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# Squeezing the Most Out of the Approval Plan Budget: The University of Texas at Austin and Blackwell's Book Services Preferred Edition and Paper Preferred Options

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## Cutting Edge Articles from page 1

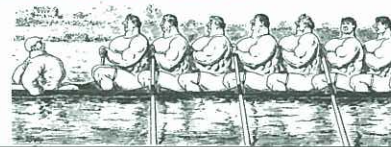
own libraries. Indeed, many vendors offer similar services; and, we all are confronted by ever shrinking acquisitions budgets and ever rising materials costs.

The second paper, by **Thomas Marshall** and **Jennalyn Tellman**, details the processing of approval receipts without professional librarians. The authors also describe their library's "frontlog" for foreign approval receipts without OCLC copy, and the public services implications of the frontlog. Many of our libraries have reduced professional staff over the years and are also having trouble finding staff with expert subject and language skills. The success that Marshall and Tellman report should give us hope that our libraries too can implement such strategies.

The third paper, by **Sara Tompson**, relates an interesting innovation at a special library. Readers will recognize the scenario she describes as the problem of routing vendor proof slips to

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## Squeezing the Most out of the Approval Plan Budget: The University of Texas at Austin and Blackwell's Book Services Preferred Edition and Paper Preferred Options



by **Glen Worley** (Manager, Approval/Selection Plans, Approval Unit, Acquisitions Department PCL 2.300, The General Libraries, The University of Texas at Austin, Austin, TX 78713-8916; phone 512-495-4149; fax 512-495-4410) <glen.worley@mail.utexas.edu>

The General Libraries of the University of Texas at Austin receives nearly 15,000 titles annually via its **Blackwell's Book Services** Anglo-American approval plan. The approval plan supplies the majority of new English-language monographs purchased by the Library. Due to all-too-familiar budget considerations, the approval plan budget has remained relatively constant over the past few years. Thus, the Library attempts to maximize the number of titles received from this plan. Last year the Library reduced its annual expenditures for its Blackwell's plan by nearly eleven percent by utilizing two options offered by the vendor:

- **Preferred Edition:** UK titles supplied at no discount from Blackwell's UK branch, instead are supplied by the US branch on discount and often at a lesser list price.
- **Paper Preferred:** Whenever possible, paper editions are supplied instead of hardbound editions, provided that the difference in price between the two editions exceeds an amount set by the library, and that the paper edition is available within sixty days.

This paper will explain how the Library restructured its US/UK approval plan profile

to take advantage of these options. This paper will also discuss the implications of these changes. Although the Library uses Blackwell's Book Services for its approval plan, other approval plan vendors may offer similar options achieving the same results.

### Historical Background

The Library's Anglo-American approval plan originally was created to supply monographs from both the US and the UK. The Library had one approval plan with the former **Blackwell North America** for US imprints, and another approval plan with B.H. Blackwell for UK imprints. Because US only approval plan titles received a discount, the Library preferred to receive titles published in both countries (e.g. Oxford University Press titles) from the US plan rather than from the UK plan. A list was compiled of publishers that routinely published titles in both the US and the UK and these publishers were excluded from the UK approval plan. Since Blackwell's US approval plan routinely excluded titles published in the UK, we needed a means to include titles from certain UK publishers while excluding others. The only solution was to create "mirror" profiles for

each approval profile. The Library duplicated each US approval plan subprofile in order to create the mirror profiles. The duplicate subprofiles were open to the UK as the non-subject parameter "country of original publication," but publishers were restricted to only the list of acceptable UK publishers. These UK publishers were then excluded from Blackwell's UK approval plan to eliminate duplication. Unfortunately, the result was the doubling of US approval plan subprofiles, thus making maintenance of the combined US/UK plan tedious. For example, changes made to one subprofile, required the same change be made in the corresponding mirror profile.

Some problems arose from international publishing industry mergers and acquisitions, and others arose when American presses published UK imprints. In the latter case, the US imprints were considered UK imprints because of the non-subject parameter country of origin. These titles thus were excluded from the US plan. Maintaining the list of publishers was analogous to hitting a constantly moving target. Every time a publisher was added to or removed from the list, then

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appropriate selectors and liaisons. Tompson was able to work together with the vendor to disseminate electronically new title information to a diverse and decentralized group of selectors. Her strategy may be able to be utilized by other libraries large and small, even if those libraries also have Web-based vendor selection tools.

The final two papers, by **Stephen Corrsin** and **Anthony Oddo** (see <http://against-the-grain.com> for Anthony Oddo's paper which will also be published in the Sept. issue), provide insights into non-Roman foreign-language approval plans. Corrsin describes the histories, varied definitions, and uses of Slavic and East European studies approval plans in the United States. Oddo describes the frustrating history of Greek-language acquisitions at his library, and the consequential creation of a new approval plan as a means to end that frustration. At the same time, Oddo also offers us a practical guide to the creation of a foreign-language approval plan. Both Corrsin and Oddo offer valuable and unique contributions to the library literature.

All five papers (and we hope two more papers in a later issue) provide fascinating reads. And, for those so inclined, the papers are teeming with ideas for approval plan innovations in our own libraries. 

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Blackwell's personnel would have to make the corresponding change in over one hundred US and UK subprofiles.

In addition to profile maintenance difficulties, other problems existed. The approval plan for UT Austin is paid out of a single fund controlled by the library collection development division, whereas firm orders are paid out of allocated funds controlled by individual bibliographers responsible for specific subject areas. It is the Library's policy to return approval titles that have been duplicated by a firm order. Occasionally a title published by one of the selected UK publishers would not be available through Blackwell's US, and because that publisher was excluded from the UK profile, the book would not arrive on either approval plan. The scenario was particularly troublesome in the cases of publishers such as Macmillan and St. Martins, which often published the same title, but also published titles which their overseas partner did not. The result was confusion on the part of the bibliographers. They debated whether or not to firm order titles, because in their view approval book were free, whereas they had to use their own allocations to firm order titles.

#### Blackwell's Preferred Edition Service for UK Titles

In 1996, Blackwell's began to offer a Preferred Edition service for their approval plan customers having both US and UK approval plans. Blackwell's would send the US edition

of a UK title, subject to certain conditions, rather than sending the UK edition. The most significant of these conditions was that the US title must be listed as forthcoming in the US approval title database. Blackwell's UK personnel would search the US database for each title assigned to the Library's approval plan by the Blackwell's UK approval matching program. If the title was listed as forthcoming in the US database, then UK personnel created an "approval force," causing the US title to be sent on approval, and allowing libraries to take advantage of their negotiated discount for US approval titles. However, if the title had already been treated for US approval customers, then the UK edition would be sent. By the end of 1999, the integration of Blackwell's UK and US computer systems made it possible for Blackwell's to automate the Preferred Edition process and thus eliminate the need for the US edition to be forthcoming.

The Library decided to try this service due to the problems with the approval plan strategy mentioned above. Some restructuring of the approval profiles was necessary in order to configure the US/UK plan to use this service. Each subprofile of the US approval plan had to have a corresponding UK subprofile identical in terms of publisher, subject, and non-subject parameters with the exception of the non-subject parameters country of original publication and country of source. The Library's existing UK profile was similar to the US profile, but two changes were needed. First, subject coverage for some areas was expanded. Second, a few new UK subprofiles were created in order to completely duplicate

all the US subprofiles. Initially this plan was a cause for concern, as there were no hard data to predict the financial consequences of this new approach. It was agreed to let the new US and UK profiles run for a trial period of six months and then assess whether or not to continue.

It took several weeks to reconfigure the US and UK profiles and the new Preferred Edition Anglo-American approval plan began with the UT Austin fiscal year 1997 (September 1, 1996). In order to monitor the plan, Blackwell's UK sent a weekly list of the "forced" titles that were to arrive on the US plan. By comparing the UK and US prices for each title and computing the discounted US price, we gauged the effectiveness of the new service. After the first few weeks, already a considerable amount of money was being saved, and so the service was made permanent.

In order to obtain sales and return information reports, Blackwell's personnel created a library code (similar to a customer number or account) to which all Preferred Edition titles would be assigned. The code went into effect about the third month of the fiscal year, and allowed the Library to use the standard Blackwell Sales and Returns management reports to determine the effectiveness of the new plan, as data for all Preferred Edition titles would now be listed under this library code.

#### Consequences of Using Preferred Edition

For collection development purposes the Library uses four library codes with corresponding fund codes to classify approval

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materials in four subject clusters: (1) social studies; (2) science and technology; (3) fine arts and humanities; and (4) area studies. The codes allow tracking of expenditures for approval materials in each cluster, and allows the use of management reports based on cluster and library codes. As previously mentioned, the Library found it useful to create a separate library profile code with Blackwell's US in order to receive management reports for the Preferred Edition titles. In order to track funds for the various clusters it was necessary to assign an appropriate fund code (e.g. the fund code for social studies cluster) to each Preferred Edition title based on a title's subject. The strategy increased the workload of staff who processed titles, but this was not significant once an effective procedure was developed. The automation of the Preferred Edition process in 1999 made this easier by assigning the title to the appropriate US subprofile which was not possible when Preferred Edition was first offered.

### Results of the First Year of Preferred Edition

The results of the Blackwell's Sales and Returns report for the remaining nine months of the fiscal year were as follows: 1,028 Preferred Edition titles were received of which 16 were returned for a net total list price of \$58,530. Savings were calculated by assuming that the US list price would be equal to

the UK list price (usually it is less), and then applying the Library's discount for the US plan. The difference between list price total and discounted total revealed a savings of over \$12,000 for those 1,012 titles, or an average savings of \$8.20 per title.

269 less titles from the Blackwell's UK approval plan were received than the previous fiscal year even though the UK profiles were expanded to make them match the US profiles (see Table 1). Price limits were also increased for the UK profiles to match the price limits of the US profiles. In financial terms, \$120,920 was expended on the UK plan with Preferred Edition in effect, resulting with a \$9,900 reduction from the previous fiscal year's expenditure of \$130,820.

more than \$20, then the paper edition would be sent). The discount on paper editions was set at 10%.

The Library requested Blackwell's to estimate costs for one year to determine if Paper Preferred would be worthwhile. The initial cost estimates are given in Table 2 on pg 22.

Table 2 shows in excess of \$50,000 annual savings by purchasing paperback editions instead of hardbound editions. Blackwell's cautioned that this estimate was based on the premise that the paperback edition would always be available within the 60-day time frame. The promise of such a large reduction in the approval plan expenditures, while retaining the same amount of coverage, immediately caught the attention of the

Table 1: Effects of Preferred Edition on Annual Receipts for the US and UK Plans

Fiscal Year	US plan receipts:	UK plan receipts:	Total
FY 1995-96	12,158 titles	2,945 titles	15,103 titles
FY 1996-97 Preferred Edition	12,883 titles	2,676 titles	15,559 titles
Difference	725 titles	-269 titles	456 titles

### Blackwell's Paper Preferred Option

Blackwell's second service was to allow a library to elect to receive paper editions when hardbound and paper editions were simultaneously published (hereafter referred to as "Paper Preferred"). The library could set the price differential that determined when the paper edition would be sent (e.g. if the price differential between the two editions was

Library's collection development and financial personnel, but they were apprehensive about acquiring "disposable" paperbacks over hardbound editions. An informal poll was taken among the Library's bibliographers to canvass their feelings on the subject. Science and technology bibliographers were very amenable to the idea, whereas art and architecture bibliographers had the most reserva-

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tions. Ultimately our tight budgets with no foreseeable relief prompted the collection development team to authorize a trial run of Paper Preferred for one year, coinciding with the university's fiscal year. Initially, shipments would be monitored to see how many paper editions were supplied instead of hardbound editions, and to gauge the financial impact of receiving paperback editions rather than hardbound editions. The head of the Library's preservation department agreed to spot check the paperback editions for quality on a regular basis, and to monitor the book repair requests to determine if there was an increase. It was also agreed that heavily illustrated art and architecture paperbacks would be sent out for binding by the Library's contract binding service. Non-science paperbacks less than 3/8-inch in thickness would be pamphlet-bound in-house. Science bibliographers requested all paperbacks remain as-is.

Within a few weeks of the inception of

the new Paper Preferred service, it was clear that the substitution of paperback for hardbound was providing considerable savings—nearly one thousand dollars weekly. The initial results were so promising that the collection development committee decided to expand country of original publication coverage to include almost all countries covered by Blackwell's US. Previously only the US was allowed as a country of original publica-

tion. This increase in approval plan coverage was an unexpected benefit for the collection.

Spot checks by Library's preservation department indicated that the overall quality of the paperback editions was excellent. Book repair requests for these materials were very low and agreed with published results (Baird 1996). Contract binding costs for those paper editions unsuitable for shelving proved to be minimal. Softbound titles by academic publishers also producing hardbound editions of the same title were found to be generally superior in binding quality to more popularly-oriented titles available only in paperback.

### Results of the Year-Long Trial of Paper Preferred Option

In order to fully calculate the financial effect of the Paper Preferred option it was necessary to devise a way to compare the approval receipts of the actual approval plan with the same approval plan where hardbound editions would have been supplied rather than paper. It was decided to compare the average price paid per volume received in the previous fiscal year with the average price per volume received during the fiscal year of the Paper Preferred trial period. These results are shown in Table 3. By multiplying the difference between the average price per volume for each year by the number of volumes received during the Paper Preferred trial period, an estimated savings is obtained. Our results take into account actual expenditures on approval titles rather than list price information from the vendor. See Table 3 below.

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**Table 3: Results of Two Years Receipts at the University of Texas at Austin**

<u>FY 1997-98</u>	<u>Expenditure</u>	<u>Volumes received</u>	<u>Price per volume</u>
US	\$397,569.24	10,678	\$37.23
UK	\$102,176.25	2,187	\$46.72
Combined US / UK	\$499,745.49	12,865	\$38.85
FY1998-99			
<u>(Paper Preferred trial)</u>	<u>Expenditure</u>	<u>Volumes received</u>	<u>Price/volume</u>
US	\$402,039.59	11,933	\$33.69
UK	\$110,649.10	2,895	\$38.22
Combined US / UK	\$512,688.69	14,828	\$34.58

**Table 2: Initial Cost Estimates for Paper Preferred**

<u>As is Profile</u>	<u>Paper Preferred Amount (list)</u>	<u>Difference Book count</u>	<u>Price/book</u>	<u>Amount (list)</u>	<u>Book count</u>	<u>Price/book</u>	<u>Amount saved</u>	<u>Books</u>
Social Sciences	\$210,478	5,212	\$40.38	\$170,653	5,203	\$32.80	\$39,825	-9
Sci-Tech	\$167,021	2,457	\$67.98	\$160,834	2,455	\$65.51	\$6,187	-2
Fine Arts	\$124,473	3,451	\$36.07	\$107,540	3,442	\$31.24	\$16,933	-9
Area Studies	\$18,436	612	\$30.12	\$15,881	612	\$25.95	\$2,555	0
US Total	\$520,408	11,732	\$44.36	\$454,908	11,712	\$38.84	\$65,500	-20
US Total (discount)	\$413,203.95	11,732	\$35.22	\$361,196.95	11,712	\$30.84	\$52,007	-20
UK Profile	\$277,887	5,231	\$53.12	\$278,431	5,262	\$52.91	-\$544	31
US Total (discount) plus UK Profile	\$691,091	16,963	\$40.74	\$639,628	16,974	\$37.68	\$51,463	-11



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Because the approval plan profile remained essentially unchanged during the period in question, the calculation assumed that the only factor affecting the difference in the price per volume was the use of the Paper Preferred option. Blackwell's own "US Approval Program Coverage and Cost Studies" for US approval plans for the same two-year period show that the average price per volume varies little (see Tables 4 and 5 below).

**Table 4: Blackwell's US Approval Program Coverage and Cost Study 1997-98**

Country	# of titles	% of all titles treated	Avg. List Price
U.S. origin	19,713	61%	\$51.36
U.K. origin	7,873	25%	\$65.36
Other origin	4,616	14%	\$92.02

Note that there is a marked decrease in the Library's average price paid per volume for the fiscal year corresponding to the trial of Paper Preferred (see Table 3 pg. 22). Differences between average price/volume for FY 1997-98 and

FY 1998-99 (Paper Preferred Trial) were US \$3.54, UK \$8.50, and combined US/UK \$4.27.

The projected savings were calculated by the formula Savings = (price per volume difference) (Number of volumes received in FY 1998-99). Calculations were made for the US and UK plans separately and for the combined receipts of the plans. Savings calculated for US and UK plans separately were US \$42,256.51, UK \$24,604.78, and total savings of \$66,861.29. Savings calculated based on combined figures for US and UK are \$63,310.23. Thus, the data show approval plan expenditures were reduced by over \$60,000 over one fiscal year by receiving paperback editions when possible. If the Paper Preferred option was not in effect, then adding the conservatively estimated in-

crease of \$60,000 resulting from the purchase of more hardbound editions would bring the total annual Anglo-American plan expenditure to \$572,689. The percentage reduction of using Paper Preferred for FY 1998-99 can then be calculated as  $60,000/572,689 = 10.5\%$ . This would mean that annual expenditures for Blackwell's US/UK approval plan were reduced by 10.5% by using the paper edition option. If the more optimistic estimate of \$66,861 is used, then the result is  $66,861/579,550 = 11.5\%$ .

## Effect of Paper Preferred Plus Preferred Edition

During the same period as the Paper Preferred trial, 929 UK titles were received via Preferred Edition. Upon comparing Blackwell's Preferred Edition average list prices to the average prices paid for the titles, the Library received an average discount of 17.3% off the US list price. These titles originally would have been supplied at no discount via Blackwell's UK. As before, it was assumed that the US list prices were equal to the UK list prices. Application of the 17.3% discount to the US list price total of \$46,272 for the 929 titles showed a reduction of an estimated \$8,000 in expenditures for UK titles by using Preferred Edition.

As reported above, it was estimated that approval plan expenditures were reduced by \$60,000 (conservative estimate) in FY 1998-99 by receiving paper editions whenever pos-

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**Table 5: Blackwell's US Approval Program Coverage and Cost Study 1998-99**

Country	# of titles	% of all titles treated	Avg. List Price
U.S. origin	19,113	61%	\$52.27
U.K. origin	7,863	25%	\$66.18
Other origin	4,498	14%	\$91.64



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ther \$8,000 resulting in a combined reduction in the FY 1998-99 Blackwell Anglo-American approval plan expenditure by \$68,000. The FY 1998-99 allocation for the Blackwell's US/UK plan was \$645,000. Thus, the reduction in expenditures of \$68,000 represents 10.5% of the allocation for the entire year. If Paper Preferred and Preferred Edition were not used, the projected total expenditures for the year would have been: \$572,689 + \$60,000 (due to hardbound editions) + \$8,000 (due to UK editions received at no discount) = \$640,689. The percent reduction in expenditures over one year due to the combined effects of Preferred Edition and Paper based on the projected expenditures:  $68,000/640,689 = 10.6\%$ .

### Conclusions

**Negative aspects of this strategy:** Because of the numerous complex variables in the approval plan as administered by Blackwell's Book Services, there are certain limitations that must be acknowledged in using the Preferred Edition and Paper Preferred services to reduce approval expenditures. It is important to note that the US edition of a UK title will not be selected under the Preferred Edition program if the UK edition exceeds the UK profile price limit. It makes no difference if the US edition is under the US profile price limit. Use of Paper Preferred option can cause a delay in receipt of a title if the publisher does not deliver the paper edition of that title to the vendor at the same time as the

sible. The use of Preferred Edition reduced expenditures by a fur-

ther \$8,000 resulting in a combined reduction in the FY 1998-99 Blackwell Anglo-American approval plan expenditure by \$68,000. The FY 1998-99 allocation for the Blackwell's US/UK plan was \$645,000. Thus, the reduction in expenditures of \$68,000 represents 10.5% of the allocation for the entire year. If Paper Preferred and Preferred Edition were not used, the projected total expenditures for the year would have been: \$572,689 + \$60,000 (due to hardbound editions) + \$8,000 (due to UK editions received at no discount) = \$640,689. The percent reduction in expenditures over one year due to the combined effects of Preferred Edition and Paper based on the projected expenditures:  $68,000/640,689 = 10.6\%$ .

Obviously the switch to paperback editions over hardbound editions may be controversial in some libraries, but it demonstrably reduces up-front expenditures. It should also be noted that, while the use of the Paper Preferred option was extended over the entire Library approval plan profile, it could have been implemented only on selected subprofiles (e.g. science and technology).

**Positive aspects of this strategy:** Obviously, the major advantage of using the Preferred Edition and Paper Preferred services is the large reduction in expenditures. The result is that it has been possible to retain the same amount of subject coverage even though there has been no increase in the plan's allocation. It has more than compensated for any inflationary factors. Furthermore, this reduction has actually allowed the Library to expand judiciously the subject and non-subject parameter coverage for the US/UK approval plan such that more titles can be received while still keeping expenditures below the same annual allocation. Price limits also were raised because the hardbound list price is the price that the Blackwell's system compares to the price limit set by the library. The Paper Preferred titles that are received instead of the more expensive hardbound titles offset the increase in price limits. Because of the Blackwell's plan success, the Library has implemented strategies with its other approval vendors offering similar options. As inflation pressures increase and as library budgets remain tight, approval plan options such as Preferred Edition and Paper Preferred allow libraries to retain or even increase their level of acquisitions even though actual expenditures remain constant. 🐾



## Glen Worley Profile

**Education:** BS and ABD, chemistry.

**Career:** teaching assistant and assistant instructor for college chemistry classes; re-

search assistant in area of non-aqueous metal-amine solutions; guitarist/vocalist/manager for two rock 'n' roll bands in early 80's; 18 years of library service with the General Libraries, University of Texas at Austin; manager of Approval Unit, Acquisitions since 1996.

**Family:** Married, with one dog, two cats, two horses, and one motorcycle.

**Proudest accomplishment:** 1992 Beginner Rider of the Year, awarded by Austin Third Coast Eventers, an equestrian club devoted to combined training.

**Educational highlight:** Receiving an A in a graduate level course in quantum mechanics.

**Life changing experience:** raising a horse from birth to maturity.

**My other life:** Care and feeding of four horses and upkeep of 30 acres of horse habitat, and whenever possible, I enjoy a brisk ride on my 1978 BMW R80/7 motorcycle.

**Last book read:** Ron Ayres, *Against the Wind: A Rider's Account of the Incredible Iron Butt Rally*, Whitehorse Press, 1997.

**Where I see myself in 5 years:** I hope to be actively involved in the transition of what the library is now to what it will be in the future.

**Pet peeve:** Online information leads people to assume that books magically appear on library shelves with no time needed for shipping, processing, cataloging, etc.

**Biggest surprise:** How much poop four horses can generate in a short period.

**Single most important piece of advice:** There are two kinds of riders: ones who will fall off, and ones who will fall off again.

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enough vendors to meet the demand.

However, at some point in the future, as catalogers retire or move on, it may become a necessity. The number of library schools requiring cataloging courses has diminished. A study by Spillane comparing required cataloging courses from 1998 to 1999 noted a drop from 78.2% to 55.4% (Spillane 1999). As a result, libraries may have difficulty in the future recruiting librarians with the skills necessary to process foreign language material. But, the future is now at the UA Library and we believe that we have implemented an innovative solution to a difficult problem. 🐾

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