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Facts and Figures / Acquisitions Expenditures

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New Feature —
Facts & Figures

Acquisitions Expenditures
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Consider this ATG's version of Ann Landers. We are interested in y'all — yes, that's YOU — writing or emailing or faxing us particular facts & figures that you are interested in knowing. We don't have to identify you unless you want us to. Send questions, issues, etc. to — Facts & Figures, c/o Anne Jennings, 348 Spoonbill Lane, Mt. Pleasant, SC 29464. Email: Jenningsa@cofc.edu.

Against the Grain recently had several calls for information regarding the increase or decrease in acquisition expenditures, with particular interest as to monographs and periodicals. These piqued our interest as well, and as a result, we looked back over a ten-year period in The Bowker Annual to see what the figures demonstrated.

While overall spending by libraries as a whole increased, the most interesting information yielded came from the percentages, i.e., the division of total monies spent in the various categories of purchasing. We specifically studied the figures spent on books, serials and database fees; the latter because of the increasing occurrence of library access to electronic services. The types of libraries we examined were academic, public and special between the periods from 1983-1984 to 1992-1993. This is what we were able to deduce:

Monographs:

Monographic purchasing steadily decreased in all three types of libraries until the 1991-1992 and 1992-1993 periods. At this time, academic and special library acquisition of books made notable increases and public library purchases significantly decreased.

Serials:

The acquisition of periodicals was on the rise in academic and public libraries until 1992-1993 when both demonstrated a decrease in spending, particularly with regard to the academic field. However, special libraries decreased their acquisition of serials until that same period when the figures rose nearly 17 percentage points.

Database Fees:

As expected, the figures for database fees have been on the rise. This was true in all three types of libraries until the 1992-1993 time period. At that time, academic libraries significantly increased purchasing costs by 8 points, public libraries decreased spending slightly, and special libraries made an eleven point drop.

So, what do all these figures mean? Can we draw any conclusions? Most apparent is the instability in acquisitions over the past several years. While the first eight years demonstrate obvious trends toward types of items purchased; i.e. an increase in periodicals and database fees with decreased acquisition of monographs, the last two years show an inconsistent market. Is this a result of the economy, or is it something more relevant to the industry? Is it funding? A shift in pricing? We figure it's The Savage Marketplace. All comments and questions are welcome!

** Note: When analyzing the figures from The Bowker Annual, we did not consider the 1990-1991 time period as those included Canada and caused significant variations in the numbers.