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Library Profile

The Boston Public Library

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The Boston Public Library was founded in 1848 as the first large tax-supported municipal library in the United States. After having moved several times, it has been at its present site in Copley Square since 1895. At that time the "Palace of the People," designed by the architect Charles Follen McKim, was built. Today this building houses the Research Collection. The adjoining building was designed by Philip Johnson and opened in 1972. The Johnson building houses the circulating collection of the General library, which, with the Library's twenty-five branches, forms the Community Library Services Division.

The Library is the largest public library in Massachusetts and acts as the Library of last Recourse, providing interlibrary loan and reference services to all citizens of the state. A member of the Boston Library Consortium, the Library works closely with the academic and research libraries in the area, offering patrons access and borrowing privileges to the holdings of member libraries. The Library is also the Headquarters Library for the Eastern Massachusetts Regional Library System serving some 200 libraries in eastern Massachusetts.

The Research Library

A member of the Association of Research Libraries, the Research Library supports the needs of the students who attend the many institutions of higher learning in Boston and offers resources for post graduate research. The collection contains over 6 million titles representing publications from around the world. There are at least two hundred special collections providing primary source material in the areas of Women's Studies, Slavery and Abolitionist Papers, the Peronista Era, the Russian Ballet and the American Theater. The Library is a Regional Depository for US documents, and Massachusetts and United Nations documents. The newspaper collection houses 268 currently received US and foreign newspapers and the Library was named the site of the Massachusetts Newspaper Project, part of the United States Newspaper Project sponsored by the National Endowment for the Humanities.

The strengths of the Library lie in the areas of the humanities with emphasis on fine arts and music. The staff of the Fine Arts Department are fond of quoting one of our early Trustees, Josiah Benton, who wrote that: "The Boston Public Library is a scholar's library and it is of public importance that it should be maintained as such." The staff is especially

proud of the collection on American Artists. Among the archival material are the archives of the Connic Stain Glass Company of Boston. The Music Department houses the Brown Collection of unique 18th and 19th century music. The Library contains over 1.2 million rare books and manuscripts with several first edition folios of William Shakespeare, original musical scores of Mozart to Prokofiev's *Peter and the Wolf* and the personal library of John Quincy Adams.

The Research Collection of children's titles, called the Jordan Collection, contains over 150,000 titles representing juvenile literature from the 1870s to the present. Every year

some 5,000 titles published in the US and abroad are added to this collection.

Since the mid 19th century, the Library has collected material from around the world and today has extensive holdings especially from Western European countries in all disciplines. Since its earliest days the library has also acquired material from all the countries of Latin America and boasts one of the finest Argentine collections in New England. The Kirstein Business Branch is a branch of the Research Library. Situated in Boston's financial district, this branch serves, and is partially supported by, the business community. This branch is very popular especially for small businesses which do not maintain their own libraries.

Community Library Services Division

This Division focuses on the needs of the Boston community with its diverse ethnic and

cultural groups. Its 800,000-volume circulating collections provide for the leisure reading and educational needs of the community. Innovative programs from guest authors series, Never Too Late groups, children's programs, as well as films series comprise some of this Division's outreach services to the community.

The Acquisitions Department

The Acquisitions Department is responsible for acquiring material to support the various collections and programs of the Research Library and the Community Library Services Division. In contrast to some acquisitions departments in other libraries which may have assumed some cataloging or ILL duties, this Department is currently organized on more traditional lines and consists of four professionals and 19 FTE who handle the acquisition of monographs and serials.

Each year, depending on the budget, the Library adds, through purchase, about 40,000 titles to its Research Library and about 150,000 volumes to its circulating collections. Some 15,000 titles, are acquired through an academic approval plan with Baker and Taylor. These represent the publications of all the major US houses and most of the university presses. To support the research collection of juvenile titles the Library maintains an approval plan with Book Wholesalers Inc. Each year about 3,000 juvenile titles are received on approval. Other smaller approval plans are used for more popular material such as Quality Books "Small Presses for Public Libraries."

Every week selectors throughout the system have an opportunity to examine new titles and may order for their respective locations. All orders for the branches are coordinated together. Replacements and retrospective titles are placed on lists. The Branches add their selections and after the selection process acquisitions places the orders.

Bestseller titles are placed electronically in advance of publication with Ingram. Each month Ingram sends a diskette listing the "Best of the Best" titles. The data is loaded on the automated acquisitions system and each branch makes their selection online from their individual branch location. At the end of a two week ordering cycle the orders are transmitted electronically to Ingram.

The Library also maintains a large lease plan with Brodart. Monthly selections for

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new titles are sent to Acquisitions which transmits the information to Brodart. This plan has proven successful for high interest material and the books are returned after the public's interest wanes.

The Research Library subscribes to the **Library of Congress Book Alert Plan**. Titles not received on approval plans are firm-ordered from selections made from the galley slips sent on this plan. Keeping with a long standing tradition of not relying on any one vendor, the Library divides its academic orders among several suppliers such as, **The Book House Inc., Academic Book Center, Ambassador Book Service, Inc., and Eastern Book Company.**

Generally, foreign material is acquired for the Research Library from the country of origin. For years the Library maintained approval plans in Europe, Canada, and throughout Latin America. At present many of the approval plans have been suspended due to budget constraints, although the Latin American ones remain. The Library continues to participate in the **Library of Congress Middle East Cooperative Acquisitions Program**. Acquisitions uses a number of methods to acquire popular foreign material for the circulating collections. Some orders are sent to the vendor in the country of publication. These are often the same vendors used for Research Library orders. Generally the Library makes

use of domestic suppliers or local bookstores for most popular languages such as Spanish and Chinese.

An in-house developed acquisitions system is used to support the acquisitions activities. This same system generates management reports that enable the branches to maintain their budgets. The **Innopac System** is used for serials control. Some 16,000 active serial

titles are checked-in centrally. The branches and the Governments Documents department check in their own serials titles. While **Faxon** is our subscription agent for North American titles, all other serial titles are purchased in country of origin from proven vendors.

The Future

As other institutions reorganize and respond to changes effected by technology, so

will this Library's Acquisitions Department. Already there are many changes that a decade ago were not part of the activity of this department. For example, a few years ago, the Library, responding to public service departments requests, prioritized all material being sent through technical services. The Acquisitions Department, being the first to see the incoming material, was made responsible for labeling the priority and assuring that it flowed through the other departments according to the schedule.

Technology brings new procedures. With the acquisitions of CD-ROM material, negotiating license agreements became the function of the Acquisitions Department. This Department also keeps the official record of these agreements and handles all questions concerning the proper use of the products.

Already mentioned above was the change in the way branches select their bestsellers. Selecting online eliminated the need for the branches to meet at the Central Library or to route slips from one site to another. The next step will be to load all branch replacement orders onto a database for online selection. After this Acquisitions hopes to work with the Research Library selectors to eliminate paper selection slips and replace them with an online selection process. Other changes will occur in the future and we welcome this! New challenges strengthen and enhance our support to the public service divisions.

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