International Dateline -- Aux Amateurs de Livres: How to Hold French Books Painlessly

Claire-Lise Benaud
University of New Mexico, clbenaud@unm.edu

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does this submission process provide into the policy’s prognosis? Put another way, what practical factors may influence the policy’s adoption for researchers who fall outside of either “true believer” faction? In these early days, perhaps the biggest selling point for the dispassionate author is the ease of the submission mechanism. The Web form is simple, quick, and nontechnical. The submitter need not have any special computer savvy to prepare the manuscript. The time and energy a submitter must exert to get a paper into PubMed Central is minimal. Indeed, according to early data released by the NIH Public Access Working Group of the NLM Board of Regents, 84% of submitters indicated a submission time of ten minutes or less.

There are several factors, however, which may limit widespread adoption among authors. For one, the submission process is confusingly silent on copy matters. No copyright statement is included in the submission form. Separately, in the NIH Public Access Policy Authors’ Manual, a section states, “Authors and/or their institutions should ensure that their final manuscript submissions to PMC are consistent with any other agreements, including copyright assignments that they may have made with publishers or other third parties.” Authors unsure of their article’s copyright status and the procedures for obtaining clearance may avoid submission altogether.

Another gating factor is the duplication of effort that PubMed Central submissions involve. Authors submit their papers to the journal. They submit them to their institutional repositories. Yet another upload of the same metadata, no matter how simple the PMC form is, may prove untenable to some. The National Library of Medicine no doubt hopes to work with publishers to create a common submission or data forwarding mechanism. Squaring away the motivations of each party would seem a delicate task.

Finally, it is not clear how the National Library of Medicine might scale to meet the potential success of the policy. At present, all XML conversions are performed by the National Library of Medicine. With an adoption rate among funded researchers at less than 5%, NLM resources have not yet been taxed. Whether such labor-intensive efforts are sustainable at higher adoption rates is a very open question. Any restriction placed on file types, or conversion requirements pushed back to the submission will undoubtedly dent uptake among the authoring community.

In concluding my look at the practical application of the NIH policy, I again pull away from the extremes. The system works well, but not perfectly. It is a good “1.0,” but is not so developed as to render participation costs nil. It is neither perfect nor flawed enough, in sum, to provide succor to either tribe of true believers.

Where will PubMed Central go from here? I’ll speculate that adoption rates among funded researchers will remain low unless one of two shifts occurs. The first shift would be the replacement of the recommendation for deposit with a requirement as a condition of funding. It is generally true that a rule yields greater adoption than a request. The second shift would be the recruitment of major publishers as strategic partners in the initiative. Publisher delivery of papers to PMC in automated fashion could reduce the author’s role to checking an opt-in box. Piggybacking publishers’ markup on existing journal production systems would also alleviate scalability concerns.

The first shift relies on legislative intervention. Given the history of the original policy’s wording, in which key language was progressively watered down over the course of a year (see http://www.easrum.edu/~pe ters/ijssm/nihpaq.htm for history) this may be a non-starter. On the other hand, perhaps the modest early results will embolden the author’s political champions to strengthen the provisions. As someone who voted for Gray Davis, Bob Dole, and Paul Tsongas, I fear my intuitions on matters political are insufficient to offer a reasoned prediction here.

The second shift would require the true believers within the NIH and the publishing industry to decide that the risks of collaboration are preferable to the alternative. Why might this be? Fear, mostly. Fear among the publishing community that prolonged antagonism will push the government to proceed with mandated participation. Fear among the NIH that publisher resistance will subtly suppress participation for long enough that the enterprise will be labeled a failure. Fear among all parties that the spilling of this debate into public consciousness will damage their standing among the researchers that provide their lifeblood.

What might the give and take of collaboration resemble? One can surmise that the publishers would seek to limit the free duplication of their proprietary content. This might mean extending the moving wall to 18 or 24 months. Alternatively, the publishers might push for public access to only the most current articles, with any content older than, say, two months pushed back to restricted access. Publishers would also likely seek to reinforce the value of their proprietary copies as the versions of record. For its part, the NIH might push for all relevant manuscripts from participating publishers to be forwarded unless the author explicitly declines (i.e., changing the aforementioned opt-in check box to opt-out). They might also require a standard delivery mechanism from all participating publishers to streamline production.

It is not immediately clear whether such collaboration will occur. One factor that bears watching is the mindset of the funded researcher. It may be that author indifference to PubMed Central continues over time, or that participation grows dramatically as the concept is demonstrated. Such an attitudinal shift would no doubt influence the strategies of each vested party.

My hope and expectation is that this column will spark discussion and debate. To that end, I welcome your thoughts—my email address is <greg@bypress.com>.

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**International Dateline — Aux Amateurs de Livres: How to Get Hold of French Books Painlessly**

by Claire-Lise Bénaud (University of New Mexico, Albuquerque, NM 87131)
<clbenaud@unm.edu>

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**Introduction**

As a librarian and selector for French and francophone literature at the University of New Mexico, I had the opportunity of doing a four-month internship at the bookstore Aux Amateurs de Livres International in France during a sabbatical. To work for the other side is always an interesting experience. I went from working for an institution whose job is to spend money wisely continued on page 80

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to working for a company whose goal is to make money. Of course, the goal of *Aux Amateurs de Livres* is much broader. Through the sale of books, they are promoting the French language, literature, and culture. Central to their expertise are books and periodicals published in France and other French-speaking countries such as Belgium, Switzerland, Canada, Africa and the Caribbean.

**Environment**

Twenty staff members work in rather cramped quarters next to the Eiffel Tower — space is at a premium in Paris — on three levels. The office is located in a former store and has large windows overlooking the streets. One can see office workers sitting in cafes, pedestrians, and traffic zooming by while at work. The bookstore functions solely as a bookseller and has no stock on the premises. However, all books transit through the library — being received from publishers and then sent again to the appropriate libraries — creating a lot of traffic. A total of 210,000 pieces transpire each year through the bookstore (186,000 books and 24,000 standing orders). UPS and FedEx workers and runners are in and out all day. During my stay, several writers also stopped by to check how their books were selling. *Aux Amateurs* is not only international because of its business dealings but also because of its staff. There are natives from England, Germany, Portugal, Guinea, and Columbia. French and English are routinely spoken, sometimes in the same sentence. This makes for a lively place.

**Brief history**

The bookstore *Aux Amateurs de Livres Internationaux*, established in 1930. The goal of the original owner was to export francophone books to US libraries and to promote the French language overseas. This goal has not changed over the years. The bookstore changed hands in 1980 and the owner at the time added the sale of rare books and created a publishing house. He left in 1998 and the publishing house inherited the name of Editions Klinecksie. Gilles de la Rochefoucard became the new president and continues to this day. He continued to focus on exporting francophone books, created his own publishing house, the *Éditions Clément Juglar*, but discontinued the sale of rare books.

*Aux Amateurs de Livres* sells books and journals, the vast majority being books. The first priority of the bookstore is to order books for universities and research institutes. *Aux Amateurs* deals with nearly 1,500 universities and research institutes worldwide. The bookstore serves a majority of foreign customers (85%), the rest being French customers. Of the foreign customers, half are US and Canadian customers, the rest being divided among Europe, especially Germany, England, and Spain. The US is by far the largest client with 680 active customers.

As far as ordering is concerned, orders from US universities are steady. Canadian institutions, on the other hand, are expanding their collections and *Aux Amateurs de Livres* has also been able to attract new clients there. The bookstore is trying to increase its European business. It is recruiting new clients, especially in Luxembourg, Belgium, Switzerland, Great Britain, Ireland, Italy, and Spain. The bookstore’s 2004/2005 sales of €5.4 million are divided among the following categories: 55% firm orders, 15% approval orders, 15% standing orders, and 10% periodicals. Five percent are English titles sold to French universities (*Bookmaster*). E-books have not entered the picture yet.


**Overall view of publishing in France**

100 days a year are published on average in France but only 20-25 of these are of interest to academic libraries. Publishing is quite decentralized but the last few years have seen a concentration on industry-wide levels. There are some 7,000 publishers in France but 80% of the business is done with 20% of the publishers.

French publishing is concentrated between 2 major groups: *Hachette* and *Editions*. *Hachette* with current sales of 1,431 is the largest. In its literary grouping, *Hachette* includes *Fayard*, *Grasset*, *Lattès*, *Stock*, *Calmann-Lévy*, and *Pauvert* among others. In its university grouping, it includes *Dalloz*, *Dunod*, and *Armand Colin*. It also includes *Larousse* and *Hatier*.

*Editions*, which was previously owned by Vivendi-Universal Publishing was then purchased by *Hachette*. However, because of anti-trust laws, part of it was re-purchased by *Editions*. *Editions*, with current sales of 712 is the second largest publisher in France and includes the *Presses Solar-Belfond* (Presses de la cité, Solar, Belfond, etc.), *Univers-Poche*, *Pon, Robert Laffont, Nathan*, and *Bordas* among others. Together *Hachette* and *Editions* have more than 50% of the market. Other publishers are *Gallimard*, one of the most prestigious (it is still family-owned by *Antoine Gallimard*, grandson of the original owner *Gaston Gallimard*), *Flammarion* which was sold to an Italian group, *Le Seuil*, which was just purchased by *La Martinière, Actes Sud, Presses universitaires de France*, and *le Chevreau*. The consolidation and publishing of publishing houses cannot only be explained by economic reasons, especially in the case of book publishing which is not a very lucrative business. Purchasing a publishing house is not only an act of profligacy, the cultural and intellectual dimension often being a stronger impetus than the strictly financial interest. Local university presses have become more active lately and now publish extensively. Some of these newly revitalized presses are: *les Presses universitaires de Rennes*, *Presses du Septentrion* at Lille, *Presses universitaires de Caen*, *PUL* at Lyon, *PULIM* at Limoges, *Presses universitaires de Grenoble*.

French publishing exhibits some local characteristics. Well-established publishers such as Gallimard, Le Seuil, Grasset, or Payard, stock for some of their series extensively (e.g., La Collection blanche de Gallimard). It is possible to buy books published 20 or 30 years ago. France also publishes books written for a general audience which are neither popular nor academic. Such books, for example, a new biography of Louis XIV, fall into this in-between category and are written for an enlightened public. They are read by metro commuters, but contain some scholarly references even though they are not considered research publications. US academic libraries need to decide if such publications belong to their collection. Likewise, the format of French books does not fall in the two categories familiar to the US customer, hard-cover and paperback. Most books are "brochés," i.e., soft-cover but printed on high quality paper. A good example, both for content and format, are books published by Robert Laffont in the series "Enseignement". The paperbacks are printed on thin paper, open easily, are very pleasant to read, and are considered tools for research. However, these present a dilemma for libraries as their binding may not stand the test of time.

Even though modern printing technology allows to print small runs, well-established French publishers do not publish very small runs. It is rare to find books printed for 50 copies. Only the smaller publishers, which are more flexible, are able to print smaller runs. When it comes to discounts, a 1981 law "loi sur le prix unique du livre" prohibits a larger than 5% discount to protect small independent bookstores from megastores. Even though 1980 is the year the US government sometimes local regulations all affect how to conduct business. *Aux Amateurs* sells the same book at the same price to all its customers.

A new 2003 copyright law entitled "Loi sur la rémunération des auteurs pour le droit de prêt" (aka la loi Lang) (established by the earlier Ministre de la Culture Jack Lang) states that all libraries lending books should compensate the authors accordingly. French authors receive two types of royalties, some from the publisher at the time of the sale of the book and some if the book is purchased by a lending library. As a result, every time *Aux Amateurs* sells a book to a French library, it redistributes 6% of its price to the author. The monies will be sent to an organization that will redistribute the royalties to authors accordingly. This government entity is being put in place as we speak. French bureaucracy is alive and well. This new law does not overly affect *Aux Amateurs* as the majority of its business is with foreign libraries. Copyright issues, like in the US, are being hotly debated in France.

Over the years, academic publishing has been decreasing in France. For example, traditional academic publishers such as *les Presses universitaires de France, Klinecksie*, or *les Belles Lettres* publish less research-oriented continued on page 81

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works and more manuals or textbooks. This has made a difference to US customers who have approval plans. Less books are candidates for approval than in the past. Some small publishers and the university presses have been able to fill the vacuum and publish small print runs of academic titles.

The goal of Aux Amateurs is to provide all books. This includes the “prese-grise” (grey press) which are semi-clandestine publishers and other hard to find books. Such publications are known as “l’enfer de la bibliothèque nationale.” Today, there are no forbidden books; one cannot speak truly of censorship as it is extremely rare in France to have a book censored. The latest well-published case was a book published in 1996 by Mitterand’s doctor which was pulled out of bookstores two days after its publication because it revealed Mitterand’s health conditions (Le Grand Secret written by Dr. Gubler and originally published by Plon). This battle was fought in court and the book was finally re-printed and distributed in 2005, this time at the éditions du Rocher. Aux Amateurs de Livres works with all publishers, even the smallest ones, and with self-published authors. It can also provide books that are published on demand such as theses.

Activities
In order to find out what is published in France, the staff uses two publications. The French system of Depot Légal makes matters simple. By law, all publishers — including self-published books — are required to send four copies to the Depot Légal which is part of the Bibliothèque nationale de France (BNF). As a result, the listing from the BNF is nearly complete. The BNF lists, organized by broad Dewey numbers, are no longer published in printed form but can be printed from the BNF “base de données en ligne.” The second publication is Livres Hebdo, which is more timely than the BNF, and lists new books published weekly as its name indicates. These two publications are used by Aux Amateurs to indicate what books will be placed on approval — and for whom, and also the size of the selection. Selections include a star rating (3.2.1 star) with 3 indicating the most relevant titles for academic or research libraries. The database Electre, an offshoot of Livres Hebdo is also used to verify availability. Publishers’ catalogs are also used extensively. They are more timely than the BNF lists and Livres Hebdo. Publishers’ catalogs provide a depth of information and a variety of publications not always listed in the other two publications. For example, books listed in a catalog from an Algerian publisher will not always appear in the BNF or Livres Hebdo. Aux Amateurs keeps close contact with hundreds of publishers in order to keep receiving the appropriate catalogs.

Staff members do ordering, receiving, cataloging, and accounting in a database called AS400 (IBM eseries). Many modules were developed to satisfy the needs of the bookstore. It is quite clunky, has no online interface, but it does the job. This database is used both for creating order records for libraries and order records for publishers and distributors. The AS400 database automatically populates the Aux Amateurs’s catalog on the Web (www.auxam.fr).

1. Ordering
Library orders are received through the mail, through emails, or through the vendor’s Website. Aux Amateurs is encouraging its customers to order electronically. Aux Amateurs’ paper slips are printed on beautiful paper with a baby blue highlight. Paper slip lovers will now have to pay to receive these elegant forms. Beginning in the spring of 2005, the bookstore began charging a fee of € 3.04 per slip, to cover the cost of shipping, handling, printing and paper. Hopefully, this will decrease the use of paper slips. E-slips are sent twice a month via email attachments (versus once a month for paper slips) and are free of charge. Customers can also order directly through the Web catalog at www.auxam.fr. This is by far the most efficient way to order. The Web record indicates if the book has been placed on approval and includes a selection criteria (1 to 3 stars). The Website is divided into two sections: new titles, which are added twice a month, and the full database. One can search using broad LC or Dewey classes, or can also do a very useful interdisciplinary search by country (Africa, Asia, the Caribbean, Hani, etc.), by topic (Judaica, feminism, gay and lesbian studies, management, accounting, reference, etc.), or by time periods (antiquities, Middle Age, renaissance, 17th-, 18th-, 19th-centuries).

As of today, sixty-three libraries order through the Website (only eight are European), and of these, continued on page 82
Currently, the bookstore has 57 customers with approval plans (46 in the US, eight in Canada, two in Germany, and one in Great Britain) and is negotiating with two other libraries. The number of books purchased on approval is increasing for US customers. This may be due to the fact that there are less French specialists in American libraries. On the other hand, European libraries with French expertise in-house, do not rely on approval plans. They also lack budgets necessary for such plans. The bookstore caters to the specific needs of its customers. For example, three customers (German, Canadian, and American) ask to receive copies of the BNF lists indicating what they have received on approval. Bibliographers then use the lists to order books in French libraries, making sure not to order what will automatically receive through their plan.

4. Other types of Orders

Aux Amateurs de Livres handles more than 3500 serial titles published in France and other French-speaking countries. All orders are automatically renewed each September and October and most titles are sent directly by the publisher to libraries. The bookstore also provides all types of standing orders including continuing series, multi-volume sets, directories, yearbooks, etc. It handles over 6,000 French or foreign titles.

5. Bibliographic Services

The bookstore offers several bibliographic services to its customers. For orders entered via the Aux Amateurs de Livres’ Website, libraries registered for this service can receive order records for uploading into their library system. They can also receive acquisition records with embedded invoice data. Records registered for this service receive order records, at the time of shipping/billing, in the MARC format for uploading into their library system. These services are offered free of charge. Libraries can also receive full MARC records with embedded invoice data.

6. Cataloging and Physical Processing

In the spring of 2004, Aux Amateurs de Livres hired an experienced cataloguer to provide fully cataloged MARC records for its customers. This need is driven by North American libraries which expressed an interest in purchasing books with their corresponding records. So far, European libraries are more traditional and prefer to do their own cataloging. Currently, all approval books are cataloged using UNIMARC. Records include LC subject headings and call numbers, and are cataloged according to AACR2 and the LC Rule interpretations. The UNIMARC records are then converted into MARC21 using a commercial converter. Customers registered for this service receive the records at the time of shipping and billing. The fee for these fully cataloged MARC records is $5.50 per record. If a library needs full cataloged titles for other types of orders, the fee for these Full-level MARC records is $7.50 per record. The bookstore hopes that this new service will interest an increasing number of customers.

The bookstore sends minimal MARC21 records monthly to OCLC and records in the MAB format to a network of German libraries. Customers can also purchase physical processing for their approval books. The bookstore will do stamping, barcoding, due date slips, and tattle-tapping, or whatever processing the library requires. There is a flat fee of $0.60 per volume for this service.

Conclusion

Aux Amateurs prides itself with the quality of its service. This is what Danielle Annino, the co-director, calls “le travail de dentelle,” meaning that services are tailor-made for each customer. Aux Amateurs caters to the needs of each of its customer, either through a very particular approval plan, physical processing, or other services. A staff member even sent a baking mold to a customer living in the Midwest who could not find one locally to bake “canneles,” a specialty from the town of Bordeaux! The staff goes the extra mile to provide excellent service.

Twenty years ago, Aux Amateurs provided books to universities. Today, it continues its primary mission but sees its service activities expanding in two areas: selection and cataloging. Libraries, especially in the United States, are less inclined to employ subject specialists. As a result, they will rely more on vendors to select the appropriate titles. The bookstore already sees this trend as more libraries are relying on approval plans for their purchases. Likewise, catalogers in US libraries are less specialized than in the past and the need for the cataloging of French books is shifting to the vendors. Aux Amateurs anticipates that the bookstore will select, catalog, and provide the books to libraries and research institutes. Even though European librarians are actively putting their collections online, US academic libraries are more driven by technology than their European counterparts. This is seen as a benefit by Aux Amateurs de Livres. By serving the US market, they can better anticipate what is on the horizon for European libraries. Stop by the Aux Amateurs’ stand at ALA. They will be delighted to meet you, both at the Annual Conference and at Midwinter.

On a personal note, it struck me how prominent writers and philosophers are in French society. Several examples come to mind. Many political figures write extensively to put forward their ideas. These books sell briskly. To be a public servant and to write is intertwined in French life. This was especially true as France debated the vote on the new European constitution. Cities are also active players. In May 2005, the city of Toulouse organized “le marathon des mots.” Writers and readers met all over the city in cafés, in theaters, in bookstores, in churches, and in the streets. French and foreign writers, actors, and singers shared their passion about words by reading to the people of Toulouse. The festival lasted four days and included some 150 events. TV channels also routinely invite authors to discuss their books in prime time and entire programs are devoted to literature. Even fashion magazines present extensive book reviews and literary interviews. Even though French writers do not quite attain the same status as movie stars or sport figures, they come as close seconds. Some even make the cover of popular magazines.

Endnotes

1. “La société Aux Amateurs de Livres International” written in 2000 by Dina Degas as part of a university research paper.
2. Aux Amateurs’ North American representative is Jane Maddox (<jmaddox@uaxam.fr>; tel: 306-714-0622).
3. Frédéric Beigbeder made the cover of Vœu, May 2005.