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Training New Acquisitions and Collection Development Librarians: Some Technical and Philosophical Guideposts

by **Antje Mays** (Head of Monograph & AV Acquisitions, Winthrop University, Rock Hill, South Carolina) <maysa@winthrop.edu>

I. Coming into the field

Coming into acquisitions/collection development is an exciting time for newly minted librarians and librarians switching from other areas alike. Acquisitions and collection development are the hub where education, curriculum analysis, needs assessment, business, and technology come together, combining the business and intellectual worlds. To succeed, acquisitions and collection development librarians must be able to interact with a vast variety of people with differing perspectives and work styles, organize and complete multiple projects on time and on budget, pace purchasing within the fiscal-year calendar, have a good grasp of users' needs and interest, and — in the academic setting — understand the programs being supported and stay ahead of programs' creation, expansion, changes, certification, and (re)accreditation.

Many people enter librarianship with a broad mix of prior experience. The new librarians may come into acquisitions/collection development right out of graduate school with little or no prior work experience, or they may come from other areas of librarianship. Some make the transition from acquisitions support staff. There are those who come to librarianship with experience from a broad range of other fields. Some incoming acquisitions/collection development librarians have experience with supervision, accounting, marketing, vendor relations, customer service, and systems/e-business tools; others do not. While all new acquisitions and collection development librarians have the foundation of the professional degree, graduate programs in librarianship differ in emphasis on theory and practice. Some students will choose theoretical courses as their electives while others will choose independent studies or a professional internship for the elective library-course credits. As a result, no two new librarians' experiences are alike, and training needs for acquisitions and collection development librarians vary greatly as a result of these differences.

A certain degree of autonomy and judgment is expected at the professional level. The urge to guide a new librarian's every step can be very tempting, but doing so can also stifle the new librarian's growth. Especially in the beginning, it is important to refrain from pulling them into too many competing directions lest they become discouraged. It is better to assess the new librarian's work by outcomes in clearly defined task areas. Balance is best achieved by showing the new librarians the way initially and then being available as a resource person in areas such as specifics about the library system, specific organizational history about academic programs and vendor relationships, but giving them enough space to grow and develop their own style. Training should be focused on skills such as technical expertise and specific aspects of the organization's needs; mentoring should be geared toward the librarian's long-term professional growth.

II. What Acquisitions Librarians Need For Success

It is crucial for acquisitions librarians to understand business functions. Running an acquisitions department is very similar to managing a corporate purchasing department. In today's automated environment, acquisitions librarians also need to be technology-savvy and have the capacity to learn the library's acquisitions system functions and its data-analysis capabilities; understanding e-business tools is also helpful for speeding up purchasing and invoicing transactions. Acquisitions librarians generally supervise other personnel. The best temperament for success in acquisitions is an innate sense of time and knowing how to organize workflow to maximize efficiency and timeliness. Fairness, impartiality, and ability to delegate are needed to be a good supervisor rather than a micromanager. Finally, negotiating and other social skills are needed for dealing with vendors, library constituencies, and preparing RFPs for bids.

Some Best Practices For Training Acquisitions Librarians

Since new librarians come with varying degrees of prior knowledge and initiative, the amount of in-depth time and hands-on training should be tailored to the new librarian's pre-existing knowledge and learning style. Training acquisitions librarians entails showing them the way initially by introducing them to the library's workflow, giving them a feel for the library's vendor base, and encouraging them to meet with other areas' staff to get a sense of how the functions and workflow interrelate library-wide. It is a challenge to teach workflow organization and project management, and it is equally difficult to instill the sense of fairness needed to be an effective and impartial supervisor. Before hiring new acquisitions librarians it is a good idea to ask them about their management style/philosophy.

A crucial part of bringing someone on board is reviewing the fund structure, financial reporting, and acquisitions system, as well as making the new librarian aware of important dates such as ordering deadlines, program review/accreditation calendars, recurring reports and their due dates, and calendar of staff-evaluation due dates. A complete departmental procedures manual for the new librarian to study is another excellent introduction to all the organization-specific aspects that the new librarian will need to learn. This type of documentation provides an in-depth introduction to the organization-specific workflow, shows how the acquisitions system is used, and other specifics. The manual serves as an excellent tutorial for the librarian to refer to at any time, and the new person can study it in a self-paced manner while taking on the actual work. In tandem with providing new acquisitions librarians with documentation on departmental workflow, it is equally important to be available as a resource person for any follow-up questions. A new librarian will inevitably need further clarification of anything that is commonly understood in-house but not necessarily familiar to an incoming new person. Often, new ideas will arise from internalizing the documented procedures and engaging in the departmental work. New acquisitions librarians should also be encouraged to obtain specific hands-on information from their support staff who are the closest to certain tasks. The mix of initially sharing deadlines and organizational specifics, procedures documentation, a climate of continued openness, and being accessible as a resource person for follow-up information is immensely helpful as the new librarians make the organization's aspects, deadlines, and needs their own.

III. What Collection Development Librarians Need For Success

There are two types of collection development librarians: (1) the director of collection development who oversees collection development for the entire library (or all libraries within a large system of specialized and/or regional libraries), and (2) the subject specialist whose role is collecting in specific subject areas. Collection development directors must understand the institution's intellectual, technological, budgetary, and political big picture. They should have an innate ability to understand the spectrum of knowledge taught by the university and should be able to build relationships and open communication lines with the rest of the university to know when programs are changing and/or coming up for (re)accreditation. This person should have broad strategic-planning skills and flexible leadership ability to work collaboratively with the many other library areas and constituencies outside of the library. Subject specialists need the ability to work closely with a teaching unit in all ways in order to stay abreast of the programs' ongoing development and transformation.

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Training Guidelines For Collection Development Librarians

A well-rounded training strategy for collection development librarians would address the university's (or community readership's) environment. This includes reviewing information such as the library's size, type and technological environment. It is also important to introduce prevailing program accreditation and certification requirements, including master time lines of self-study and site visit dates. The collection development librarian also should meet with representatives from all library areas and assigned constituents early on.

For subject selectors, some libraries assign collection development areas based on the librarians' interest; others assign them based on the librarian's undergraduate background or second graduate degree. Getting to know either one's own or all subject areas in an academic setting is a twofold process: meeting the faculty and learning about their needs, and meeting the librarians who participate in the daily activities of serving the departments. The selector needs to meet with teaching faculty to discuss their teaching and research goals (especially in research settings), obtain course syllabi to get a feel for the approach to the knowledge areas, study the undergraduate and graduate course catalogs and keep abreast of ongoing faculty research projects and related information needs. Within the library, the selector should meet with their Reference, Bibliographic Instruction, and Interlibrary Loan colleagues to get a feel for how the knowledge areas are covered and where gaps are in the collection. Collection development librarians need to receive and understand their budgets in order to make their selections within budget and on schedule. Part of the training should also entail meeting with Acquisitions early on in order to learn about deadline needs and ordering guidelines.

Choosing formats is an outgrowth of keeping an eye on the marketplace of library materials regarding formats and delivery technologies. One key to success is understanding each knowledge area's approach to research and preferred formats. How do the departments use the technological environment? Do faculty want to access library resources online from their offices? Do off-campus or distance education courses require support from eBooks and other online resources? Maintaining awareness of the latest developments in print / electronic pricing packages, online database packages, and access models can also help the collection development librarian make the best choices for their subject areas. No two libraries are alike, and the best choice of format is customized to the needs of one's specific environment.

Training a new collection development librarian includes an overview of current realities and trends in publishing and information-delivery models. This includes reviewing the marketplace of e-journals and aggregated databases, accreditation standards for core journals, and print vs. "e" — both in introductory meetings and ongoing discussions with library working groups. Good training strategies also include pointing to specific selection tools such as print and online reviews, discipline-specific sources of book reviews, bringing the new selector into close contact with teaching departments and encouraging them to collaborate with Reference and Library Instruction for the latest observations of research and collection needs.

IV. What Incoming Librarians Need To Learn About The Relationship and Collaboration Between Acquisitions and Collection Development

Acquisitions and collection development go hand in hand, and as such these areas are two sides of the same coin. Collection development is the intellectual side of the coin: in an academic library, this entails curriculum analysis, understanding how the disciplines are taught on one's campus, including areas of specialization as well as discipline cores and at what educational level. In doing so, the collection development librarian will learn what programs are coming up for (re)accreditation. Then, when assessing the collection, collection development can take the lead in building pilot collections for new programs and filling collection gaps, all the time working with the teaching faculty to tailor the library's collection to the curricular-support needs.

Library selectors often struggle with scheduling their materials selection amidst their other — always constant — duties in reference, bibliographic instruction, and interlibrary loan. While the perspective of acquisitions is more immediate in the sense of processing orders and pacing oneself to beat fiscal-year deadlines, collection development's perspective is more long-term. Often, the types of questions asked at the reference desk and the collection gaps uncovered while preparing and teaching bibliographic instruction classes help the selector identify collection strengths and weaknesses. In a public library, collection development's role is to understand its library community's reading preferences, keep on top of new materials coming out in those areas, and regularly study current bestseller lists.

Acquisitions is the business arm of collection development. The Acquisitions department purchases and processes the materials and is responsible for getting them in before each fiscal year's end. The Acquisitions department lives with strict ordering and expenditure deadlines, tight schedules, and constant workflow. It is helpful for library selectors to know about the calendar of deadlines so that they can pace themselves in their materials-selection activity. While collection development operates more in a long-range mode of analyzing the curriculum (or reader preferences in a public library) and where it is headed in the long-term future, acquisitions operates on a cycle geared toward getting the materials in on time. Acquisitions librarians are the experts in vendor relations and the marketplace to the end of knowing, for example, where to find that small-press publication from overseas. Degrees of freedom and initiative to incorporate collection development into acquisitions work vary greatly from one library to the next.

An Example of Collaboration Between Acquisitions and Collection Development: The Approval Plan

One example illustrates the result of collaboration between monographic acquisitions librarians, library subject specialists, and departmental library liaisons. The approval plan is a customized purchasing method in which libraries identify their needs in a curriculum-descriptive profile. The profile is then "translated" by the vendor into appropriate books or print / e-mail announcements about new and forthcoming books that match it. Approval plans can be comprehensive and cover the entire curriculum or they can be small and focused in very specific areas of need (for example, literature in a specific language from a vendor who specializes in such materials). The acquisitions librarian and collection development director are the most likely to work with the entire range of vendor choices, publishers, selection tools, trends in the fields, accreditation agencies, and state program review bodies. The acquisitions librarian serves in a consulting capacity in matching the selection needs with the best vendors. The selectors, reference librarians, departmental liaisons, and other interested teaching faculty provide constant feedback on the intellectual content needed, while the acquisitions librarian continually fine-tunes the vendor's services to the collection needs. While each party contributes a unique perspective to the finished product, the acquisitions librarian is the central catalyst in bringing the approval plan to successful fruition.

Budget Allocations — How Acquisitions and Collection Development Work Together

No two allocation formulas are alike because no two libraries are alike. However, library-materials budget allocations generally take into account the following mix of considerations:

1. Knowledge areas represented
 - Level of collecting (undergraduate, masters, doctoral),
 - depth of area collecting (in-depth or cursory), and
 - enrollment figures and trends in each area.

2. Prior expenditure patterns.

Some allocation preparations also tally unfunded requests on hand, and these are factored into the evidence of demand for library materials in each area and become part of the percentage distribution of the next year's materials budget.

3. For monographs, average price per book in each discipline.

Some formulas go so far as "this many books per FTE in this knowledge area" per year.

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Positioning Acquisitions in the Library Organization: Issues, Questions, Decisions

by Aline Soules¹ (Associate University Librarian, California State University, East Bay) <aline.soules@csueastbay.edu>

Part I: Introduction and Discussion

Acquisitions departments are often located in technical services, but sometimes other models prevail. Acquisitions can be part of a single technical services unit or an independent unit side by side with other units in technical services; part of a collection development unit that is also under technical services; part of a collection development unit that is part of public services; part of an administrative unit in the library that is responsible for all purchases for collections, operations, etc.; or paired with an administrative unit handling ordering and/or finances for the central organization. What factors contribute to the evolution of acquisitions' place in a library organization and what are the pros and cons of these various arrangements?

To begin, there are some assumptions inherent in this article. The first is that the acquisitions function encompasses the processes of ordering, receiving, and paying for library information in multiple formats. The second is that when an organization chart is created, that organization chart represents a decision regarding where acquisitions best fits within the formal structure of the organization. That, in turn, implies a single relationship; however, while that relationship reflects a decision regarding the primary or the most important relationship in that organization, it is not exclusive. Secondary relationships and synergies are possible and can be reflected through "dotted" lines on the chart or may be understood tacitly, with no physical line on the formal chart. The third assumption is that the library has a strategic plan for the organization before a formal organization chart is structured. Part of that plan involves acquisitions and current decisions regard-

ing the future of the functions represented in the acquisitions process. The fourth assumption is that this article will lay out issues and ways of thinking about the organization and not supply answers. Those issues are best resolved by the individual organization. The questions and chart at the end of this discussion can aid library staff in determining where acquisitions is best suited within the organization in order to achieve the library's goals.

There are some long-standing factors that affect how acquisitions fits into the library's organizational structure. One is size. If an organization is small enough, one person may be handling acquisitions among other duties, e.g., other types of purchasing (equipment, supplies), cataloging, etc., although in most cases, this person is likely to be at a paraprofessional or clerical level and not making collection development decisions. In a larger organization, however, where each person becomes more of a specialist, the question of placing acquisitions in a structure is more of an issue.

Geography is a similar factor. In a smaller library, everyone tends to be closer together physically, facilitating communication between acquisitions and other areas, such as collection development, cataloging, or processing. In larger libraries, however, these functions may be on different floors or even in different buildings, especially if branches are involved. There can be a central purchasing unit that handles all or some aspects of the acquisitions function (of-

ten invoicing and payment), or a state-wide system or consortium that even places these functions in different cities or states.

Technology has enabled some of the above scenarios to come into existence, but technology has also driven changes. Regardless of the

ideal that technology is a tool and not a driver, this is not always the case.

There are times when the incorporation of technology leads to natural and logical changes that affect the optimum organizational model, but there are times when technology drives changes. Some can be less desirable, resulting from the limits of current technology, and some can reflect the use of technology for political reasons. These also affect the

organizational model.

Library automation systems, for example, have tended to drive certain activities to the "front end" of the technical services process, such as downloading records from a bibliographic utility. This used to be the responsibility of catalogers, who chose the correct record or at least the record they thought most fit the library's circumstances. Now, that decision falls to acquisitions and the cataloging function merely makes decisions about overlaying when the record chosen by acquisitions is determined to be less desirable than another one that is now available. This was one of the early effects of integrated library systems, which made it more

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4. The preferred ratio of serials vs. monographs in each area, depending on where each discipline's cutting-edge research tends to be published:

For example, in the physical sciences a high percentage would go to serials subscriptions and a low percentage to monographs, whereas in literature and history, serials and monographs are often split 50/50 or even tilted in favor of monographs

5. Statistical evidence of use for e-journals, databases, and eBooks.

Acquisitions and collection development need to consult each other in pursuit of fair budget allocations. Acquisitions brings the knowledge of ordering patterns and their numerical breakdown while collection development knows the direction of the library's intellectual environment. Both should monitor marketplace trends and developments in information-delivery technologies and access models.

V. Long-term Success and Career Growth

While training is oriented toward starting out and familiarizing the new librarians with specifics about their new organization, it is useful to

share with them how acquisitions and collection development interrelate — both administratively and philosophically. In time, the new librarians will gain a larger-scale perspective and their grasp of the technical and philosophical elements will become second nature.

Long-term growth can be encouraged in a variety of ways. Whether there is a formal mentoring arrangement or simply informal exchanges between "junior" and "senior" colleagues, exposing the new librarian to the organizational community, pointing them toward publishing, scholarship, and service opportunities, and encouraging their lifelong learning will inspire the new librarian to set goals for long-term knowledge enhancement and overall growth.

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us for UNC-Greensboro. Anyway, Bill didn't make it to the dedication even though he had hoped to. Instead, he hopes to make it to the Charleston Conference in November.

Congratulations to Charlene Kellsey, assistant professor and acting head of the Original Monographic Cataloging Unit at the University of Colorado the winner of the 2005 Coutts Nijhoff International Western European Specialist Studies Grant. Kellsey's proposal was en-

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