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Joys, Horrors, and the Future of Library Acquisitions

by **John M. Kistler, M.L.S.** (Acquisitions and Collection Development Librarian, West Virginia State College, 310 Grandview Pointe, Dunbar, WV 25064) <kistlerj@mail.wvsc.edu> <kistlerj@email.msn.com>

Though I have only worked in libraries for ten years, I've labored in three very different types: special, public, and academic. Each institution catered to differing audiences and used dissimilar methods for acquiring materials. Both as an Acquisitions Librarian and as a Library Director, I have experienced the many challenges posed by the rapid changes of modern librarianship.

In order to understand the current pressures on libraries, it is important to examine how different acquisition styles help or harm library collections. And in order to assess the evolving nature of the relationship among publishers, distributors and libraries, it is also necessary to examine what is the impact of changing acquisition methods upon libraries, publishers and jobbers.

Current Changes

Librarians have become panicky about change, which is understandable, given the stressful computerization of libraries over the last two decades. Electronic resources have displaced the traditional use of paper indexes and reference tools, not just the "card catalog." The trauma of re-learning our own jobs, then training patrons to learn the new systems, has been acute. However, we're beginning to see an end to these initial changes.

The most significant new change is to the Periodicals Department of the library. Online periodicals databases are a system full of both wonders and perils. Serials librarians are beginning to feel like database managers. The electronic tools themselves are great achievements. Patrons who are accustomed to the instant gratification of computer searching greatly prefer online fulltext articles to microfilm or print searching. However, even the major online database companies have a constant gain and loss of new available titles. As a result of the skyrocketing prices of periodicals, libraries have been forced to cut print and microfilm versions to rely upon the cheaper and more popular electronic databases. While these electronic files do often contain several years' worth of articles for each title, these titles also tend to suddenly vanish. One month they are here; the next month they are gone. If the library has dropped the print and microfilm versions, they now have nothing.

This movement to e-periodicals impacts basic cooperative services, like **Interlibrary Loan (ILL)** availability. Subscribing to an electronic database version of a periodical does not allow for "fair-use" copying to share with other libraries upon request by a patron. With fewer libraries subscribing to print and microfilm

titles, fewer libraries are able to fill **ILL** requests. Thus, while providing a wide variety of previously unknown or unaffordable titles, online databases simultaneously foment conditions that reduce the security of once-steady periodical collections. It is a very pretty, felt-lined trap. The administrators love the apparent cost reductions ("we now receive 2500 fulltext periodicals for the price of 500"), but the collection changes monthly, and thus no coherent collection development plan can be followed. Whereas once the periodicals holdings list required updating once per year to show the new acquisitions, now the updates must be performed quarterly.

Online database changes are still increasing, but overall, the pace of change is slowing. Why? For two reasons. One, humans are still limited in their abilities to incorporate change, and the businesses creating our new technologies are making them more simple and user-friendly. We have survived the initial shock of installing, learning, and teaching computer use. Future changes will involve the same equipment with which we are now familiar (computers) and will be built upon extant software interfaces (**Microsoft**). Two, the economy has significantly slowed. Businesses will be spending less on research and development, and people will be spending less money on buying new products. I believe that it will be some years before the next burst of frantic activity in library technology.

However, the perception of libraries continues to be affected by the technological changes which have already occurred. An example is the naively accepted administrative belief that libraries are becoming irrelevant, and can only be kept alive by turning them into computer labs. Modern library science schools do nothing to help this trend. Even my own alma mater has changed the name of their school from "School of Library and Information Science" to plain "School of Information Science." Administrators cut back on all traditional expenditures for such things as books, periodicals, and personnel, and wish to fund only electronic resources and equipment. Reference questions are now 80 percent computer related – e.g. how do I set the margins on Word Perfect? Computer librarians or network experts are the high-demand position in libraries now; and those facilities that are too small to have one, require the current staff to meddle in electronics troubleshooting. The independent, self-sufficient library no longer exists. Practically every facility requires "linking" to an outside electronic database, cataloging system, hardware vendor, and experts whom we will never meet. Problems cannot be solved in-house, but require consultation with the electronic services providers (who may take some time to get to your problem).

Even aside from the current economic slowdown, the philosophy of "do more with less"

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Choices for Libraries

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and publishers—must work together to find ways to provide quality service to customers. Suggestions I have are the following:

1. Local institutions need to work with library system vendors, publishers, and book/serial vendors to coordinate electronic ordering and payment. Electronic data interchange (EDI) has had positive results for libraries and vendors for faster payment and less paperwork. Implementing an efficient electronic ordering and claiming system will make many acquisitions staff very happy. However, these systems need to set and follow standards for transacting data and agree to same or similar technology, so that library systems and book/serial publishers and vendors don't need to design separate programs for each vendor or library. (For example, there should be one design for transacting order data for all library and book vendors. Currently, each book and serial vendor must design separate programs for each library system.)
2. Local institutions need to allow electronic invoice processing and no longer require paper with authorized, hand written signatures. They also need to take advantage of electronic deposits and more flexibility for staff to use credit cards. If these steps were implemented, much paperwork would be eliminated and payments would be processed more quickly.
3. Interest groups of customers and company staff, with several areas represented, such as from the library selectors and acquisitions staff, from publisher technical, marketing, publishing, and editorial staff, from library system vendor development staff, and from vendor development and customer service staff, could be formed to identify and address singular and common needs. One approach to this could be with representation from types of companies and libraries, rather than from a specific library/company.

Some of these needs are technical, but other needs are based on communication. All staff, whether from publisher, library, or vendor need a greater understanding of the pressures and concerns of the others.

has been applied to library personnel as it has in the business sector. Librarians are required to practice multi-tasking. Job descriptions frequently request two specialized skills in a single person, because they have lost two workers and need to fill both slots with one hire. A recent study suggesting that multi-tasking cuts productivity by forty percent, as the worker must constantly "shift gears" to take up a substantially different project, will be ignored by the leadership in times of want. This lack of personnel will directly impact the relationships between libraries, jobbers, and publishers.

Libraries suffering from personnel reductions have less time for careful selection. Approval plans and blanket orders become more attractive, as in-house library selectors require little or no effort to receive relevant materials. Online book selection becomes more rare, and trips to a physical bookstore are ended. Purchase order methods again become promising, as librarians can allow book requests to pile up for a few months before stringing them together on a typed list. Another critical problem for libraries during economic downturns is job-turnover. While in many job fields, recession might lead to less turnover because of the reduced availability of jobs, the library sector is somewhat different. Librarians are often spouses in two-income families, with the library income as the secondary or supplemental income. If the "primary bread-winner" loses his or her job, the job search often leads to a move, and the library worker will be moving too.

The bad news is everywhere. Collection development suffers without careful study of the library's needs, and without funds to fix recognized problems.

Methods of Acquisition

Consider some of the methods of acquisition, and the industries who benefit from or suffer harm by each method.

The Bookstore Method

Small public libraries usually have a good deal of independence in their purchasing habits. Of course, lack of funds makes this freedom somewhat illusory, as they are able to buy from anyone they choose in theory, yet cannot realistically do so. At my public library, in the mid-1990s, I took our pittance of funds to a local bookstore and bought whatever was on the *New York Times* bestseller list. The governing board insisted upon this method, believing that bestsellers would be popular and a more reliable means of getting books than trusting a librarian to make choices. There were no purchase orders; no credit cards; just a credit account that our treasurer paid off upon receiving the bill. Quite simple, really. No catalogs, no mailings, no phone calls, no jobbers. Only when I applied for and received special grant funds were we able to buy through catalogs and distributors, for one-time large purchases of collections such as reference books. Of the dozen libraries in this region, my impression was that the two largest institutions worked with jobbers, the four smallest had no funds for any

purchases, and half a dozen used the bookstore method. Since this is the only public library system I have served, I cannot say whether this is common nationwide.

Given the nature of the above example, of the physical visit to the local bookshop, you can probably spot several joys and horrors to the bookstore method.

Joys:

- 1) The librarian gets to leave his or her desk, browse the store, flip through the pages of many new resources, and get paid for it. Certainly there is something to be said for letting our resource-gatherers out of the basement from time to time. They may find, in browsing, subjects previously unknown.
- 2) The billing system is laughably simple, one bill from one vendor, paid monthly. Who needs an accountant?
- 3) Instant gratification, or the immediate acquisition of materials without any delay for shipping. Of course, the cataloging will take some time, but delays are all internal, not external.
- 4) Small budgets can be accommodated. There is no minimum purchase required at the bookstore.
- 5) The bookstore is usually happy to negotiate some kind of regular discount for the library, in exchange for the regular business.
- 6) Prices are known at time of sale; there are no "finding fees" or errant estimates.

Horrors:

- 1) There is no realistic collection development plan that can be met using this method. The world's best bookstores probably do not contain every item needed to meet a specific library's needs in full.
- 2) Large budgets cannot be easily accommodated unless the bookshop is huge. The librarian could easily blow a few thousand dollars there, but \$100,000?
- 3) The librarian, pleased at visiting the store, must now carry the goods to the car, and then into the cataloging room.
- 4) There are no cataloging options sold with the purchased resources, nor binding options. Special orders for out-of-stock materials may be possible, but add delays.
- 5) Unless the librarian has a thorough knowledge of his/her collection, duplicates may be chosen.
- 6) Small local publications may be difficult to catalog, requiring original cataloging, when they cannot be found in the OCLC database.

Bookstores and publishers, as you might imagine, appreciate this form of library acquisitions. Jobbers and online bookstores do not like this method, for obvious reasons; they have no profit in it.

The Online Bookstore Method and Credit Cards

Parallel to the bookstore method is its distant cousin, the online bookstore method. In this case, a physical store is replaced with a virtual store, on the Internet.

Joys:

- 1) Shopping is done from the computer, requiring no physical movement. This pleasurable inactivity can be further enhanced with a track-ball mouse, utilizing only the thumb. No travel budgets or mileage to consider for reimbursement.
- 2) The inventory of the bigger online bookshops is vast. The browsing activity will be much more effective, having a greater number of available choices. A collection development plan can now be followed.
- 3) Interesting resources can be checked immediately against the collection to ensure that duplicates are not purchased.
- 4) Small budgets or large budgets can be accommodated.
- 5) Delay in shipping is usually minimal.
- 6) No carrying books to the car; they come in with the mail.
- 7) Prices are firm; there are no later price changes.

Horrors:

- 1) Payment is usually required in advance or with credit card. Does your library have a credit card? Is the limit high enough to make large orders?
- 2) The time required to do effective browsing of a large inventory is much greater than the time of scanning the shelves of a physical store, in person. Does the acquisitions librarian have enough time?
- 3) Special cataloging options and binding are not available.
- 4) Shipping charges are usually added on.
- 5) Discounts may be much harder to negotiate unless you are a large library.

Physical bookstores don't like the on-line method of acquisitions because it reduces their business, they believe. Jobbers also dislike this method, but are fighting back by making their own Internet ordering sites more like online bookstores. Publishers do not mind online bookstore sales, because they are still selling books.

The advent of credit card use in the library is the one critical change that has been allowed by college business offices in some decades. I sometimes wonder whether cardiac arrest attended the announcement in some fiscal affairs departments. For years it was said that the cards would be abused, that purchases would not be approved by the proper supervisors without the purchase order system, and so on. The credit card allows our library to leave the traditional supply chain by making purchases directly. We do not have to go through the state database of approved vendors, since the actual vendor being paid is the credit card company and not the bookseller.

One big limitation of the credit card is that our college does not permit large purchases without prior approval. This does limit our ability to buy outside of the traditional purchase order system. On the other hand, the adminis-

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tration is not completely irrational when it sets limits. There is the possibility of abuse or even fraud, when credit cards are involved.

The one area in which this credit card function works best is in the purchase of used books on the Internet. Often we need to replace an out of print book, missing from the collection. I can go directly to **Advanced Book Exchange** or other used-bookstore-consortia, find a copy, and buy it instantly with no middleman to pay for the searching. This advantage, however, only works for the library with access to a credit card, and with a librarian who has time to go searching for these items. For some libraries, time and personnel may be a bigger issue than funds.

The Purchase Order Method and Using Jobbers

The purchase order method is the preferred process among leaders or organizations who want complete control over the budget. Generally it is found in the large bureaucracies, such as academia, but some public and special libraries may also suffer here. The reason for the purchase order method is so that there is no flexibility. "Flexibility" is kin to "change," which is a dirty word to such leaders or organizations.

In short, the purchase order method requires the paper-intensive and time-consuming pre-order process. Desirable items are chosen, prices and vendors are located, and the list is typed on multi-part forms. The forms go to the Library Director and other leaders for signatures. In West Virginia, at least, the state determines whether the vendor is properly licensed (for taxation purposes) in our state, and rejects non-compliant sellers. This makes "jobbers" a favorite source, since they can obtain items from multiple publishers, and are already state-approved. Jobbers are large vendors, who work with many publishers and buy large quantities of books, thus traditionally gaining large discounts, which can be partially passed on to the library purchasers.

After one or two months, the approved or rejected forms are returned to the library for action. Rejected forms go back to the drawing board, for new vendors or requested paperwork from the desired vendors. Approved lists can be mailed or faxed to the supplier, who will then begin collecting and shipping the desired materials. Of course, the prices may well have changed, and some items may no longer be available. General advantages and disadvantages follow:

Joys:

- 1) The bureaucracy or leader may be delighted in the accurate control of the budget. There will never be unauthorized cost-overruns.

- 2) Orders are nicely organized and simple for filing purposes.
- 3) The level of effort required to produce an approved purchase order effectively reduces the number of vendors who will be approached, making for strong relationships with one or two favored sellers.
- 4) Discounts may be easily obtained because of steady order volume from those vendors.
- 5) Payment is not required in advance, but upon receipt of the items.
- 6) Special cataloging options and binding processes are available, usually.
- 7) The cataloging department can prepare for the expected materials with pre-emptive catalog record download.
- 8) Materials come in a few large boxes rather than lots of small packets, since the orders are large.

Horrors:

- 1) Price and availability of desired items may change because of the long delay before the order is received by the vendor.
- 2) The difficulty of direct purchases from small vendors (probably not on the "state approved" list) will reduce the variety of the collection. Only the large publishers who are serviced by jobbers will be obtained.
- 3) The leadership may disallow library purchases late in the fiscal year to balance over-expenditures from other departments.
- 4) Items that do not arrive before the end of the fiscal year may have to be cancelled if the library does not have special arrangements for "encumbered" items with the business office. Otherwise those items will come from your next year's budget.
- 5) Faculty members who requested specific items may not be pleased about the long time required between request and arrival in the library. Most items will physically arrive three to four months after request, before cataloging.
- 6) The difficulty of producing the paperwork means fewer, but larger orders. This translates into large shipments of books arriving together, which makes life difficult on the cataloging department.

Even without discounts, now reduced because of the failing economy, jobbers offer services that are not easily obtained from smaller sources or publishers. One of the most valued functions of the jobber for our library is the binding of paperback books. Paperbacks usually cost about half as much as hardbacks. So we save a lot of money not through discounts, but by ordering the paperback and having it bound for an extra four dollars. As long as the jobber

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AUTHOR'S BIO

John M. Kistler, M.Div., MLS, Acquisitions and Collection Development Librarian at **West Virginia State College**. Lover of animals, especially elephants and salamanders. Freelance writer, with two books published by Greenwood Press. Favorite writers: J.R.R. Tolkien, Stephen Hunter, Martin Cruz Smith, Farley Mowat, Lindsey Davis and Colleen McCullough.

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uses a decent bindery, this is a big advantage. Because binderies discount large orders, the jobber can get very inexpensive binding work, compared to the prices our library would receive when sending small shipments.

Jobbers also have online ordering systems. While many large libraries now have integrated online library computer systems, ours does not yet include the acquisitions function. Our ordered items have been tracked using the old-fashioned multi-part form system on card stock. The online jobber database and ordering system allows us to place our orders, instantly receive a pre-order invoice, and prepare a purchase order with a minimum of labor. Then we simply await the books and check the invoice against our order forms. For those libraries that do not yet have a sophisticated ordering system, using the jobbers online system can save a lot of work.

Jobbers are not perfect, of course. It seems to take a long time to get books from certain publishers, which could be received almost instantaneously using a credit card and a direct order phone call. Furthermore, there are a number of publishers with whom the jobber will not deal, for one reason or another, and it may be many months before the jobber tells us that the title cannot be obtained. But in both cases these problems are related to time. Time is rarely a critical problem in academia; the sheer weight of plodding inertia gathering under the mossy ivory towers reminds everyone here that nothing occurs quickly. On the rare occasion that a faculty member needs a book quickly, we get it from **Amazon.com**, online, and priority mailed.

One problem for smaller libraries is that jobbers, in exchange for offering discounts, want a high volume of orders. Sometimes the vendor also wants an agreement for exclusivity: a promise not to deal with other jobbers.

The discounts I have seen in academic libraries have been in the 5 to 15 percent range for most items, with free shipping sometimes as an additional bonus. In reality, the discounts are not a major factor, because some items come with unexpectedly high prices (exceeding the initial quote) and extra charges sometimes levied for acquiring out-of-print items. Furthermore, recent changes in the markets have cut the discounts, as the salesmen are now admitting to their library customers.

Another problem, one hopes a rare one, is that of intentional inflation of prices by the jobber before adding the discount, so that a profit is made while pretending to offer a discount. There have been cases of unscrupulous behavior by vendors, as is always the case when large sums of money are involved.

For the jobbers, of course, there will be less money spent during hard economic times. However, their competitors, the bookstores (both physical and online), will fare worse due to lack of time and personnel to explore the options. Libraries are more likely meekly to accept the reduction in discounts because they have little choice. They cannot hire more people

to seek out cheaper alternatives and do not have time to do it themselves. The paperwork and difficulties attendant with changing jobbers takes time and effort as well.

Bookstores and online bookstores hate the purchase order method, except in the rare cases where they receive the purchase orders. Publishers don't mind, because they are still selling books, though increasingly they are hoping to sell directly without the middleman.

The Approval Plan/Blanket Order Method

In general, only large libraries, or those with well-funded special collections, use this method. In short, a publisher or vendor automatically sends all items of one particular subject area, language, or series. In an approval plan, the library completes a detailed profile that explains to the vendor what specific types of materials are desired. The seller then acts like an acquisitions librarian, finding such materials and sending them for preview. Some returns are allowed, but only a small percentage. In a blanket order, a publisher gives substantial discounts for the library to accept all works printed by that publisher.

Joys:

- 1) The approval plan process is like hiring a specialist bibliographer to improve the collection.
- 2) Certain subject areas will be very well covered.
- 3) Blanket orders are useful either for regional publishers, where local history is important to the collection, or with special-subject publishers who provide resources that are important to an academic curriculum.
- 4) Blanket orders come with substantial discounts.
- 5) Automatic shipments mean that no time is spent producing orders.

Horrors:

- 1) Approval plans may include extra costs for collection development.
- 2) It takes some time to refine the profile so that the approval plan will not send unwanted materials, which must be returned.
- 3) Both approval plans and blanket orders introduce an element of uncertainty about the budget expenditures for the fiscal year. While there may be an upper limit not to be exceeded by the plans, under-expenditure may have to be resolved at the end of the year.

During times of economic slowdown, the approval plans and blanket orders become much more palatable to libraries. Little in-house personnel action is required to receive relevant materials: either the selector for the approval plan chooses the subject materials for the library, or the already-valued publisher provides materials automatically. Time is saved and collections grow.

Publishers love this method because they have a guaranteed number of copy sales for each printed volume. Bookstores only like it if they are running the approval plan. Jobbers are increasingly offering services similar to approval plans, and thus may also come to flourish in

this environment. After all, the infrastructure is already set up for their efforts to acquire a wide variety of materials.

The Future

What impact will coming technologies have on acquisitions?

Print on Demand

One new technology that may have a significant impact on Acquisitions is the "Print on Demand" system. My understanding is that all remaining inventory in stock, at a publisher or bookshop, is taxable every year. Publishers therefore print shorter runs, and are loathe to keep lots of copies "in print" or "in stock." Vendors can now avoid this expense of keeping items in stock by using the print on demand system, which literally prints and binds a book in less than one hour. The big question for libraries will be regarding the quality of the binding, since library books tend to receive heavier use than personal copies. Will there be any standardization of the bindings provided by such machines, or will some book makers use the cheapest materials possible? Will there be options for fine bindings, or is it all one color and one style? If the volumes are printed and bound in a sturdy fashion, this print-on-demand technology could remove the "out of print" book barrier that so often hinders our searches for materials. Jobbers might even print the books themselves, cutting down significantly on shipping time. If jobbers take up this mantle, the traditional purchase order method can still be used. If not, the online bookstore method will probably increase in usefulness.

For bookstores, however, technologically this process may be more complicated than its promoters claim. The printing is quite simple, to be sure, using the new laser imagery and digital methods. However, where will the local bookshop be storing all of the necessary paper, binding boards, glues, cloths, false headbands, labels, and other materials necessary for the decent hardback book? I have done a lot of hand binding, and seen the machinery used for automated binding. These will be complex machines. Will they have a mechanic there to service the machinery? I suspect that for many years, only cheap paperbacks will be produced en masse in bookstores, because of the difficulties with hardback bindings. Paperbacks just need a paper cover and some glue. The costs may rise unpredictably, for instance, when wood and pulp supplies dwindle and the price of paper skyrockets.

Print on demand technology should also open the publishing markets to more "obscure" or smaller-market materials. Right now, trade publishers will only print books that they believe will sell large numbers of copies. Academic books have a smaller print-run threshold. With print-on-demand, the publisher will not have to use the X-number-of-copies barrier as a hindrance to accepting a highly-specialized book.

On the other hand, this could also be a problem for small publishers. If big publishers start accepting lesser-known writers with more specialized subjects, the small publishing houses

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may lose their niche markets. After all, small publishers are generally reliant upon niche markets; this is how they can afford to buy and print small-run books, because they already have a loyal target market, primed to receive such materials.

Pay per View Articles

Online services that charge for a given desired article have existed for some years, and are therefore not new. However, this is being discussed more frequently as a solution to expensive online subscriptions. For instance, some of the Physical Sciences online databases are extravagantly priced for fulltext access. Plans are being offered that allow a patron to see the abstracts of articles, then choose to view the fulltext for a fee. Libraries can also provide the same service by paying on behalf of the student or patron. In institutions where the requests for such detailed articles are uncommon, the pay per view method could be an ideal solution. \$10 each for ten searches in a month is only \$100; a far cheaper choice than \$1000 per month. Obviously this would be a disastrous choice for a library with constant requests for such materials.

The fear in many libraries is that pay per view article viewing could become standard in more databases. Rather than providing broad coverage of many subjects with total access to the whole campus, the companies may decide to charge everyone by the articles viewed. Even if cheaper than the current system, it could wreak havoc on budgets. How would a library ever know how much money to set aside? Most likely, each database company would require a large deposit, and take money out upon use; but this could lead to unanticipated demand and cost overruns and leave libraries without access until the new budget year.

One reason to worry that pay per view articles will become more common is the recent court decision in favor of writers. Publishers had claimed that an electronic version of an article is no different than the print version, while writers wanted another commission payment for the electronic use of their work. It remains to be seen whether publishers will simply take off their older articles to avoid paying a second fee to the writers, or if they will start charging to view those articles, so as to pay the writers' commissions.

Electronic Books

Electronic books are not yet widespread in the public or private sectors, and cannot be labeled a success story, thus far. A recent article said that less than five percent of new monographs are being printed in electronic format. If so, then students and faculty can certainly not rely upon an all "digital library" at the present time, nor hope for it to be accomplished in the very near future. Then, if someday all new books are available in electronic format, will out-of-print books be digitized for research also? The electronic publishing industry has a long way to go before it can claim a significant place in the book market. Recent strides in

miniaturization, for the creation of handheld e-book readers, are a good start. However, the public has not yet shown that it prefers electronic books to the old-fashioned print style.

One New England state recently announced that it would purchase laptop computers for all of its students. Many large universities and colleges now include a laptop computer in student tuition fees. While the idea is catching on, and shows great promise, do not forget that laptops are still a dream for most states and public schools. Until more people (or governments) are able to afford laptop computers and e-book readers, libraries cannot fully embrace the collection of such materials. They just are not useful to a majority of patrons, yet.

One niche market, in which electronic books do seem to be taking hold, is the academic textbook market. The production of CD-ROMs is cheaper and faster than the production of traditional hardcover texts, and upgrades or updates can be sent via email to buyers easily. Some professors have also begun customizing textbooks, or adding their own class notes for the use of the students, electronically. If electronic

books and their production come to be accepted, libraries will have to think carefully about the ramifications. Copyright laws may have to change. Will publishers disable the print keys on the computers that are reading the e-book? At least with a printed volume, a photocopy can be made of a page; that may change with electronic books. The least of our problems will be supply issues, if electronic books become the standard.

Conclusion

Changes have come to libraries, publishers, and jobbers in recent years. These changes have been driven both by changing technologies and by economics. In spite of the painful nature of change, I suspect that all three groups will continue to survive. The relationships between the three cannot dramatically collapse because there is still demand for all of the groups. Despite the Internet, libraries are still necessary. Despite credit cards and online bookstores, jobbers continue to provide useful services. And despite price increases and the desire to cut out the middleman, publishers will continue to use jobbers to get books to the libraries.

Library Acquisitions: Change and the Need for Communication Among Libraries, Distributors, and Publishers

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The title for the **21st Annual Charleston Conference** is an especially appropriate one...The Trends They Are A'Changing...We live in a world of great opportunity for libraries, publishers, and distributors of information. It is vital that all three groups continue to work closely together, sharing their concerns as well as new titles. Librarians must make their needs clear to both publishers and distributors so that changes in their purchasing strategies, such as purchasing an increasing number of titles directly, does not tilt the balance so far that vendors supplying large quantities of titles are forced to change their pricing model. Approval vendors have traditionally included many value-added services, such as printed approval forms and online access to their inventory databases for no additional cost. There now seems to be lurking a model which would build a fee into the pricing model for certain value-added services such as these. This model would shrink the buying power of libraries, so it is hoped that this change would continue to be discussed openly with librarians and publishers. It is vital that all three groups try to understand the pressures causing distributors and publishers to change pricing and supply models, and libraries to change procurement practices as they seek

to get the most for their money while trying to meet the demands of their customers.

As we seek to provide the titles required by our students and faculty, libraries are employing a wide variety of methods. The traditional large approval plan, I believe, will continue to be the most appropriate option for large academic and research libraries, but alternate methods are also appearing.

Approval plans are one situation where libraries and vendors work closely to provide the needs of library users before the need can even be expressed. Vendor representatives visit the library at the beginning of the relationship to discuss the subject areas for which books or notification forms will be sent to the library. By carefully setting up the library profile (the parameters of the materials to be sent automatically to the library), books or notification forms can save selectors/bibliographers a great deal of time. The vendor can provide cost estimates for profiles based on the previous year's titles supplied so that libraries can more accurately know what the approval plan will cost them. This is especially essential when setting up a new approval plan, so there are no surprises before the end of the fiscal year. The vendor's

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