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## Group Therapy - Prepaying Rush Orders

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# Group Therapy — Prepaying Rush Orders

Column Editor, **Rosann Bazirjian** (Florida State University)

*Hey y'all out there! Do you have any gripes? Come to your therapist! Try <rbazirji@mailers.fsu.edu> or FAX 904-644-5170.*

**GRIPE:**  
(Submitted by **Robert Schlabach**, Library Business Manager, The College of New Jersey)

We recently ordered from **Amazon.com** for the first time. We needed a rush reserve that was OSI at the publisher and the requester told us it was available from Amazon.com. Sure enough, their Website indicated that it was available. They had one copy in stock, but our library doesn't have a credit card and Amazon.com wouldn't hold the copy for us. We did a rush prepay, but it will still take three weeks for our check to arrive and clear. Wouldn't it be nice if library vendors included inventory on their online databases, i.e., **BNAm's NTO** and **YBP's GOBI**? Sure, they're reluctant, but it would help immensely in locating copies of OP and OSI titles. I think for now we'll probably establish a deposit account with Amazon.com.

**RESPONSE:**  
(Submitted by **Bob Nardini**, Regional Vice Pres., Collection Management and Development Group, Yankee Book Peddler)

Sometimes when a vendor steps into the batter's box, as it were, to answer a question, a librarian will serve up a homerun ball that you can knock into the seats, and then trot around the bases looking like Mickey Mantle.

But not every inning. Sometimes what you get is a fastball you can barely see. The best you can do is to foul it off. This question is a hard fastball, one no vendor is going to hit for a homerun—not, at least, any vendor oriented toward academic libraries, where our customers call on us to have the capability to supply a very wide range of titles — many of them esoteric,

difficult to locate, and bound to be needed by only a few libraries — and to fill orders accurately and in a customized manner according to individual library specifications almost limitless in their variety.

That's a very different mandate than the one guiding vendors oriented toward public libraries and retail stores where the ability to supply a more predictable range of titles very quickly — from local inventory — wins and holds customers.

Academic vendors may in fact carry substantial inventories, but it would be extremely expensive to compete directly with one another on the basis of what was on the shelves at a given moment.

Not only would the cost of added inventory have quite a price tag — one that not all vendors could afford — but development costs for effective real-time inventory windows would themselves be substantial, and would mean that development or expenditures in other areas would have to wait.

We agree that it would be nice to include inventory on our databases. But we're not certain, knowing that costs would be high, that this should be a priority. Not, especially, since it is already possible for a librarian to call or email any academic vendor about a book that might be needed — in just a bit more time than it would take to search a database.

Not a homerun, but this is spring training, after all.

**RESPONSE:**  
(Submitted by **Matt Nauman**, Marketing Manager, Blackwell North America)

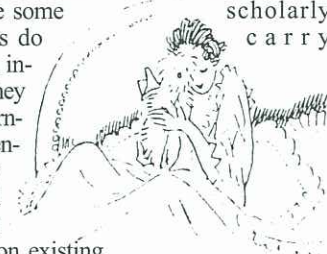
When Rosann asked me to respond to the suggestion that library vendors include inventory on their online databases, I thought perhaps it was time to go on spring break. Then for some

reason valor overcame discretion. Academic booksellers see this question with some regularity and it deserves a response.

The simple answer here is still the best. While some booksellers do carry substantial inventories, they are quick turn-around inventories. New titles and firm orders are based on existing customer needs. They arrive, are invoiced, and sent out to customers as quickly as possible. These are the bulk of the books in any warehouse and it would be difficult to list them as inventory on hand.

The books that are held in inventory over a longer period of time frequently come from two main sources: returns and actual approval stock buying. Like books for approvals and firm orders, returns are generally turned around as quickly as possible. These books are used to fill new orders or returned to publishers. Such also has been the case with stock quantities that buyers bring in to augment approval buying. The quantities are used to fill orders based on new title announcement slips or firm orders. The quantities are usually modest and are not meant to be held for a long period of time. I have wondered about the possibility of designating such titles in our database as "stock quantity available."

What's in inventory if one's inventory is fast-turning is a tough question. On the other hand, booksellers understand how useful this information can be. I hope that at some point we will be able to address it. Newer technology may enable vendors to solve the problem in the near future. For now, several library booksellers offer inventory check services through customer service departments. If you phone, fax, or email, vendors will provide inventory status reports. 🐾



## Inside Pandora's Box from page 79

cooperation. For guaranteed fast response time libraries could locally maintain full or partial data for their own holdings and rely on network searches for outside resources. This implies a national or worldwide search by ID and extends the notion of user searching far beyond the local catalog. This has many important benefits. For example, this would for the first time enable the user to determine positively that a given library does not hold a given book or serial (or article.) These IDs would help prevent the creation of duplicate records, something current systems

cannot do well. With a shared national system it would be possible to enable searching for many items that are not present in current MARC records or library indexes, such as periodical articles and chapters and contributions in books.

•• The new system should be designed so that it can be built automatically from existing MARC records with a minimum of manual work. Deciding on the structure of the tables of the new system and the mapping of MARC fields will be interesting and challenging work. Once this has been accomplished, Internet spiders could read through LC and local catalogs, populating the tables with data. Duplicate resolution would form an interesting challenge, but need only be

done once and should be shared. Each cooperating library would link its call numbers and all other unique local information. These tables of local data would be maintained by libraries in a distributed arrangement. The processing or "cataloging" of new paper works could be shared with publishers and book distributors. Libraries could continue to use their MARC catalogs as long as they wished. It may be possible to offer users the old or the new system with their choice of user interface. The example of Internet search engines shows that a new national catalog could be created. If libraries do not do this, I fear a competitor, such as a company in the business of outsourcing libraries, will. 🐾