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Biz of Acq — Sample Magazine Display at the Pratt Institute Library: 2003-2006

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Column Editor’s Note: Finding effective means of including patrons in the collection development process can be difficult. Pratt Institute’s Library successfully gathered patron feedback via a sample journal display and incorporated their results into their collection management decisions. I am greatly pleased to present with this article author Susan Thomas’s Poem “Relax Art Library,” assembled entirely from patrons’ comments written into sample magazines. — MF

“Relax” Art Library
Assembled from Pratt Institute Library patrons’ comments written in the back of sample magazines.

I thought personally
I’m digging this big time
I have been waiting around
with substance and meaning

Why haven’t you already?
architecture eye candy
don’t listen to him
too many ads and corporate nah

Less hipster crap would be great too!
would love to frequent this magazine
if you know what’s good
seriously, from different countries

More fire, blaze it up!!
the best Japanese magazines
today’s anarchists
smash layout
so “relax” art library

Upstairs. fabulous
the word strange is a helpful reference
and great all in one breath
yes, I say I have always loved this one.

Background
The Pratt Institute in Brooklyn, New York, offers undergraduate and graduate degrees in several design fields, fine arts, art history, and other disciplines. The library’s expansive, rich, unusual periodicals collection is popular with the Pratt community and is frequently used by individual students, staff, and faculty as well as classes. Librarians have taught library instruction sessions on the periodicals collections, including current, bound, and special collections. The collection includes periodicals about fine arts, art history, design, literature, current events, hard sciences, social sciences, library science (at the Pratt Institute, and more. The Periodicals Committee consisted of all the librarians responsible for selecting materials for the library. Librarians contributed in their areas of specialty or research, with some librarians more deeply involved than others. As the chair, I worked closely with the Technical Services librarian and clerical staff on quotidien work like processing unusual issues, establishing binding schedules, and the like. Through 2003, the PIL periodicals collection was in two parts: Art & Architecture and Reference. In 2004, both collections were merged together.

Special Periodicals include historical titles like Avalanche, Avant Garde, Creative Art, and The American Magazine of Art as well as more contemporary titles like Émigré, McSweeney’s, and Gum. Probably due to different perspectives on cataloging and processing over the years, some historical periodicals, like Cahiers d’art, have been classed as books and live in the Special Collection (books) or Rare Books collection. Most, however, have no call number and live in the Special Periodicals section of the Special Collection. Pratt Institute Library has an inchoate Zine collection, too.

As with many open periodicals stacks and current displays, no hard statistics have been collected other than those related to the in-house use and occasional circulation of bound journals, which have barcodes. The librarians on the Periodicals Committee closely observed the use of the periodicals collections over the last several years; it is clear that the collections, especially the current periodicals, are heavily used. Pratt community members use the periodicals collections for many reasons:

- For general interest and inspiration
- To examine design specimens
- To read about emerging artists, designers, and writers
- To be informed about current trends in and the avant-garde of creative fields
- To be informed about current affairs
- To become exposed to independent periodicals publishing, including magazines as well as zines.

The Sample Magazine Display
One of the goals of the Periodicals Committee was to create more opportunities for patrons to contribute to collection development. Several years ago, many of the subscriptions beyond architecture, and design were straight out of the print Reader’s Guide to Periodical Literature, Social Sciences Index, and Humanities Index. They were not necessarily the best periodicals for the PIL community in the 21st Century. Thus, a great deal of work was done to select more relevant, important, and unique titles. The committee came up with a plan to acquire sample periodicals, display them, and ask patrons to write comments about why the library should (or should not) subscribe or regularly purchase a magazine. The committee read the comments and considered them during the course of its selection process. The committee thought long and hard about the collection and decided early on that a title need not be indexed or available via subscription to be selected for regular acquisition.

When we became aware of a new or established magazine of potential interest to the library community and curricula, we attempted to acquire a sample from the publisher or purchased an issue from a bookstore. Sometimes patrons would bring sample issues of favorite magazines, and those would be added to the display. In addition, a notebook was kept on display. In it patrons wrote the names of publications they thought the library should sub-

continued on page 77
subscribe to or otherwise acquire. Acquisition as well as subscription is mentioned because the library had to purchase several titles regularly from bookstores because subscriptions did not exist (Gum, a design magazine), a credit card was required for subscription (Tate, etc., a UK art magazine), or EBSCO could not provide or could no longer provide (Arguine, a Spanish architecture magazine). In some cases the Library made bookstore purchases until EBSCO was finally able to provide a subscription. Examples included Marmalade (UK design magazine), 032c (German art magazine), and Bidoun (U.S. published magazine about art and culture in the Middle East).

In 2001 and 2002, the Dean of Libraries approved a budget of a few hundred dollars so that librarians could purchase sample periodicals. The money came from petty cash in increments of no more than $25. Librarians visited bookstores, made purchases, and were reimbursed. During those years, samples were not displayed but were studied by librarians only. Beginning in 2003, samples were put on display. Later, the budget was $400 — later increased to $600 — and was expanded to officially include sample magazines and bookstore purchases of regularly acquired magazines that did not offer subscriptions, including zines. Most purchases were made at St. Mark’s Bookshop and Spoonbill & Sugartown Bookstore in New York. If unavailable at a bookstore where the PIL had an account, materials were purchased with petty cash. Without such a budget and such flexibility, the project would have been much weaker since the library would have had to rely on free samples (usually available only from well-established journals, not independent art and design publishers) and donations.

The magazines were typically displayed face out, next to the New Book Display. Another library could choose to display sample magazines with subscription and regularly acquired magazines, depending on the library’s layout and other factors. One reason we put the display with the New Books was to avoid the sample magazines getting mixed up with the regular magazines. A sticker was placed on each sample magazine’s cover, identifying the magazine as a sample and requesting the reader/browser to write comments in the back. “Why (not) should the Library subscribe to this magazine?” Patrons wrote on a piece of paper taped in the back. Samples were kept on display for several months — usually for about a semester.

The Outcome
I found comments written in most of the magazines. The comments in general were rather thoughtful, with the occasional, marginally useful “This sux!” or “this is great! Subscribe!” Useful comments included: “There is too much advertising in this magazine.” “architecture eye candy, blah,” “all style but no substance.” We often responded to each other’s comments, as well: “don’t listen to him.” “I agree, there aren’t enough Japanese magazines in the library.” Writers would often compare the periodical to the rest of the collection, noting that it was “unique,” “popular,” etc. One patron wrote that she gained an internship at one of the sample magazines. Someone else wrote that a part-time faculty member at Pratt was involved in the production of the magazine. Another said that she loved the new magazine so much that she ordered a subscription for herself and friends. Such comments were quite pleasant to read.

After a magazine was removed from display, I word processed all the comments and shared the results with the Periodicals Committee. Magazines that were clear “winners” were usually selected for subscription. A great example is Gastronomica: the journal of food and culture. Everyone loved that journal! Sometimes the committee selected a magazine for subscription even if the patron or committee members were not so enthusiastic (or were just lacking). Overall, the committee read the comments with great interest and used them as one tool in its selection process.

Then stickers were put on the cover and the magazines were returned to display for a short time. The stickers indicated that the Library would subscribe, thank you very much for your input; or the Library would not subscribe, thank you very much for your input. In some cases, the sticker said that the magazine was still under consideration. (Since adjustments to the EBSCO order were usually made during the summer, the committee sometimes had to wait before deciding. The library couldn’t add anything unless something else was canceled or became defunct.) There was a “good faith” agreement with the library administration that the total budget for new subscriptions would not exceed the amount of money freed up by cancellations and defunct titles. Even so, the serials budget did increase every year because EBSCO increased prices. The “good faith” agreement was based on the popularity and heavy use of the periodicals collection. Good support from the college administration was key, as well.

Deselection was part of the process. The committee was not afraid to cancel titles infrequently used (based mostly on observation) or used but (now) available in a full-text database. Heavily illustrated magazines were never canceled; more likely to be canceled were seldom-used academic journals. The librarians attempted to include the discipline faculty in some of the selection and deselection; but, as most librarians will not be surprised to hear, many faculty members simply said that the library should not cancel anything in their

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continued on page 79
work a lot,” one said it had helped somewhat, and one
said it had had no effect. This consensus is remarkable
because the common opinion is that library staff tends to
be resistant to change, making a 2.0 tool like a wiki hard
to implement successfully. Only a few months after the
move to the wiki, our staff unanimously preferred it to
the former documentation.

As part of the survey, I also asked the ordering staff
to write in their opinions of the advantages and disad-
avantages of the wiki. Interactivity, such as the ability to
add comments and suggestions, was frequently listed as
an advantage. The other benefit cited by several staff
members is the clear linking within the wiki to other
departments’ Websites. One respondent wrote the best
thing about the Consul procedures is “having other units’
procedures ‘up front’ and available.”

The main disadvantage mentioned by respondents
was searching. Staff members wrote they wanted to be
able to search by keyword. This is possible in Conflu-
ence, but not immediately obvious. There is a search
box that searches across all “spaces” within Stanford’s
installation. After an initial search, you can limit results
to a particular space. The labeling I have done to link
documents within the ordering space is another option
for searching. The staff response on this subject shows
a need for more training in Consul searching.

The Future

The consensus of the ordering staff was that a wiki
platform for the unit’s procedures was beneficial to ac-
quisitions work. Procedures are kept current and we save
managerial time with a tool that allows quick and easy
Web updating. Since the creation of the ordering space,
I have trained the managers of the other units within our
Acquisitions Department to create and populate Consul
spaces. At this point, every Acquisitions unit is in
the process of transitioning to the wiki, and many other groups
in the Stanford Libraries are creating spaces as well. Ulti-
mately, as we standardize the tools we use for documenting
procedures across the libraries, we will enable better cross-
linking between units and as a consequence, a better and
broader understanding of library processes.

Biz of Acq — Sample Magazine
from page 77

discipline. The committee was caught between trying
to do the right thing — which included explaining why
a title was being canceled and conveying thoughtfulness,
regret, and offers to find other libraries that subscribe
—and simply conducting its business in a vacuum, inside
the library and outside of the Pratt Institute community.
The acquisition of full-text, multidisciplinary databases
seriously improved the availability of journal articles in
subjects like history, cultural studies, and literature.

At the time of the author’s departure from the PIL, the
committee had nearly exhausted potential cancellations.
The process of selecting new titles will become more dif-
cult now that the collection of currently received titles
has been so well tuned and shaped. It is inevitable, how-
ever, that numerous titles — even popular ones — will
become defunct. Money may be freed up as a result. It
is also possible that the budget will be increased due to
patron satisfaction and interest in the periodicals, many
of which are available exclusively in the print format.

Biz of Acq — The Wiki of Acq
from page 78

T
he management of digital resources has
never been an easy process. The rapid expansion of
digital resources compounded with changing forms
and models in the short life of Web-based delivery systems
has particularly made the management process
more complex. Further, from the very
beginning, details relating to purchasing,
licenses, access, and usage have been kept
in ad hoc systems built by in-house teams
by the individual librarian needing to
organize her workflow. It is hard to recall
the days when digital resources played
only a minor role in library management
discussions.

It is from these very humble begin-
nings that a fairly robust community
of vendors and librarians developed an
entirely new type of library system
—the E-Resource Management System (ERMS).
There are now several vendors
providing more or less integrated ERMS
services. The most dominant vendors of
d these systems are: Ex Libris, Innovative
Interfaces Inc., and Serials Solutions.
There are also community-developed
projects such as Colorado Alliance’s
Gold Rush systems as well as open
source systems, such as HERMES at
Johns Hopkins University. In addition,
there are likely dozens (or more) home-
grown systems that librarians are using
to address complex management details.
Even without a formal system in place,
however, nearly every library is dealing in
its own way with the acquisition, license,
title, integration, and usage data informa-
tion that accompany digital content.

NISO held a two-day seminar in Den-
ver during September to bring together
systems vendors and a diverse cross-
section of librarians who are at different
stages in the process of implementing a
formal ERMS. It became apparent that
these systems are relatively early in their
development and deployment, despite
some successes. Approximately one-third
of the attendees had an ERMS in produc-
tion, while the balance of the participants
were either just implementing one, in the
process of acquiring one, or still consider-
ning whether to purchase an ERMS. Dur-
ing this event we also learned that only
about 400 institutions have functioning
systems in development or production
nationwide. Among the issues that were
discussed at this forum were the role of
ERMS systems in the library; the ERMS
relationship to and interoperability with the
standard ILS; which functionalities
were most critical for adoption and use;
and some of the barriers to implementa-
tion that have been experienced by the
attendees.

When considering the amount of
funds invested in electronic resources,
the anecdotal indication from the group
that gathered in Denver is that not
nearly enough staff resources are being
dedicated to the ERMS acquisition
and content-management lifecycle. Among
ARL libraries, the average percentage of
materials budget spending on electronic
resources in 2005-06 is 42%, or nearly
$3.6 million, with the highest percentage
being 73%. This expense amount is up
20% from the year before. The median
percentage is up 5%. Despite this growing
trend, we learned that even at some of the
largest institutions, where annual acquisi-
tions investment for electronic content is
in the millions of dollars, fewer than five
full-time staff are responsible for the full
management of electronic resources and
their acquisition lifecycle. Compared to
the staff resources dedicated to managing
the print material acquisition and manage-
ment process, the e-resource IR
investments seem modest. Obviously,
every institution could use more staff, but
the relative investment in print compared with
the growing investment in digital content
will necessitate changes in staff allocation
that go well beyond the scope of having a
system that manages these resources.

Perhaps the lack of staff resources
is part of the reason that a relatively
small number of the ERMS that have
been purchased are up and running, or
producing the anticipated results. To ef-
f ectively populate, manage, and use these
systems a significant time investment and
significant shifts in organizational culture
are required, steps that many institutions
have yet to make.

One barrier to adoption that was
discussed was the complexity of the
problems that ERMS are trying to
address, compounding the difficulty of
rolling out such a system. Larger issues
such as adapting workflows, restructuring
staff resources to manage digital content,
and systems interoperability with existing
management tools were also pointed out
as causes of delayed implementation.
The sheer scale of the volume of data
continued on page 80

Standards Column — Electronic
Resources: Challenges
and Opportunities

by Todd Carpenter
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反对资源管理的复杂性与相容性
与标准的ILS；哪些功能特性
对采用和使用最重要；
以及实现实施的障碍
和那些已经被体验的
与会者。

考虑到电子资源的
资金投入，
从小组聚集在丹佛
得出的准则是，几乎
不够的员工资源被
用于电子资源的
获取和内容管理
生命周期。例如
ALR图书馆，
平均百分比的
材料预算支出
在电子资源上的
是2005-06的42%，
或近3.6百万，
最高的百分比
为73%。这个支出
金额是较上一年
的20%的。中位数
百分比为5%。不
管这个增长的
trend，我们了解到
甚至在一些较大的
机构，每年对电子
内容的收购投资
在数百万美元，
少于五个全职
员工负责处理
电子资源和
它们的获取生命周期。相比
于管理印刷材料的
获取和管理过程，
电子资源IR
的投资较小。显然，
每一个机构可以
使用更多的员工，
但相对的投资在印刷
相比增长的电子
内容投资将需要改变
员工的分配
超出范围，拥有
一个管理这些资源的
系统。

也许员工资源
部分原因在于
一个相对
的数量的ERMS
已经购买
但没有运行，
或产生预期的结果。为了
有效地填充，管理，
和使用这些
系统，一个显著的
投资和
显著的转移
在组织文化的
是需要，步骤
许多机构
还没有做到。

一个障碍的采用
被讨论是复杂的问题
ERMS正在试图
解决，增加了
实施的难度
这样一个系统。较大的问题
如调整工作流程，重组
员工资源来管理数字化内容，
和系统可兼容性与现存
的管理工具也被指出来
作为延迟实施的原因。
数据的庞大数量
继续在第80页