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Anthony Ferguson, Associate University Librarian, Columbia University

Editor

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Profiles
Encouraged:

Anthony Ferguson

Born when and where:
March 30, 1945, in Boise, Idaho.

Current residence:
Haworth, N.J.

Education:
BA from Brigham Young University in 1969 in political science, Asian studies; an MA from the University of Washington in 1971 in political science; an MLS from the University of Washington in 1972.

Summary of job experience:
Began as a social and Asian studies bibliographer in 1972 at BYU; moved into collection development in 1979; headed collection development at BYU, Texas A&M, and Columbia.

Family:
Father of six with wife Cheryl.

Proudest accomplishment:
Chair the task force that revised the RLG Conspectus collection depth codes for RLG/ARL/ WLN.

Most Recent Goal:
Complete digital information strategic plan and content for Columbia University.

First Job:
Pizza cook.

Fondest Memory:
1964, awakening in Macau on a steamship at anchor in the harbor after taking an overnight steamship ride from Hong Kong. I had been locked in my stateroom overnight in case the Communists boarded the ship, and came out in the morning to see a procession of junks sail by.

Favorite Pastime:
Collect books by and about foreigners in China.

Hobbies:
Gardening, family history, church work.

Last Book Read:

Pet Peeve:
Selfish people.

What would you like to be doing five years from now:
Finishing a Ph.D. in higher education administration.

Had I but world enough and time:
Teach library science in China.

Single most important piece of advice:
Work harder than everyone else.

Vendor-Library Relations
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include in the description. The second step involves deciding on the vendors to include in the bid invitation. In the informal process, the importance of being inclusive rather than exclusionary cannot be overstated.

The formal purchasing bid process usually takes care of the problem by including additional vendors than those preferred by the library, but the informal one rests upon the acquisitions librarian's opinion and decision at this point. Omitting reputable qualified vendors for cause at the beginning of the process can make the entire process open to challenges by companies that have been excluded. I am not saying that every possible vendor has to be invited, but exclusions must be justifiable. One option for winnowing the number of possible bidders is to draft a brief questionnaire asking for responses to criteria that will determine who is invited to make a presentation or who will be on the final list of vendors to be evaluated. Before I add additional steps in my "ideal informal bid" do you have any comments about the ones I've mentioned so far?

From Barry:

I like the pre-RFP questionnaire idea for several reasons. It provides some guidance for you on how to structure the informal RFP, based on answers to the questions. Some vendors may raise issues that you've not thought of, or some may have such lackluster responses that you want to eliminate them at this early stage, simplifying the later decision-making process. It helps the vendor too, because it enables us to get some sense of your needs and your thinking, before we enter into the informal RFP process. The goal at this stage should be to get everyone on board, and by involving your team in the questionnaire design you can establish an environment that should work well when the RFP is designed and then evaluated. The same thing should happen on the vendor's side. By forming our response team to your questionnaire, we'll be more effective later when we respond to the RFP. How do you feel about vendor presentations as part of this whole RFP process? Should the library make decisions without having a series of presentations? These take a lot of time for your group, and they cost vendors a significant amount of money. My personal preference is to meet with the decision-making committee, but I can also see a preference to dispense with that part of this process. What do you think?

From Judy:

I agree that presentations are very expensive, for libraries in terms of the time involved and especially for vendors who must pay travel expenses. Smaller projects can be bid without vendor presentations but larger ones, in the hundreds of thousand dollar range do benefit from on-site meetings. There are a few things that an acquisitions librarian can keep in mind when planning an informal bid process which can assist vendors in keeping the travel costs low. The first one is to allow for plenty of time in the process so that all of the invited vendors can make their travel arrangements in advance. This gives the vendor representatives time to plan as extended trip to see other libraries in the area or to work in the presentation as a leg of a much longer trip. Another is to invite only the serious contenders for a visit. The questionnaire assists the librarian in making that determination. Once two or three vendors have been selected, it is important to plan each visit so that the vendor representatives see the same groups or individuals. In libraries, that task is getting to be almost impossible given our hectic schedules these days, but it is still an important goal.

The criteria that will be used for evaluation of the proposals should be determined in advance. The acquisitions librarian should be able to communicate the most important criteria when the vendors ask, and in my experience, most of them do. Vendors should also be aware that big decisions are rarely made by a single individual in academic libraries these days. Our organizations have been flattened, stretched, and re-engineered to the point that decision-making has become consensus-driven among players that are new to the game. The national visibility and reputation of the companies making presentations are critical. This may not be fair, but it is a fact. A company that is not already well-known has almost no chance to succeed in this environment. Have I gone too far? What's your perception?

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The Answers
1g, 2n, 3k, 4j, 5i, 6m, 7s, 8I, 9h, 10e, 11a, 12r, 13p, 14q, 15c, 16d, 17u, 18t, 19f, 20q, 21b

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