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Both Sides Now: Vendors and Librarians — Making the Deal Happen

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Salespeople, especially those whose job it is to call on libraries face a number of challenges in closing the deal for a library to buy the company's product. A common roadblock in attempting to derail a possible sale is the classic excuse used by many an information professional when they say, "we have no money to buy new resources." Virtually every sales rep in our business has heard this excuse countless times in their careers. It seems that this is the fail-safe rationale for not buying a product while still being nice to the salesperson.

Yes, we all realize that libraries constantly face funding difficulties, but when a valuable, new eContent product comes to market, both the salesperson and the library person are tasked to get together and figure out a way to finalize a purchase that results in a mutually acceptable solution for both parties. Whether it's cancelling a product in lieu of the new one or getting a special deal from the company, all avenues of possibilities must be pursued to get the deal done. In a business that thrives on new technologies, funding should not stand in the way of acquiring new content. Any salesperson that walks away from a potential deal after hearing the "no money" excuse is not doing their job and needs to explore as many ways as possible to make the deal happen.

At the outset of the buying and selling process, it's in everyone's best interest to review the library's purchasing procedure. What is the funding situation? If funding is an issue, how can that be overcome? Who are the main people at the library that will ultimately decide on buying or not? What incentives are needed by the buyer to help make the deal happen? If an order is forthcoming, how long will it take to materialize into a signed agreement?

Of course, the first step in the process is for the sales rep to contact the library, to present the finer points of the product to be sold and gauge the interest of the librarian. The deal falls apart here if there is no interest on the part of the library. Whatever the reason, this is the *first moment of truth* in the buying and selling process. Don't like the product? Don't have the money? Don't want to be bothered? This the time to tell the rep that it is in no one's best

interest to continue the discussion for whatever the reason. And that's fine because sales reps in our business have monthly/yearly sales goals and are tasked with speaking to a wide array of prospects. So if Library A says "no" then it's time to call Library B, C, D, etc. No database publisher/aggregator produces a product to be sold to just one library. So declining to see the rep is not necessarily a bad thing. As a matter

of fact, the information professional is doing that salesperson a favor because a rep's time is better spent with interested prospects than those who are unable to buy.

On the other hand, if the library agrees to see the rep even though they know that there is no hope of a sale any time soon, then that is not right unless the rep knows up front that a sale is not forthcoming in the immediate future. Salespeople in the information industry or any industry for that matter must be fastidious in the management of their time. By visiting a library without knowing in advance that the chances of a sale are non-existent is simply a waste of everyone's time.

So, let's assume that Mary the salesperson for a major aggregator has just called the Schliderman Memorial Library at Dust University. The librarian is intrigued with the brief description of the database, is not sure if the funding will be available but nevertheless invites Mary to the campus and tells her about the uncertain funding situation once again. As they meet, and discuss the pros & cons of the product, it is clear that there is interest and as such, funds may be available for a purchase. For both parties, they have reached the *second moment of truth*.

It is at this point that Mary has to begin to review the needs of the library with the information professional so that both parties are on the same page. Mary should review her notes at the conclusion of the meeting with her counterpart and highlight all the needs expressed by the library person and describe how the new product will fulfill and hopefully surpass those needs. Once that mutual review is completed, Mary will probably say, "Given that the database I just described will solve a number of your library's needs, what is the next step in order approval process?" And here ladies and gentlemen, is the ever so crucial *third moment of truth*.

To counteract the "we have no money for new resources" excuse, Mary needs to begin the discussion with an open ended question, such as, "Given all the ways in which this new product will undoubtedly save you time and money while providing an excellent resource for faculty

and students, alike, what would you expect to pay for this valuable database?" While Mary may not get an answer about specific dollars in the budget, she has laid the groundwork for a discussion on how much money it will take to buy her new product.

The ball is now in the library's court. There is an expectation on the part of the salesperson that the information professional is fully aware

of the budget which corresponds to the price of the product presented. So, let's assume, the librarian is fully aware of what can be spent to purchase the item presented. Now given a series of questions and answers designed to remove all roadblocks, thus allowing the purchase to be completed.

"Mary, I am intrigued by this new database and I know it will be well received here at the library. Can you tell me how much it will cost?"

"Given that this is a new product, the eventual selling price will be \$15,500, but since it is so new, the company is giving a 15% discount to early adopters, so your cost would be \$13,175 for the first year," Mary replies.

Sounds like a nice deal, but Mary needs to be pushed for a better one. Perhaps asking for that initial price to be frozen for next year's renewal or asking to be a beta test site for half the quoted price in year one or just simply asking for a deeper discount should be considered responses when the price is given.

Depending on Mary's incentives to make the sale happen and the library's ability to have the budget to buy, the *fourth (and most important) moment of truth* has been put into play. How far will the company go to satisfy the customer? How far will the library go to get the best deal possible? And now, the serious negotiations begin.

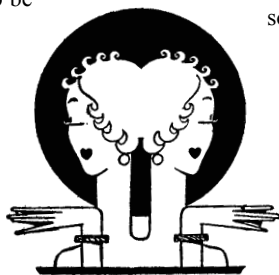
The selling process is one in which a good salesperson overcomes whatever objections are posed by the buyer with positive responses that will overcome the roadblocks seemingly preventing the purchase.

Too often, a salesperson will return from a meeting with a prospect and tell the sales manager that a sale could not be made because the library said that they have no money for purchase. The salesperson should have inquired in advance about the funding possibilities and know what the company is willing to do to make the sale happen. And the information professional should always share with the salesperson the realistic budget possibilities.

Making the deal happen is all about knocking down roadblocks that get in the way of a sale. Price is always the easiest roadblock to surmount. Discounts, extended payments, flat renewals in the following years, beta test site, etc., are all ways to help the client with justifying the price. There are technical issues, content issues, platform issues, etc., that must be also dealt with, but if the sales rep and the librarian are both willing to negotiate in good faith, a deal can be struck.

In the '60s the group **The Youngbloods** had a hit record written by **Jesse Colin Young** called "Get Together." Getting Together is what making the deal happen is all about. 🐼

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Much easier said than done, of course, and in today's financial and political climate for higher education much harder done than ever before perhaps. But I will be looking to such collections partnerships as **SCELC**, **University of California, Big Ten Academic Alliance**, **EAST**, **CI-CCI**, **MI-SPI**, and **ALI/PALNI** for successful examples as institutions find their way toward more expansive and inclusive programs and such efforts as the **ASERL/WRLC Scholars Trust** and the **Rosemont Group** for journals coalesce smaller programs. The **FDLP** has always been to an extent a distributed shared print collection, albeit a highly duplicative one. It will be interesting therefore to see the effects over time of the growing influence of electronic publication and access coupled with such centralizing programs as **ASERL's Collaborative Federal Depository Program** and the **FDLP's** own preservation stewardship program.

For the last several years, I have participated in a group consisting of representatives from library organizations and scholarly societies who have been trying to design among scholars and librarians a collaborative future for the preservation of and access to print monograph collections.⁷ Our proposal is ready for a more public phase, and at the very least we hope it can help to catalyze a national approach in the absence of an organization charged to do so and in the presence of many organizations that have promoted the cause of shared collections.

5. Libraries need to move beyond the current concepts of resource sharing that depend on ownership models favoring local readers and treat all libraries' readers equally in order to make good on the promises of shared collections. Evidence about materials access logistics from **ReCAP** and **Emily Stambaugh's** suggestions about delivery methods will support achievement of this goal.

6. In this column, **Jake Nadal** (December 2016/January 2017, 26:6, 61) stimulated us to think about the prospects for moving from off-site storage as an expedient for relieving the pressure on stuffed stacks to the creation of regional collection centers whose services and efficiencies would not only enable at-scale preservation of print but an array of cost benefits to libraries and readers. We should follow **Jake's** argument to come up with business models for "repositories of record" that collaboratively serve the inventory and access functions of libraries and also provide readers the physical access many of them need to bodies of material as well as individual (known) items.

7. Academic libraries need to partner with public libraries to engage them in shared collection collaboratives and secure materials that publics typically collect and academics do not. The **Maine Shared Collections Cooperative** has done so, and **OCLC** research has pointed us to the importance of public library holdings in megaregions. We need to develop among all academic libraries, which already participate in resource sharing networks with publics, ways

of taking into account the holdings of public libraries in our thinking about the collective collection.

8. We need to financially encourage the many current experiments in open access publishing, the systematic digitization of books, and the use of tools for quickly determining the possible public domain status of orphan works according to the protocols developed by **HathiTrust**. Doing so will enlarge the electronically accessible full-text library that necessarily complements the shared physical library, facilitate use cases for books that print does not, and may, just may, pressure a copyright regime that, though it protects the interests of authors and publishers, does little to encourage access to texts by broad swaths of readers.

9. We need to think harder about how our investments in collection analysis can assist consortia, as in the case of **VIVA** with monographs or the **UC** system with some journals, in prospective management and preservation of newly published materials, be they print or digital.

I began working on interlibrary collections collaboration when I joined the **Haverford College Library** in 1988 and a then fifteen-year-old program between **Haverford** and **Bryn Mawr** to acquire new monographs through a joint approval plan. The purchase of a library system with **Bryn Mawr** and **Swarthmore Colleges** in 1989 laid the groundwork for a series of collaborative collections efforts that continue today among the three colleges and expand through their memberships in **PALCI**, **PACSCL**, and **EAST**.

As I head farther into Retirement Land than I have thus far ventured since leaving my day job at **Occidental College** in July 2015, I would like to thank those **TriCo** colleagues who launched me in the business. I would also like to thank the many colleagues who have contributed during the last three years to this column as guest authors. Along with the meetings I helped to plan with **CRL's Marie Waltz** for the **Print Archive Network (PAN) Forum** at **ALA** meetings, editing this column has offered the opportunity to document the activities of the shared print, and more generally, shared collections community. For **ATG** readers who want to follow collaborative print and related topics, **PAN** and its archive of presentations (<https://www.crl.edu/past-meetings>) will serve well as a surrogate for this column.

I want especially as the greenish pastures of retirement beckon to thank **Ivy Anderson**, **Rick Lugg** and **Ruth Fischer**, **Kathleen Fitzpatrick**, **Chuck Henry**, **Constance Malpas** and her colleagues at **OCLC**, **Jake Nadal**, **Lizanne Payne**, **Bernie Reilly**, **Susan Stearns**, **Jeremy Suratt**, **Mark Sandler**, **Emily Stambaugh**, and **Andy Stauffer** as well as colleagues on the 2014/15 **HathiTrust** shared monograph collection task force for the many intellectual and professional stimuli and kindnesses over the course of my shared collections involvements. I would like to wish them and colleagues from **PACSCL**, **PALCI**, **SCELC**, and the many others whom I've come to know in the last 10-15 years a rich future of curating collective collections. 🍷

Endnotes

1. 2016. "Risk, Value, Responsibility, and the Collective Collection," with **John McDonald**, *Shared Collections: Collaborative Stewardship* (ALA Editions, edited by Dawn Hale).
2. 2014. "Beyond My People and Thy People, or The Shared Collections Imperative," *Rethinking Collection Development and Management* (Libraries Unlimited, edited by **Diane Zabel**, **Becky Albitz**, **Chris Avery**).
3. "Collective Collection, Collection Action," with **Lizanne Payne**, *Collection Management*. 37: 3-4 (2012); "A Nation-Wide Planning Framework for Large-Scale Collaboration on Legacy Print Collections," with **Lizanne Payne**, *Collaborative Librarianship*, 2:4 (2010), <http://collaborativelibrarianship.org>.
4. I use "we" in this list to denote the librarians, scholars and students, publishers, institutions and organizations, funding bodies, and the great variety of readers whose interests come to bear on the creation and management of the resources libraries gather and make available.
5. This group is informal and self-regulating and convened first in January 2014 in Philadelphia as the Regional Climate Summit. They do not have a web presence, but reports of their work circulate through **ALCTS/PARS** and a mailing list.
6. Such other means for achieving distinction might include the richness of their partnerships, their access methods and who can gain free access, the extent to which they contribute special materials to common access, how much they devote to funding collaborative efforts that address benefits to all readers.
7. <https://printrecord.mla.hcommons.org/about/>. This group needs a new name that better defines its focus.

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*Mike is currently the Managing Partner of **Gruenberg Consulting, LLC**, a firm he founded in January 2012 after a successful career as a senior sales executive in the information industry. His firm is devoted to provide clients with sales staff analysis, market research, executive coaching, trade show preparedness, product placement and best practices advice for improving negotiation skills for librarians and salespeople. His book, "Buying and Selling Information: A Guide for Information Professionals and Salespeople to Build Mutual Success" has become the definitive book on negotiation skills and is available on Amazon, Information Today in print and eBook, Amazon Kindle, B&N Nook, Kobo, Apple iBooks, OverDrive, 3M Cloud Library, Gale (GVRL), MyiLibrary, ebrary, EBSCO, Blio, and Chegg. www.gruenbergconsulting.com*