Library Perspective, Vendor Response

Robin Champieux
Ebook Library, Robin.Champieux@eblib.com.com

Steven Carrico
University of Florida Smathers Libraries, stecarr@uflib.ufl.edu

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Something to Think About
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and visualized volumes of history and other information for you. I have always thought that to be fascinating, but it could just as easily be memories created by odors from sticks or vials. We might even develop our minds to communicate for us without speech, like some Star Trek episodes I’ve seen. Will we be ready to accept those changes? How will the people staffing the library change to command those new devices or techniques? Is it the human being in the equation that continues the knowledge of information and how to find it? I still believe the human “x” factor is the studying student in our definition of library and, no matter how virtual we get, we will always need someone to explain things to us. Our 24/7 reference service for distance education works a lot like that. The interviews and help come over the electronic mail to the inquirer, and information leaps time and space to get there. The transference of information to another person not even in our contiguous space is amazing. The librarian must still be alert to the kinds of information transmitted and the needs from different cultural backgrounds and places of study. It is a challenge every day to keep up with those needs, and the various barricades we raise in the communication process require human beings to be the bearers of the information and explain the innuendos. It is a different, more diverse world these days and a challenge to keep “library” as the purist’s image of knowledge. I find myself grieving the loss of our ivy-covered, leather-filled, quiet-and-peaceful-in-the-Halls of Information. It is indeed past midnight, and the glass slipper has been lost. Perhaps we will need to think about our new and varied roles and how our definitions have changed to meet the world’s challenges for us. What do you think? Virtual? Real? Both? 🌟

Rumors
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finally fulfilled her secret dream and is now the proud owner of a cute havanese puppy named Moondance.) And, in case you missed it, Corrie guest edited the highly cited Serials Review v. 35 #3 on IRs.

Talk about fast-moving! Dan Tenkony has left EBSCO and is working with Content Strategies which “is experienced in buying and selling content at the company, database, or product level. We are uniquely qualified to help identify targets for acquisitions, partake in the due diligence process, or help you create successful long-term strategies for a changing market.” And I recently got around to reading the Dan Tenkony Profile in Serials (March 2010, v.23#1). A fascinating piece of history complete with a picture of Dan with his granddaughter Hailey. http://www.e-contentstrategies.com/

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Column Editors: Robin Champieux (Vice President, Business Development, Ebook Library) <Robin.Champieux@eblib.com>

and Steven Carrico (Acquisitions Librarian, University of Florida Smathers Libraries, Box 117007, Gainesville, FL 32611-7007) <stecarr@uflib.ufl.edu>

Column Editors’ Note: This column for Against the Grain is devoted to discussing issues affecting library acquisitions, library vendors, and the services and products they supply to academic libraries and the publishing marketplace as a whole. It is an ongoing conversation between a book vendor representative, Robin Champieux and an academic librarian, Steven Carrico. — RC and SC

Steve: Lessons from library school again! Maybe you should teach library classes... anyway it seems that once again it’s a profit incentive pushing the envelope. For libraries, a not-for-profit institution if there ever was one, this reluctance to embrace change so often permeates the organization itself. For an example that’s near and dear, the Acquisitions Department at UF: as with many acquisitions departments in academic libraries, we are still a part of technical services but really belong in the same division that is home to collection building. Until recently acquisitions probably did belong in tech services, when acquiring print serials demanded a continuous collaboration between serials cataloging and other tech service areas, such as preservation that handled the binding of the issues. Print monographs were purchased in large quantities and demanded hands-on cataloging and processing, so workflow necessitated close proximity and constant communication. But print serials are an endangered species and UF’s print monograph budget is half what it was, while a large percentage of the books we receive come in shelf-ready and circumnavigate the Cataloging Department altogether. Acquisitions nowadays has more daily contact with collection managers than other staff in tech services. In fact, with so much of the budget wrapped up in consor-tially purchased, bundled journal packages requiring little if any selector input, one could argue that acquisitions is every bit as important to collection management as the subject specialists in our library.

Robin: Just to be clear, I’m not implying that a profit motive is the best way to lead change! But I definitely see what you describe at UF reflected in my everyday work. At one institution I will be working primarily with Collections, at another Technical Services, and yet another Acquisitions. The work of acquisitions, technical services, and collection development is changing dramatically and rapidly. And, what this work will evolve into is still being negotiated. I believe that many models will emerge. Were you at or have you read Susan felts’ article “Time Horizon 2020: Library Renaissance” presented at the ALCTS Symposium at ALA Midwinter? It is wonderful and offers a very persuasive articulation of the emerging landscape — both technologies and services
that will drive a major shift in the work of the technical services and collection development. You can find it here: http://www.ala.org/ala/mgrps/divs/alcts/confevents/upcoming/ala/library_renaissance.pdf.

Steve: Have to be honest, I haven’t read this paper… yet. Thanks for the citation, Professor. Now back to my soapbox: it’s not just the organization of departments in academic libraries that are so often rooted in the past. Many librarians are resistant to accepting and adapting to the online environment. Let’s use a specific example, again from UF: I know eBooks can be more expensive than print books and often titles aren’t available readily, but at the beginning of this fiscal year, UF’s subject selectors were afforded the opportunity to tag order requests for individual eBooks as quickly and easily as they can for print books. Yet, after six months only 1.1% of all monograph orders were for eBooks. It’s a little frustrating to see how slow we all can be to embrace change — our users certainly aren’t that reticent: they want everything online 24/7!

Robin: Yes, I think so. Also, and so sorry for getting on my soapbox, but I wouldn’t characterize what is needed as a strategy that addresses eBooks vs. print books. Rather eBooks and other technologies — print books included — need to be addressed within an overall strategy for resource access and discovery. And, this strategy should guide the choices selectors make about format, among other things. That being said, I don’t think this is easy or straightforward work. The recently released Ithaka S+R 2009 Faculty Survey highlights some of the complexities and needs when it comes to planning for the transition from print to electronic resources and meeting scholarly needs. The section on eBooks and non-journals materials is particularly interesting. And, in her paper Susan Gibbons notes that collection balance may suffer as libraries focus more and more on just-in-time access. And, then there are issues of preservation and born digital materials. So, there is a lot to consider and there won’t be a single solution that emerges on any of these fronts, and no solution is likely to live for very long.

Steve: Whew! Thanks, Prof. Champieux, I just hope you aren’t planning a quiz on this material. Actually, what you are suggesting is very well said and makes perfect sense — a collection strategy should take into account many factors as you say. By the way, you don’t have a personal profit incentive for this lesson plan, do you?

Robin: Hey, I think I may be making it harder on myself! I’m looking forward to seeing you in DC. These and other hot topics are sure to be discussed and debated. I’ll save the quiz for our next column; I wouldn’t want to exclude anything we might learn at Annual. Until next time…. 🌈