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And They Were There: Reports of Meetings

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And They Were There

Reports of Meetings

Column Editors: **Sever Bordeianu** (U. of New Mexico) (sbordeia@unm.edu)
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ATG encourages reports on meetings. Please contact Sever Bordeianu if you are interested in reporting on a meeting or in suggesting a meeting for review by ATG! — KS

Feather River Institute

Report by **Peter H. Stevens**
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The fifth annual **Feather River Institute on Acquisitions** was held May 18-21, 1995, at the historic Feather River Inn, operated by the **University of the Pacific**. The inn is located high in the California Sierras, in Blairsden — about 90 minutes' drive northwest of Reno, Nevada. Limited to 65 participants, this institute brings together acquisitions and collection development librarians and library vendors for an intimate, highly participative and informal gathering in a very picturesque and relaxed setting.

Unlike other much-larger conferences which meet in cities and in large convention halls, at Feather River the conferees meet in front of a large fireplace, on couches and around tables. Everyone has an opportunity to participate in discussion. Since all attendees stay and eat their meals in the same facilities, there is also a lot of opportunity for networking and informal conversation. More than a few attendees this year noted the opportunity that Feather River affords to eat like a lumberjack. A new pastry chef

was in residence this year, yet another indicator of the steady annual improvements in this institute.

This year's institute was attended by staff from about nine Eastern libraries, seven Midwest libraries and twenty-one Western libraries, plus one from Canada. There were also representatives of about a dozen book and serials vendors in attendance. Many attendees said that Feather River was the best conference they had ever attended.

It's not too early to begin thinking about next year's Feather River Institute on Acquisitions which is scheduled for May 16-19, 1996. The call for papers for the 1996 Institute will be issued in September of 1995. For further information, **Ron Ray** may be contacted at the University of the Pacific, at <rray@uop.edu>. There was a waiting list established this year, since the number of applicants exceeded the limit of 65 attendees, so early application is a good idea.

This year's theme was **Controversies and Debates in Acquisitions**. All of this year's papers, as in the past, will be published in a future issue of *Library Acquisitions: Practice and Theory*. The program and my own, unauthorized summary of each presentation follows.

The Economics of Monographs Acquisitions: Results of a Time/Cost Study. Presentation by **Pam Rebarcak** (Iowa State University) <lb.paz@isumvs.bitnet> This report was from an eight-year longitudinal study of technical services costs at Iowa State, but also reflected study of over 70 articles on this subject of technical services

costs. While all acquisitions librarians are spending money on operations, only some acquisitions librarians know what that money goes for. Cost factors in acquisitions include such things as the automated system in use, organizational structure, workflows, acquisitions methods, type of material acquired and staffing patterns. Cost studies can engender staff reactions, ranging from "we already know all this" to "we don't need to know this" to "we don't want to know this." Since you cannot manage what you cannot measure, it's very important that acquisitions costs be calculated. At Iowa State, technical services cost centers were devised for a wide range of processing. In ordering, receiving and claiming, for instance, 29 tasks were identified. One-week sample periods were scheduled at the same time each year, so that costs could be tracked. It was found that the cost per receipt averaged \$7 per record, without overhead; \$10, with acquisitions overhead and \$13, if technical services overhead costs were included. Over this eight-year period, costs for searching, claiming and maintenance decreased while receiving costs increased. This cost study data allowed Iowa State to assess the cost impact of implementing NOTIS as well as determining the cost of the pre-OCLC PromptCat processing.

Building Bridges between Acquisitions and Collection Development: Communication Models for the Electronic Environment. Presentation by **Margaret Axtman** (University of Minnesota) <m-axtm@vm1.spcs.umn.edu> and **Barbara Stelmasik** (University of Minnesota) <b-stel@maroon.tc.umn.edu> These two speakers presented three different models of acquisitions and of bibliographers, each covering the spectrum of what acquisitions and collection development librarians do today. In the traditional model, bibliographers communicate with acquisitions via paper, telephone and in person, selecting from catalogs, slips, bibliographies and reviews. In this model, acquisitions works with authorized selection request forms and vendor notification slips. In the transitional model, bibliographers use traditional tools, but add to them online searching for selection and verification, communicating with acquisitions in the traditional way but also

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via electronic mail and online request forms. Finally, in the techno model, bibliographers flag records in vendor databases for ordering, use electronic notification services for selection, move records into local online systems for acquisitions and receive electronic requests from library users. Fund monitoring is online, rather than via printed reports. Acquisitions, in this model, continues to receive traditional requests in paper format but also receives many requests online, as well as by gopher and WWW forms, via vendor databases and by direct transfer of records. Much ordering is electronic in this model. Both parties — acquisitions and collection development — in this new model face the need for ruthless efficiency in order to keep up with selection and ordering responsibilities.

Outsourcing, in Acquisitions and Technical Services. Presentation by

Gary Shirk (Yankee Book Peddler) <gshirk@office.ybp.com> Wearing a sorcerer's tall hat, this speaker compared outsourcing and magic, each of which can create very high expectations but provide a very different reality. Outsourcing can require much more library staff involvement than is originally anticipated. To bring expectations and reality into some conformance, a lot of work must be done in advance, to draft detailed specifications, evaluation methods, monitoring schemes, etc. Like magic, outsourcing can require a lot of apparatus and a complicated set-up. Outsourcing reality involves risk, contract management, complex relationships among many parties (including acquisitions, collection management, cataloging, systems, administration, a bibliographic utility, a vendor, the library's online system vendor). With mutual dependency comes less control and more risk. Increased pressure for standardization is likely, with outsourcing, as are added costs for any local peculiarities and customizing. Before outsourcing, libraries need to consider what are their core competencies; what they need to preserve, in the way of staff expertise; who the library is competing with; what strategic partnerships need to be created; areas of weak expertise in the library; will the library be able to recreate an operation internally once it outsources the activity. Before outsourcing, libraries need to examine their strategic rationale for engaging in it; is it just to cut costs? There must be mutual benefits for both partners in outsourcing: the library and the vendor, and a durable partnership can

reduce risk. As with magic, the real magic in outsourcing is in the details that make it work.

Prioritizing Firm Order Costs and Vendor Services. Presentation by **Scott Smith** (Blackwell North America) <smithsa@bnamf.blackwell.com> and **Richard Brumley** (Oregon State University) <brumleyr@ccmail.orst.edu> In this intensive exercise, conference attendees were divided up into six groups, each to act as a mythical bookselling company, with the assignment of developing a business plan to maximize company earnings while maintaining competitive services. Each attendee received a seven-page handout, detailing their company's financial conditions and the ramifications of various changes in company strategy. Each company was required to determine its profits, what changes were made to achieve those profits and the rationale for those decisions (all in about thirty minutes). Fortunately, most groups had at

least one representative from the business sector to provide help for the overwhelmed librarians. Popular cost-cutting strategies included reducing advertising, travel, entertainment and conference expenditures while slowing the ordering of books from publishers. Popular service enhancement strategies included more automation and customer service staff, higher discounts and better quality control.

Debate: Any Technical Services Operation Can Sustain a 25% Budget Reduction Without Significant Erosion of Service Two debate teams, each consisting of three people, argued either for or against this proposition, in the usual debate format of a few minutes each for presentation of the case, rebuttal, audience discussion, summary by each team and a polling of the audience as to the winning team. It was not uncommon for debaters to be arguing against their personal opinion. Arguing FOR the proposition were **Joe Barker** (Berkeley), **Ann McKee** (Faxon) and Peter

Stevens (Washington). They cited evidence that most organizations have built-in slack that can be excised; that management overhead can be consolidated; that the materials budget could be cut; that staff can be cross-trained and empowered; and that excessively-high quality standards could be reduced; and that the resulting organization would be leaner and more efficient. Arguing AGAINST the proposition were **Joyce Ogburn** (Yale), **Sharon Propas** (Stanford) and **Barbara Woodford** (EBSCO), who claimed that such a cut would devalue and demoralize staff, violate union contracts and lead to higher turnover, lower quality control, less time to plan and manage, large backlogs, no claiming and a general disaster.

Reorganization Revisited: Acquisitions as an Endangered Species. Presentation by

Eleanor Cook (Appalachian State University) <cookei@appstate.edu> At Appalachian State, library reorganization left technical services without an assistant director in charge of these activities and with only a half-time supervisor for acquisitions, as acquisitions, cataloging and collection development were merged into a single unit, called materials processing. With a great deal of staff involvement, the library was completely reshaped to a new model, with a new mission, at the same time that a new online system was being implemented. The new organizational model is characterized by cross-functional teams, organized by subject area, with all librarians involved in faculty liaison and selection. Instead of department heads, activities are supervised by coordinators. These coordinators all report to a single assistant director. While acquisitions librarians are not endangered in this model, they are being cross-bred, involved in a wider range of activities than in the traditional model. Likewise, acquisitions staff now perform a wider range of duties, with staff having had an opportunity to indicate which activities interested them most.

Sleeping With the Enemy: The Love/Hate Relationship between Acquisitions and Collection Development. Presentation by **Karen Cargille** (UC-San Diego) <kcargille@ucsd.edu> and **Douglas Cargille** (CSU-San Diego) <cargill@mail.sdsu.edu> This husband-wife team, in point-counterpoint fashion, enumerated the contrasting viewpoints, and values, of acquisitions librarians and collection development librarians (based on their personal

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experiences). They stressed the need for these two parties to take the time to communicate, face-to-face, frequently, and to define the boundaries of each other's responsibilities. Collection development librarians are responsible for keeping faculty out of the library director's office and for communicating with faculty. Acquisitions librarians are responsible for the speedy and efficient acquisition of library materials but have little face-to-face contact with library users. By working on their relationship, acquisitions and collection development librarians can help each other achieve their own and their library's goals.

I Love Me, I Love Not: Schizophrenic Behavior among Acquisitions/Collection Development Librarians. Presentation by **Terry Allison** (CSU-San Marcos) <terry_allison@csusm.edu> This presentation reflected the speaker's graduate studies in postmodern analysis and deconstructive theory, inviting attendees to consider all the roles that they fulfill in their daily work and how poorly their job titles reflect the great multiplicity of those roles. By deconstructing their job titles, acquisitions and collection development librarians can gain greater understanding about the variety of functions that they fulfill and can think in a much broader aspect.

The Acquisitions Manager: Where is the Librarian in this Picture? Presentation by **Kirk Russell** (Brigham Young University) <kirk_russell@byu.edu> Acquisitions librarianship is sometimes seen as a stepping stone to positions with a more strictly-professional focus, as more of a business office function than one that demands considerable professional expertise. Instead, acquisitions librarianship uniquely requires both professional and business expertise. Because acquisitions librarianship is largely ignored in library education, many professionals have little understanding of what this specialized field entails and what its practitioners do. Unlike other library departments, acquisitions operations usually employ just a few professionals, who can easily become isolated within the larger library organization. With one foot in the library and the other in the business world, acquisitions librarians rely on their colleagues at other institutions for advice, rather than on librarians within their own libraries. Acquisitions librarianship is undergoing rapid change, with outside forces defining many of these changes. Integrated online systems require that acquisitions librarians become much more knowledgeable about

cataloging, accounting, collection development, automation. The book and serial vendors with whom acquisitions works are moving into many new services and automated products. Many more materials are now available in electronic and other, non-traditional formats that have different acquisitions requirements (such as site licensing). Acquisitions management is changing as the number of professionals in technical services shrinks and as training and teaching of more student and more part-time assistants increases. Acquisitions librarians need to change the perception of their library colleagues and engage more widely in the larger profession.

Ethics: More Case Studies in Collections and Acquisitions. Presentation by **Ron Ray** (University of the Pacific) <r-ray@uop.edu>, **Mary Devlin** (Blackwell) <devlin@bnamf.blackwell.com> and **Meta Nissley** (CSU-Chico) <meta_nissley@msmailgw.csuchico.edu> **Ron Ray** was the first presenter in this session, demonstrating how one library publisher's advertised subscription rates for their publications routinely fell well below what libraries actually paid for these subscriptions over a period of years. After comparing usage data for these publications, many were canceled at his library. The ethical question was whether this publisher was intentionally trying to mislead subscribers about the actual annual cost of their publications. **Mary Devlin** offered the case of a vendor whose employee knows that bad business practices are likely to bankrupt the company. What responsibility does that employee have, to the company and to its customers, to inform management that the business is in jeopardy? **Meta Nissley's** case studied the ethics involved when a document delivery company offers a hot new service, widely, to a library and its users, for free — but, then, on short notice, levies a fee for every transaction. The resulting fees can amount to very large expenditures. Does this action represent an unethical bait and switch operation? As intended, these cases provoked much discussion.

Library Management: The Latest Fad, A Dismal Science, or Just Plain Work? Presentation by **Bill Fisher** (San Jose State University) <fisher@sjsuvm1.sjsu.edu> In this presentation, the speaker modestly attempted to summarize the entire history of management to the present day, neatly encapsulating the principle management theorists of each major period of management theory, from **Weber**, through **Taylor**, **Fayol**,

MacGregor, to **Ouchi**, **Peters** and **Waterman**, and **Senge**, ending up with **Martin Smith's** book on management fads and fashions (entitled *Contrarian Management*). Management theories have evolved as objectives, technology and the workforce have changed. What remains is the need for managers to develop positive relationships with work groups as well as with individual workers, aiming for commitment rather than compliance. While management involves much hard work, the best managers succeed in making it look easy and effortless. Management was likened to conducting a symphony orchestra, where each instrumental group must meld and every instrument must be in tune.

Debate: Consolidation of Purchases with a Single Vendor Makes Good Business Sense. Arguing FOR the proposition were **Joyce Ogburn** (Yale), **Sharon Propas** (Stanford) and **Barbara Woodford** (EBSCO). They cited the simplicity of dealing with just one vendor, lower costs, better discount, simpler management, streamlined procedures, better ILS linkage and a more attractive prospect for other vendors (if successful in obtaining that single-vendor position). Arguing AGAINST the proposition were **Joe Barker** (Berkeley), **Anne McKee** (Faxon) and **Peter Stevens** (Washington). They argued against putting all one's eggs in a single basket, preferring the advantages of greater competition for discounts and services with a range of vendors; argued that no one vendor could supply all materials; and that the number of vendor dinners at ALA would be reduced if orders were consolidated.

Top Ten Great Things at SLA '95 in Montreal

by **P. Michael McCulley**
(GENESIS Information Services)
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I had the experience and pleasure of adventuring to Montreal in June, for the **Special Library Association's 86th Annual Conference**. It was synchronicity of sorts — since I attended my first SLA in Winnipeg in 1984. My wife, **Leslie**, also had the pleasure of conferencing in Montreal earlier this year — at the **Art Library Society of North America (ARLIS)** gathering; she was the

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one who encouraged me to visit the architecture museum noted below. If you have an opportunity to visit Montreal, don't miss it. It's a world-class city, as close to a Paris of North America as I think I'm likely to find. . . and now, the Top 10 List.

10. Grand Prix, grand smoke, and Large Parties . . . The only Formula 1 race was in town while SLA was visiting, and it was a happy co-existence . . . the small laundry fire that evacuated the Sheraton into the night . . . the grand bashes of vendors — from **Moody's/D&B**, **Lexis-Nexis** dessert soiree, to the division suites. A fine social environment when the meetings are done for the day.

9. "Do It Yourself: Special Librarians Creating Internet Applications," a program by Information Technology Division, Networking Section. Breeching the millennium out-front, these SLAers had created a gopher site, a database/directory, and a newsletter. Leading by examples . . .

8. Centre Canadien d'Architecture (CCA) was a world-class museum, with the largest collection of documents on architecture in the world. The Canadian Center for Architecture is one of the most exquisite

modern museums built, with a sensitivity to indigenous building materials, space and light. Thanks to Leslie for encouraging me to visit.

7. Annual Business Meeting? Yes, because it was where again the power of the members is evident — as we halted a proposed change of our Executive Director to having the title of "Chief Executive Officer." SLA's a member-driven organization, and we make our voices heard.

6. Bruce Maxwell's Government Documents' session for law librarians. He had a great handout with sites, URLs, information, and his book (*How to Access the Federal Government on the Internet*) is a winner, too.

5. Listserv mailing list SLA95-L . . . provided by the wonderful hosts from the **Eastern Canada Chapter** of SLA. Boston '96 has a Web page up already, at <<http://www.delphi.com/sla96/sla96.html>>.

4. All Things French . . . from currency exchange (\$2 bills!), to bistros, to lilting language everybody *tried* to speak, and the gourmet and always-fresh food c'est tres bon, merci. The Quebecois music, and people of Quebec, were generously patient with our language skills, and friendly, full of joie de vivre.

3. Exhibits Rule! From *New York Times* going onto **DIALOG/Knight-**

Ridder Information to the latest reference books from distinguished publishers to the growing number of Internet-related vendors onhand, **SLA** exhibits are state-of-the-art realtime information wonderlands. We are even lobbying for a night-time exhibit period so we can do 'em more.

2. Keynote Speaker Howard Rheingold. He's the author of *Virtual Communities* (deserves a read), and closed his talk by asking us to become the "Road Warriors" on the Information Superhighway. I had an invited luncheon with Howard and some other SLAers — and we waxed and waned philosophically for several hours about things virtual and cyber. He's enlightened about what we do, and believes our work important still.

1. . . . And the number one thing about **SLA—Montreal**, as always for me, were the **people of SLA** — members, vendors, exhibitors — who are some of the brightest, curious, and engaging information pros you'd ever want to meet. Networking is the official term for this aspect of conferencing, but it's more than that: old friends, many of a decade or more, talking about what's changing, what's new, and helping each other make sense of the shifting landscape of libraries and information. And next year, we do it all again in Boston! 🐼

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