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Group Therapy -- Database Trials

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Group Therapy — Database Trials

by **Christine Fischer** (Head of Acquisitions, Jackson Library, University of North Carolina at Greensboro, PO Box 26170, Greensboro, NC 27402; Phone 336-256-1193; Fax 336-334-4731) <christine_fischer@uncg.edu>

GRIPE: Submitted by **John For-syth** (Bibliographer [Business & Languages], University Libraries, Bowling Green State University, Bowling Green, OH)

Our library has until now had the practice of generally holding database trials within the library and limiting the participants to library faculty and staff. In particular, the possibility of a faculty member(s) becoming enamored of a database and interpreting the proffered trial as a guarantee of subscription on the library's part has been a deterrent to our offering open trials. We are considering the advantages of making database trials available to university faculty. We would very much like to know your experience with database trials. Especially useful would be your experience with open trials; what are the advantages and what are the disadvantages? Do you ever include students in open trials?

Another problem we have had with database trials is the great number of trials. Database trials pop up at all times of the year. Librarians and staff have difficulty accommodating them with the rest of their workloads. Has anyone had success limiting trials to one or two trial periods annually? Please let me know your library's experience, if relevant, to offering public trials of databases and handling the great number and unpredictability of them.

RESPONSE:

Submitted by **Ellen Metter** (Humanities/Anthropology Bibliographer, Auraria Library, Denver, CO)

We haven't limited trial periods to one or two a year because of the situations that arise that seem to demand trials quickly, including: the interest of a faculty member or librarian; consortial purchasing; a time-limited 'deal'; the discovery of a database that fills an information gap or is more affordable and comparable to one we have; or the sudden appearance of funds that must be used ASAP. I do say no to some trials, putting lower priority databases on the back burner. There are times I try not to do trials because I know the faculty are too busy or not available. Trials are generally held mid/late September through November and February through April.

I actually like opening up the trials to one and all since positive comments from faculty strengthen my cause when I ask for funding from the group that holds the purse strings, the **Electronic Resources Committee (ERC)**. Having an **ERC** is nice for a number of reasons but, in regard to your question, it's helpful to be able to hold up the **ERC** as the final deciding group when a faculty member has become enamored of a database and the decision has been made to not buy it. Since reasons for not buying a database are usually reasonable (including negative comments or lack of feedback), I find faculty are usually understanding.

I think the few times the faculty continued to agitate about not having a database were times when we really did need to acquire the database and their persistence resulted in helping us find funding — or get more creative. In the case of **OED** we scrounged the funds, and I'm glad we did. The database gets enormous use. (And the English faculty did not need to chain themselves to the library, as threatened.)

We have a trials page <http://library.auraria.edu/findit/dbase-trials.html>, though just having that page brings in little input. During trials I send an email to the appropriate faculty members and ask them to try it. Also an email announcement is sent to the library.

RESPONSE:

Submitted by **Barbara Cox** (Coordinator of Library Selectors, Marriott Library, University of Utah, Salt Lake City, UT)

Marriott Library at the **University of Utah** recently started a more formal system for database trials and evaluations. A request for a database must be adopted by a library employee who agrees to be its champion and to take explicit responsibility for it. By filling out a form completely, we hope selectors will have gathered enough information about the database that they can make a sound recommendation about its value. We feel that an important predictor of database use is promotion by the library and hope that having an official champion will mean that databases are more consistently presented to the committee and the campus.

The final evaluation is by the **Database and Serials Evaluation Team (DASET)** — a committee which evaluates all additions (and subtractions!) to our subscriptions.

We will now not start trials until information is gathered and there is a reasonable chance the database can be afforded. The champion begins the process by filling out a form which asks for basic information and identification of specific key user groups. The Electronic Formats Coordinator completes it with additional information she gets from the publisher (exact cost, statistics, and other technical issues) and sets up a trial. Trials are generally listed on our main database page so all have access. We have a Web form for collecting input from users and librarians. If, after the trial, the database still seems promising, the champion presents the facts formally to **DASET** which makes the purchase decision. All our new subscriptions are reviewed after two years to see if they have indeed attracted an audience.

RESPONSE:

Submitted by **Gloria Selene Hinojosa** (Collection Development Librarian, Alkek Library, Texas State University-San Marcos) and **Paivi Rentz** (Electronic Resources Librarian, Alkek Library, Texas State University-San Marcos)

Texas State University has been offering trials/previews/demos of databases for quite a while. We send emails to our faculty liaisons and ask them to share access information within the department. Vendors have always agreed to our request to share the login via email with faculty. Our biggest problem is getting faculty to actually look at the databases and give us some feedback. When we

send announcements to all faculty members, we seldom get enough responses to get a real reading. If I approach my faculty liaisons individually because I feel the database might be relevant to their or their colleagues' research or curriculum, I get a better response, though not necessarily a lot.

On one occasion, several faculty members really liked a searchable image database on trial. We had arranged a trial, though we knew we probably couldn't afford it, because we really wanted the faculty to know what was happening in that area of database searching. We got several emails of support. For the one person who insisted we should buy it, we referred him to the cost. We try to give faculty an idea of the cost when we announce trials, so they can understand what the funding issues may be relevant to the library allocation of the related discipline(s). We do use some of their library allocation money when appropriate (i.e. relevant to the one discipline) and make that case when asking them to contribute. Sometimes the database is so useful that several academic departments actually cooperate and will pitch in to help pay for it. Other times they have to take "no" for an answer, as do we. They are understanding as long as we can give them good information regarding why we can or cannot get something (and be prepared to prove it), such as there is too much duplication with what we already own, or the price is unaffordable, etc... You'd be surprised how often they are not aware of some of the other resources we already have, but that provides us the opportunity for an information sharing experience. We've never had any unpleasantness over having to do without.

We have had faculty suggest that we write a proposal to get money to purchase a database. Remember, we are often talking about an ongoing cost, though faculty don't always consider that issue. An exchange of information can make that clear. With one-time purchases,

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Library Marketplace — Looking Forward-Looking Back

Column Editor: **John D. Riley** (National Sales Director, Eastern Book Company) <jdriley@comcast.net>

Now that 2007 is over and we are headed into the New Year I wanted to take a look back at some of the topics that I have been following this year. There are exciting developments all over the map, but for now many of them are just getting rolling, such as “the library as publisher” while others are going ahead full tilt, but haven’t had their full impact yet, such as “scanning book collections” and the “greening of libraries and publishers.” Other topics I’ll cover are occasions where “celebrating the book” becomes a community wide event and I’ll even take a look at the introduction of Amazon’s Kindle.

Library as Publisher

The growing cooperation between university libraries and presses is a win-win concept for two institutions that are re-examining their roles as producers and disseminators of scholarly information. The initial steps in this union have been coming from libraries themselves and in many cases the press has been reporting to the Dean of Libraries. Other schools are hiring “Scholarly Communication Officers,” a shared position between the library and the press. So far the synergies have been helpful to both libraries and publishers and to the university as a whole. Their cooperation is benefiting professors and students who want to see more of their writing and research reach the public. It is unlocking a vast amount of stored print resources and opening the gates for more open access publishing.

I spoke recently with **Mike Furlough**, Assistant Dean for **Scholarly Communications** and Co-Director, **Office of Digital Scholarly Publishing at Pennsylvania State University** about the progress they are making in bringing their library and press closer together. He told me that the library and the press have been working together for nearly six years and that a librarian has been on the university press board for twenty years. Many of the functions that define “library as publisher” are already in place there. The nexus for their work together is the **Office of Digital Scholarly Publishing**, a sort of **Virtual Organization** as **Mike Furlough** describes it. Currently the **Penn State Libraries** are focusing on four projects as the building blocks for their publishing enterprise.

1) Creating a digital back file of journals, on a **JSTOR** model, mainly in Pennsylvania history. This looks to be an appealing approach for other libraries who want to emphasize their regional strengths.

2) Publishing conference proceedings for conferences held on the campus. These are in digital format now and will be available in a print on demand basis.

3) Publishing a monograph series on Romance Language Studies. These are open access and also available in a POD format. RomanceStudies@romancestudies.psu.edu

4) A reprint series of out of copyright books handled by **Lightning Press** and available through the **PSU Press**.

Digitizing and Distribution of Library Holdings

Of course we all know about **Google’s** massive digitization project, but many other libraries are working on their own (such as the **Boston Library Consortium**) or with other partners, such as **Microsoft** and **Yahoo** to accomplish similar ends. Two of the more interesting projects are at **Cornell** and the **University of Maine**. **Joyce Rumery**, Dean of the **Fogler Library** at the **University of Maine**, told me how they are working with the **Maine State Library** to digitize many of the state’s town histories and rare material related

to the native Wabenaki Tribes. They are making their books available through **Book Surge**, a subsidiary of **Amazon**. They also digitized their entire collection of yearbooks and posted them on the Web. It was a big hit at their annual alumni get-together. Likewise, **Cornell University** is working with **Book Surge** to make available many of their scarce materials that are out of copyright. **Oya Rieger**, **Cornell’s** director of digital library and information technologies, showed me some of the new titles being reprinted from their unique anti-slavery and mathematics collections. Reprints from those collections retail at prices far below the rare book market and open up their collection to scholars all over the world. I did suggest however that reprint material needs to follow some of the same guidelines as traditional publishing, such as including a colophon and printing history. Adding introductions by current scholars would also be a good idea to put these works into a contemporary context.

Celebrating the Book

The Pioneer Valley in Western Massachusetts has been the center of a four month long celebration entitled “**Bookmarks: A Celebration of the Art of the Book**” featuring exhibitions and programs dedicated to book making, printing, literature, and literacy. The idea came from the cooperation of ten museums in the area (museums10.org) working together with area bookstores and libraries. One of the highlights of the celebration was a two-day event at **Mt. Holyoke College** called “**Books to Blogs and Back**” focusing on the future of the book in the digital age. **Robert Darnton**, famed historian and Director of the **Harvard Libraries** kicked off the event with his keynote speech “**The Research Library in the New Age of Information**.” His central thesis involved the inherent instability of the text, whether as “constructed” newspaper articles or even the variance in the **Shakespeare** folios. **Google** adds to the question of textual authenticity with their lack of bibliographic control. **Darnton** asks which editions should be scanned and preserved, what was the original format of the text, and how will they be preserved? He envisions that research libraries will be crucial in correcting and maintaining digitized information. And they will become even more important in the future as they foster development of new kinds of scholarship.

Other speakers at the conference included **Jason Epstein** speaking about his new project “**Espresso**,” the instant book distribution and printing machine. **Espresso** has had some test runs in libraries and bookstores, but it has encountered an old fashioned glitch that has halted its commercial introduction: paper jams. Its sheet-fed printing process needs more tweaking before we see it in wide use. Other speakers included **Sven Birkerts**, **Terry Belanger**, and **Lisa Gitelman**. See (www.mtholyoke.edu/go/booksblogs07)

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and keeping access fees in mind, sometimes we can work it out with one-time new program money that we get from the University. This is always with the knowledge and support of the department involved. Regardless, we feel we should ask for input from faculty, particularly because sometimes we do expect their library fund allocations to support those databases, at least in part. Famous last words, but so far we’ve never regretted it in the six years I have

done it here. And still, in all that time, we don’t really get a lot of feedback.

We do have a database team that makes recommendations, and they review the trial databases. In addition, we ask the subject librarians to pass along the information and logins directly to the department faculty liaisons, who in turn notify interested colleagues. 🌿