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People Profile: Melissa K. Aho

Editor

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receipts, and dates when items were sent to cataloging. Since there is no acquisitions system, the current Acquisitions Librarian¹ continues to use **Excel** spreadsheets to keep track of all orders.

The history and reasoning behind **MSB/GU**'s lack of an acquisitions module is not surprising or unique. The time and investment in a fully integrated library management system with an acquisitions module is very high for any academic library, and even higher for a career college library with its limited funds. Most career college libraries are seen as a cost expense, because they take money away from the school and do not contribute to bringing money in. In 2003, **MSB/GU** finally purchased the integrated library system **PALS**,² but only the catalog, circulation and administration modules, and the public Web version. In 2006, **PALS** upgraded to **Ex Libris' Aleph**, which **PALS** operates and supports, but once again only the cataloging, circulation, ILL and administration modules were purchased. Many reasons were given for not purchasing the acquisitions and serials modules in 2003, but the main factor was the cost. In 2006, cost and the migration to **Aleph** again were factors in not buying the acquisitions and serials modules. **MSB/GU** now had eight campuses with eight libraries and no main library. It was decided that **PALS** and **MINITEX**³ would see the **MSB/GU** libraries as a mini-consortium, which would complicate **Aleph** arrangements.

Librarians at career colleges may have authority to order what they want for their libraries, or the heads of academic programs may approve all purchases. At some career colleges, the director of the school approves purchases. At the **Minnesota School of Business/Globe University** all items to be purchased for the library (usually books, eBooks and DVDs) must first be approved by the Program Head of that particular academic program. The **MSB/GU** librarians are not allowed to purchase items that are not directly relevant to the curriculum.

Career college librarians order their materials from a wide variety of sources, from local independent bookstores or used bookstores, to national bookstore chains and American and international publishers and vendors. From 2002 to 2006, **MSB/GU** purchased most books from the online bookseller **Amazon.com**. **Amazon.com** was used because of its low prices, no tax, free shipping and handling (most of the time), and its ease of use. Another factor was that **MSB/GU** had an **Amazon.com** corporate account, which the library was allowed to use. While this made ordering easier, there was a downside to having access to the corporate account. The **MSB/GU** corporate account was created for the bookstore, and when the account became overextended, the library's books were the first cancelled. (Bookstore business is another way that career colleges make money.)



The **MSB/GU** Acquisitions Librarian soon learned to avoid ordering books at the end or beginning of school quarters or the end of the calendar year, so as not to conflict with the large quantities of books that were ordered for the bookstores at those times.

MSB/GU orders were also placed directly with the publisher. Because the library had no credit card or checking account, it was necessary to request a check in advance from the corporate billing department and place the order after receiving the check. The process involved extra forms, extra time, and the occasional missing check.

Each **MSB/GU** library is separate and independent, and technical services are located on different campuses. Once the number of libraries started to grow, better organization was needed. In 2007, it was decided to use **YBP's GOBI** for book buying and to move away from using the **Amazon.com** corporate account. **GOBI** is a Web-based service, and it allows purchasing to be done from one source and with relative ease. As with **Amazon.com**, one can search **GOBI** by title, ISBN, author, etc. All of the college's collection development librarians can enter in **GOBI** books that have been approved for purchase for their subject area, saving their selections in folders. The Acquisitions Librarian reviews the folders and places the order. **YBP's** system allows email notification after the order has been placed, and the Acquisitions Librarian sends notices to the **MSB/GU** Cataloger, the collection development librarian

whose books were ordered, the Lead Librarian, and herself. This informs everyone that the books were ordered and identifies the order date. With the **YBP GOBI** account, items can be processed and shipped complete with barcode and classification number to the **MSB/GU** Cataloger. The Cataloger still sees that materials are "Dewey-ed" according to her system, but pre-processing speeds up technical services considerably.

Acquisitions work and the Acquisitions Librarian position at the **Minnesota School of Business/Globe University** continue to evolve and change. In big and small libraries, acquisitions can be a growing and changing library service. In a career college library, acquisitions functions can move and change overnight and with huge consequences. This may be a complex, multi-stage growth, depending on the size of the school and library, money that is available, the corporate culture of the school, and the librarians involved.

Endnotes

1. **Melissa Aho, MLIS, MS** is the current and third Acquisitions Librarian (as well as Campus and Business Resources Librarian) at the **Minnesota School of Business/Globe University-Brooklyn Center** campus.
2. **PALS** provides automated library services to various libraries, both public and private, in Minnesota. <http://www.mnpals.org/>
3. **MINITEX** is a publicly funded cooperative network of libraries in Minnesota and is housed at the **University of Minnesota-Twin Cities**. <http://www.minitex.umn.edu/>

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Campus, Acquisitions and Business Resources Librarian
Minnesota School of Business/Globe University
5910 Shingle Creek Parkway, Brooklyn Center, MN 55430
Phone: (763) 585-5220 • Fax: (763) 566-7030
<maho@msbcollege.edu>

Melissa K. Aho

BORN & LIVED: Born in Minneapolis, Minnesota and currently living in Lexington, Minnesota.

FAMILY: Cat Che, parents **Carole** and **Terry** and twin sister **Michelle**.

EDUCATION: M.L.I.S. — 2001, **Dominican University** (Library and Information Science)

M.S. — 1998, **University of Wisconsin - Milwaukee** (Anthropology)

B.A. — 1999, **University of Minnesota - Twin Cities** (Art History)

B.A. — 1994, **St. Cloud State University** (Anthropology and History)

FIRST JOB: My first "real" library position was in 2000 as a Research Librarian at the **Saint Paul Pioneer Press** in Saint Paul, Minnesota.

PROFESSIONAL CAREER AND ACTIVITIES: I try to do as many Webinars as I can and I am constantly reading blogs by librarians.

IN MY SPARE TIME, I LIKE TO: Read and travel.

FAVORITE BOOKS: The *Harry Potter* books, *The Eight* by **Katherine Neville**, anything by mystery writer **Elizabeth Peters**, historian/travel writer **William Dalrymple**, and poet and essayist **Bill Holm**.

MOST MEANINGFUL CAREER ACHIEVEMENT: Having my first article and then book review published (I had them both framed!). 🐾