2016

If Rumors Were Horses

Katina Strauch
Against the Grain, kstrauch@comcast.net

Follow this and additional works at: https://docs.lib.purdue.edu/atg

Part of the Library and Information Science Commons

Recommended Citation
DOI: https://doi.org/10.7771/2380-176X.7302

This document has been made available through Purdue e-Pubs, a service of the Purdue University Libraries. Please contact epubs@purdue.edu for additional information.
The Business of Academic Bookselling ... and Buying

by Bob Nardini (Vice President, Library Services, ProQuest Books)  <bob.nardini@proquest.com>

M  

othing makes you feel smarter than being invited to write an encyclopedia article. So I felt awfully smart while writing the entry for “Approval Plans” in the Encyclopedia of Library and Information Science, which CRC Press brought out back in 2003. That was the second edition of a venerable work that had first come out in 1968. And then last year, when asked to revise my entry for the third edition (still forthcoming), I felt smart again.

Until I re-read what I’d written that first time. Can you retract an encyclopedia article? Probably not. Too bad for me, since some of what I’d said didn’t belong in any encyclopedia. Most of what I wrote was fine, and some of it, to tell the truth, I enjoyed reading back to myself. “An approval plan is an acquisitions method under which a library receives regular shipments of new titles,” I began, a good enough start, nothing to be ashamed of there. Maybe I should have quit while ahead. Instead, I concluded with a section called, “The Future of Approval Plans.” That’s where I ran into trouble.

Approval plans would spread to overseas libraries, I predicted. Small libraries would begin to use approval plans. Why not? Approval plans were already, for many libraries, “the centerpiece for the collection of monographs.” Didn’t happen, either prediction. Many libraries who’d had one, in fact, had trimmed or even done away with their approval plans. eBooks were not doing well at the time, but I did mention them at least. And likewise, I mentioned teaching faculty in one sentence and users more generally in another, devoted a couple of sentences to metadata, and followed that by rerouting in a vague way to “the immediacy of data” together with “efficiency” a little further on in another sentence.

So, I wasn’t completely off base. But how would I know that the world of academic bookselling was about to change radically, and that the new centerpiece would be usage? That eBook aggregators would arise, first to challenge book vendors and then to merge with them in part so as to be more able to compete and cooperate, simultaneously, with publishers and with one another? That so many publishers would merge as well, that some publishers would become aggregators, and that all would be challenged to attract readers, let alone become as businesslike as the businesses that served them? That academic librarians would continue on page 14

If Rumors Were Horses

March and April have been busy! Even though it’s hard to have anything new to say these days with the Internet so pervasive, there is some big news in our industry. I hope you are keeping up with the ATG NewsChannel posts which Tom Gilson crafts so thoroughly every week. Also, Erin Gallagher from Rollins College keeps us up-to-date weekly with her Hot Topics! www.against-the-grain.com

YBP has bought Ambassador Book Services’ library customers. Your YBP representative will be in touch shortly to assist with the transition if not already. https://www.ebsco.com/promo/ambassador-book-services

Moving right along, Follett, the family-owned bookseller, has acquired Baker & Taylor. Reportedly this will boost sales by almost 40 percent and strengthen Follett’s presence in a number of markets, from public libraries to foreign countries. Terms of the sale were not disclosed. http://www.4-traders.com/BARNES-NOBLE-INC-11858/news/Barnes-Noble-Blockbuster-book-deal-Follett-buys-Baker-Taylor-22193388/ continued on page 6
Don’t you love it? While I was in Italy eating pasta, there were people working away on this print April issue of ATG! And it’s a great one. The energetic and committed Bob Nardini has put together a unique series of articles on the business of bookselling and buying. His introductory article — looking through the lens of his encyclopedia article many years ago and how the industry has not — changed is too weak a word — is Morphed a better word? The industry is definitely changing its image…

Articles included are by Rick Lugg (being in the middle), Stephanie Church (strengthening the library story), Carol Joyner Cramer (alternatives to DDA), Alan Jarvis (next for academic publishing?), and Adam Sandler (eulogy for a bookworm).

We have interviews with Rosann Bazirjian and N V Sathyanarayana and David Parker has interviewed Laura Brown of JSTOR, while Myer Kutz had a fascinating conversation with renowned attorney Jon Baumgarten.

There are several book reviews and reports — Collecting to the Core is about advanced astronomy texts and thanks always to Anne Doherty for her editing of this continuing column. I can’t believe how amazing Regina Gong is getting so many great book reviews, and Tom Gilson is no slouch either.

Don Hawkins does his usual thorough reporting on the 2016 NFAIS Annual Conference. Ramune Kubilius brings us her reporters from the 2015 Charleston Conference, and Leah Hinds gives us a few glimpses of Charleston 2016.

Back Talk is about the speedy delivery of books through Amazon, etc. (Is speed the best factor when buying a book regardless of format?) Leila Salisbury is wandering the stacks in her From a University Press column. (I heard this quote recently, “You can’t walk the stacks in a virtual library — all you can search digitally is the metadata.”) Michael Arthur surveys the importance of efficient access and enhanced technical services operations, Jerry Spiller fills us in on a new scholarly journal launched by the Museum of Science Fiction, and Michael Gruenberg asks “when is a trade show not a trade show?” Stacey Marien and Alayne Mundt get technical about the chaos of media ordering while Vicki Sipe and Lynda Aldana care about shelf-ready workflow.

It’s time to down tools. What to have for supper? Pasta? Love, Yr. Ed. 🍝

Letters to the Editor

Send letters to <kstrauch@comcast.net>, phone or fax 843-723-3536, or snail mail: Against the Grain, MSC 98, The Citadel, Charleston, SC 29409. You can also send a letter to the editor from the ATG Homepage at http://www.against-the-grain.com.

Dear Editor:

I’d like to fill in some of our gaps. We have a bound copy of vols. 13, parts of vol. 16 through 19, and nothing for volumes 20 through 26. Our new subscription began with vol. 27#6. The simple question I have is to ask if you have any back issues available and, if so, how can I obtain them? I see from the issues available and, if so, how can I obtain them? I see from the vol. 16 through 19, and nothing for volumes 20 through 26. Our new subscription began with vol. 27#6. The simple question I have is to ask if you have any back issues available and, if so, how can I obtain them? I see from the vol. 16 through 19, and nothing for volumes 20 through 26. Our new subscription began with vol. 27#6. The simple question I have is to ask if you have any back issues available and, if so, how can I obtain them? I see from the vol. 16 through 19, and nothing for volumes 20 through 26. Our new subscription began with vol. 27#6. The simple question I have is to ask if you have any back issues available and, if so, how can I obtain them? I see from the vol. 16 through 19, and nothing for volumes 20 through 26. Our new subscription began with vol. 27#6. The simple question I have is to ask if you have any back issues available and, if so, how can I obtain them? I see from the vol. 16 through 19, and nothing for volumes 20 through 26. Our new subscription began with vol. 27#6. The simple question I have is to ask if you have any back issues available and, if so, how can I obtain them? I see from the vol. 16 through 19, and nothing for volumes 20 through 26. Our new subscription began with vol. 27#6. The simple question I have is to ask if you have any back issues available and, if so, how can I obtain them? I see from the.

Thanks for any info. you can pass on. I’m really enjoying Against the Grain. It has such a breezy, fun, creative style; it’s not like any library journal I’ve ever read before.

Do y’all know how different and special you are? It’s like the difference between a dry, boring, lecture and a chatty, amusing, — but oh, so very knowledgeable — conversation.

All the best, Sheila

Sheila Dorsey (Collections Librarian, Collection Management and Digitization, South Carolina State Library) <SDorsey@statelibrary.sc.gov> 🐙

Rumors from page 1

I don’t think that I told y’all that the soft-spoken steel magnolia, Rosann Bazirjian is retiring. Good news is that she is moving to Myrtle Beach, just up the street from Charleston! Plus she is leaving Beth Bernhardt to continue her marvellous work with the Charleston Conferences! We have an interview with Rosann in this issue, p.40.

The highlight of my March/April was completing staff evaluations which were supposed to be “paperless” until we had to print everything for the files! Go figure!

So, you will understand why I was delighted to attend the 18th Fiesole Collection Development Retreat in breathtaking Tuscany. The weather was perfect despite dire predictions to the contrary. The pasta and wine were ooh-lala and so was the scenery. Tuscany is this side of paradise. The Casalini’s as always were perfectly flawless hosts and the programs and discussions were stimulating. Sessions tackled “The E-Book Elephant” in Scholarly Publishing with an emphasis on new models and new strategies and much much more. Slides from the meeting are now available at the official Fiesole Retreat Repository. www.casalini.it/retreat

continued on page 14
become much more attentive to their users than to their book collections? And that those books would, as often as not, be seen as a problem as much as an asset.

Approval plans are all about buying books on the chance they might be used. They continue to make sense for libraries with the mission, and corresponding budget, to build research collections. Fewer and fewer libraries, however, can claim that mission, or count on that budget. Instead, the same profiles that fueled approval plans are now the engines beneath the hood for Demand-Driven Acquisition (DDA) programs, generating MARC files under subject and other parameters that can provide patron access to more books than approval plans ever did. Or, many of these same profiles have been retooled for approval plans where no books are bought until a librarian has first reviewed and authorized them online on their vendor’s interface, almost like a firm order. How many new books — and which ones, and under what conditions — will academic libraries buy without good evidence their patrons will discover and then open them? Those are the questions faced today by everyone in the business of academic books.

This issue of Against the Grain isn’t about approval plans. Approval plans, for the past thirty years or so, have simply been my own usual vantage point on the academic book business. In fact the five contributors to this issue, from their own vantage points — three librarians, a publisher, and a consultant — barely mention approval plans. Just a few years ago that wouldn’t have been the case. It’s a telling sign — as if we needed another — that the business of publishing, aggregating, selling, and buying academic books is going through tectonic change, but at electronic speed.

Among the ways I’ve been fortunate in my career is that I began it by working for about fifteen years as a book vendor colleague of Rick Lugg. Now I’m fortunate once more that Rick agreed to write for this issue, since he and his wife Ruth Fischer have been as responsible as any individuals I can think of for a healthy portion of that change. When they founded Sustainable Collection Services in 2011, their earlier experience as library workflow consultants had revealed to them that academic libraries held too many print books that rarely circulated, or didn’t circulate at all. They built their new business on that insight, and in his Against the Grain contribution, Rick first provides a recap of how the academic bookselling business has evolved since the 1980s, and then presents data on book circulation that can’t be ignored. SCS, now a part of OCLC, is an example, as Rick puts it, “of the next generation of vendor intermediary might look like,” companies who bring analytics to bear on the books and other resources that publishers produce and that libraries buy.

But today’s libraries don’t simply “buy resources.” Librarians realize that another factor that can’t be ignored in the market is the purchasing power they have. When academic librarians speak up, publishers, vendors, and aggregators are wise to listen. Stephanie Church, of Case Western Reserve University, is a librarian with a lot to say. What she says is that assessment is “no longer a buzzword” for academic libraries. A library’s importance to a university is no longer assumed. Libraries must prove it, and usage data is one of the ways to strengthen the story. Stephanie also has things to say about print and eBook preferences; DDA, eBook pricing models, DRM policies, and user authentication hurdles; and other questions too. Readers will be thankful that Stephanie has chosen to speak up in this issue of Against the Grain.

What if DDA went away? While the model has become widespread among academic librarians, one major aggregator has questioned the logic behind DDA. Publishers have recently pulled back or have changed their terms. Wake Forest University’s library provides “an all-you-can-eat smorgasbord” of books through a large DDA program. WFU’s Carol Cramer conducts a “thought experiment” in this issue, to find that even with less generous pricing and terms for DDA and Short-Term Loan, “DDA remains by far the most efficient models for an institution like ours.” What would Carol do if the DDA model was in fact suppressed? To find out, just read her Against the Grain contribution.

 Librarians aren’t the only ones who need to justify how their budgets are spent. Scholarly publishers, according to Routledge’s Alan Jarvis, “have to rethink their approach to deciding whether individual book projects are worth pursuing.” In his wide-ranging Against the Grain contribution, Alan rethinks just about every aspect of academic book publishing: total output, consolidation, the long tail, pricing, publishing models, eBook business models, open access, non-library markets, discovery, DRM, analytics, and more. Read it and you will feel like you’ve taken a short course in today’s academic book publishing business.

If Mark Sandler had been a baseball player and not a librarian, right about now his number would be retired, a monument erected in the outfielld, he’d be shaking hands in a home plate ceremony, and soon, would be on his way to Cooperstown. Instead, Mark is retiring as Director, Center for Library Initiatives, at the Committee on Institutional Cooperation (CIC), a position he held for some ten years, apprenticed with for twenty years working in Collections at the University of Michigan. Among Mark’s grand slams were his roles in Google’s digitization projects, in the Text Creation Partnership, in shared print, in government documents digitization. I could go on, but best to stop and simply say that anyone who has ever heard Mark speak, or read something he’s written, knows that they are in for some laughs that won’t diminish the thoughtfulness of his contribution. What Mark is thinking about in this issue of Against the Grain is the future of the book itself in academic life. On that topic, let’s just say that Mark isn’t sanguine. He says a lot more than that, as well, and all of us with our hand in that book culture as it exists today would best pay attention.

All of us in the business of academic bookselling might prefer that things were different — the book unreheated, library collections revered and not questioned, usage one of those “nice to haves,” budgets strong, approval plans soaring, eBook models settled, assessment and analytics merely words in the dictionary. Instead, whether publisher, vendor, aggregator, or librarian, we’re all challenged to examine the assumptions and practices that have sustained us in the past. If we are going to engage with our future, one place we are not going to find it, I can tell you, is in the encyclopedia.
branding the product to gain acceptance as a global company from India. We also needed bigger investments to add new features and functionalities to become globally competitive. There was lot of resistance too from some of the Ivy-league publishers in supporting us, by misreading us as a potential competitor. Hence, it took too long a time to be where we are! We are happy today that people recognize us to partner with us. This change will be a leap forward for Informatics.

**ATG:** J-Gate, and its subset Open J-Gate, seem to be your key offerings. Can you talk more about them?

**NVS:** I will be happy to. We conceived J-Gate in 1999, just when the Web-based e-journal revolution had started. We started working on J-Gate with a vision to develop the single largest e-journal database and portal. Very early on, we realized that our market in India couldn’t support a product, indexing thousands of e-journals, for two reasons. One, e-journals were still far from the reach of Indian libraries due to Internet infrastructure limitation which was too slow to happen; two, the number of e-journals subscribed by libraries then was too small, in the range of 100-500. We changed the direction and focused on a customized database, limiting to the journals that libraries subscribed to, which works as a product within the local area network of the institutional campus. In effect, we created a local discovery solution for the libraries and their journal literature holdings. We quickly expanded this concept to a group of libraries and library consortium as a shared discovery and resource-sharing solution. This caught up the imagination of Indian library consortia. The consortia modeled J-Gate solution, popularly called in India as JCCC (J-Gate Custom Content for Consortia), would facilitate online access to e-journals by their defined right-of-access to resources subscribed by libraries, either individually or collectively. By virtue of indexing articles from their print journal holding also, JCCC facilitated inter-library loan when a user found an article in a journal, which might not be subscribed by his library. JCCC was adapted in 2003 by one of the earliest and largest Indian Library Consortium. It is another matter that big publishers didn’t like JCCC for this reason. But, they couldn’t stop us, as the libraries wanted it. However there is one instance where surprisingly a leading not-for-profit publisher signed with a consortium to make available his content to the consortium for inter-library loan among its members under CONTU guidelines, but threatened them and us, several years after our service was in use, with copyright violation for facilitating ILL. Fortunately, he was the only one, an odd one indeed!

J-Gate as a customized solution could have been an ideal product for the big global libraries and the consortia to adapt as an effective discovery and resource-sharing platform in the early days of e-journal evolution itself. We marketed global e-journals in India extensively, but we failed to get our unique e-journal discovery solution into the global market. I may say, it is for journalists like you to analyze the reasons for our failure to brand a great Indian product in the global market.

**ATG:** It’s probably not a big revenue opportunity for you, but you are the world-wide distributor for S.R. Ranganathan’s journal, SRELs Journal of Information Management. Does that journal have an international following?

**NVS:** Very little. We took over this 52-year-old journal only two years ago. Ranganathan is a great universal brand in the librarianship, like Melville Dewey. But the journal started by him is not widely known outside India which is typical of any Indian scholarly journal. Marketing and branding a single journal is an expensive job. Hence, we have created a platform called i-Scholar (www.i-scholar.in) to host and market Indian journals with a good e-commerce model. Currently i-Scholar hosts around 200 Indian journals, with archives dating back to first volume. We have started adding global journals also to our i-Scholar platform. We hope to do better with this strategy. Now that we have made SRELs Journal online through our i-Scholar platform, libraries around the world can subscribe to it easily online.

**ATG:** What about the future? What new products can we expect from Informatics?

**NVS:** Our future plan is in two distinct directions: (1) to strengthen our library-centric products and services to maintain leadership in this market and go global. (2) expand our market into many non-library domains of the global information market place. Our strategy is to be a “Technology + Content” Company. We realize that in the digital world, information products cannot be conceived or pursued as a quickly scalable market without the internal strength of technology. Pursuing this strategy, three years ago we created a new subsidiary company called Informatics Publishing Ltd., which is now focusing on our established library market and are working towards building technology strength within our parent company. We plan to expand into the new horizons of information market place with this strength. You will see a few new products in the coming years, which may even be spun-off into new subsidiary companies. We are, in some way, back to start-up mode.

---

**Interview — Rosann Bazijran from page 42**

restaurants in Myrtle Beach, so I am looking forward to checking them out. I am also looking forward to getting involved with community events. Now that I am a South Carolinian, I am determined to finish the Anne Rivers Siddons novels that I have yet to read. I love getting to know local authors, so I will go to author events and buy their books. I don’t know if I will be doing anything library related after I leave UNC-Greensboro. Everyone says that when you retire, you shouldn’t make any commitments for at least six months. It is important to feel the rhythm of retirement and then make any decisions regarding committees, volunteering opportunities, etc. I will definitely be in Charleston now that I do not live too far away but solely as a tourist!
entities to effectively monitor and meaningfully hinder persistent infringing by uploading, downloading and retransmission of copyrighted works over the Web. This draft of the McAllister renovation project.

and instruction, and for coordinating the Hayden Library renovation project. Lorrie McAllister will arrive in late May from MIT, in the position of Senior Administrative Librarian with the title of Assistant University Librarian. Her responsibilities will include supervision of the library’s data gathering and assessment exercises; strategic initiatives at

In my view, judges are sometimes unduly influenced by the magic of technology... Do you see things that way too?

Yes, and very much so — and not only among judges, but also among legislators and other policy makers here and abroad. The basic problem, as I see it, is the overt advocacy by some technology interests and the receptive tendency of some judges and policy makers to be so favorably overwhelmed by the exciting promises, benefits and convenience of new technology that they view copyright as an impediment, so its protection ought to be diminished if not swept aside. This view is entirely short sighted and counterproductive to a healthy environment for intellectual scholarship and creativity.

One example of this trend in advocacy is the use of the word “innovation” in copyright debate today. Proponents of diminished copyright protection commonly argue the purported “stifling” of technological innovation posed by strong copyright law, and pretend that technology companies, as opposed to the creative copyright industries, are the only “innovators.” (Some technology companies have quite explicitly urged governments abroad to limit copyright protection as a means of encouraging their local investment or presence.) Unfortunately, these arguments conveniently overlook at least two points: first, that a great deal of technologic innovation in products and services of the digital economy are produced by the time, effort, and investment of the creative industries themselves, as repeatedly shown in new, emergent, exciting and popular offerings (new media, new platforms, new formats, new research tools, etc.) of motion picture companies, scientific publishers, and others — actions that are critically underwritten by the protections offered by the copyright laws to the creative works of these companies made available through their own innovations in new entertainment and scholarly products and distribution mechanisms. Second, in the case of copyright works being made available to the public, successful or meaningful innovation even if initiated by technology companies can only be viewed as a partnership or fusion of scientific invention and copyright creativity. This is exemplified in a recent newspaper article appraising the future of virtual reality in entertainment media that noted: “[w]ithout compelling content, even the most impressive piece of technology won’t appeal to more than a hardy base of early adopters.”