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Library Profile

University of Western Ontario

by **Linda Lutz** (Head of the Acquisitions Department)

Column Editor: **Barbara Dean** (Fairfax County Public Library)

The University of Western Ontario is located in London, Ontario, Canada and yes, we too are on the Thames River. London is a two-hour drive away from Detroit to the southwest and Toronto to the northeast.

The University is comprised of fourteen faculties, a School of Business Administration, Graduate School of Library and Information Science and Graduate School of Journalism. There are also three affiliated colleges. The undergraduate population is over 16,000 and there are another 2300 students in a variety of Masters and Ph.D. programs. An additional 3000 students study at the affiliated colleges which border the main campus.

The University of Western Ontario Library System (UWOLS)

The main library on campus which serves primarily the Faculty of Arts, Faculty of Kinesiology, Faculty of Social Sciences, and the Research Depository Library is called The D.B. Weldon Library. There are six other libraries: Business, Education, Engineering, Law, Music, and Sciences. There are 46 professional librarians, 181 non-professional staff, and 35 part-time (FTE) assistants for a total of 262.

The D.B. Weldon Library opened in 1971 and recently celebrated the receipt of the Library System's two millionth volume. Item counts for UWOLS are 2,104,000 books; 2,866,000 microforms; 953,000 audio/video/graphic/cartographic pieces; and 17,300 active serial subscriptions. A massive weeding project is currently underway in Weldon Library to free up space for new acquisitions. Material which is still of some potential use, but not in heavy demand, is housed off site in a compact-shelved, closed-access storage library (Research Depository Library), but can be retrieved within one working day.

The Budget and the Selection Process

The 1993-94 budget of approximately five and a half million dollars is divided basically into 3 sections — a monographs budget (24%); a serials budget (68%); and a binding/shipping/postage/handling/Goods and Services tax budget (8%). The ratio of 74/26% serials to monographs is capped by ratios established for each library/subject area.

Budgets are allocated to subject specialists using a complex series of formulae (see the report on **Dr. John Clouston's** paper delivered at the **1993 Charleston Conference**), which utilize a mix of factors from both supply and demand. There is a written up-to-date Collections Management Policy for each subject area which defines the general objectives and subject scope, scope of coverage (language, geographical coverage, chronological coverage), formats (inclusions, exclusions), and related policies and resources. There are analytical sections for some subject-specific policies, the basic framework of which is that of the RLG (Research Libraries Group) Conspectus.

Library materials are selected largely by some twenty Collections Librarians, some of whom work full time in the Collections Management Department, while others also have reference or administrative responsibilities.

Approximately 90% of our firm orders are generated from announcement slip programs with major vendors such as the Blackwell group, John Coutts, Nijhoff, Harrassowitz, Ballen, etc. Approval plans have been used in the past but had to be discontinued for a variety of reasons, chiefly pressure on the book budget caused by escalating serials costs. The remaining 10% of orders originate from publishers' catalogues, faculty, etc., and are submitted on Purchase Request Forms (PRFs).

Acquisitions Department

The Acquisitions Department is currently comprised of three units — the Pre-Order Search Unit, the Monographs Acquisitions Unit, and the Serials Acquisitions Unit. As of January 1994 the personnel in Accounts Payable (5 people) will report to the Head of Acquisitions. This will bring the staff count to 32 and will necessitate a reorganization of the Department. The Head of Acquisitions and the Assistant Head are the only professional librarians.

The automated system used by the UWOLS is Geac 9000. Monographs Acquisitions were automated in May of 1986 and the Serials module was added in January of 1989. Other systems are being investigated.

The Acquisitions Department is the centralized location within the D.B. Weldon Library for all UWOLS purchases. Vendor announcement slips are displayed there on a weekly basis in broad LC classification order and daily selections are searched against our online catalog and the on-order file for possible duplication. Missing bibliographic information is added as needed. A staff member in the Monographs Unit assigns vendor codes to orders generated from PRFs based on her knowledge of discount structures, our vendor of preference, and special arrangements which have been negotiated. Orders are then input and paper purchase orders sent out the following day. The same Unit staff receive the material and ensure that the invoice, item in hand, and original purchase order match. Claiming is done as required

and books are shipped daily to the Cataloging Department which unfortunately is located across the street. The geographic separation from Cataloging poses several problems and a proposal to move us closer to them is being studied.

Serials follow a similar stream. Issues received in the morning are generally checked in on the same day and are en route to one of the seven locations in the afternoon. This turnaround time is not always possible because of system downtime, staff absences, and mail strikes.

Projects and Problems

The assignment of serial vendors had been somewhat haphazard in the past. A country of origin code has now been designated to every serial title and a major project is underway to revendor titles to an appropriate vendor. We have just completed the revendoring of U.S. published titles to a single vendor. This project will continue on a country-by-country basis. Electronic ordering is on our mind as well, and we are discussing this possibility with our major vendors. In an attempt to protect our diminishing budget, we are actively negotiating a bet-

ter discount structure with vendors.

During the spring and summer of 1992 a drastic serials review project took place that resulted in the cancellation of approximately \$450,000 worth of serial titles. The continued escalation in serial prices may force us to conduct a similar exercise in 1994.

A decreasing acquisitions budget caused by reductions in government funding has already forced us to go through a painful redundancy exercise, the result of which, for the Acquisitions Department alone, has been the early

retirement or redeployment of seven people. Cross training is ongoing to make remaining staff more flexible and transportable because the funding situation and the instability of the Canadian dollar point unmistakably to further staff readjustments.

The future looks uncertain, but the dedication and increased willingness of staff to learn new tasks and look at the System as a whole, and not as a series of unrelated entities, will provide a light, if not a brilliant glow, at the end of the tunnel. ☺

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