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On The Street-Out of Print Searching on the World Wide Web

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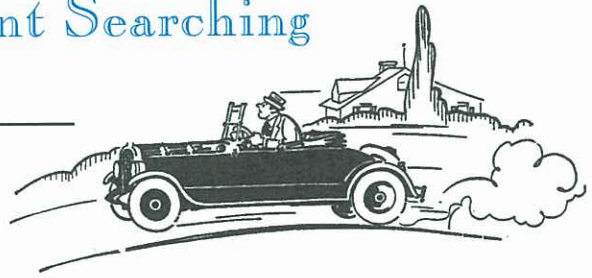
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On The Street — Out of Print Searching on the World Wide Web

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by **Eamon T. Fennessy** (The Copyright Group)
Assisted by: **Linda Albright** (Winthrop College) and **Kathy Miraglia** (Catholic University)

Do you want to get a good discussion going at your next library-oriented cocktail party? Just raise the topic of how to handle the problems of "Out-of-Print" (OP) titles. I did ... for a survey to be reported in this column.. and in no time at all I had about thirty librarians advising me about OP. Here's a list of those who said I could identify them as participants. There were several more who couldn't give me permission to mention them by name, or quote them.

Debbie WILCOX- New Hampshire College
Dawn VAN ARK- City of HOPE
Barbara STERLING- Dartmouth College
Elsie PRITCHARD- Morehead State University
Marilyn NG- University of California, Berkeley
Kent MULLINER- Ohio University
Pam MATTHEWS- Gettysburg College
Helen MACK- Lehigh University
Ned KRAFT- Smithsonian Institution
Mary H. KAY- Humboldt State University
Steve JOHNSON- Clemson University
Annette JOHN- Washington & Lee University
Vince JENKINS- Maricopa County Community College
Emily HUTTON- Colgate University
Sarah HILL- University of Iowa
Bernard HELMS- Andrews University
Sharon HARTMANN- (No affiliation given)
Kim GILBERT- Grinnell College
David FISHER- University of California, San Diego
Daniel EVANS- Lafayette College
Douglas DUCHIN- Baruch College
Rebecca CALIHAN- Longwood College
Meg CAIRO- New York State Library, Albany
Laurie ANDERSON- Maryland Institute, College of Art
Marilyn ADAM- Viterbo College

To get going we first addressed OP by asking how often, and what procedures were used to handle OP? Most respondents used terms like "continually or frequently" in answering this one. Institutions usually want to act quickly to find the titles. There are several accepted procedures, but most started with a basic search on the Internet with a "want" list posted on [ABEbooks.com](http://www.abebooks.com) or a similar source. This report reflects the success most had with this source. The next method requires sending a list to vendors asking them to search for you. This is especially helpful where foreign titles are concerned. Quite a few librarians resort to foreign vendors for these overseas searches. A third way is to search Web sites and simply check periodically to see whether that site reports the title turning up. Curiously, if time is of the essence, some librarians report they will often not offer the search to an outside vendor, but will search themselves since they feel they can do it more quickly and less expensively.

Next we asked whether the Web was used as a "first resort" and if so which sources were the most popular. There were very few who used non-Web sources exclusively. Most used the Web as the prime resource with the following listed in order of popularity: **Bibliofind** and **MXBookfinder** were tied for first place.

Interloc
ABE
Amazon.com
Bibliocity
Outofprint.com
Blake's
Advanced Bookfinder
AltaVista

PS. **David Marshall** at **Georgetown** also offers the following for French titles: **SLAM (Syndicat National de la Librairie Ancienne et Moderne** — <http://www.franceantiqu.fr/slam/search.htm>. **Sarah Hill** of the **University of Iowa** expects to use "[alibris.com](http://www.alibris.com)" when it is available.

In those instances where responsibility for a search was given to a vendor, the most-often-mentioned sources were, in alphabetical order:

Antiqbook (Dutch titles)
Blackwell's
Boekenvondst (Dutch & Belgian)
BookLook
A.B.Bookman
Coutts
C.Dickens
Eastern Book Co.
Midwest's OP Service
Oldhand Books
Palmer's Books (San Diego)
Powell's Technical Books
Zentraten Verzeichnis Antiquarischer (German)

Our third question asked, "How does the Web "hit rate" compare with non-Web sources? There were many enthusiastic responses here. The trend is definitely to use the Web. Some liked the fact that you could immediately be advised whether a source had the title or not. Speed was the key. Most respondents used three or four Web sites but some used only one, with a single back-up source in the event the first didn't pan out. **Elsie Pritchard** of **Morehead State** reported a 50% hit rate for both Web and non-Web, but did admit the non-Web sites were given longer search leeway. **Mary Kay** at **Humboldt State** applauded the Web and reported a hit rate of "perhaps 90%." (Mary uses **ABE** and **Bibliofind**.) **Steve Johnson** at **Clemson** did well with **Interloc** and **ABE** at a 75% success rate. **Emily Hutton** at **Colgate** said the Web was "vastly superior." She loved "the fact that you can

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comparison shop across dealers to get what you want for the price you want." (Emily's choices on the Web are **BiblioFind** and **Advanced Book Finder**.) **Bernard Helms** of **Andrews University** also backed up Emily when he said, "Now with the Web I get 80% of the titles I'm looking for and GOOD Prices." (Bernard uses **Interloc** and **Bibliocity**.)

Our fourth question asked: "If payment for the service is required, excluding the cost of the title itself, how is that payment made?" It seems libraries are not asked for any fee except for the cost of the work if it is found. I understand the usual cost of Web site information is paid for by the vendors whose wares are listed at the site. Generally librarians have not had to make a payment for service beyond the cost of the title sought. As for the payment for the successful searches, some librarians prefer to send a purchase order and pay from an invoice. If prepayment is required, librarians find it convenient to pay by credit card to avoid the delay of writing a check, mailing it, etc. Internally, the department ordering the title is charged accordingly.

When a vendor reports a successful search, **Helen Mack** at **Lehigh** says she checks with the requester regarding price and if that is too high, the request becomes one for an Interlibrary Loan rather than OP. **David Fisher** at **UC, San Diego** states, "We do not use vendors who charge up front for searches."

In our fifth and last question, we asked for other comments on this topic and got some interesting responses. At **Dartmouth**, **Barbara Sterling** responded, "the Web sources are useful but time-consuming. It is a title by title search." (Does anyone have advice on how to overcome this?) **Meg Cairo** at **New York State Library, Albany** says "Web has changed everything, made finding OP part of regular search streams."

Only one librarian commented on the condition of OP titles. "Reading copy condition books" are acceptable. **Marilyn Ng** at **UC, Berkeley** wrote, "Science titles and conference proceedings have always been difficult to locate in the OP market. We find that going direct to the author/editor of a book can be rather successful with the needed book being donated to the collection."

Another accolade for the Web. **Laurie Anderson** of **Maryland Institute. College of Art** says: "Web searching is the only way this one-person acquisitions department would ever have time to search for OP titles regularly." At **Baruch College**, **Doug Duchin** commented that the Web, "works well for us and is much cheaper. The problem is that some OP vendors want credit card payments, which means we cannot use them at all."




Dan Evans at **Lafayette College** said: "The biggest problem we have encountered are smaller dealers who refuse to give their ss numbers, as required by law, to our

controller's office." **Steve Johnson**, **Clemson University**, summed up his comments this way: "The Web has revolutionized the out-of-print business. Now we can obtain many more titles, for much less hassle, much faster, and at a lower price."

In summary, I see several major findings, probably not news to all of us, but noteworthy:

1. The Web technology has changed OP searching.
2. More institutions are resorting to credit card purchases.
3. Some state institutions have difficult-to-implement policies.
4. U.S. titles are easier to find than foreign works.

Thanks to all who found the time to contribute to this column! We couldn't do it without you. 

Biology Bestsellers
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Moynihan, M. *Social Regulation of Competition and Aggression in Animals*. Smithsonian Inst. 1998. \$27.50. Cloth 156098788x

Liebes, Sidney. *Walk through Time: From Stardust to Us: The Evolution of Life on Earth*. John Wiley. 1998. \$29.95. Cloth 0471317004

Frohn, Robert C. *Remote Sensing for Landscape Ecology: New Metric Indicators for Monitoring, Modeling, and Assessment of Ecosystems*. Lewis. 1998. \$69.95. Cloth 1566702755

Helmreich, Stefan, 1966- *Silicon Second Nature: Culturing Artificial Life in A Digital World*. Univ of California. 1998. \$29.95. Cloth. 0520207998

Lincoln, Roger J. *Dictionary of Ecology, Evolution and Systematics*. Cambridge Univ Press 1998 \$29.95 Paper 052143842x

Welch, Margaret, 1961- *Book of Nature: Natural History in The United States, 1825-1875*. Northeastern Univ. 1998. \$50.00. Cloth 1555533426

Biodiversity Dynamics: Turnover of Populations, Taxa, and Communi-

ties, Ed. by Michael L. McKinney. Columbia Univ Press. 1998. \$59.95. Cloth. 0231104146

Gaston, Kevin J. *Biodiversity: An Introduction*. Blackwell Science. 1998. \$24.95. Paper 0632049537


Michod, Richard E. *Darwinian Dynamics: Evolutionary Transitions in Fitness and Individuality*. Princeton Univ Press. 1999. \$45.00. Cloth 0691026998

Restoration Ecology and Sustainable Development, Ed. by Krystyna M. Urbanska. Cambridge Univ Press. 1997. \$80.00. Cloth 0521581605

Mehlman, Maxwell J. *Access to the Genome: The Challenge to Equality*. Georgetown Univ. 1998. \$39.95. Cloth 0878406778

Dewey, Thomas Gregory, 1952- *Fractals in Molecular Biophysics*. Oxford Univ Press. 1997. \$65.00. Cloth 0195084470

Gayon, Jean. *Darwinism's Struggle for Survival: Heredity and the Hypothesis of Natural Selection*. Cambridge Univ Press. 1998. \$95.00. Cloth 0521562503

Warren, Leonard, 1924- *Joseph Leidy: The Last Man Who Knew Everything*. Yale Univ Press. 1998. \$35.00. Cloth 0300073593 

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Send ideas by **June 30, 1999**, to:

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