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

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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 full-text access. Plans are being offered that allow a patron to see the abstracts of articles, then choose to view the full-text 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 next 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.
African American Slave Narratives
An Anthology
Edited by Sterling Lecater Bland, Jr.

African American slave narratives of the 19th century recorded the atrocities of the antebellum South and provided a solid foundation for the African American literary tradition. By presenting 16 such narratives in their entirety, this reference conveniently documents this historically significant literary genre. Unlike other anthologies, which often contain excerpts from readily available narratives, this work offers complete versions of largely unavailable texts. To add to the value of this reference for the researcher and general reader alike, each narrative is accompanied by a preface, explanatory notes, and suggestions for further reading. The work begins with an introductory essay that fully contextualizes the slave narrative genre and concludes with a general bibliography.

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bibilographer assigns books to various subject profiles and simply applies the library's requirements. For example, a given library may want every book on the graduate level in a particular subject. Since the vendor is currently reviewing publishers' lists, the appropriate books are identified by the vendor without the library selectors having to go through endless numbers of catalogs to find particular titles to be purchased.

For rush materials and situations in which few copies are available, many libraries have started purchasing materials through the use of a credit card. Even state institutions, normally the last to be able to implement cutting edge practices, are using credit cards. Vendors/publishers must produce a receipt of payment to verify the purchase with the exact amount of the purchase stated clearly. As a result, they are experiencing a different set of demands from libraries in regards to these credit card purchases.

For domestic purchases, use of the credit card has been quite liberating. The credit card approach has worked well in securing rush titles for professor's classroom and research needs. The credit card has also been quite successful in dealing with out of print materials that would be almost impossible to obtain if the normal prepayment process were necessary. While some major publishers would send a rush book and be willing to wait for payment, rare book suppliers would hold books until prepayment could be processed, often requiring a month for the payment process to work its way through the state procedures. Of course, that would not be acceptable to many suppliers when other institutions and individuals can pay for a title more quickly. Many small publishers have refused to do business with some state libraries because of the severe delay in receipt of payments. Using the credit card, this payment takes a matter of minutes, and a book can be on its way to the library in less than a day. While electronic access to various databases and individual serial titles becoming more popular and library customers depending on the electronic access more heavily, the credit card has also been used to prevent the imminent disruption of service due to payment delays using the traditional paper workflow methods. For example, a subscription may be ending on August 31. The payment for the renewal may not be able to reach the vendor by the end of the subscription, so a credit card payment can be processed so that service will not be interrupted.

Use of the credit card has been less successful with foreign vendors and publishers. Texas A&M University Libraries attempted to use the credit card approach for difficult to obtain foreign titles, both monographs and serials (especially backfile missing issues), but found that the exchange rate used for the billing was determined by the date the distributor/publisher submitted the billing which often differed from the order/payment data used in the automated acquisitions system. This discrepancy, which

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AUTHOR'S BIO

Jeanne Harrell is currently the Director of Acquisitions at Texas A&M University Libraries in College Station, Texas. Her first professional library position was as cataloger at the University of Tulsa in Tulsa, Oklahoma. Her undergraduate degrees are Elementary Education and English. She taught school for four years and fell in love with libraries at Baylor while her husband was working on his Masters' degree. She began as Head of the Labelling Department at Baylor University in 1972, and gradually worked her way through an MLS at the University of Oklahoma while working full-time as a staff member at the University of Tulsa. Her job experiences include: Cataloging, Cataloging Training (dated now), Acquisitions, Serials, Electronic Resources, Automated Library Systems (OCLC, LIAS, NOTIS, VOYAGER).

Her hobbies include spectator sports, especially football and basketball, and reading mystery novels by Braun, Grafton, and Evanovich. She has a son, age 26, who has a degree in journalism and works in the Sports Information Office at Texas A&M. She also has a daughter, age 16, a junior in high school, who keeps Jeanne and her family busy with drill team activities.

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was detected at the time the monthly statement was received, necessitated additional steps to correct the payment information in the automated system in addition to changes in the printed log which tracks credit card transactions. Since each occurrence had to be documented carefully for auditing purposes, it became more troublesome than it was worth. As a result, the credit card for foreign purchases requiring currency conversion to US dollars is used only in emergencies.

Tracking these credit card purchases can be quite time-consuming because the purchases must be documented carefully for auditing purposes. Staff in Acquisitions, library business offices, and university fiscal offices are all involved in verifying that the purchase was authorized, that the funds were paid to the correct vendor/publisher for the correct amount, and that the acquisition was received and expended correctly on the library's automated acquisitions system. Each transaction requires initials of the staff performing the task, and the department head must verify that all documentation is complete and correct. Direct transactions can carry over from month to month, this is quite a laborious task. For example, a title is ordered on September 28. The book arrives on October 4, but the Mastercard bill does not arrive until the end of October. The log for September and October are required to document the transaction. The transaction becomes even more complex and lengthy in its final resolution if the publication is delayed for any reason, or if it is damaged in some way and must be returned for credit.

Since the limit on the credit card and the complexity of record keeping would not likely allow a library to send all of its rush orders as credit card orders, many libraries, including Texas A&M University Libraries, are choosing to go directly to the publishers to expedite the delivery of a title. One snag in this particular scenario has been an increase of late payments to publishers who will not take orders directly from library acquisitions staff, but insist that the title be ordered through a vendor. Perhaps the publishers prefer to deal with fewer sets of purchasing requirements, since every library seems to have its own set of restrictions and documentation requirements. Perhaps the publishers are tired of dealing with the many issues when selling to certain libraries, especially state institutions. In most cases, libraries would prefer to purchase titles from vendors to take advantage of discounts offered by vendors, either through approval plan umbrellas or through state contracts. However, it is difficult to explain to a professor that it is not possible to obtain the book she needs for class in three days because the publisher will not sell the title directly to the library, thereby causing a delay of at least two days in most cases since the vendor may not necessarily have the book on hand to ship to the library.

Of course, while enabling libraries to receive materials more quickly, the direct purchasing model can also cause problems. Consolidation of orders can provide many economies of scale, especially with the use of Electronic Data Interchange (EDI). EDI refers to the computer-to-computer transmission of business information between trading partners for ordering electronically. Publishers who decide that all titles must be purchased directly from them create difficulty for libraries because library staff must process the orders separately following a different set of procedures than those used for the bulk purchases of materials from a vendor/distributor. The result is, generally, higher materials costs, higher shipping cost and an increase in overhead costs to process the materials over a period of time. Thankfully, the publishers in this category are in the minority.

A new approach to purchasing monographs that could cause a paradigm shift for libraries is the increased availability of electronic books. While this is not the media of choice for the majority of libraries, if enough librarians and everyone else participate in the new system, the limited numbers of print books that will be available. This new format allows for direct downloading and print-on-demand of titles. Libraries can then purchase books on a per-title basis through electronic catalog software, and the books can be downloaded directly to the library's servers. This approach allows libraries to purchase titles on a per-title basis, rather than by volume, which can save money in the long run. However, it is important to note that this system also requires significant changes in the way libraries operate and manage their collections.

Should libraries be worried about "permission" access? As a librarian, I am concerned about how libraries will address the changing technologies. If perpetual access means a CD-ROM copy that cannot be formatted into the "current" technology, what recourse is there? Will the title really be available permanently or will librarians insist that an archival copy be purchased in print format? Perhaps cooperative collection development should be explored more fully to address these concerns. With tight budgets, and increasing demands from not only the serials budget, but also the swelling number of electronic offerings, will libraries be able to afford the luxury of print archives when electronic versions are so readily available? A limiting factor with certain libraries has been the fact that e-books purchased through a consortia could not be counted as additions to the volume count for statistical purposes because the title was not technically "owned" by the library. This is not true of individual purchases of electronic titles through libraries because they can be added to the volume count.

Librarians, publishers and vendors need to keep the lines of communication open so that we can all respond to the demands of our customers in the most creative ways possible. We need to be open to a variety of approaches to address the ever-changing "problems in the pipeline."