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Issues in Vendor/Library Relations-Report on the OhioLINK-YBP relationship

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Biz of Acq from page 74

3. How reliable is the vendor overall? Baker and Taylor is very reliable. The Company is providing us with a three-to-four day turnaround for items ordered on TSII, unmatched by any other vendor used by the Library District. GRADE = A.

4. Does the vendor charge a fee for access to the system? The fee, at the time of this writing, is \$1750 for account set-up and the first login, and \$250 for each additional login. This is just a bit steep. GRADE = C.

5. Does the vendor provide alternative methods of access? This is irrelevant because TSII is Internet-based. GRADE = not applicable.

6. Is the hardware available? Consistently slow Internet connections would make this system taxing on staff. However, with the upgrade of the network at the North Las Vegas Library District in the beginning of FY2000, speed is not usually a problem. GRADE = B+.

Subscribing to TSII has been one of the best technological investments the Library District has ever made. The convenience, accuracy, and speed of delivery of TSII far outweigh the cost.

Issues in Vendor/Library Relations — Report on the OhioLINK-YBP Relationship:

Serendipitous Advantages of Buying Monographs as a Consortium

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by **David Swords** (Director Consortia Market Development, YBP Library Services)

It is becoming common for vendors to grouse about library consortia as buying clubs whose effect will be to put us out of business. And surely, many consortia exist only to improve discounts for their members. On the other hand, we now see that consortia are like cholesterol: some are bad but others are extremely good.

When YBP became the monographs vendor for OhioLINK more than two years ago, we were nervous about the discounts and service requirements. As it turns out, however, the contract has been good for us, good, we think, for the consortium and for individual libraries, good for a spirit of partnership, and good for experiments in cooperative collection.

Why so good? OhioLINK achieved excellent discounts and favorable terms for its members, of course. By and large, for individual libraries, the direct savings through discounts are significant, and across the consortium, the direct savings have been considerable. Before the OhioLINK contract YBP was principal monographs vendor to a handful of schools in Ohio. Now, because of the contract, we are the major vendor to every large university in the State, save one, and to a total of more than sixty libraries. Without the consortial contract we might never have gained so many customers.

The advantages, however, go deeper than

continued on page 76

Issues in Vendor/Library Relations from page 75

discounts for **OhioLINK** or revenues for **YBP**. They begin in the commitment of member schools to the contract. That is, librarians around the State, and especially the members of **OhioLINK's Collection Building Task Force**, took the contract seriously from the beginning, supporting it by moving their business to **YBP** and by encouraging their peers to do the same. The **OhioLINK** office under **Tom Sanville** supported the effort in myriad ways, but especially through buying loaders to bring records into library systems in batches. To hold up its end, **YBP** tried to be always available on short notice to work with Ohio libraries, and we have assembled technologies to support cooperative collection. Still, good discounts, commitment, good service, and technological support are to be expected; they are not news. It is, instead, the serendipitous advantages of working with a consortium that I wish to describe here.

Some of the advantages of the **YBP-OhioLINK** arrangement are quite simple. For example, usually academic sales representatives cover geographically huge territories of several states and visit their customers no more than once a year. Comparatively, Ohio is small but because it comprises a sales territory, we are in Ohio libraries constantly. It is possible to visit anywhere in the State from one day to the next and to visit one library as often as needed. Conversely, we have held regional training sessions around the State that

enable potential customers to come to us, some to learn more about **YBP** and others to obtain timely instruction in the use of **GOBI**, **YBP's** online acquisitions and collection management system.

GobiSlow and NewGobi: Solving Problems Together

The concentration of customers in one small State has proved especially important when things do not go well. In fall 1999 **OhioLINK** libraries reported that **GOBI** was unacceptably slow, often too slow for people to use it to do their work. The situation was bad enough that the **Collection Building Task Force** summoned senior executives from **YBP** and our then brand-new parent, **Baker & Taylor**, to Ohio to discuss the problem.

Among the first things we did was to assemble a group of Ohio libraries to track their experience of what was by then being called "**GobiSlow**." With their help, we traced sources of the problem and bought faster servers, improved our internal network, and rewrote parts of **GOBI's** code. For their part, many customers adjusted their schedules to use **GOBI** early in the day. In time, **GOBI's** response improved, but we also realized that as an early product of its kind, the real fix would be to rewrite it from scratch.

We first announced the plan to rebuild **GOBI** completely (now, more or less officially, known as "**NewGobi**") at a meeting with **OhioLINK** last May.

In the early phases of the project, members of our IS department visited 10 libraries in Ohio, large and small, whose use

of **GOBI** ranges from simple to among the most sophisticated. We heard what was wrong, what customers hoped to see, and what was right that they did not want to lose, and the meetings helped start the project in the right direction.

In sum, the concentration of libraries in Ohio that use **GOBI** in different ways makes for a ready source of volunteers to help us through problems, design issues, or beta tests. The organization under **OhioLINK** makes communication easy and keeps interest high. In return, Ohio's libraries have, *de facto*, a considerable voice in our plans.

Experimentation and Cooperative Collection Development

An avowed interest of library consortia is always cooperative collection, but with respect to monographs, interest has generally outpaced action. Even in Ohio progress has been slower on some fronts than anyone would have liked, largely because people have full-time jobs to which these experiments are always an addition.

But we have made considerable progress. Among the first things **YBP** did as part of its pledge to **OhioLINK** was to develop **GobiTween**, a feature of our database that enables any member of a consortium to see all activity on a title by all members. We then developed a visual means of enabling selectors in a subject from different libraries to compare their several approval plans. Most promising, though, have been the "Not in Ohio" reports.

During a year of experiments with the **Collection Building Task Force**, led in this work by **Jerry Newman** of the University

continued on page 77

From the Other Side of the Street — University Presses: making progress or roadblocks?

by **Thomas Bacher** (Director, Purdue Press, 1207 SCC-E, W. Lafayette, IN 47907-1207; Phone: 765-494-2038; Fax: 765-496-2442) <bacher@purdue.edu> www.thepress.purdue.edu

Currently, the **Association of American University Presses** and its member organizations are going through a process of introspection. The idea is to define why presses are so important to the process of scholarly interchange and development. Reinvention is not the key issue, unfortunately, and looking at the University Press, in most cases, at the end of the millennium is probably not much different than looking at the University Press at the beginning of the 1900s except for the expansion in the number of titles produced by UPs and the number of UPs that have been chartered. But don't take my word on this point, listen to the presses on their own terms.

The **University of Texas Press** was founded in 1950 to show that "books matter; books educate; and publishing good books is a public responsibility and a valuable component of the state's system of higher education." But fifty years later, the **University of Texas Press** indicates in its mantra that they are still a book publisher (even though they do journals, too) and a focal point where the life experiences, insights, and specialized knowledge of writers converge to be disseminated in print." Unfortunately, this might be taking the **UT Press's** mission very literally. Yet of all organizations, presses, with their daily routine of getting words right, must be taken at their word. No?

The **University of Texas** is not out of step in the university press publication march. If you were to ask most directors, they would say that indeed their press's primary aim is to publish books, scholarly books. The **University of Alberta Press** publishes strong scholarly works. The **University of Arizona Press**, founded in 1959, is a nonprofit publisher of scholarly and regional books. The **University of Hawaii Press** is recognized as a leading publisher of books and journals in Asian, Asian American, and Pacific Studies. **Howard University Press's** mission is to publish "discerning non-fiction books and journals that analyze developments and is-

continued on page 77

Issues in Vendor/Library Relations from page 76

of Cincinnati and Michael Zeoli of YBP, we have developed a process that goes as follows:

- Six months after books are profiled by YBP, we run a report that gathers up all of those bought by no library in Ohio. Thus, in March 2001, we look at titles profiled in September 2000 that no library in Ohio has bought from YBP.
- OhioLINK takes our list and uses a program to run it against the statewide catalogue to eliminate books that libraries have bought from vendors other than YBP.
- We put the pared list on GOBI, in an account established for this project. Any selector in the State participating in the experiment can order titles for his or her library from the account.

The "Not in Ohio" experiment is at the point of achieving production status, in which a half dozen or more libraries will routinely buy books that otherwise would have escaped the consortial net.

The Future of Consortial Relationships

Not surprisingly, we believe that vendor-consortia partnerships will play an important role in both our futures. Corporations are scrambling to divide the eBook marketplace and libraries themselves must find roles in an increasingly virtual world. Specifically, if patrons do not visit libraries, libraries must confect ways

to deliver services to patrons. . . wherever the patron may be. YBP's core competencies, describing books and profiling the interests of libraries, can easily be extended to faculty. Through GOBI, libraries will soon be able to deliver notification of new titles to faculty, based on a personal profile. Faculty can then recommend titles back to the library, but rather than choosing simply to purchase or not, will indicate whether

a book should be "owned locally," "owned consortially," or not owned at all. YBP will then run the "own consortially" file against our database of the books consortia members have bought from us. Put differently, the ties between consortia and their vendors should lead to experiments that will profit both and to thinking that may help both find their way as critical parts of this new world. 🌱

From the Other Side of the Street from page 76

issues in the arts; education; literature; ethics; social economic, and political arenas; human relations; intercultural communications; and foreign affairs." Indiana University Press publishes books that that "will matter twenty or even a hundred years from now—books that make a difference today and will live on into the future through their reverberations in the minds of teachers and writers." Utah State University Press is dedicated to acquiring and publishing books of "superior quality that win the esteem of readers and that appropriately represent Utah State University to the community of scholars." Wilfrid Laurier University Press was established in 1974 to publish scholarly books and journals in the humanities and social sciences.

Scholarly books undoubtedly are written by scholars and are for the scholarly community to ensure the interchange of scholarly ideas. Still, presses can define these books in an unusual ways. Princeton University Press has "hewn its charter" to make available books "whose scholarly importance exceeds their financial rewards." The main function of the University of Alaska Press is to serve as a means for professional scholars to have works published that

"might not otherwise appear in book form." Oregon State University Press desires to publish important ideas and information that "otherwise might not find a forum." In other words, due to market numbers, university presses must publish losers in the sense of revenue but winners in the sense of the advancement of knowledge.

However, in recent years, under the stress of ever diminishing returns on monograph publications, university presses have sought to increase income by publishing books for general audiences. Regional publishing has always been a strength of university presses evidenced by books on native flora and fauna and on local history. Still their has been a notably shift in the publication strategies of some university presses. Commercial publishers have sought to solidify profits by trimming their mid-list authors. University presses have stepped in to fill this gap. The University of California Press is proud to attract authors "whose work transcends traditional academic boundaries to speak to people everywhere." Indiana University Press "emphasizes scholarship but also publishes text, trade, and reference titles." Johns Hopkins University Press publishes books for the general reader, "who find in them [books] en-

joyment as well as enlightenment." Of the more than 900 books in print at the University of Wisconsin Press, many are intended for the general reader in the areas of "biography, natural history, poetry, [and] social issues."

Even though books still remain king, even to Stephen King, a number of presses have moved past the printed page. New York University Press (NYUP) whose books have a "prominent place on the table of public debate," considers itself a gadfly and is willing to publish books from "different poles of the political spectrum ... to generate dialogue, engender debate, and resist pat categorization of our publishing program. NYUP sees the future more clearly than some presses in the recognition that the past is gone when "libraries more or less financed university press operations." In recent years, in fact, NYUP is trying to redefine "what it means to be a university press."

Johns Hopkins University Press (JHUP), understanding that its primary missions still is "to seek out and publish books and journals of superior quality that contribute significantly to the progress of research and learning," realizes that this can

continued on page 78

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