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The Collection Development Role of the Library Liaison-A View from Both Sides of the Fence

Jack G. Montgomery

Western Kentucky University Libraries, jack.montgomery@wku.edu

Sean Kinder

Western Kentucky University Libraries

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Book Pricing Update — British Book Prices 2000-2001

by **Tom Loughran** (Manager, Approval Systems Blackwell's Book Services, 6024 SW Jean Road, Bldg. G, Lake Oswego, OR 97035) <tom.loughran@blackwell.com>

What has been mostly speculation in the economic news lately, became a reality in British book publishing last year. In contrast to talk of the possibility of deflation in the US economy, there was an overall drop of 9% in the price of British books treated on **Blackwell's** approval plan last year.

Every year, we do an annual Cost & Coverage Study of the prices of books covered on approval in the previous year. For purposes of the study, the year begins in July and ends in June.

While the decrease was general, one might have missed it, were one, say, a Music Librarian, since Music titles increased 58% over the year. Other areas experiencing an increase, although not as dramatic, were Applied Arts (+11%), Auxiliary Arts (+23%) and Performing Arts (+14%). The Fine Arts, Performing Arts and Architecture experienced a 6% increase. This was balanced by a 6% decrease

(overall) in the Humanities (History, Philosophy, Religion, Folklore and Language). Literature was mixed, with a 4% increase in the average price of a literary text, but a 6% decrease in the average price of a book of criticism. For all of Humanities and Fine Arts, there was a 4% drop in the price of an average book (from 32.07 GBP to 30.82 GBP).

Overall, the price of the average Social Science title dropped 10%, although there was a 14% increase in the prices of both Library Science and Psychology books. Prices for Political Science titles fell 11%, Economics titles fell 11% and Anthropology titles fell 26%.

Titles in the Sciences and Technology fell only slightly less than did Social Science titles. Overall, the drop was 7% (from 55.37 GBP to 51.22 GBP). Within the broad discipline, General Science fell 1%, Biology -7%, Botany -10% and Chemistry -23%. Zoology titles rose 14%, on average, from 49.68 GBP to 56.80

GBP, and there were modest increases of 1% in Physics and Forestry titles. Undoubtedly, the most shocking rise was in the price of an average Dentistry title: from 24.38 GBP to 45.71 GBP, or 87%. Admittedly, there were only 13 titles treated in Dentistry. I am sure the 6% drop in the average price of a Medical book relieved some of the pain.

All of these prices were for books treated on the UK approval plan based in Oxford, England. It is instructive to note that the average price of a UK origin title treated on the US approval plan last year was \$64.05. Using the exchange rate of \$1.54 = 1 GBP, the average price of UK origin title sourced from the UK was \$61.35, or 4% less. After the first of the year, I'll review the average prices of both US and UK origin books to see where we stand.

The Collection Development Role of the Library Liaison: A View from Both Sides of the Fence

by **Sean Kinder** (Humanities and Social Sciences Librarian, Western Kentucky University) and **Jack G. Montgomery** (Coordinator of Collection Services, Western Kentucky University, Library Automation and Technical Services, 309 Cravens Library Complex W.K.U. Libraries, One Big Red Way, Bowling Green, KY 42101) <Jack.Montgomery@wku.edu>

This article explores the complementary role of collection development in the library liaison process as exemplified here at WKU and offers the perspective of the library's Collection Development Officer and the viewpoint of a librarian new to the role. Hopefully, this article will provide insights into the role of the library liaison in the collection development process.

Part One: The Role of The Collection Development Librarian

Each librarian in the **WKU** Department of Public Services has a series of academic departments and/or programs assigned to them for liaison services. Their orientation to this role is given by the Collection Services Coordinator, who works cross departmentally although officially assigned to the Department of Library Automation and Technical Services. The Collection Services Coordinator also coordinates the activities of the library liaisons, administers the Collection Development program, manages the acquisitions process and acts as a program liaison to the Afro-American Studies Program as well. One advantage of this cross-departmental position has been to create enhanced interdepartmental commu-

nication and promote better understanding of the integrated nature of our roles, needs and policies. This cross departmental position also provides a seamless link between the entire process of materials acquisition for the library. This position was established almost two years ago and has already been heralded as a positive organizational decision.

The Collection Services Coordinator (hereafter called CSC) establishes the overall materials budget and, in a nutshell, makes certain that the Collection Development policy and liaison program functions as intended. As an example, on a biannual basis, the CSC and the appropriate library liaisons meet with the departmental and program representatives from each college to exchange reports and information, give and receive feedback and plan the future of Collection Development at the University. These meetings establish and maintain that vital communications link so important to effective relations between the academic departments and the library. Another role for the CSC is to assist the liaison in learning to interpret the information on orders and fund expenditures available to each librarian and faculty member on the library's TOPCAT in-

tegrated library system employing the Endeavor Voyager acquisitions/serials subsystem. The role of the CSC has a large educational component as he must communicate with all parties involved in the Collection Development process. Part of that communication process is to orient new WKU librarians to their role in collection development. As an example, here is a list of the basic definitions and instructions given to each liaison at the time of their initial orientation to their role as liaison in the **WKU** system.

Definition of a WKU Library Liaison: The **WKU Library Liaison's** collection development role is a relational one established either formally or informally by the liaison for the specific purpose of seeking input and guidance and input on the selection of library materials. Liaisons at **WKU Libraries** are assigned and coordinate their roles through their supervisor and the Collection Services Coordinator. It should be added that the departmental or program liaison also provides reference services, bibliographic instruction and assists the teaching faculty with their research as requested.

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There are several aspects to the library liaison relationship which are as follows:

1. Departmental or subject liaisons should begin by becoming familiar with the research and teaching interests of the faculty assigned to them. (Tip: use an index card deck/file for each of the faculty assigned to you containing the above information plus information on current and past projects, personal interest and background information on each faculty member.)

2. Liaisons should make visits to the respective departmental representative or faculty member. Generally once a semester is sufficient. As an example, if you have a new faculty member or departmental representative, make an appointment and visit that person to explain who you are and the services you can provide as well as the formal relationship, the budgeting process, fund structure, forms used in the process and other useful information. Often, you will find that faculty new to teaching may not know anything about you or the resources you can provide. It is a great opportunity to establish a good working relationship for the future.

3. Liaisons should provide not only vendor supplied slips, but flyers, ads for serials or serial samples and other materials to keep the faculty rep current on what's being published. The Collection Services Coordinator (or CSC) can help you with this role with the catalog and clipping service provided by his office. You should also alert your faculty rep to any new online resources in their field. You will find that this service is greatly appreciated. It makes a lot of difference in the faculty's perception of your abilities if you know about a new publication when he or she makes that first inquiry.

4. Liaisons should, on a regular basis, inform the departmental representative as to the status of the existing funds and the timetable for their expenditure. If you need help with this, please ask the CSC. The CSC will be glad to help or to explain any aspects or address any problems regarding the funds with your departmental representative.

5. Liaisons should be versed in, and be able to relay information on how we evaluate, acquire or weed the collection. Again, the CSC can help you with this aspect of your job. As an example, if a faculty member wants to share the cost of say, a set of encyclopedia with another department, you should assist him or her as a go-between. You become valuable and respected by your willingness to go that extra mile.

6. Liaisons should be familiar with the latest copy of our collection policy. The departmental representative should have a copy of our policy or at least the part that pertains to their department. You should also be familiar with the Collection Development profiles maintained with vendors like Blackwell's. You can actually view our profile on Blackwell's online **Collection Manager Service**. Please let the CSC know if and when you or your de-

partmental representative feel the need to change this profile. If you find this is not the case, contact me and I will help you get the information you need.

7. Ideally, your area of expertise should roughly correlate to that of the academic area to which you are assigned, but you can still become knowledgeable even if that isn't the case. Becoming acquainted with the bibliography of a certain subject is a bit of an effort on your part, but one well worth doing. Along with, let's say, the well-known authors in a field, who is important to your selector? Academics often have a favorite or series of favorite authors or even a particular university press or research institute they consider to be of value. You should also begin to develop a subject awareness of the publishers and new developments in his or her assigned subject area.

8. Liaisons should be able to stay current on curriculum changes and or faculty additions within their subject areas. It is valuable to know who is close to retirement, moving on, being promoted, and so on. Keep an eye out for announcements in the university newsletters for such information. As an example, I once was given an order for an extremely expensive looseleaf service. In the midst, of the process, I learned that the requestor was in two weeks leaving the university and was placing this order as a favor to a former colleague who was its author. In truth, we really had no need for the set and hence, the order was held and then reviewed again at a later date.

9. Liaisons should be aware of the accreditation requirements for new and existing academic programs. This information will be of value during the accreditation visits that will surely come to each department, unless, like Afro-American studies, there will be no accreditation review.

10. Liaisons should be willing to assist faculty proposing a new course offering and the CSC in determining the adequacy of holdings when new courses are proposed. This information will be contained on the "Library Resources" portion of the "Course proposals" and must be reviewed and signed by yourself, the faculty member and the CSC.

11. Liaisons should at least be familiar with the acquisitions process in order to offer bibliographic or other assistance to expedite and/or explain the process. Any of us in Collection Services can show you the process. You might also want to become familiar with the document outlining the "Collection-related Duties of Faculty Representative" of Academic Department to University Libraries. If you do not have a copy, the CSC will be glad to furnish you with as many as you need.

Part Two: The New Library Liaison: A View From the First Year Experience

While most people will remember Janu-

ary 2001 as officially ushering in the new millennium, I will remember it for an altogether different reason — it was the month in which I began my professional career as **Western Kentucky University's** Humanities and Social Sciences librarian. Fresh out of library school and eager to make my mark on the profession, I was prepared to tackle new challenges, put my recently acquired skills to the test, and assume new responsibilities. The latter included, among other things, collection development and serving as a library liaison to faculty representatives. Collection development was not unfamiliar to me, since I had selected materials for an academic library during my stint in library school. Liaison responsibilities, however, had not been required, so this part of my job was new, uncharted territory for me. As a result, I approached this duty with many questions, a lot of curiosity, and a little trepidation. Fortunately, assuming these new responsibilities

was relatively easy, made all the more smooth and painless by **Jack Montgomery's** patient guidance, tutelage, and help. In the remainder of this article, I would like to share some of this assistance with you, along with my own observations and advice, which I hope will be of some help to other new liaisons. Collection Development coordinators may also find this discussion interesting, especially if they are seeking ways to improve or modify their current orientation programs.

My first bit of advice to both coordinators and liaisons would be for them to meet in person as soon as possible. Notice the emphasis on a face-to-face meeting, something that is becoming increasingly rare in the workplace, where it seems that faxes, telephones, and email are the preferred modes of communication. I think this type of tête à tête is important for several reasons. First, it serves as a wonderful icebreaker, allowing coordinators and liaisons to get acquainted, talk a little, and match a name with a face. Second, it sets the tenor for future communications, which will ideally be characterized by a certain level of ease, comfort, and informality. Third and most importantly, it provides both parties the opportunity to learn more about each other — interests, expertise, educational background, and experience — all of which can direct and guide the pair's working relationship and impact collaborative efforts in the future.

If collection development coordinators are the ones to arrange this first meeting, they need not think of it solely in social terms, but as a legitimate opportunity to convey important information. This meeting could be structured to double as a sort of orientation session, with coordinators familiarizing liaisons with policies, procedures, and application programs they will use in their job. This is what occurred during one of my first meetings with **Jack**. I remember that we had the chance to discuss the library's collection development policy, the

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proper method to fill out book slips for ordering, and the basic operations of the acquisition software program, which I could use to monitor the financial status of my different accounts.

Soon after this first meeting, coordinators could introduce liaisons, as Jack did with me, to other library faculty or staff who may be able to help them carry out their duties. I am thinking specifically of individuals such as the serials coordinator, acquisitions staff, and catalogers, who could explain, among other things, the procedure for requesting, terminating, or withdrawing items; how to check their status, including price, frequency, content, and scope; how to interpret the meaning of unfamiliar acronyms, terms, or bibliographic tools that may be unfamiliar — standing order, ISSN, OCLC, or MARC. I know from my personal experience that I have called upon all these individuals on several occasions to assist me with some problem, request, or inquiry. I have been continually impressed with their savvy, skills, experience, and institutional knowledge, and I would advise any liaison to make their acquaintance and learn from their considerable expertise.

At this time, coordinators could help new liaisons by arranging or suggesting they meet with their predecessors, but only if these latter individuals are competent, readily available, and receptive to the idea. My meeting with my predecessor, for instance, was especially informative and of immeasurable value. I found her to be extremely polite, encouraging, and full of sound, practical advice. She suggested numerous resources to consider during the selection process; she also discussed ways to organize and sort book slips and offered other valuable short cuts to help me make better, more efficient use of my time. This type of information, while helpful, was relatively inconsequential compared to the other things she told me — the most helpful being insights into my faculty representatives. I learned about faculty members' attitudes, behaviors, personality traits, and idiosyncrasies, not to mention work habits and priorities. I learned, for example, who may need to be prodded and coaxed into returning book slips; who is notorious for missing deadlines; or which approach to use with certain faculty member to gain their trust and cooperation.

After they have gleaned this information, liaisons can turn their attention to actually meeting their faculty representatives. If coordinators know faculty members well, they could take this opportunity to introduce them to liaisons, but at this juncture, I feel that liaisons are ready to assume a more active, self-sufficient role and can initiate their own meetings. This is not to say, however, that liaisons will no longer need coordinators or elicit their help on occasion, but it does mean that the relationship has entered a new phase, one that is characterized by the liaison's increasing autonomy, independence and self-reliance.

Acting on their own, liaisons will want to approach faculty representatives tactfully,

stressing the importance of an initial meeting, but not doing so overzealously or in an intrusive way. Liaisons should keep in mind that the logistics of meetings can be challenging in their own right. Simply trying to coordinate work schedules can be problematic, especially in light of faculty members' sometimes fluid office hours, which can fluctuate dramatically due to research, travel, service, or other professional commitments. Liaisons should equally be warned that their desire for a meeting may not be reciprocated, or it may garner only a lukewarm response from those faculty members who regard their library responsibilities as unimportant or a low priority.

If liaisons are unsure about the best way to initiate contact with faculty members, they may want to try what I did, which was to send a brief email message introducing myself, asking representatives if they would like to meet in person to discuss their accounts. Overall, the response I received was positive and cooperative, with most contacts extending a cordial invitation for me to visit them in their office. Only one of my representatives failed to acknowledge the message, but he later apologized for this oversight and was receptive to future meetings, which have been highly productive and congenial.

Once faculty and liaisons meet, they have an excellent opportunity to discuss a range of issues that will affect their working relationship and how they attain their common goals. During my first meeting, for example, I asked

faculty representatives about their academic pursuits and areas of interest, even asking them to provide me key words, concepts, or subject headings (if they knew them) to assist me in selecting relevant resources and materials. Finances and record keeping were also frequent topics of discussion, and a few of the topics discussed included the amount allocated to each account, its distribution, the way it should be spent, and the frequency with which I would report the balances to representatives. Still other areas that could be broached are inadequacies or superfluity of materials in the collection, weeding, withdrawal, or replacement of titles, or the possibility of investing in alternative electronic or digital resources.

Finally, during this or subsequent meetings, liaisons and faculty representatives are encouraged to set aside some time to discuss all those unexpected events and developments that can, and often do, impact collection development, making it the interesting activity it is. I am speaking of things such as the possibility of financial cutbacks, windfalls, gift items, disasters, accidents, ever-changing deadlines, personnel adjustments, and policy and procedure modifications. When these and other events happen, and they inevitably will, they can seem insurmountable. But if all parties — whether they be liaisons, faculty representatives, or coordinators — have developed proactive, collaborative ways to solve them, they will be richly rewarded for their efforts, with substantial benefits and gratifying results.

Group Therapy — Checking for Duplicates

Column Editor: **Rosann Bazirjian** (Assistant Dean for Technical & Access Services, University Libraries, The Pennsylvania State University, 507 Paterno Library, University Park, PA 16802-1812; Phone: 814-865-0404; Fax: 814-865-3665) <rvb9@psulias.psu.edu>

GRYPE: (submitted anonymously)

I work in an Approval Plan Unit of the Acquisitions Department at a large research library. We currently search our new receipts in our online catalog to make sure that they do not duplicate any titles already in the collection or currently on order. We check the catalog by both ISBN and title in order to rule out this duplication. My question: do we need to search by both ISBN and title? In a random check of 500 titles, we discovered only 3 duplicates that were caught because we checked both elements. Is that sufficient cause to keep checking when the checking is so time consuming? Wouldn't it make more sense to only do a single search (ISBN or title), but not both?

RESPONSE: (Submitted by Leah Black, Assistant Acquisitions Librarian, Michigan State University)

While it is certainly necessary to avoid duplication to the collection when processing approval plans, searching the local online catalog by both title and ISBN for each new receipt is unnecessary. A title search alone should suffice.

At Michigan State University we subscribe to the OCLC PromptCat service for our major Yankee Book Peddler approval plans. Duplicate detection through a title search in our online catalog has proven to be very reliable; approval plan processors know that if a title search retrieves more than one record a thorough investigation is in order. Processors for the dozen or so other approval plans (non-PromptCat plans) follow a similar procedure.

Approval profiles that are specific and well documented and a thorough understanding of the approval plan vendor's procedures also

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