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receipts, and dates when items were sent to cataloging. Since there is no acquisitions system, the current Acquisitions Librarian continues to use Excel spreadsheets to keep track of all orders.

The history and reasoning behind MSB/GU’s lack of an acquisitions module is not surprising or unique. The time and investment in a fully integrated library management system with an acquisitions module is very high for any academic library, and even higher for a career college library with its limited funds. Most career college libraries are seen as a cost expense, because they take money away from the school and do not contribute to bringing money in. In 2003, MSB/GU finally purchased the integrated library system PALS, but only the catalog, circulation and administration modules, and the public Web version. In 2006, PALS upgraded to Ex Libris’ Aleph, which PALS operates and supports, but once again only the cataloging, circulation, ILL and administration modules were purchased. Many reasons were given for not purchasing the acquisitions and serials modules in 2003, but the main factor was the cost. In 2006, cost and the migration to Aleph again were factors in not buying the acquisitions and serials modules. MSB/GU now had eight campuses with eight libraries and no main library. It was decided that PALS and MINITEX would see the MSB/GU libraries as a mini-consortium, which would complicate Aleph arrangements.

Librarians at career colleges may have authority to order what they want for their libraries, or the heads of academic programs may approve all purchases. At some career colleges, the director of the school approves purchases. At the Minnesota School of Business/Globe University all items to be purchased for the library (usually books, eBooks and DVDs) must first be approved by the Program Head of that particular academic program. The MSB/GU librarians are not allowed to purchase items that are not directly relevant to the curriculum.

Career college librarians order their materials from a wide variety of sources, from local independent bookstores or used bookstores, to national bookstore chains and American and international publishers and vendors. From 2002 to 2006, MSB/GU purchased most books from the online bookseller Amazon.com. Amazon.com was used because of its low prices, no tax, free shipping and handling (most of the time), and its ease of use. Another factor was that MSB/GU had an Amazon.com corporate account, which the library was allowed to use. While this made ordering easier, there was a downside to having access to the corporate account. The MSB/GU corporate account was created for the bookstore, and when the account became overextended, the library’s books were the first cancelled. (Bookstore business is another way that career colleges make money.)

The MSB/GU Acquisitions Librarian soon learned to avoid ordering books at the end or beginning of school quarters or the end of the calendar year, so as not to conflict with the large quantities of books that were ordered for the bookstores at those times.

MSB/GU orders were also placed directly with the publisher. Because the library had no credit card or checking account, it was necessary to request a check in advance from the corporate billing department and place the order after receiving the check. The process involved extra forms, extra time, and the occasional missing check.

Each MSB/GU library is separate and independent, and technical services are located on different campuses. Once the number of libraries started to grow, better organization was needed. In 2007, it was decided to use YBP’s GOBI for book buying and to move away from using the Amazon.com corporate account. GOBI is a Web-based service, and it allows purchasing to be done from one source and with relative ease. As with Amazon.com, one can search GOBI by title, ISBN, author, etc. All of the college’s collection development librarians can enter in GOBI books that have been approved for purchase for their subject area, saving their selections in folders. The Acquisitions Librarian reviews the folders and places the order.

YBP’s system allows email notification after the order has been placed, and the Acquisitions Librarian sends notices to the MSB/GU Cataloger, the collection development librarian whose books were ordered, the Lead Librarian, and herself. This informs everyone that the books were ordered and identifies the order date. With the YBP GOBI account, items can be processed and shipped complete with barcode and classification number to the MSB/GU Cataloger. The Cataloger still sees that materials are “Dewey-ed” according to her system, but pre-processing speeds up technical services considerably.

Acquisitions work and the Acquisitions Librarian position at the Minnesota School of Business/Globe University continue to evolve and change. In big and small libraries, acquisitions can be a growing and changing library service. In a career college library, acquisitions functions can move and change overnight and with huge consequences. This may be a complex, multi-stage growth, depending on the size of the school and library, money that is available, the corporate culture of the school, and the librarians involved.

Endnotes
1. Melissa Aho, MLS, MS is the current and third Acquisitions Librarian (as well as Campus and Business Resources Librarian) at the Minnesota School of Business/Globe University-Brooklyn Center campus.
2. PALS provides automated library services to various libraries, both public and private, in Minnesota. http://www.mnpals.org
3. MINITEX is a publicly funded cooperative network of libraries in Minnesota and is housed at the University of Minnesota-Twin Cities. http://www.minitex.umn.edu/