

April 2006

# Case Studies in Collections and Technical Services -- Case Study Three: The Ticking Clock of Tenure: The Case of the First Article

Anne Langley

Duke University, [anne.langley@duke.edu](mailto:anne.langley@duke.edu)

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



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

---

### Recommended Citation

Langley, Anne (2006) "Case Studies in Collections and Technical Services -- Case Study Three: The Ticking Clock of Tenure: The Case of the First Article," *Against the Grain*: Vol. 18: Iss. 2, Article 35.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.7771/2380-176X.4664>


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

## Little Red Herrings from page 74

anomalies occur. Scholarship is important in librarianship; external funding, however, is not only more important, but is also much more to be preferred in these tight and declining budget times over obscure articles on so many extraneous statistics. If grant-writing is not of first-most importance, that academic library is still in denial about its status in its new information world.

Deans must not be shy about this process, or exhibit tunnel vision. *Multiple* fund-raising outreaches must be pursued, and in many ways, through many avenues. Each avenue must be *more* than self-supporting: each must achieve its own measure of funding success. Deans must lead their libraries in "branding" and selling their libraries and services, not just to students, faculty and staffs, but also to the community at large in which the library resides. Naysayers may complain that this cheapens the library but those who do not "brand," or something very like it, will find the sledding very tough during the often long budget winters of our discontent. Every community member is enriched by an academic library in its midst. But not every community has been made as fully aware of this as it must be. Once this is fully known, library budgets will begin to take as prominent a place financially, just as they do in general parlance.

Participatory, proactive, flexible, and fund-raising sum up for me four important activities to which a dean must turn his attentions first. By remembering these the dean can assume the challenges of 21st Century librarianship, confident at the very least that she will not be undone by them and may, with a strong supporting team, conquer more of them than not.

Of course I'm not benighted enough to think this ends the matter. Surely this is but the beginning of a much wider conversation? 

# WHY BASCH IS BETTER

## BASCH PLEDGE of SERVICE

- On time receipt of issues
- Prompt and Courteous responses to your needs and questions
- Efficient order entry and acknowledgement of renewals, claims, and reports
- Effective service that reduces your library's workload, record-keeping and paperwork
- Timely payment to publishers
- Accurate pricing

At *Basch Subscriptions*, our customers have the right to expect the best from our service and products. We know what you want from your subscription agency – personal attention, high quality results, responsive and efficient service and reporting. We've brought back the style of service that ensures you will get what you expect when you expect it.

We're small enough to remember that every client is important, but large enough to work with publishers worldwide on your behalf.

Our new serials management **software** allows us to serve your needs in a seamless and efficient way.

Our 60 years of **experience** in the subscription business, publishing, and the library community makes us effective advocates for the needs of libraries and librarians.

We are active participants in many library and information organizations – **ALA, ASIS, NASIG, SLA, MLA**, as well as various regional associations.

**BASCH** Services for Libraries and Publishers  
*Subscriptions, Inc.*

88 N. Main St. • Concord, NH 03301  
Phone: (603) 229-0662 • Fax: (603) 226-9443  
E-mail: [Subs@Basch.com](mailto:Subs@Basch.com)  
[www.basch.com](http://www.basch.com)

## Case Studies in Collections and Technical Services

### Case Study Three: The Ticking Clock of Tenure: The Case of the First Article.

Column Editor: **Anne Langley** (Head of the Chemistry Library, Duke University, Box 90355, Durham, NC 27708-0355; Phone: 919-660-1578; Fax: 919-681-8666) <[anne.langley@duke.edu](mailto:anne.langley@duke.edu)>

**Melissa** was worried. She had learned a lot during her first two years at her very first professional job at **Big Southern Research University Library**, and had gotten glowing reviews from her immediate supervisor **Robert**, for her work thus far. But since she was on the tenure track she still had some things to do before she felt secure in her first position. She had yet to publish one article. And she needed to have something to show for her promotion and appointment review coming up in 12 months. What could she do?

Multiple times **Melissa** had sat in front of a new blank document waiting for the ideas to come, yet so far, nothing had. She often woke up from a deep sleep, sat up in her warm cozy bed in her very own apartment worrying over her lack of publishing. Her supervisor had been encouraging when she had approached him on the subject, but had given her no ideas. **Melissa** was at her wits end and she knew that time was running out.

How ought **Melissa** get down to business and publish an article?

The experts speak:

**Melissa** is catching her problem in the nick of time. Luckily she still has a little while before she is in big trouble. We suggest a four-prong approach to getting started on her first article. First, she will need to find a writing partner/mentor. Second, they need to brainstorm about what to write about. Third, she and her partner need to think of various publications to send their article to and then contact the editor. Finally, she (they) needs to actually write the thing.

#### Finding a Writing Partner/Mentor

Obviously **Melissa's** direct supervisor is not the person to look to for help. **Melissa** needs to do some background checking on her colleagues at **Big Southern Research University Library**. She needs to find out who on the library staff has published, and better, who

has published recently. Once she figures out who the writers are among her colleagues, she needs to start networking. If there is no one on staff who has published recently who she might feel comfortable approaching, an alternative is to get on her library school alma mater's listserv, and put out a call to her fellow alumnus for possible writing partners. Best would be if her prospective partner had published something before, and could therefore serve not only as a writing partner, but also as a mentor to help guide **Melissa** through the process. Once she figures out who to approach, the next step will be to initiate a conversation by phone or email. Something along the lines of:

"**Sally**, Hi. This is **Melissa**. I have a favor to ask, and if you can't do it right now perhaps you could suggest someone who can. Here is my request: I am up for promotion next year and am struggling with the publishing part of

*continued on page 76*



Case Studies ...  
from page 75

the requirements. I have done some searching and I found that you have written many terrific articles. Would you be willing to be a writing partner/mentor for me through my first article? I have some thoughts on possible topics. Would you be interested? If so, when can we meet?"

### What to Write About?

Next **Melissa** needs to find something she can write about. Ideally brainstorming would happen with her new partner, but she ought to go to the meeting armed with ideas. Good topics for first articles, and in fact for all writing, are (is) to keep it to subjects that you know about. **Melissa** needs to think over the projects she has worked on during the past two years. Was there any project that she subsequently learned from? Did she create a new process for accomplishing a specific task? She could think about what her experience was like for her as a new librarian during her first two years. What did she learn along the way? She could write about her learning process and how she might approach it differently, knowing what she knows now. Lots of library literature is about "How we did it here." The *How*, the *It*, and the *Here* then become the major parts of the article.

### Where to send it? AND The initiation email to editors, what to say?

**Melissa** and her writing partner need to make sure they market their article ideas to a receptive and focused audience. The partner/mentor will most definitely have some ideas of possible journals, but searching the literature on similar topics to what they plan to write about will give them a list of possible journals to send their article to. Remember the rules of the publishing game: you can't just blanket the area with your article. You may only send it to one journal at a time. If one rejects it, then, and only then, can you send it to another. If one journal (fingers crossed) accepts it — then that is the journal your article will appear in and no other. Once the partners find a few journals whose articles interest them, they will need to leaf through a few issues and get a feel for the writing styles, articles lengths, and article topics.

Either before, during, or after, **Melissa** and her partner begin writing, they will need to contact the editor of the journal they choose to start with. Ideally they will introduce themselves, say that they are interested in writing an article for the journal and then present some possible topics for their article. They also need to ask about, or make note of the submission deadlines, length limits, and other important details for authors often shared by the editor, or found on the inside front cover of paper journals, or in a specific area of an electronic journal's Website.

### Writing the article.

Writing with a partner brings all sorts of positive things to the writing experience. You have someone to share the work with; someone to work with, and against, for deadlines; and someone to bounce ideas off of. We find it easiest to split up the writing into chunks and then each partner takes some of the chunks to write the first draft of. Then drafts are shared and edited and then put together for a final read-through draft for both (all) partners. It



works best if people don't try to "own" their writing and focus on working together as a team, trusting each "editor's" perception of how something reads. Leave your ego out of the partner-writing process and focus on writing a useful, readable article that you are both happy with. Finally, give yourselves both preliminary and drop-dead deadlines. That way you will leave yourselves plenty of rewrite, and editing, or "perfecting," time.

Get started and have fun! Who knows — you may even write a book one day! 🍌

---

## Lost in Austin — 102 Books

---

Column Editor: **Thomas W. Leonhardt** (Director, Scarborough-Phillips Library, St. Edward's University, 3001 South Congress Avenue, Austin TX 78704-6489; Phone: 512-448-8470; Fax: 512-448-8737) <thomasl@admin.stedwards.edu>

---

Last year I read a lot of books, more than I have ever read before in a single year, 102. Many (most?) will laugh at that number. Is that the best you could do? That isn't even two a week. No, it isn't and it would seem that two a week ought to be the absolute minimum if one purports to be a serious and good reader. But to get even close to two a week, I neglected my personal correspondence and I all but ignored *The New Yorker Magazine* (except for the cartoons), *Atlantic*, *Harper's*, *The American Scholar*, and a couple of other magazines that regularly arrive in my mailbox if for no other reason than to prove to the postal carrier that I have a life beyond bills and promotional mailings. I still get the *New York Times* delivered every day and admit that it can take a chunk out of my reading day and often does.

But what I started to say was that among those 102 books, only one was ostensibly about librarianship but if I had to read just one book on my trade, I chose a good one. The book is *Perspectives, Insights & Priorities: 17 Leaders Speak Freely of Librarianship*, edited by **Norman Horrocks** for the **Scarecrow Press**. All royalties, by the way, go to **ALA's Spectrum Scholarships** so you get not only a good read for your money, you are supporting library education.

This is a book that could be opened to almost any page and become absorbing. Before you do that, however, you might have to get past the table of contents and the list of authors. I can imagine someone looking at the names of former **ALA** presidents (that category is well represented here) and losing interest simply because of public opinions and limited knowledge of these leaders. You might be surprised. I was and I know many of the essayists in this book and spent some pleasant time

in meetings with many of them last year. What surprised me — and it shouldn't have — was the passion that each one brings to the book and the profession.

I liked each essay in the book but want to single out one of them because it describes the approach to the book that **Norman Horrocks** (I wish that he had written a chapter himself) had in mind when he approached his authors.

**Gillian McCombs**, University Librarian at **Southern Methodist University**, called her chapter "The Fog of My Career: Some Reflections and Lessons Learned (with Apologies to **Errol Morris** and **Robert S. McNamara**." With a title like that, do you wonder that this is the essay I began with and that I want to quote?

"...everything is personal — your career, your life, your lessons learned. The deeper part of this moral is that it is impossible to separate out the professional from the personal. I am who I am. I have made the choices I have made because of who I am. And by extension, the lens through which I look back on my career and ahead to the future of the profession is also exquisitely personal." (p. 81)

**McCombs's** words could be a jumping off place for any number of literary excursions for me but career aside, many of the essayists talked about the importance of libraries in their lives. I realized that outside of my career in libraries, beginning as a university student, I had not really given much thought to the libraries in my past. Were libraries even that important to me growing up? I think that they were but perhaps not in any exciting or profound way as they were to **Richard Wright**, for example.

*continued on page 77*