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Does Out-of-Print Mean That It's Out-of-Play?

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As the Coordinator of Collection Development at the **The University of Toledo**, whenever I need to locate hard-to-find or out-of-print items, I know that there are a number of sources such as **Alibris** or **Better World Books** where I can purchase most items. However, I wonder if these purchases are really necessary? Considering the limited funds, the low circulation statistics for the majority of our print resources, and the availability of the resources within our statewide academic consortium, **OhioLINK**, I question purchasing items that may be used only once by the requestor. I also know that purchasing older items, whether priced higher than their original publication list prices or priced drastically lower due to being used, depletes the funds for purchasing newer titles. When faced with such questions, I usually consult my library colleagues, the information literacy librarians, since they spend the majority of their time with students and instructors at the reference/information desk and interact with them in the classroom.

What do information literacy librarians say about out-of-print books?

From an information literacy perspective, the out-of-print book raises interesting questions and dilemmas. We find that our students expect information to be available immediately, which today means electronically. When teaching where to find materials for research, we present several options: our shelves, online resources in our catalog, the shelves of our consortial members, and interlibrary loan (usually the last resort). If we identify any out-of-print books during library instruction, we rarely consider recommending that the library purchase such titles; limited funds are already stretched to meet the need for new publications. More importantly, the turnaround time for notifying the Acquisitions Department in order to obtain an out-of-print book is not fast enough for today's student who is a member of the "Now" or "Net" generation. Remember: this generation has always known the Internet and can easily access information anywhere and anytime. Many students feel that, if a resource is important, then it should be either in the library collection or available online. Whether in the classroom or at the reference desk, very few students ever question why a title is not in print.

What genres are more likely to contain out-of-print titles?

Out-of-print to most individuals means monographs. However, from first-hand experience in collection development, ironically the item type or genre requested by classroom

instructors that has caused most challenges is the feature film and, to a lesser extent, the documentary or non-series television program. This challenge falls into two categories: locating the item itself and being able to purchase it in the preferred format, which today is usually DVD. Classroom instructors who use or assign films typically assume that videos are more available than print items. This is not always the case. In the early 2000s, locating even a used copy of *E.T.* for an Academy Awards Films course was impossible. Years later, a special edition honoring *E.T.*'s 20th anniversary was released on DVD, perhaps explaining why all production of the VHS version had ceased. Making films available or providing a preferred format typically resides with distributors or copyright holders. Most will recall **Disney's** advertisement mantra that encourages the customer to buy now: Retiring to the Vault!

But at the reference desk, it seems that items most likely to be in demand but out-of-print are textbooks. When a student cannot obtain a required textbook, the student then often requests an older version; these are usually out-of-print (and almost always, cheaper). Many classroom instructors allow a student to use older versions, especially if the content has not changed significantly. The librarians at the reference desk may provide students with information about online companies that specialize in out-of-print or used texts, but recommendations for library purchase of such items rarely reach collection development.

Speaking of classroom instructors, what have information literacy librarians experienced?

Sometimes classroom instructors suggest a definitive work within a discipline. Contrary to the instructor's belief that this text is being widely used and should be easily available, in reality, the text is out-of-print. Often students are allowed to substitute another source. More often, the instructors insist that the student find the required text. Reference librarians usually step in and help students check for availability within **OhioLINK**. In most cases, this text can be obtained. When the text is not available, students will return to the instructor. If the instructor owns a copy of the text, the instructor typically requests that a copy of required chapters or sections be made available through electronic reserves. At our library, this is when

the Reserves staff enters the process. The Reserves staff prefers to have the instructor provide a copy for scanning; however, too often when the instructor does not provide a clean copy, the Reserves staff requests the original document from the instructor and makes as clean a copy as possible for scanning. Once the copy is scanned into a PDF, the file is uploaded into the Reserves section of the online catalog.

As in most libraries, following copyright guidelines falls to the library staff to uphold. Often instructors feel that out-of-print material need not adhere to the fair use guidelines. How many times have we heard, "But I'm just using it in my class?" The library staff gently reminds instructors about fair use guidelines and tells them that, if they wish to exceed these guidelines,

then they must obtain copyright permission. Rarely does this happen because instructors do not want to be bothered with this time-consuming activity, and our Reserves staff is diligent in maintaining fair use. It seems that using electronic reserves eliminates the need for trying to locate out-of-print materials in which chapters or sections are required reading — at least for us. Rarely is collection development involved in this process at our university.

What experiences have students had with out-of-print books?

Out-of-print books don't seem to be an issue for our students and generally for instructors either. For most undergraduate students, currency seems to be the only criteria when looking at sources. When a student sees an item published in the late 1970s, the student feels that the resource is out-of-date and therefore not relevant or appropriate for research. The fact that something that is older is considered "useless" makes a student question using it and a collection development librarian question purchasing it. The fact that an item is out-of-print does not denote its importance but rather its age. In today's wireless, on-demand society, how does a librarian impart this concept? Do we turn to eBooks? Are eBooks ready to step in and help solve out-of-print dilemmas? In our experience, students are not reading eBooks online; they still look for the print copy or ironically ask if they are allowed to print it. Too often we witness our students' hole-punching printouts and placing the sheets in a binder even for 450 page eBooks!

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How do librarians explain the fact that titles go out-of-print?

We really don't have any easy answers from either a collection development or an information literacy standpoint. What we do know is that publishing is a business that depends upon supply and demand. Libraries alone as customers cannot generate enough demand to keep titles from becoming out-of-print. In addition, competition from the Internet (Aren't most literary classics reproduced in some version or other?) and streamlining publications (How many versions of *Romeo and Juliet* really need to be published yearly?) contribute to the growing out-of-print status. We know: things are upgraded and replaced with new features that often make obsolete all previous editions. Students are used to things being replaced and naturally updated. Whether we're discussing iPods, phones, computers, or even library resources, the philosophy of dates in the Information Age dictates that the current is king and will continue to be so. In an age of live streams, blogs, and tweets, an older publication date almost instantly eradicates a source's worth. As mentioned before, how do we impart that there is still value in out-of-print books?

Some last thoughts about Out-of-Print resources?

It seems today that out-of-print is a dated concept. When resources are not available or easy to locate, then students and even instructors suggest turning to other sources — the thought of asking the collection development librarian to purchase an out-of-print item rarely, if ever, comes up. Locating out-of-print resources is really not an issue anymore — at least not at our university. In the classroom, students want access immediately; and the mentality is that, if it were important, it wouldn't be out-of-print. This reasoning has some logic behind it, right? Rarely are there requests for out-of-print materials; and if the event ever arises, collection development has to question whether using funds to obtain these resources is a better use than purchasing newer materials.

As more companies, such as **Google Books**, produce items on demand and book sellers, such as **Barnes & Noble**, venture into the used and out-of-print market, libraries now have easy access to and sources for acquiring hard-to-find items. But, how much of our time and money will be spent in this pursuit? We believe that each library will have to answer that question for itself. Demands of faculty researchers, doctoral students, and classroom instructors will all factor into that decision. In an age when disappearing shelves reveal a diminishing physical collection, libraries are transforming themselves into a world of virtual resources, accessible anywhere and anytime. 🍁

against the grain people profile

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Narda Tafuri

BORN & LIVED: Born: Staten Island, NY. Lived: Staten Island, NY and Fleetville, PA.

EARLY LIFE: Worked in NYC until we decided to leave the "rat race" and move to the country.

FAMILY: Husband — **Peter**, a self-employed used/out-of-print bookseller, organic farmer and now author!

EDUCATION: MA — **New York University**, Anthropology/Archaeology. MLS — **SUNY Albany**.

FIRST JOB: Administrative Assistant, **The Saitama Bank, Ltd.** in Manhattan.

PROFESSIONAL CAREER AND ACTIVITIES: Acquisitions Librarian at **The University of Scranton** since 1994; prior to that was the Library Director at **Keystone Junior College** (now **Keystone College**).

IN MY SPARE TIME I LIKE TO: Do therapy work with my dog, **Bella**. We go to local libraries, nursing homes, assisted living facilities and schools to provide emotional support for individuals.

PHILOSOPHY: To get something you never had, you have to do something you never did.

HOW/WHERE DO I SEE THE INDUSTRY IN FIVE YEARS: I would never have dreamed when I started my career how much the nature of information and libraries would change. I don't think that I can anticipate all of the ways technology will change what we do in the future. As librarians we need to ride the wave, or we will be pummeled by it. 🍁

Buying Out-of-Print Books on the Internet, Where the Old is New Again

by **Jane Brodsky Fitzpatrick** (Assistant Professor, Acquisitions & Collection Development Librarian, Mina Rees Library, The Graduate Center (CUNY) New York City, NY 10016; Phone: 212-817-7056) <jfitzpatrick@gc.cuny.edu>

I work at the **Mina Rees Library** of the **City University of New York (CUNY)**, the **Graduate Center**, in the heart of Manhattan. The **Graduate Center** is the PhD granting campus of CUNY. The students are required to do extensive reading in their disciplines, which often entails finding older and out-of-print titles.

Despite the research level of classes, the **Mina Rees Library** is not a research level library; nor was it ever meant to be one. When the **Graduate Center** was founded in 1961, it was on 42nd street, across from the **New York Public Library (NYPL)** (<http://www.nypl.org/research/chss/index.html>). Having a premier research institution so close by meant it was unnecessary even

to try to duplicate its rich and deep resources. In 1999 the **Graduate Center** relocated to Fifth Avenue at 34th street, still only blocks away from NYPL. The southeast corner of the same building that now houses the **Graduate Center** is where **New York Public's Science Industry and Business branch (SIBL)** (<http://www.nypl.org/research/sibl/>) is located; so again, proximity belies the need for **Mina Rees** to attempt, with limited tax levy money, to be a research level library. Of these two branches, only **SIBL** has a circulating collection. However, there are many resources, online and in print, available to our students and faculty at NYPL.

The collection at the **Mina Rees Library** is built on the reserve requests of professors at the **Graduate Center**. As clearly stated in our collection policy: "Course reserves and departmental reading exam lists are the primary determinants for Library purchases. Additional desiderata lists are compiled by selectors in

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