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Group Therapy: Using One Vendor's Forms to Order From Another Vendor

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Group Therapy

Using One Vendor's Forms to Order From Another Vendor

Column Editor: **Rosann Bazirjian** (Syracuse University)

Hey y'all out there! Do you have any gripes?

Come to your therapist! Try rvbazirj@hawk.syr.edu or

FAX (315) 443-9510.

GRIPLE

Submitted by an **Anonymous Vendor**

My complaint is about libraries which receive form selections from a particular vendor and then they turn around and use the information received from that form selection to order the title from another vendor. I do not think that is ethical and wonder why this practice is followed by some librarians.

LIBRARIAN RESPONSE

Submitted by **Joe Barker** (Acquisition Department Head, The Library, University of California, Berkeley 94720) (jbarker@library.berkeley.edu).

I tend to agree with this griper. A lot of expense goes into the production of form selections; multi-part forms are not cheap. The vendor deserves to be compensated by getting most (if not all) of the orders triggered by these forms. It's only fair.

But nothing in library work is without exceptions. What if a library receives a notification slip from Vendor Q for a profile in physics, but the physics selector thinks the book is engineering, hates to throw things away, and sends the slip to the engineering selector, who likes the title. However, when the engineering library sends the slip to the Acquisition Department, the decision is made that this current imprint needs to be ordered "do-not-duplicate" from Vendor Z where engineering has an approval plan? We try to prevent this from happening at Berkeley by clustering overlapping subjects with the same

vendor and by careful profiling to get each selector all the slips she or he needs without costly referrals among selectors. But I cannot deny it does happen, albeit infrequently.

Or what if a library has an approval plan with Vendor K, who is an excellent approval plan dealer but a mediocre firm order dealer and this perception has been discussed with Vendor K? Along with the approval plan, Vendor K volunteers to send form selections outside the basic subject profile, knowing that the library only sends firm orders to Vendor K when duplication by the approval plan is likely. In my view, the library cannot be faulted here. I leave it up to the vendors to decide whether Vendor K has good business sense.

Another exception occurs when a vendor sends a notification slip for a run-of-the-mill publication from a country outside the vendor's. We do not require these forms, but we get them. When selectors choose these titles, we are likely to order from a vendor in the country of publication. I prefer to ask for forms or an approval plan from a good vendor in the country of publication.

Another perspective on this is that all form selections are a risk for vendors. Vendors can be seen as prospecting in supplying forms. Vendors should exercise the right to say "No." If the vendor who issued this gripe had the courage of his (her?) convictions, he would tell the "gripee" library that the forms are expensive to produce and cannot be supplied if so few orders result. If the vendor is afraid of losing business because of such a "just-say-no" attitude, then the vendor needs to look at his motives. If the customer is so important that the griper doesn't want to risk losing the gripee, then I wonder if the griper is being entirely fair. Vendors are in the business for profit, and decide which customers are important on the basis of factors other than the cost of some forms. Prospecting

continued on page 81

Drinking from the Firehose

continued from page 79

a right to present an alternative view to a subject being discussed. He says, "Ban the medium of flaming and you ban the message of dissent." That is certainly something to think about. The line between dissent and "gentility and decorum" is not the same for everyone. But how much should one tolerate? When dissent becomes verbal abuse then what?

It's like real life too — you have to deal with obnoxious people in all types of situations in everyday living. You can

avoid them or meet them head on and put a stop to it. Everyone has to deal with this occasionally. It is generally not against the law simply to BE obnoxious. However, electronic lists will continue to test legal bounds in terms of libel and slander and other similar litigious matters as time goes on.

When joining a new list, read the scope and purpose statement if there is one. If there isn't, be aware that one may need to be developed and that questions will inevitably arise. As a subscriber, you should get involved and provide feedback to the listowner. And if after all else fails and you are unhappy about

the direction a list you are interested in is taking, you can always take your ball and go home and start your own list!

Sources: (all from the *Chronicle of Higher Education*)

DeLoughry, Thomas. "Gatekeeping on the Internet," Nov. 23, 1994, pp.A21-22.

Wilson, David L. "Vigilantes Gain Quiet Approval on Networks," Jan. 13, 1995, pp.A17-19.

Lemisch, Jesse. "The First Amendment is Under Attack in Cyberspace," Jan. 20, 1995, p.A56.

Group Therapy

continued from page 80

inevitably incurs a loss, and wise prospectors know when to quit probing a dry vein.

I have heretofore used the word "fair" and avoided "ethical." There are more than two sides to this gripe, as in any other challenge to ethical behavior. My opinion reflects how I've thought this issue through over the years, and I encourage each of you to do likewise. I invite all readers of *ATG* to meditate this one while reading the "Principles & Standards of Acquisitions Practice" recently composed by the Acquisitions Section and now available through PVLRC. (To obtain a copy, send me, as current chair of the Publisher/Vendor-Library Relations Committee your snail-mail address. E-mail: jbarker@library.berkeley.edu)

VENDOR RESPONSE

Submitted by an **anonymous vendor representative**
— as a compilation of discussions with customers
on this topic

I had the opportunity to speak with a number of librarians on this subject. Most of them feel an obligation to use the vendor that supplies them with the slips and a number of them also send this vendor additional firm orders as a "reward" for

providing the slips, or as part of an overall discount arrangement. There were, however, a number of librarians I spoke to who, for different reasons, choose to order some of the slip titles from vendors other than the vendor who supplies the slip.

The reason that came up most frequently was time and convenience. Let's say that vendor A does provide slips. If the librarian is preparing an order for Vendor A and also has a few slip orders, rather than prepare two separate orders to two vendors, all the orders will get lumped together and sent to Vendor A. The librarians I spoke to felt justified in this because the service provided by Vendor A was either not offered by vendor B or not performed as well. They do not go out of their way to send the slip orders to a different vendor, but occasionally that is how it works out.

It was mentioned to me by several people that their feeling about the slips is that it is a gimmick or ploy used by the vendors to solicit business, and it is the vendor's choice at any time to stop the slip program.

One other reason that I heard from a few people was simply that they received the slips from several vendors and ordered from the vendor that gave them the best service, even if it was not the source of the slip. Or they just ordered from the vendor that sent them the slip first.

My overall feeling after discussing this with a number of people is that no one is intentionally doing anything unethical or purposefully being unfair. Nor is it being done lightly. Each librarian is trying to do what is right for her/his library and make the best use of time and limited resources. ☛

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