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The Biz of Acquisition

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There's no biz like acq biz

WHEN IT SOUNDS TOO GOOD TO BE TRUE...

by *Richard Jasper* (Emory University)

The publisher's brochure that the faculty member in the Philosophy Department sent to Collection Development looks too good to be true — hundreds of obscure Renaissance writers have been translated into English for the first time and are now being made available at a special prepublication price.

"Professor Smith-Jones is very excited by this offer," your collection development coordinator says. "These titles would really beef up our holdings in the area of Renaissance polemicists and with Professor Sums are coming in next year..."

You take the brochure back to the Acquisitions Department and begin poking around. You find out that:

— The titles, \$95 a volume or \$8000 for an entire set, are to be prepaid.

— The glowing quotes in praise of the titles are all anonymous.

— The publisher's address is a post office box in a place you've never heard of; no telephone number is listed and directory assistance has never had a listing by that name.

— There are NO holdings or order records for these titles in OCLC or RLIN.

"If it's too good to be true, it probably isn't," you think. "Is this

another bogus publication from a bogus publisher?"

The above scenario is itself fictitious, but grappling with the question of bogus publications and bogus publishers is a fact of life for acquisitions librarians. Anyone with a budget of any size receives one or several of these brochures every year and chances are that everyone will be stung at least once. Even so, knowing certain clues can help the acquisitions librarian spot potentially bogus publications and there are certain tactics one can employ to avoid being stung. And if by unhappy chance you do get burned, there are steps you can take to help warn colleagues in other libraries against repeat occurrences.

Avoiding a sting begins with **recognizing** potentially bogus publications and publishers. Sometimes this is quite easy to do — the publisher's brochure, in terms of format, spelling, wording, and so forth, is so bizarre as to immediately sabotage its credibility. Other lures are more sophisticated — the titles, the format, the quotes are quite similar to those you would see in an advertisement from a legitimate academic or trade press. It is only when you begin looking at the fine print and notice that all titles must be prepaid, that the address is a post office box, and that the quotes are all

anonymous that you begin to wonder. When further checking reveals there is NO telephone number and there are NO holdings or on order records in any bibliographic utility, the alarm bells should be ringing.

But how do you know for sure? After all, the Professor Smith-Jones' of the world can be quite adamant about wanting these titles; they may even have sent in a few prepaid orders on their own in eagerness to have added these gems to their personal collections. Here-with are a few suggestions for checking on these titles and publishers:

— Consult a "publisher not supplied" (PNS) list, either one supplied by your firm order vendor or the "Gille list" maintained and distributed by the Publisher/Vendor/Library Relations Committee (PVLRC) of ALA ALCTS. More on these lists below.

— Call another acquisitions librarian whose library collects in this area. Have they seen the brochure? What do they think? Have they ordered any of these titles?

— Contact your firm order vendor or subscription agent. Do they know or can they find out anything about

CROSS REFERENCE PUZZLE

by *Lenny Schrift* (Ballen Booksellers)

Can you match these people with their old affiliations? Answers on page 39.

NAME		OLD AFFILIATION
1. John Laraway	a	Greenwood Press
2. Mike Markwith	b	Westview Press
3. Otto Rapp	c	Reidel Publishing
4. Dan Tonkery	d	University of South Carolina
5. Bill Schenck	e	University of Illinois - Chicago
6. Lyman Newlin	f	University of Kentucky
7. John Ryland	g	SUNY Binghamton
8. Corrie Marsh	h	University of Notre Dame
9. Sul Lee	i	Pergamon Press
10. Arthur Kennedy	j	Louisiana State University
11. Carl Teresa	k	Harvard University
12. Michael Breuer	l	Academic Press
13. Herbert Johnson	m	Duke University
14. Barry Baker	n	Prentice Hall
15. Tom Leonhardt	o	Yale University
16. Gerald Curtis	p	Charles W. Clark Co.
17. James Deffenbach	q	University of Rochester
18. Wanda Dole	r	University of Virginia
19. Frederick Praeger	s	National Library of Medicine
20. Charles Willett	t	Krochs & Brentano's

this publisher or publication? This tactic might be especially useful if the vendor is in reasonably close geographic proximity to the publisher.

—Contact the publisher directly. Even if you cannot determine a telephone number, there is always the mail! In cases where the library is uncomfortable prepaying, it has been suggested that the acquisitions librarian write to the publisher and request supporting documentation in the form of photocopies of title pages, contents pages, indexes, bibliographies, etc. If the publication is

truly bogus, the would-be publisher will have a hard time coming up with such documentation.

—Take a chance. If your budget permits, why not prepay the one volume listed for under \$50 and see what kind of response you get? If nothing is forthcoming within a reasonable period of time, or if the volume supplied is of extremely poor quality, a formal complaint may be lodged with PVLRL.

One of the Original purposes of PVLRL, formerly the Bookdealer/Library Relations Committee and before that (back in the dim, dark

recesses of time) "the Gille Committee," was to address this very problem. Over the years PVLRL has come up with two mechanisms to this end. They have become the chief means by which acquisitions librarians attempt to prevent additional stings.

The first is an official "form for filing a complaint against a publisher or vendor," copies of which are obtainable from PVLRL c/o ALCTS, 50 East Huron Street, Chicago IL 60611. The form provides the acquisitions librarian an opportunity to make known and document specific

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FYI

ALA ASSOCIATION FOR LIBRARY COLLECTIONS AND TECHNICAL SERVICES SERIALS SECTION ACQUISITIONS COMMITTEE 1990 MIDWINTER MEETING, CHICAGO JANUARY 7, 1990

by **Jana Lonberger**, Head, Serials Control Dept., Georgia Institute of Technology Library, Atlanta GA 30332

The ALCTS Serials Section Acquisitions Committee reviewed progress on the drafting of guidelines for performance evaluation of serials vendors at its meeting on January 7, 1990. Preliminary work on this project was based on the format followed in *Guide to Performance Evaluation of Library Materials Vendors*, a document developed by the ALCTS Resources Section Acquisitions Committee, which focuses on evaluation of monographic vendors. It was noted that comparison of serials vendors is particularly difficult, due to the relatively small number of serials vendors available and to the nature of the orders placed through them. Evaluation of serials vendors should focus on comparing an individual vendor's performance against a library's needs. The Committee hopes to have a rough draft ready for review at the 1990 Annual Conference. Work also continues on an extensive glossary of acquisitions and serials terms. Originally intended as an addendum to the vendor evaluation guidelines, the glossary has generated much interest in the serials community and is currently under preparation as a separate entity. A draft will be completed this spring and distributed to various groups for comment.

In other business, committee members voted to co-sponsor, with the AAP/ALCTS Joint Committee Subcommittee on Serials Marketing, a program on marketing of serials for the 1991 annual conference. Committee members were urged to comment on the Serials Marketing Subcommittee's draft of a serials marketing survey, and to volunteer their institutions as test sites for the survey.

Acting on a request from the ALCTS RS Acquisitions Committee, the Committee also agreed to work on revising an unpublished document on handling of library orders for serials and periodicals.

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instances of publishers' failure to supply prepaid orders and/or publishers' supplying grossly inferior products. With this documentation, PVLRL is able to pursue the issue with the individual publisher and/or the U.S. Postal Service, if appropriate. Truly bogus publications, after all, constitute mail fraud.

PVLRL's second mechanism was developed to address acquisitions librarians' complaints in the aggregate. For years now the committee has maintained and distributed a list of imprints believed to be operated by Frank and Michael Gille—otherwise known as the "Gille list." As noted above, the committee was originally established to deal with many, many complaints librarians had regarding Gille publications. The availability and distribution of the list has broadened general awareness of these imprints.

Along with PVLRL's efforts, several vendors circulate "publisher not supplied" (PNS) lists which are somewhat analogous to the "Gille" list. In addition to the PNS category, these lists usually include publishers which are "apply direct" (AD). The general idea is that the AD publishers are legitimate organization which will not work through vendors, so the library must "apply direct." Unfortunately, the "publisher not supplied" category is rather more slippery. It is difficult sometimes to tell whether the vendor has found the publisher to be unreliable or just difficult to work with.

The main problem with both PVLRL's "Gille" list and the PNS lists circulated by the firm order vendors is keeping them updated and current. Many of these bogus publishers fold operations under one name in one state and re-appear six

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Rumors continued from page 1

Martinus Nijhoff Eastern Europe, a subsidiary of Martinus Nijhoff International in The Hague, The Netherlands, will start the supply of scientific literature to the Soviet Union worth approximately 1.5 million Dutch guilders per year. . . The Dutch company will be supplying predominantly scientific journals to the library of the Academy of Sciences of the Soviet Union in Leningrad."

And, after a year at Stanford University, **Pam Censer** will be returning to the **University of Florida** (Gainesville) this summer. Pam will be a bibliographer.

Do you all remember **Clara-Mae Chitum** who way back when worked as Acquisitions Librarian at MIT? Well, for those of you who do, Clara recently was married to Ruud F. Van der Velden and is living in The Netherlands.

EBSCO Subscription Services will host a reception honoring ALA President Pat Berger following the President's Forum on Sunday, June 24, 3:30-5 at ALA Annual. The Forum features Clifford Stoll, an authority on computer security who uncovered an international network of spies selling computer secrets to the KGB. Stoll will speak on preserving library materials in an electronic age.

According to *Inforonics Info* (v.III, no.1, Spring/Summer 1990) **Harvard University Press** "is upgrading their book catalog

database to an on-line TitleBank system. TitleBank is a complete book marketing and catalog production service, which maintains book data in an easily accessible computer file for use throughout the marketing and sales process."

Rosann Bazirjian has been named Head of Acquisitions at **Syracuse University**.

Sara Miller McCune's husband George passed away unexpectedly in Wawona, Yosemite National Park on Saturday May 19, 1990. Mr. McCune, born October 18, 1924, "began a long and distinguished career in the publishing industry with Macmillan Publishing Company (New York). In 1966 he joined a fledgling publishing company **Sage Publications, Inc.**, which was founded in New York by his wife Sara, in 1965." He is succeeded as President of Sage Publications by his son, David.

According to a recent press release, **Martindale Hubbell** has been acquired by **Reed Publishing (USA)**. Ira Siegel, president of Martindale Hubbell as well as R.R. Bowker (also owned by Reed Publishing), has stated that Bowker will be relocating to New Providence, NJ, the headquarters of Martindale Hubbell. "Both companies will be housed together in a new building set for completion in early 1991."

And **Baker & Taylor Books** has announced the acquisition of a new IBM 3909 200J computer that will enable customers to send and receive electronic orders faster than ever. According to a recent press release, this system will reduce processing time, sending data at a rate of less than two seconds a line. 🐘

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months or a year later under another name in another state. And given the vicissitudes of determining absolutely whether the publisher in question is a rip-off artist or merely cantankerous, developing a list which is truly comprehensive, fair and accurate is difficult indeed.

Even so, the best defense against bogus publications and bogus publishers is a network of acquisitions librarians who are informed, suspicious, snoop, and willing to pick up the phone to check with...

...a colleague,
...a vendor,
...or the publisher himself.

(P.S. I would be very interested in hearing more on this topic from any of you. Are there other clear signals that the library should be wary of ordering from this publisher? Which tactics have you used to determine whether a publication has been bogus and which have been most successful? "Tricks of the trade" are what this column is all about. Your comments or suggestions would be most welcome in this space.) 🐘