December 2002

Inside Pandora's Box -- Management of Gifts to Libraries, Part IV, Selling Gifts-in-Kind on Consignment: The University of Iowa Libraries Model

Kathy Wachel
University of Iowa

Follow this and additional works at: <https://docs.lib.purdue.edu/atg>

Part of the [Library and Information Science Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Wachel, Kathy (2002) "Inside Pandora's Box -- Management of Gifts to Libraries, Part IV, Selling Gifts-in-Kind on Consignment: The University of Iowa Libraries Model," *Against the Grain*: Vol. 14: Iss. 6, Article 31.
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.7771/2380-176X.3963>

This document has been made available through Purdue e-Pubs, a service of the Purdue University Libraries. Please contact epubs@purdue.edu for additional information.

Egyptology

One of the world's most important archaeological zones is in danger; not only have looters plundered its treasures, even early archaeologists destroyed valuable information searching for museum pieces. To the rescue is the **Theban Mapping Project**, which aims to create a comprehensive archaeological database of Thebes. Begun in 1978, the **Project** has concentrated on the **Valley of the Kings** over the last decade. The result: a fabulous multimedia **Atlas of the Valley of the Kings**. Explore each burial by manipulating floor plans or watch a film narrated by Egyptologist **Kent Weeks** who also leads a virtual tour of a rare double tomb. Don't forget to browse the many articles, including tomb development, history of the Valley, and mortuary beliefs and practices. — <http://www.thebanmappingproject.com/>.

Entomology

Jan Swammerdam's most notable work is his *Bybel der Natuure* ("The Bible of Nature"), which details incredible insect dissections and reveals his empathy with their existence (ref. his description of a postcoital snail's discomfort!). However, despite his recurrent malaria and financial woes, **Swammerdam's** insatiable and sometimes mystical curiosity led him to discover and refute many other misconceptions of the time, such as **Descartes'** assertion that movement took place following the transmission of fluid "animal spirits" from the brain to the muscles, through the nerves. Also check out the fake "portrait" story! — <http://www.janswammerdam.net/>.

After you've become acquainted with **Swammerdam's** work on insects, it's worth your while to visit **The Bugwood Network**, a clearinghouse for information about forestry, entomology, forest health, and invasive species, and its new image archive, **Insect Images**, where more than 5400 high-resolution digital pics including taxonomy and life history, are freely available for educational and nonprofit use. — <http://www.insectimages.org/> — <http://www.bugwood.org/>.

Global Warming

Rather than try to replace extensive abstracting services like **Web of Science**, **Greenhouse Gas Online** wants to distill the freely available information on cutting edge greenhouse gas science and news, thus providing an up-to-date resource for researchers, students and policymakers debating how to cut emissions of carbon dioxide. Created by **Dave Reay**, an environmental scientist at the University of Edinburgh, the site offers background topics like sources of greenhouse gases and carbon dioxide sinks, as well as links to news stories and articles from over 100 peer reviewed journals. — <http://www.ghgonline.org>.

Microscopy

Did you know that the humble hamburger had its origins with the Russian Tartars in medieval Eurasia? **Molecular Expressions** ("...exploring the world of optics and microscopy") is

an unlikely place to read about the history of burgers and fries, but this wonderful Website is packed with such tidbits that accompany photomicrographs of many different substances. Not just fluff, the scholarly sections offer basic concepts and tutorials on microscopy, Science, Optics and You — a science curriculum package being developed for teachers, students, and parents, and an introduction to the structure of cells and viruses. There is also a Museum of Microscopy, and a "Powers of Ten" java powered page that moves from a view of the Milky Way 10M light years from earth down to the subatomic world of an oak tree just outside the buildings of the Website's originators at the **Optical Microscopy Division of the National High Magnetic Field Laboratory** in Florida. Director and research scientist **Michael W. Davidson's** photomicrography has won more than 40 awards. Lots more... take a look! — <http://micro.magnet.fsu.edu/index.html>.

Statistics

Need to develop a regression model or a simple uncertainty analysis, but don't have the statistical background? Turn to the *Engineering Statistics Handbook* maintained by **Sematech** (a global consortium influencing semiconductor manufacturing technology) and the **National Institute of Standards and Technology**. Organized by chapters, the full text is searchable and the site offers links to download software packages like **Dataplot** to analyze examples in the text. — <http://www.itl.nist.gov/div898/handbook/>.

Inside Pandora's Box —

Management of Gifts to Libraries, Part IV, Selling Gifts-in-Kind on Consignment: The University of Iowa Libraries Model

by **Kathy Wachel** (Team Leader, Monographic Acquisitions Central Processing Services, University of Iowa)

Column Editor: **Jack Montgomery** (Western Kentucky University)
<jack.montgomery@wku.edu>

Column Editor's Note: This article represents the fourth and final paper of this column's series on gifts management and deals with the development and implementation of consignment. — **JM**

Pleasant dreams of valuable gifts-in-kind can sometimes morph into nightmares. We need only consider our confrontations with boxes full of 1960s textbooks or dirty, moldy books stored for the last 20 years on a basement floor to conclude that processing gifts-in-kind is both a waste of time and hard on our clothes. With the inevitable and not infrequent appearance of such gifts on our doorsteps, we have to remind ourselves that the foundations of many great European and American libraries began as private collections, in other words, as gifts-in-kind.

Taxonomy

875,000 down, 100 million to go! It's an ambitious project: discover, identify, and classify all living species in the world within the next 25 years. The **All Species Foundation** aims to do just that. So far, they have listed roughly 875,000 species of the fewer than two million animals, fungi, plants, prokaryotes, and protists identified to date, and estimate there are from ten to more than one hundred million as yet undiscovered species. The recently debuted **Toolkit** offers a search engine to locate taxonomic information, as well as connect to other pre-set searches through **Google** and others. Users can pull up a direct hit list of images and information of, for example, the **Maned Wolf** (*Chrysocyon brachyurus*) or go directly to the **Species2000** database with full taxonomic detail and references. — <http://www.all-species.org/>.

Veterinary Medicine

Emergency treatment of a dog with bloat isn't the ideal situation under which to consult the online version of the *Merck Veterinary Manual*, but the content appears identical to the 8th edition print version. The online advantage, of course, is the search capability which, when tested with "West Nile virus" performed admirably. Disappointing, though, is the static content, which would be much more useful if it were updated regularly — West Nile virus shows up only in a Zoonoses table indicating it is common in the Eastern hemisphere in wild birds and horses. — <http://www.merckvetmanual.com/>.

Perhaps not surprisingly, the biggest conundrum accompanying gifts-in-kind at the **University of Iowa Libraries** is not the moldy books and the junk that we can never seem to wholly bar from our doors. (It's a quick but surreptitious trip to the dumpster for those items.) It isn't even the sorting and processing that we find particularly bothersome, though it does consume a considerable amount of time. Rather, it is dealing with the pile of useable but unwanted stuff that grows inexorably toward the ceiling, once the gift has been mined of its treasures for our collections.

Not unlike most other libraries, we have spent considerable time trying to develop strategies for disposing of these materials with

continued on page 92

Inside Pandora's Box from page 91

some degree of sensitivity—in other words, we prefer to identify a person or an institution that wants them. Offering unwanted gifts-in-kind to other libraries for the price of the shipping always sounds like a good idea, but for us there is often a problem: these libraries usually want to know specifically what we have to offer. They want lists of titles with full bibliographic information. However, we have a very small and already over-committed staff in our **Monographic Acquisitions Gifts Unit**. No one has time to compile such lists other than our area studies bibliographers, who occasionally provide a limited number on exchange to institutions in their regions of interest. Inviting librarians from other institutions to make on-site selections hardly creates a dent in the numbers that are usually available, and inviting dealers to pick from these materials usually produces similar results. Book sales are an obvious solution. (Selling both donated and withdrawn library materials is allowed at the **University of Iowa** as long as any money made from the sale is used to purchase more library materials.) Book sales are popular and they provide good PR for the Libraries. We have book sales nearly every year, and while they reduce the pile somewhat, they bring in very little money per volume sold. And since we have no designated, permanent sale location, we frequently have a problem identifying a suitable space that is both secure and large enough to hold a medium sized sale of 4-6,000 volumes.

In 1997 we briefly considered directly selling unwanted materials via the Web, which at that time was just growing into a viable medium for buying and selling OP materials. However, we quickly abandoned the idea, when we realized that developing and maintaining such a process would be highly labor-intensive. In the fall of 1997, the library assistant who at that time managed the **Gifts**

Unit suggested that we experiment with using a local dealer to sell our unwanted gifts-in-kind on consignment. He had established a good relationship with this dealer, trusted him and had confidence in his ability to keep good records. Using an OP dealer for consignment sales is common enough, but the arrangement we made with our dealer was unusual, because we granted him the larger percentage of each sale: 60% for the dealer and 40% for us.

We made this decision for a number of reasons. We needed to dispose of these books as painlessly as possible, and we preferred to work with a local dealer rather than go to the time and expense of sending the books elsewhere. Also, we wanted the dealer to do most of the work. These books are not great rarities; rather, they are primarily somewhat hard-to-find, low-demand academic titles that may take a dealer a long time to sell and that in a typical book sale would probably bring \$2-\$5 per volume.

The process works in the following way:

1. We review potentially useable gifts-in-kind for possible addition to our collections, and we rough-sort and box by broad subject areas any books which appear salable (usually at very low prices) in our library book sales.
2. From among the potentially salable books, we select good quality, primarily scholarly, materials for which we think we could get better prices if sold via a dealer rather than at a library book sale. We offer these books to our local consignment dealer.
3. The dealer sets the prices and enters the bibliographic information online. (We lack the staff to do this.)
4. The dealer handles all details of the sales—billing and shipping as well as working with difficult or dissatisfied customers—all of which would be very time-consuming and, therefore too costly, for us.

5. The dealer provides us with a monthly update of sale results and gives us a check each month for titles sold.
6. After a reasonable period of time of attempting to sell the books—usually at least nine months and frequently longer—the dealer will have the option of buying the books from us at 20% of the price at which he listed them. Otherwise he will return them to us.

It is important to point out that our first step was to draw up a formal consignment agreement that was read and approved by the General Counsel of the University. The document contained the following general statement of agreement plus additional procedural details: **Monographic Acquisitions of the University of Iowa Libraries** will consign selected, higher quality unwanted books (originally donated to the Libraries as unrestricted gifts) to Out-of-Print Dealer X (OPDX). The dealer will list these books for sale with, but not limited to, such electronic, out-of-print book sales media as **Advanced Book Exchange** or **Bookfinder**. OPDX will manage all aspects of the sale including inquiries, holds, shipping, billing and collection of monies. In exchange for this service OPDX will receive 60% of the sale price, and the Libraries will receive 40% of the sale price. A check for the Libraries, share will be sent to the **Gifts Unit**, Monographic Acquisitions the first week of each month. Either party may terminate this agreement at any time.

A sampling of 139 titles sold on consignment since 1997 shows that we are receiving an average of \$15.14 per title or at least four times the price we could expect to get from most of these titles in a book sale. A sampling of 114 titles purchased by the dealer after having tried unsuccessfully to sell them within the initial period of nine to twelve months shows that we are receiving an average of \$5.81 per title. This is still at least twice the amount we are likely to realize in a book sale. (It should be noted that there are a few multi-volume sets among these titles, but the samplings consist of primarily single volume titles.)

Approximately 10-15% of the titles consigned to the dealer are eventually returned to us unsold. These books are then placed in our library book sales. The percentage of returns to us was somewhat higher during the first couple of years of this consignment experiment. However, as our dealer has become more experienced in selecting titles that are likely to sell, the percent returned to us has seemed to stabilize.

From a vantage point of five years, we are extremely satisfied with our relationship with our consignment dealer and with the sale results. We have succeeded in identifying a dealer with whom we have a very good working relationship, and we have also succeeded in our goal of making the consignment process one of minimal work and cost for us.

ADVERTISERS' INDEX

67	ABC CLIO	85	THE CHARLESTON ADVISOR	69	MAJORS
48	ACS	10	THE CHARLESTON REPORT	39	McFARLAND
49	ACS	20	MARCEL DEKKER	96	MIDWEST LIBRARY SERVICE
2	ALFRED JAEGER	21	MARCEL DEKKER	18	JACK MONTGOMERY
29	ANNUAL REVIEWS	27	EASTERN BOOK COMPANY	63	OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS
59	AM. INSTITUTE OF PHYSICS	25	EBSCO INFORMATION SERVICES	95	PROQUEST
43	ASME INTERNATIONAL	9	EBSCO PUBLISHING	41	RITTENHOUSE
5	ATG	17	ELSEVIER	51	SAGE PUBLICATIONS
14	AUX AMATEURS DE LIVRES	31	EMERY PRATT	35	SERIALS SOLUTIONS
73	BASCH SUBSCRIPTIONS, INC.	37	ENDOCRINE SOCIETY	53	M. E. SHARPE
3	BLACKWELL'S BOOK SERVICES	45	FRETWELL-DOWNING, INC.	13	SPRINGER-VERLAG
11	BOOK HOUSE	23	IEE/INSPEC	7	SWETS BLACKWELL
87	BROCKHAUS/GERMAN BOOKS	15	IEEE	33	YBP
65	CASALINI LIBRI	61	KLUWER ACADEMIC	55	ZUBAL BOOKS

Ad Manager: Edna Laughrey Internet: elaughrey@aol.com
phone: 734-429-1029; fax: 734-429-1711