

June 2005

Balancing Act: The Nexus of Acquisitions and Collection Development

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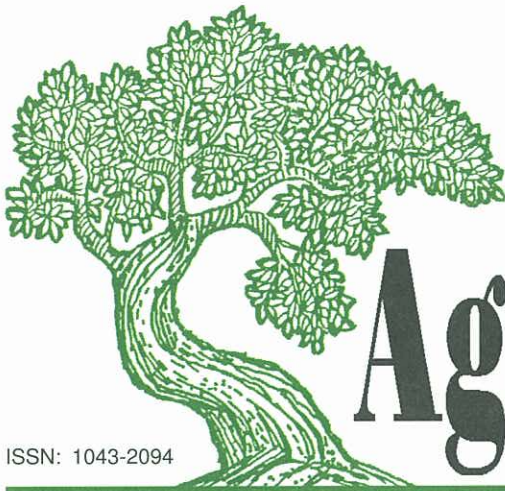
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Recommended Citation

DuBose, Stefanie (2005) "Balancing Act: The Nexus of Acquisitions and Collection Development," *Against the Grain*: Vol. 17: Iss. 3, Article 5.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.7771/2380-176X.4874>

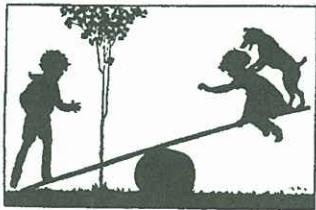
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Against the Grain

“Linking Publishers, Vendors and Librarians”

ISSN: 1043-2094



Balancing Act: The Nexus of Acquisitions and Collection Development

by **Stefanie DuBose** (Head of Acquisitions, Joyner Library, East Carolina University)
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The dialectic of acquisitions and collection development can sometimes be frustrating for those in either field. Acquisitions librarians caution about the budget and expenditures, speak in codes that sound like we’re members of a secret society, and at times sound like we’ve just graduated from law school when in the midst of protracted license negotiations. Librarians with collection development responsibility sometimes are lucky enough to focus strictly on just that. Most times, though, they are librarians who have to multitask their regular duties with subject responsibilities. Faced with desk hours, bibliographic instruction, cataloging quotas, personnel management, research consultations, scheduling, and other numerous tasks collection development is often the work that’s taken home at night and done after the kids finally get to bed. Even more difficult is finding the time for user needs or collection analyses. When there’s not enough training or communica-

tion, the temptation arises for each group to retreat to their bunkers in an “us vs. them” relationship.

Training and communication are paramount for this relationship to be successful and positive. New collection development librarians need to be introduced to the acquisitions process, including the institution’s philosophy regarding fund allocation and the budget planning cycle, the order process for monographs, the approval plan, serials (and the related, and hated, serials review process) and handling gifts. In many cases, the acquisitions librarian can provide valuable information to the collection development librarian or liaison with regard to publishing trends, alternative publishers, budget tracking and gathering data from multiple sources to support collection development decisions, whether for building or, conversely, weeding a collection. For a more holistic picture, other important data include interlibrary loan and circulation data. The collection development librarian

or liaison uses this information in conjunction with a user assessment and subject expertise to make informed decisions in resource selection, managing a budget, and evaluating the collection (Tucker and Torrence, 2004; Johnson, 271-297).

New acquisitions librarians also need an introduction to the work, in a more detailed manner. Workflow issues, system training and personnel management all are part of the training process for an acquisitions librarian. According to **William Fisher**, among the core competencies for an acquisitions librarian are those relating to acquisitions, management, technology, and interpersonal qualities. Of particular interest is the inclusion of collection development within the acquisitions competency (Fisher, 188), so for some librarians a

continued on page 18

If Rumors Were Horses

So much is going on that it’s hard to know where to begin.

First, a caveat. **Yours truly lost EVERYTHING in my email in box** and much of what was filed in my email folders! So, if you have sent me something and I haven’t responded, mea culpa. Send it again, please. Thanks!

Now, on to the good stuff. YIPPEEEEE!!!! The University of Utah has selected the awesome, fantastic, energetic, smart, and bam-zowie **Joyce Ogburn** as its new Director of the J. Willard Marriott Library. Joyce comes to Utah from the University of Washington where she was Associate Director of the Libraries, Resources and Collection Management Services (RCMS). She takes over for **Sarah Michalak** who left to become university librarian and associate provost for university libraries at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. Besides her latest position at the University of Washington, which she has held



since 1999, **Joyce** has served in similar posts at Old Dominion University, Yale University, and The Pennsylvania State University. In announcing **Ogburn’s** appointment, University of Utah President **Michael K. Young** praised her extensive qualifications. “The Marriott Library is the primary repository in Utah for printed materials and electronic information, indeed, one of the largest library collections in the entire United States. I am absolutely delighted that we have attracted someone equal to the task of managing and improving it. **Joyce Ogburn** has had precisely that experience at some of the very best university systems in the country and has succeeded marvelously well wherever she has been. I am extremely pleased she has agreed to join our educational team.” **Joyce** will begin her duties September 1. Congratulations, **Joyce!**

www.utah.edu/unews/releases/05/may/library.html

continued on page 6

What To Look For In This Issue:

<i>Adding Value to Bulk Licensing</i>	72
<i>America Life in the 19th Century</i>	77
<i>Is Open Access Training for Faculty a Good Thing?</i>	78
<i>Creating Your Own Blog</i>	85
<i>I, User — Au Contraire, Robert!</i>	90
<i>Issues in Vendor/Library Relations — Google</i>	91
<i>Where Have All the Catalogers Gone?</i>	92
<i>Profiles Encouraged</i>	
<i>Paul Strey</i>	56
<i>Tim Daniels</i>	86
<i>William Walsh</i>	88
<i>Interviews</i>	
<i>Norman Desmarais</i>	66
<i>Copyright Clearance Center & Innovative Interfaces, Inc.</i>	70



1043-2094 (200506) 17:3:1-P

The Nexus of Acquisitions... from page 1

review of collection development guidelines and methodology would be useful. The acquisitions librarian needs to understand the various responsibilities many subject librarians juggle. Should this fit into a library's organizational structure, the acquisitions librarian should be available as a resource for data gathering or provide other assistance when necessary. And, as always, a sense of humor is necessary regardless of specialization!

Contributors to the discussion come from a wide variety of libraries and backgrounds to discuss this relationship. What makes this issue fascinating is that three types of libraries are represented in the discussion, from academic libraries of varying sizes, to a large public library system and a special library. One contributor is a faculty member at the **College of DuPage** in the Library Technical Assistant training program. Another contributor is still wet behind the ears: he's a graduating library science student from the **University of Arkansas** completing an internship in both collection development and acquisitions.

Aline Soules from the **University of California**, East Bay, discusses various organizational structures and different issues that need to be addressed when determining the best fit for acquisitions. A library's strategic plan, size, geography, use of technology (as a tool and information delivery method), relationship of functions, and the relationship of the library to central administration are all factors to consider when optimizing the position of acquisitions within the library.

Barbara Blummer, the librarian at the **Center for Computing Sciences**, analyzes the relationship between acquisitions and collection development, and finds that, of the ties that bind, not surprisingly technology is the strongest. The Internet and constantly improving integrated library systems have provided libraries with invaluable opportunities to share information and streamline workflow. Writing from the **Fort Worth Public Library**, **Deborah Duke** remembers that invisible line in the sand between collection management and technical services, and the painstaking steps in ordering, receiving and processing books. After the advent of the Internet, and other changes in the library world, the **Fort Worth Public Library** has created a unique structure in a collection management unit that has collapsed the distinctions between the two areas into a strong, interdependent relationship including cataloging and processing.

Linda K. Lewis and **Nancy Pistorius**, from the **University of New Mexico**, unveil the mystery behind acquisitions in their piece describing what collection development librarians should know about acquisitions. And yes, there are days where I wish I could pull out a crystal ball and say when that book will come in! **JoAnn Hrabak** describes her teaching method, ACQCITY, for introducing students in her acquisitions class to the philosophy and work behind collection development. In the class, the students, through collaboration, learn that collection development provides the backbone of the library's mission. **Ben Buettler** is a graduating library science student from **Arizona State University**. In his essay, he reflects on his experience as an intern and some of the valuable lessons he's learned through his projects, among which he recounts the miraculous load balanc-

ing of many librarians with collection development responsibilities and the joy of licensing and negotiation.

Antje Mays is the Head of Acquisitions at **Winthrop University** and reflects on the two sides of the coin: collection development as the intellectual side, and acquisitions as the business side. She discusses the characteristics needed to succeed in both areas, training scenarios, and describes two examples of collaboration between the acquisitions librarian and the collection development librarian in the approval plan and budget planning.

It's a wide-ranging issue, granted. But there are many points to consider when examining the relationship between the two areas. Sometimes there's tension and misunderstandings when there's miscommunication. But when we succeed, which is most of the time, it's the result of a multifaceted amalgamation of organization, technology, training and communication. 🐼

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A Portrait of the Intern As a...um...Youngish Man; or, My Semester in Acquisitions and Collection Development

by **Ben Beutler** (Graduate, School of Information Resources and Library Science, University of Arizona) <benbeutler@gmail.com>



When I phoned my mom and told her I was going to be an intern, she burst into tears. It took a few minutes to figure out that she thought I meant *internist* and was weeping for joy because I'd finally come to my senses and decided to go into medicine. When I explained that, no, I was still studying Library Science and would be interning at an academic library, she sobered quickly.

"Aren't you a little old to be an intern?"

"No mom," not willing to admit I'd had that same thought myself.

"And you'll be doing what?"

I didn't have a good answer for that one. I was about to begin an internship at the **Arizona State University (ASU)** at the West campus' **Fletcher Library**, focusing on acquisitions and collection development. This I knew for sure; beyond that fact everything was still a bit fuzzy.

To be honest, I was worried. I had done a summer internship during my undergraduate years. I was studying public relations at **Brigham Young University** and had an opportunity to work for a PR agency in Hong Kong. This wasn't just an internship: it was an adventure! After only a few weeks of working at the agency I was convinced of two things—**McDonalds** is just as bad in China as it is in America, and public relations is not for me. So it was with some degree of trepidation that I had decided to do an internship during my last semester of graduate school. As it turned out, my fears were groundless.

But the question remained: What would I be doing? I had taken a Collection Development class, so I thought I had a pretty good idea about what was involved there. Acquisitions, on the other hand, had been one chapter in the

Collection Development textbook with little in-class discussion on the topic. As I've met more librarians, I've discovered that this oversight of acquisitions is not uncommon. Many in our own profession, with years of experience, are similarly uncertain as to what exactly acquisitions is. It seems to belong to a shadowy corner of librarianship that is easily overlooked, much like the hotel housekeeping staff whose presence is only hinted at by clean towels in the bathroom and fresh linens on the bed.

Appropriately, upon arriving for my first day at **ASU's** West campus I was led to my office on the library's lower level. I was right next to the office of my study advisor, **Smita Joshipura**, **Fletcher Library's** good-natured Acquisitions Librarian. I wasn't sure if my location there was for convenience or whether they

continued on page 20