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Biz of Acq -- Am I Still Selecting?

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As arguments rage among content providers hawking their wares to libraries and consortia, I'm reminded of an old Milanese saying "chi vusa pusè, la vaca l'è sua" (*The cow belongs to whomever shouts loudest*). What are some of the highlights among these arguments? Combining books and journals adds significant value otherwise unavailable to users. Or are we just creating bigger silos that create as many new problems as they solve? Do other tools offer a better solution? Should books be treated like journals? And the commonplace that *treating eBooks like print books is a counterproductive paradigm* (admittedly, we are ready for a paradigm shift, but is the answer to move to a form derived from the epistolary exchange of information several hundred years ago?)⁴. An argument heard increasingly among press consortia (and some library consortia) is that that by removing the intermediary, i.e., the book vendor or eBook aggregator, significant savings can be passed along to libraries. Of course, there are still tremendous digital development agendas to make this so, not to mention a significant learning curve in terms of establishing collection development tools and the "million other trades" for content distribution — including print!⁵ Where are the savings? Publishers and database aggregators are intent on realizing significant sales of backlist files. It is true that backlist eContent does seem to be getting more use than its print counterpart, probably owing to greater discoverability and ease of access, but what is the proper business model for a clientele already underwater in terms of acquiring new content? Last but not least, wherefore the Big Deal? It was relatively easy to build a platform to deliver a large mass of content and invoice the library or consortium annually. That technology is more than a decade old now, and tools that support greater selectivity and improved access have since appeared. These allow libraries the potential to provide their users with greater access at reduced cost. And this returns us to the argument of combining books with journals. As in all the questions above, there are good arguments on both sides depending on the content and institutional requirements. But an important factor from the library perspective ought to be choice — and this should extend to journals as well as to books. Additionally, when eContent is available from a publisher, it is rarely comprehensive. Titles are commonly and inevitably withheld from digital format owing to rights issues or for fear of losing *course adoption* sales. Currently, 80% of the YBP print universe is available *only in print*. According to a study commissioned by OCLC,⁶ 75% of academic and professional content from the top 1,000 publishers will be available in digital format by 2016. Libraries will continue to need to consider somewhere between 20,000 and 55,000 print-only English language titles in collection development strategy annually for



at least the next five to ten years. How will the library ensure comprehensive coverage of pertinent content and control duplication across formats, vendors, and publishers?

A column like this is useful to pose questions and, if fortunate, help to inspire forums in which members from across the information supply chain can address these issues and many others. A unique aspect of our information ecosystem is the essential relationship between a not-for-profit enterprise and the vendors and many publishers and others who *must* eke out a profit from the services they supply in support of the scholarly mission. There is wide space for miscommunication and missteps in balancing organizational interests with marketplace requirements. As we listen to the descriptions of new content and product strategies, it would behoove us to look beyond the *bottom line*, as well as beyond our fiefdoms, and consider how an opportunity can be cultivated to serve all parties in a more efficient and productive way, from content creator and provider through information consumer. This will require more social networking (not to mention social *skills*) and activism among all stakeholders.

Ultimately, the invention of moveable type was bad business for **Franco**: whether through miscommunication or missteps, his wit brought him into conflict with the Inquisition which hung him on March 11, 1570. *Let's hope that our story will have a happier ending.* 🐼

Endnotes

1. <http://makemillionsellingebooks.com/>
2. Dialogo del venditore di libri in *Dialogi piacevoli*. Venice, 1539.
3. "A Concurrent pilot project approach to approval plans." Library Collections, Acquisitions, and Technical Services 30 (2006), 69-76.
4. This is an interesting argument. Manuscripts and printed books were commonly bound together by owners. It was library science that unbound and separated print books and manuscripts.
5. Manuscripts continued to thrive for several hundred years after the invention of the press. Print books will continue to be a significant part of most library collections for some years to come.
6. OCLC work commissioned from **Michael Cairns**. Based on interviews with a selection of industry experts.

Biz of Acq — Am I Still Selecting?

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Eleven years ago, shortly after I had started my first job as a music librarian at **Ball State University**, a colleague, whose work also included collection development, sent me an article with the provocative title, "Are We Still Selecting?" The article, by **Thomas Nisonger**,¹ was a report on a session that had been part of the program of a recent **ALA** meeting. The panel consisted of two bibliographers and one administrator, who reflected on the changes in duties and priorities of librarians working on collection development. In particular, one of the bibliographers noted that many decisions about selecting materials were taken out of her hands because of factors beyond her control, such as consortial agreements and licensing.

In the years since I read the article, I forgot many of its details, but I always remembered the title, "Are We Still Selecting?" I have always found collection development to be one of the most time-consuming but also rewarding aspects of my work as a librarian. I enjoy shaping a collection to fit the needs of faculty, students, and the music curriculum. For me, maintaining control over selection has been crucial, and in order to do so, I was

willing to spend the time needed to sift through catalogs, reviews in journals, and lists from vendors. Moreover, the longer I worked at it, the more familiar I became with the collection I was building, more aware of the interests of particular faculty and students who especially relied on the library for their work, and through bibliographic instruction and reference, more knowledgeable about the types of resources needed to support the curriculum. Given all these factors, why would I want to start an approval plan and turn over some of the decisions about what to add to the collection to someone else?

In my work at **Ball State University**, this question seldom came up because the only approval plan I had was one for English-language monographs on music, which was part of a library-wide program. My budget was not large enough for an approval plan for scores to be feasible.

When I took over my current position as Music Collection Development Librarian at **Indiana University** in 2007, I was confronted with a new situation. I now had a collections budget that was more than four times larger

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than my previous one, a much more diverse and numerous constituency to serve, and the responsibility of continuing to build one of the best collections in the country. Within a few months, I was convinced of the need for developing approval plans to allow myself time for these tasks, but I still wanted to maintain as much control as possible over selecting materials. I eventually decided to start two approval plans, one with **Theodore Front**, the other with **Harrassowitz**.² Both began in the fall of 2008, so I am now nearing the end of my third year of overseeing these plans. While I have found that they do save a significant amount of time, they also require careful attention for a number of reasons. I would like to discuss briefly four of those reasons here: avoiding duplications between the plans and firm orders; coordinating the plans with standing orders already in place; modifying them as needed to bring them more closely in line with the interests of students and faculty; and finally monitoring the plans' budgets in relationship to other expenditures. I think all of these factors are related to the question raised above of who is doing the selecting.

Preventing duplications was one of my biggest concerns when designing the plans. The numbers of duplicates we have received because an approval shipment overlapped with a firm or standing order have been gratifyingly

few, but I have found it necessary to monitor all our orders. One feature of **Harrassowitz's** Website facilitates this process: authorized users can see the items selected for the approval plan prior to shipment. I have found this feature very helpful in planning purchases and try to use it at least a couple of times a week. Similarly, **Theodore Front** sends a list of items scheduled for shipment on approval each month, which allows me to search for duplicates and delete them from the plan.

My second point, the necessity of coordinating approval plans with standing orders already in place, proved to be especially crucial in my situation. At **Indiana**, we have over 560 standing orders for a variety of series publications. Many of them are for composers' collected works and historical monuments (a staple of academic music libraries), and for these, it was relatively easy to avoid duplication with the approval plans. I simply requested on both approval plans that volumes in such publications be excluded. But other standing orders were for smaller publications of a lower profile that could easily be overlooked. Fortunately, my predecessor, **R. Michael Fling**, had set up an Excel spreadsheet listing the composer, series title, and vendor for all of our standing orders. This is an incredibly valuable resource which I have continued to maintain, and it has saved me on numerous occasions from making an expensive duplication. I decided it would be unwise to cancel a number of standing orders, so I wrote a number of "exception clauses"

into my approval plan, thereby requesting that a particular series be excluded.

So far, I have discussed ways of maintaining control over selecting materials on the approval plan by avoiding unwanted duplication that usually involved attention to individual series or even a single publication. I would now like to turn to larger issues, ones that I suspect will be the subject of ongoing evaluations of our plans in the years to come. The first concerns modifying the approval plans to more closely match the interests of faculty and students. In some instances, it is easy to meet the needs of faculty or students because they frequently approach me with a specific request in mind. In others cases, I have found that adjusting the approval plan to match the interests of faculty and students may require a more thoughtful analysis of the collection. For instance, in many of our libraries, music tends to have a long shelf life. Items published in the late 19th and early 20th centuries often reside in our collections because there is still demand for them. Performers may be searching for a repertoire that is off the beaten path to program for recitals. The musical canon for this period, in particular the early 20th century, has been revised and expanded in recent years with the result that composers once considered marginal are now enjoying renewed interest from scholars and performers. I recently performed a search in our online catalog of music published between 1890 and 1910 and found 6,102 titles.

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Of course, the physical condition of many of these scores may be in a perilous state, and in recent years a number of publishers have begun reprinting a great deal of music long out-of-print. After assessing all these factors, I decided to give some priority to reprints in my approval plans. Two such publications on my approval plans are the *Repertoire Explorer* series (primarily orchestral music, published by **Musikproduktion Höflich** in Munich) and *Silvertrust* editions (published in Riverwoods, IL), which concentrates on chamber music.

My last point concerns the necessity of closely monitoring the budgets and expenditures for approval plans. When I began these plans in 2008, I set a budget of \$25,000 for each one. This amount worked well initially, but several factors caused me to review this amount in 2009. At the start of this fiscal year I set up ten new standing orders for composers' collected editions and historical sets. Also, I found that our holdings in some scholarly editions were not completely up-to-date, so I worked on filling in these gaps. The result was that in the fall of 2009, we received a significantly greater number of standing orders than we had at the same point in the previous year. We were spending our money faster than I had anticipated, so I feared

we might run out of funds before the fiscal year was over. I obviously needed to keep some money in reserve for firm orders, so in November I contacted both vendors and explained the situation to them. I felt that I had no choice but to cut the budget for each approval plan by \$5,000. Naturally, this was not news they wished to hear, but they understood my reasoning and accepted it. I am pleased to say that the budget cut was only temporary. I continued to monitor our expenditures, and I noticed that the number of standing orders declined markedly in the new year. By February I felt confident that our budget could absorb the \$10,000 amount that had been cut from the approval plans. I notified both vendors and asked them to restore the budgets to their original amount, which they were happy to do.

With the approval plans now well into their second year and the experiences outlined above, I would like to return to the question that I raised at the beginning: am I still selecting? I think the answer is yes, but the following observations should be kept in mind. First, it is essential to stay in regular communication with vendors. Particularly in the early stages there were many emails and telephone calls about the scope of the plans. Fortunately, I have found both **Front** and **Harrassowitz** to be receptive to my questions, concerns, and requests for changes. They both gave the option of returning items that did not fit the plan,

although it has not been necessary to do so. Second, an approval plan is not likely to be set in stone. The plan is almost certain to be modified over time due to a number of factors. Changes in the curriculum; the hiring of new faculty; a decline in the materials budget; new publications that are deemed worthy of being added to the plan; and the arrival on the scene of important composers, whose work we desire to collect comprehensively — all of these scenarios are likely to affect approval plans in some way. In my own situation, I know that after the spring semester draws to a close and the last flurry of ordering has taken place, it will be time once again to review the parameters of the plans and to consider changes for the coming year. 🌿

Endnotes

1. *Library Collections, Acquisitions and Technical Services* 24, no. 4 (Winter 2000): 479-482.
2. Information about the vendors' approval plans may be found at their Websites: http://www.harrassowitz.de/music_services/music_scores.html and <http://www.tfront.com/t-ApprovalPlansMU.aspx>. See also **R. Michael Fling**, *Library Acquisition of Music, Music Library Association Basic Manual Series*, No. 4 (Lanham, MD: **Scarecrow Press**, 2004), 124-128.

Booklover — Road Trip

Column Editor: **Donna Jacobs** (Research Specialist, Transgenic Mouse Core Facility, MUSC, Charleston, SC 29425) <jacobsdf@musc.edu>

Summer is the time when we think about escaping from the routine of our daily lives. The modern school calendar probably contributed to this idea since summer is the usual break between school terms. I have many childhood memories of packing everyone in a car and going on a road trip. Cars were large sedans or station wagons, and seat belts were not a requirement for anyone in the car. We would build "fortresses" behind the clothes that hung in the backseat or among the luggage piled high in the back of the station wagon. The black top rolled out in front of us like a red carpet for our journey. More recently, I took a road trip with three girlfriends from high school. We explored I-95 from the southeast to the northeast and had a blast. With no agenda and only random crazy adventures in store we rotated driving, navigating, entertaining, or providing the never ending flow of snacks from the cooler in the back seat. We were seatbelted in, and the entire car was our fortress. Our Double Nickel Tour restored our souls and fortified us.

Sinclair Lewis' *Free Air* brought all these road trip memories rushing back to me this summer. Published in 1919, the story begins with a young girl, Claire Boltwood of Brooklyn Heights, ready for adventure and a break from the society of New York. Her father, Henry B. Boltwood, is a workaholic, and his worst nightmare has come true — the doctor's order of rest. Claire lures him

as far as Minneapolis to consult for a branch of his company, but once again he immerses himself in work. Claire is undaunted and again convinces her father that a road trip across the two thousand miles to Seattle, to visit their cousins, the Eugene Gilsons would be an excellent diversion. She has her beloved Gomez Deperdussin roadster shipped from New York and they depart on a July morning from Minneapolis along the edge of a cornfield between Schoenstrom and Gopher Prairie, Minnesota toward Seattle. It is not long before she realizes that she might be in over her head in this adventure, but like all adventures it is not without the villains and the heroes. Getting stuck in the mud, bad diners, cheap hotels, and quirky small town folks all contribute to the growth of Claire. And of course there is a hero in the character Milton Daggett. **Lewis'** version of a knight in shining armor. He has also taken to the road as a diversion from his routine, that of a mechanic in a small town garage. Retrieving Claire and her father from the con of Adolph Zolzav, the farmer making sure the road stays muddy in front of his house so he can "rescue" stuck cars for a price, sets the stage for a love of the road and its travelers. We feel the wind in our hair as we follow the roadster along the flat wheat lands, and we grip the book hard as we maneuver the windy mountain roads. And we hope that the social strata of the day will not interfere with a "happy-ever-after" end to the story.

In 1930 **Harry Sinclair Lewis** became the first American writer to win the **Nobel Prize in Literature** "for his vigorous and graphic art of description and his ability to create, with wit and humor, new types of characters." He was born in 1885 in Minnesota, studied at **Oberlin Academy** and **Yale University**, where he began his writing career that included numerous novels and short stories. His novel *Main Street* was a huge (a few million in today's dollars) commercial success and his short story *Little Bear Bongo* caught the interest of **Walt Disney Pictures**.

When presenting his Nobel lecture **Lewis** offered his view of American literature: "in America most of us — not readers alone, but even writers — are still afraid of any literature which is not a glorification of everything American, a glorification of our faults as well as our virtues." He described America as "the most contradictory, the most depressing, the most stirring, of any land in the world today." His comment about America's literary establishment: "Our American professors like their literature clear and cold and pure and very dead." Maybe so, but it is summer again. I feel the call of the road, dream of having the wind in my hair, exploring this great land of ours, and maybe discovering a new book or two. 🌿

