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

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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, Bidg. 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@wk.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 communication 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 department 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 integrated library system employing the En- deavor 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.

continued on page 78

Against the Grain / December 2001 - January 2002 <http://www.against-the-grain.com> 77
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 a new 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 departmental 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 area. 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 newsletter for such information. As an example, I was once 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 his 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 African-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 explain the process. Any of us in Collection Services can show you the process. You might also want to become familiar with 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 January 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 my experience 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 continued on page 79
Group Therapy — Checking for Duplicates

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GRIPE: (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 already 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

continued on page 80