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Rob Withers

Miami University of Ohio, rwithers@lib.muohio.edu

Rob Richards

University of Colorado Law Library, rrichard@stripe.colorado.edu

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A Decade of Change — A Study of Acquisitions Positions in Libraries

by **Rob Withers** (Assistant to the Dean, and University Librarian, Miami University of Ohio)
<rwithers@lib.muohio.edu>

Column Editor: **Rob Richards** (Technical Services Librarian, University of Colorado Law Library, Federal Depository Library 0074-C, 402 UCB, Fleming Law Building, Rm 190, 2405 Kittredge Loop Drive, Boulder, CO 80309-0402; Phone: 303-492-2706; Fax: 303-492-2707)
<r-richard@stripe.Colorado.EDU> <http://www.Colorado.EDU/Law/lawlib/rr.htm>

A Decade of Change

The past decade has been a time of profound change for acquisitions librarianship. During the early 1990s, acquisitions modules began to be incorporated into integrated library systems such as **NOTIS** and **Innovative Interfaces**. As these ILS modules appeared, many departments began to automate their ordering and receiving, while others switched from an automated acquisitions system they had previously used to a new system which was part of an integrated system adopted by their library.

In 1993, the World Wide Web emerged. The rapid development of Web publishing has challenged libraries and librarians to develop new skills and provide new services. As many print and CD-ROM products became available on the World Wide Web, libraries were confronted with the need to understand technical issues well enough to negotiate and interpret sometimes complex licensing agreements. By the end of the decade, a significant portion of many libraries' budgets was devoted to procuring online resources. In addition, the growing acceptance of the World Wide Web as a medium of communication and information exchange means that libraries and library departments may be expected to develop Web sites which contain contact information, descriptions of services, and other information. These changes create a demand for library staff proficient in understanding and creating information resources.

In attempting to provide services caused by the emergence of the World Wide Web, libraries have been pressured to create some new positions and re-allocated some old ones. A cursory glance at recent job advertisements reveals an abundance of jobs which were less common or even non-existent just a decade ago. In addition to electronic resources and metadata librarians, a cursory glance at advertisements in recent issues of *College and Research Libraries News* reveals a number of job titles scarcely imaginable several years ago: (Numeric/geospatial Data Librarian (November 1998); Web Applications Developer (November 1998); Digital Projects Librarian (December 1998); Information Commons Librarian (December 1998); Virtual Reading Room Librarian (January 2000); Academic Technology Librarian (February 2000); Digital Services Coordinator (March 2000); Librarian for Distributive Learning (April 2000); Outreach Librarian (May 2000); Digital Initiatives Coordinator (May 2000). These posi-

tions are emerging at a time when many libraries do not enjoy significant budget increases, which means that libraries must eliminate or re-write existing positions to make room for new ones. Many of us who have worked in the field of acquisitions librarianship know first hand of instances when a technical services position was re-allocated to deal with the need to develop new Internet resources or teach our end users how to effectively use existing ones.

Overview of the Study

Acquisitions librarianship, as a distinct specialty, is a specialization most often found in academic libraries. Accordingly, this study will review job advertisements for acquisitions librarians which appeared in *College and Research Libraries News* to measure the impact of these changes on the field of acquisitions librarianship. To do so, this study will compare job duties and qualifications in advertisements from 1988-1990, before the proliferation of acquisitions modules of integrated library systems and the development of the World Wide Web, with the job duties and qualifications with advertisements after those changes, from 1998-2000. Positions which were re-advertised or advertised more than once were counted only once.

This sampling includes positions for whom one of the primary responsibilities is monographic acquisitions. Such positions include acquisitions department heads, acquisitions section heads, acquisitions coordinators, or monographic acquisitions librarians with other responsibilities including serials, collection development, reference and instruction. However, positions listed as "Technical Services Librarians" or "Technical Services Coordinator," and therefore focus on multiple areas of technical services, were not included, nor were AUL-level positions. For each position sampled, a list of job duties listed, required qualifications, preferred qualifications, and job title were recorded and compared.

Changing technologies and management philosophies have placed pressure on libraries to accomplish new tasks often without a corresponding increase in new resources. This brief study will see to what extent job advertisements indicate that they have dealt with these pressures by incorporating new duties into acquisitions positions. In addition, the number of positions advertised might indicate whether or not acquisitions jobs are being re-allocated into other areas of specialization.

Changes in Duties and Pre-requisites

Advertisements from 1998-2000 were more likely to emphasize cooperation or collaboration and less likely to stress supervision. Supervisory skills were listed as a requirement in 35% of advertisements from 1998-2000, compared with 43% of those from 1988-1990. Also, 30% of job advertisements from 1988-1990 specifically mentioned supervision of staff, compared with only 23% of advertisements specifically mentioning supervision of staff during 1998-2000. Interpersonal skills and communication were mentioned as requirements more frequently in 1988-1990 (40% and 52%, respectively), than in 1998-2000 (23% and 45%, respectively). Bibliographic skills, which is listed in 4% of jobs from 1988-1990, ceased to be mentioned by the end of the decade.

Previous experience, additional degrees, and professional activities remained roughly steady. Professional activity is required in 16% of jobs from 1988-1990, but 13% of jobs from 1998-2000. In 1988-1990, 73% of jobs required prior experience in technical services, while 71% required such experience in 1998-2000. However, the average number of years of prior technical services required has slowly dropped from 4.2 years to 2.26 years. Requirements for prior library experience (regardless of department) dropped from 23% in 1988-1990 to 22% in 1998-2000, with the average number of years required remaining constant at three years. Interest in a second master's degrees and foreign language ability was constant, with 13% of advertisements listing this additional degrees as being preferred or required for acquisitions positions. At least one foreign language was required for 16% of positions in both 1988-1990 and 1998-2000. But where 12% of jobs in 1988-2000 listed knowledge of a foreign language as preferred in 1988-1990, only 6% did so in 1998-2000.

Creativity, initiative, and problem-solving abilities jumped from prerequisites in only 10% of advertisements in 1988-1990 to 19% in 1998-2000. Service orientation, mentioned in only 3% of postings from 1988-1990, appears as a requirement in 16% of 1998-2000 postings. Familiarity with integrated library systems, required by 46% of jobs in 1998-2000, is a slight increase over the 24% of jobs requiring familiarity with automated acquisitions systems in 1988-1990. Familiarity with computers and computing software remains roughly steady, with 10% of jobs in 1988-1990

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requiring it, and 13% of jobs in 1998-2000, and 3% of jobs in 1998-2000 requiring candidates to have experience in managing automated systems.

Although not widespread, several new prerequisites began to appear in position advertisements from 1998-2000. These include: license management/negotiation (9%), familiarity with digital/electronic publishing trends (23%), experience with digital information (3%), and knowledge of SGML, HTML, or ability to create Web pages (desired in 6% of advertisements).

Job Duties

No advertisement can provide a comprehensive list of duties, but the duties that are chosen can reflect current priorities. Supervision of staff is less frequently mentioned explicitly, with 30% of advertisements from 1988-1990 mentioning it, but only 23% of advertisements from 1998-2000. Drafting or reviewing procedures experiences a slight drop, from 9% to 6%.

Monitoring or managing budgets remains steady with 30% in 1988-1990 and 32% in 1998-2000, and vendor relations or management increases from 21% of advertisements to 32% in 1998-2000.

Duties mentioned only in 1998-2000 include: managing/negotiating licenses or contracts (26%), monitoring trends in digital/elec-

tronic publications (16%), acquiring electronic resources (6%), and serving as liaison to faculty for electronic resources (3%).

Job Titles and Job Availability

The number of acquisitions positions also drops, from 65 to 28. The number of jobs acquisitions/collection development librarians remains constant (8% in 1988-1990, 7% in 1998-2000), while job titles involving acquisitions/serials jump from 8% to 21%, perhaps reflecting an increase in mergers of serials and acquisitions departments. Jobs titles such as "Head of Acquisitions," "Head of Acquisitions Department," "Acquisitions Librarian—Department Head," and "Chief of Acquisitions" drop slightly from 37% to 32%, and "Acquisitions Librarian" plunges from 28% to 3% of job titles mentioned in advertisements. "Acquisitions Coordinator" or "Coordinator of Acquisitions," which do not appear in 1988-1990, make up 14% of job titles advertised in 1998-2000. The declining number of available jobs, the increase in the percentage of job titles indicating responsibility for other areas of librarianship, and the decrease in the number of job titles reflecting department head or unit head status, all suggest a flattening of the hierarchy in acquisitions positions.

Conclusion

Changes in acquiring and disseminating information technology have dramatically altered the ways in which libraries function. Libraries expend a significant portion of their budgets to subscribe to online resources, and must

find ways to afford not only online resources, but the staff needed to ensure accessibility to these resources. At the same time, many libraries are consciously making efforts to flatten their hierarchies. Changes in job advertisements for acquisitions librarians over the past decade perhaps reflect these trends. Acquisitions positions require slightly less prior experience than previously. Moreover, they are less likely to require supervisory ability or explicitly mention supervision of staff; instead, they more often tend to mention collegiality and teamwork as required skills and job duties for acquisitions positions. Not surprisingly, there are few positions whose job titles emphasize department head status. At the same time, there are more positions which combine monographic acquisitions with serials or collection development, and several positions are now described as co-ordinators, rather than department heads. Technological change has also impacted acquisitions librarianship, with advertisements now seeking the ability to negotiate licenses, work with automated systems, and monitor digital publishing trends.

Acquisitions librarian positions have sometimes changed to absorb duties needed to cope with technological change. However, the significant drop in the number of positions advertised, at a time when new types of positions appear to be proliferating and when the number of positions advertised seems to be constant, suggests that positions previously allocated to acquisitions may be allocated elsewhere.

And They Were There

Reports of Meetings — SALALM

Column Editor: **Sever Bordeianu** (University of New Mexico)
<sbordeia@unm.edu>

46th Seminar on the Acquisition of Latin American Library Materials (SALALM)
"Latin American Identities: Race, Ethnicity, Gender and Sexuality"
May 26-29, 2001, Arizona State University Libraries, Tempe, Arizona

Report by **Claire-Lise BÉnaud** and **Sharon Moynahan**
(University of New Mexico General Library)

"*Latin American Identities: Race, Ethnicity, Gender and Sexuality*" was the focus of the **46th Seminar on the Acquisition of Latin American Library Materials (SALALM)** held May 26-29, 2001 in Tempe, Arizona. Sponsored by **Arizona State University Libraries**, the conference, which hosted librarians and book dealers from the United States, Latin America, and Europe, examined the theoretical and practical impact of the theme topics on library collections and services. Participants also used the meeting as an opportunity to discuss the nuts and bolts issues that affect libraries and book sellers locally, regionally, and around the globe. Conference organizer **Orchid Mazurkiewicz** and

her local arrangements committee set the stage for an outstanding conference that explored all aspects of library activity. At the book exhibits, librarians and vendors explored publishing activity, discussed commercial issues, and forged the business and personal relationships so important to acquisitions and collections. Committees on cataloging, reference, library cooperation and other important topics met throughout the conference. Regional affiliations covering California, the Midwest, Southeast and Northeast also met.

SALALM president **Victor Torres** of the **Universidad de Puerto Rico** opened the conference and welcome this year's participants. After introducing the conference theme, he

thanked the host institution. **Sherrie Schmidt**, Dean of **University Libraries at Arizona State University**, warmly welcomed the participants and encouraged them to visit the University's libraries and the city's numerous museums and cultural attractions in defiance of outside temperatures which topped 109 degrees.

Following these warm welcomes, **Cecilia Puerto** announced the winner of the **José Toribio Medina Award**. The award is given annually, if merited, to SALALM members for outstanding bibliographic or reference works that support Latin American Studies. This year the recipient was **Ilana Sonntag Blay** for *Twentieth-Century Poetry from Spanish America: an Index to Spanish Language and Bilingual Anthologies*. Three **Enlace** travel awards recipients were also introduced to the assembled membership. **Enlace** is a SALALM program designed to bring librarians from Latin America to the conference. They were **Eloisa Vargas**, Librarian at the

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