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Inside Pandora's Box: Issues and Ideas in Acquisitions Management

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be accomplished by a program that "embraces both traditional and newer modes of scholarly communication."

The University of Illinois has many electronic projects completed and sees the need for new ones as it moves into the future. Yale University Press "was one of the first university presses to publish a multimedia CD-ROM, *Perseus*, and CD-ROMs have enhanced Albers's Interaction of Color and Jorden's book on learning Japanese." Purdue University Press is beginning a new imprint in January 2001, Digital-I books. Facing the ever-increasing need to produce titles for smaller market segments in Academe, "the Digital-I imprint will provide an outlet for scholarly information that does not presently exist." Columbia University Press inaugurated electronic publishing in 1990, when *The Concise Columbia Electronic Encyclopedia* went online on the Columbia University Network. In 1991 *The Columbia Granger's(r) World of Poetry* on CD-ROM was issued in response to requests from reference librarians. Currently, the Press publishes a variety of CD-ROMs. Its first four publications online are *Columbia International Affairs Online (CIAO)*, *The Columbia Granger's(r) World of Poetry Online*, *Earthscape*, and *The Columbia Gazetteer of the World Online*. In a world where technological changes are a daily occurrence, new reference services may provide models for the future direction of academic presses. Ebrary is aimed at revolutionizing "the way people conduct research and acquire information on the web by combining a powerful discovery engine, full-text viewing, and state-of-the-art reference tools with an extensive collection of books, periodicals, maps, and archival works." Fatbrain.com's aim is to revolutionize the way organizations share knowledge by creating "custom online bookstores and information resource centers that can efficiently and cost-effectively meet the information needs of an organization's internal and external audiences." NetLibrary helps academic, public, corporate, and private libraries create a richer, more productive learning environment for their patrons "by combining the time-honored traditions of the library system with electronic publishing." Lightning Source is combining on-demand printing with electronic document distribution. As university presses head into a new century, the quality of their information will remain a key component in their growth. The new knowledge economy should provide new opportunities for these presses. Traditional publishing will remain a part of university press offerings. However, unlike trade markets where e-books might not be the answer, scholars are becoming more willing to search across vast arrays of information. The university press must foster this growth or be seen as a roadblock to progress. 🌱

Inside Pandora's Box — Issues and Ideas in Acquisitions Management

by Howard Bybee (Assistant Acquisitions Librarian, Brigham Young University)

Column Editor: Jack Montgomery (Collection Services Coordinator, Western Kentucky University) <jack.montgomery@wku.edu>

Editor's Note: This is the first in a series of articles on creative ideas in gift's management. — JM

Many libraries sell unwanted books. Traditionally these sales occur once or twice a year when the friends of the library staff a book sale for the public. A few libraries operate a book store stocked with their unwanted books, some sell them to dealers,

or they donate them to other institutions. There are many ways for a library to assure that unwanted books continue their useful existence. Online book sales are a recent choice for selling the library's excess titles. Today anyone can sell books on the Internet. Internet book selling may be a great way for some libraries to put books back into circulation and to obtain a fair price for valuable artifacts.

Operating an Internet store is simple, but labor intensive, which might deter some libraries from attempting it. There are, however, good reasons for selling unwanted library books over the Internet:

- Local markets won't support the highest prices for many titles, but offering them over the Internet broadens the market and should bring a fair price.
- Posting books requires, and builds, knowledge about bibliographic description and book values.
- Revenues from sales usually swell the book budget.
- Books that might cause public relations problems if disposed of locally can be sold far afield. When the true value of a title cannot be discovered, selling it through an auction will often bring a fair price.
- In the course of operating an Internet book store, acquisition department personnel learn about out of print markets and the value and availability of OP materials.
- When labor and material costs are measured, as difficult as that is, most libraries that sell books end up transferring labor dollars into book budget dollars -- not a bad exchange if the wage budget can stand it.

The first step to selling online is to survey the available sites. This is not a WWW site review article. I will append a URL starter list for those who want to get going. There are many used book vendor sites on the Internet and there will be more. A brief search will supply enough URLs to keep the book sale administrator busy for awhile. These sites usually offer services to the seller that make it easy to start. Abebooks.com, a Canada based book marketplace, is a well established site. They boast twenty million books for sale. Most sites require vendor registration and many charge a small fee. Rules of conduct govern business ethics and non-compliance results in offenders being dropped from service. These sites are frequently interrelated by mutual agreements that provide shared inventories and greater market exposure for the seller and the buyer. They provide free or inexpensive software for managing inventories and sales data, and E-commerce services that allow customers to buy with

a credit card, saving the seller the cost of managing credit sales. The customer usually pays a service fee when purchasing by credit card.

Automated matching has helped to revivify the used book trade, and it has improved out of print purchasing for libraries. Matching assures that a book for sale on the Net will be offered the next day to someone who has posted a "want" on the system for that very title. Most libraries that purchase out of print books have discovered these services and use them. Posting "wants" is as simple as posting books for sale.

Because there are many book selling Websites, companies such as Bookfinder.com, BiblioFind.com, or Addall.com provide multiple site searching. Looking for a title on these sites will bring hits from many different book selling Ecompanies, worldwide. They save time when looking for out of print titles, and provide wide market exposure for the seller. This kind of Internet power will market your books

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to individuals and to book sellers such as **Powells** and **Barnes and Noble**, even to **Amazon.com**, all of which provide out of print book searching for their customers. Book selling truly has become an interwoven web of dealers all working together to increase availability of used books.

Bibliographic description, or as book dealers call it, cataloging a book, is very different from the cataloging done by librarians in a library. When a dealer catalogs a book there are different motives. Most cataloging or book description is a form of advertising. When the dealer or seller describes a book, the goal is to grab the attention of the buyer in order to sell the book. Next, the seller, if reputable and experienced, accurately describes a particular book so that the buyer knows its condition, in order to justify the price and to avoid returns once it is sold. Good book dealers jealously guard their reputation among their peers, who can also be their customers, and they want to create a regular clientele who will buy from them again, if several sellers are offering the same title. For this reason standardized descriptive terms are used by dealers to describe a book. A reading copy is a book with no real commercial value, good only for content. A good copy is a heavily used book with some collectible value that may be improved by conservation. Defects should be clearly described in detail. A very good copy is normally clean, with a good binding. All defects should be clearly described. A fine copy is usually a book in new condition, but may have a few minor defects, clearly described. These general terms may be modified by using qualifiers such as a + or - sign or by using the word "near" as in near fine. Reading a few hundred descriptions will bring the new seller or buyer current on the general drift of the jargon within a short time.

Successful library book sales bring in funds that help recoup the labor expense of handling donations. These funds usually end up in the book budget. This may be cost recovery only but it is a way to transfer funds from the wage to the book budget. This is not a bad thing. Donors feel they have helped the library, the book sale prolongs the useful life of the book, and the library can buy more books.

Selling donated books can cause a public relations problem. Donors living in the area sometimes find books in the book sale that were donated by friends or relatives, or that they themselves had given to the library. This often causes disappointment when they feel that the books they gave were not appreciated by the library. Selling books over the Internet ensures that the books leave the library's geographical area and are less likely to arouse ill feeling from donors. Informing donors at the outset that books may be sold if not added to the library is the best way to overcome donor dissatisfaction when books are sold, but it is not always understood when the books are given that they become the property of the library and that not every book

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is pertinent to the library's collections.

Sometimes duplicate rare, collectible books are weeded by the library. It is not always possible to know the value of rare books. Markets change, prices rise and fall. Online auction sites offer an alternative to posting online for a set price. Online auctions are very well organized. They offer reserve pricing, minimum bid, special feature advertising, images of the book online, variable time at auction, all the services that one would expect from a live auction. Auctions charge small fees for options such as placing the item on a featured page that gives greater exposure, or protection from low bids by using minimum bid and reserve price. A small percentage of the sale may be charged when the item sells. In this way the library can ascertain demand for a book and can obtain a just price. If the library does not want to sell an offering for less than a certain amount the book will remain unsold unless the bids exceed the reserve price. Often it is surprising how high, or how low the price that a book brings at the auction.

Operating an Internet book sale opens up the world of book selling to librarians. Many libraries sell their surpluses to the public, to dealers or through some intermediary. The books eventually reach the marketplace where their prices double or triple. The Internet allows the library to increase revenues with little increased expense. At the same time, the library's awareness of other sources for purchasing hard to find titles grows. Libraries throughout the coun-

try buy out of print books, often at inflated prices. The Internet has caused prices to fall or to stabilize and to make librarians aware of the fair market price for a given title. Shopping on the Internet for these titles has improved because of the increased familiarity with how the market works that is gained by operating a book store on the Net. New reliable vendors in far away places can be found when dealing books over the Internet. Foreign purchases bought with a purchase card avoid the currency exchange costs and delays of the past. International shipping is as fast as domestic shipping and one hardly notices a difference between foreign and domestic fill times.

Here are some helpful tips when you begin your sale. A thousand books on the Internet will generate about one sale per day, every day of the year. Once the inventory is up maintenance is key. Always be adding new titles and removing sold titles. Carefully select, price and flag all titles in your Internet store and shelve them together in a secure area by an identification number so they are easily found when an order arrives. Encourage all sales to be conducted via email. Most sites send email notification of an order, but sometimes customers call or email directly. Email sales leave an audit trail if you archive email and print and file orders. One of the most critical elements is to carefully train those who describe, price and post books on the Internet. Books awaiting payment should have all pa-

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Many sites provide this ordering and shipping documentation when an order is placed. Be prepared to make adjustments when communication and processing errors occur. There are many details that need to be learned by doing. Buyer dissatisfaction is rare and usually caused by an error on the seller's side. Be liberal and kind in making adjustments; they are the teacher in book selling. Learn to package and ship carefully to protect and speed the book to its destination. Make the customer happy.

Wages are the principle cost incurred by Internet sales operations. Data entry, accounting, shipping and handling, stocking, and inventory maintenance, all cost employee wages. Libraries are not usually considered profit and loss operations and so we don't always measure all the expenses when we decide to start an Internet book store. It is important to account for the activities and the number of workers required to carry out all the tasks, and to be committed to supply the personnel. Books must be priced, described, entered online, wrapped and shipped and accounting records kept for auditors. Customers

perwork inside them while they await payment and shipping.

correspond via email, telephone, or post, and someone must carry on the communication, usually a professional, experienced staff person who oversees the operation. We entered the Internet book trade gradually, experimenting with the earliest Ebusinesses, and even posting to our own Website. Our success has been modest, but we continue to improve our procedures and to increase our sales.

Meeting the responsibility of prolonging the useful life of books that the library decides not to add is an important part of librarianship and should be given adequate attention and resources from the library administration. If the support is available the Internet book sale is one good way to fulfil that responsibility.

Internet Book Selling Tools: <<http://www.addall.com/>>
<<http://dogbert.abebooks.com/>> <<http://bibliofind.com/>>
<<http://www.bookfinder.com/>> <<http://www.chapitre.com/>>
<<http://21NORTHMAIN.COM/>>
<<http://www.alibris.com/cgi-bin/taxis/searcher>>
<<http://www.worldbookdealers.com/home/>>

Currency Converter: <<http://www.xe.net/ucc/>>

Shipping: <<http://www.uspsglobal.com/welcome.htm>>

Bet You Missed It

Press Clippings — In the News — Carefully Selected by Your Crack Staff of News Sleuths

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THERE'S NO FREE LUNCH, OR IS THERE?

by **Pamela M. Rose** (University at Buffalo)

Even though genome sequencing data can be accessed without charge through **GenBank**, a public database run by the **National Institutes of Health (NIH)**, NIH scientists are negotiating terms to set up access to a **Celera Genomics** genome database to the tune of up to \$15,000/user/year. **National Cancer Institute (NCI)** director **Richard Klausner**, whose staffers ran an informal evaluation, sees no legal or ethical problem in using public funds to acquire data freely available elsewhere if it is cost-effective and valuable.

See — **Eliot Marshall**, "NIH Considers Paying to Use Private Database" in *Science*, p. 223, Jan. 12, 2001.

THE REFRESH THAT DOESN'T PAUSE

by **Pamela M. Rose** (University at Buffalo)

Four months and 3000 pages later, two **Stanford** computer scientists concluded in their analysis of 270 popular sites that dot-com sites were refreshed significantly more often than those run by government and university sites.

See — "Fresh and Stale on the Web" in NetWatch section edited by **Jocelyn Kaiser**, *Science*, p.215, Jan. 12, 2001.

SMASH GLASS FOR WOMEN

by **Pamela M. Rose** (University at Buffalo)

Male representatives from nine top U.S. Research Universities met at **MIT** in early February and pledged to smash the glass ceiling that hinders women from advancing at their institutions. A major focus of the discussion was to quantify the problem, and all agreed to gather data, to work to improve the situation at their institutions, and to further discussions tentatively slated for 2002.

See — **Andrew Lawler**, "College Heads Pledge to Remove Barriers," in *Science* p.806, Feb. 2, 2001.

TAKE IT TO THE BANK

by **Pamela M. Rose** (University at Buffalo)

Pharmacogenomics, the tailoring of drugs to a person's genetic profile, must overcome scientific and ethical obstacles before it becomes a reality. **First Genetic Trust Inc.** of Deerfield Park, IL, hopes to alleviate the obstacle of confidentiality of an individual's genetic data by acting as an intermediary between patients and researchers. The company would store a person's genetic data in its confidential database and use the Internet to ensure informed consent before allowing dissemination of that data to clinical researchers. The **Trust** is teaming up with the **Memorial Sloan-Kettering Cancer Center** to test the scheme in a protocol involving genetic counseling for 50 women with genetic mutations putting them at high risk for breast cancer. Critics cite worries that the third-party scheme could turn out to be more complex than the present system of controlling access to medical data.

See — **Eliot Marshall**, "Company Plans to Bank Human DNA Profiles" in *Science* p.575, Jan. 26, 2001.

IMPOSSIBLE PHYSICS

by **Pamela M. Rose** (University at Buffalo)

Physicist **John Hubisz** concludes that today's physics textbooks are deplorable, plagued with errors, irrelevant photographs, experiments that could not work, and diagrams representing impossible situations. One egregious text confuses "force" and "acceleration" in describing gravity's effect on an object. The problem is that in-house teams write the texts with no individual accountable for the final product. The complete report can be found at www.psr-online.org/curriculum/book.html.

See — "Physics Texts Found Wanting" in Random Samples section edited by **Constance Holden**, in *Science* p.587, Jan. 26, 2001.