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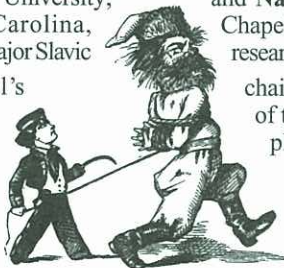
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Slavic Studies Approval Plans: Report on a Panel at the 1999 Annual Conference of the American Association for the Advancement of Slavic Studies

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This panel was held at the 1999 Annual Conference of the American Association for the Advancement of Slavic Studies, in St. Louis, Missouri. The conference is the main venue for US scholars and librarians in the wider field of Slavic, East Central European, and former Soviet Union studies (hereafter, for conciseness, "Slavic studies"). It was a roundtable panel, without formal papers required. Panelists had 15 minutes each to present their comments. The floor was then opened to questions and comments. The event proved particularly lively and informative. The panelists were (in alphabetical order): **Dr. Kristine Bushnell**, of the **Russian Press Service (RPS)**, a US vendor focusing on Russian materials, who was present not in her capacity as president of the **RPS**, but rather as a generic vendor, presenting a general point of view; **Janet Crayne**, University of Michigan; **Nina Gorky Shapiro**, Princeton University; **Grazyna Slanda**, Harvard University; and **Nadia Zilper**, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill. All the librarians represented major Slavic

As the panel's chair, I began by presenting an overview of the development and plans in US libraries. This overview was drawn chiefly from ALCTS's *Approval Plans* (1998), edited by Susan Flood. While this sort of introduction



chair, I began by presenting an overview of the development and plans in US libraries. This overview was drawn chiefly from ALCTS's *Approval Plans* (1998), edited by Susan Flood. While this sort of introduction might have

seemed superfluous to an ordinary group of acquisitions librarians or collection development officers, I felt that acquisitions operations in Slavic studies are so unusual relative to those of general library acquisitions, that this sort of basic overview would be useful. I then asked the individual speakers to describe their own library's use of Slavic studies approval plans.

Janet Crayne emphasized the great variety of her library's Slavic approval plans. She noted that in Slavic studies, we typically work with large numbers of small, and often technologically-limited vendors, while the plans developed by the major US and Western European vendors (covering US, British, German, French, Italian, etc., publications) are typically of far greater size and technological sophistication. However, she also noted the importance of "informed vendors," who understand scholarship as well as the book trade in the countries they cover. Slavic studies has the same problems as other areas of acquisitions (duplicates, returns, firm order fill rates, etc.), and these are multiplied by difficulties in communications, access to markets, and rapidly changing publication and distribution industries. Nonetheless, she stressed the importance of detailed pro-

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In Memoriam

Gerald D. Stormer, of Sycamore, Illinois, passed away on Sunday, April 30, 2000 at Kishwaukee Community Hospital in DeKalb. He was born on May 16, 1941 in Chicago. Gerry is survived by his wife, Andrea Larson of DeKalb; his mother, Lucy Richardson of Dallas; two sisters: Nancy Leibrock of Dayton and Arlene Regan of Streamwood; his brother Thomas Stormer of LaGrange Park and seven nieces and nephews.

Gerry had formerly been employed as an Associate Professor of Philosophy at Northern Illinois University from 1970-1977. He was Fine Arts Director for Radio Station WNIU-FM and a Counselor with Psychological Consulting Services from 1978-1984. From 1984-1994 he was Sales Representative with Coutts Library Services. He joined Brodart Company as an Academic Sales Consultant from 1994-1997. He was most recently employed as a Library Service Sales Representative for Harrassowitz in Wiesbaden, Germany.

Gerry received his PhD in 1970 from Tulane University, a M.A. from Northern Illinois in 1967 and a B.A. from North Central College in 1965. He was the Track and Cross Country Coach at North Central from 1968-1970. His teams won two conference titles and one NCAA championship.

His interests included long distance running (he ran 25 marathons and placed 28th at the 1968 Boston Marathon.); classical music, opera and record collections (over 10,000 albums); reading (history, biography, fiction, mysteries); browsing secondhand book stores and stray cats.

Those of us who knew Gerry will always remember his kindness, generosity, sense of humor, intellect and wit. He was a true gentleman. He had a soft spot in his heart for any stray cat he would encounter.

In keeping with his love of animals, especially cats, his family has asked that donations be made to the DeKalb County Animal Welfare Shelter, 16173 Baseline Road, Genoa, Illinois 60135 (815) 756-1022.

Contributed by John Laraway <John.Laraway@blackwell.com>

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files for efficiency and labor saving concerns, and the need for area studies librarians to develop good working relationships with their acquisitions departments.

Nina Gorky Shapiro noted that her institution had focused on firm orders until the 1980's. It subsequently started an approval plan with *Les Livres Étrangeres*, one of the most important vendors, which operated by sending marked-up copies of the Soviet bibliographic serial, *Novye Knigi* (*New Books*) to its clients. Shapiro, who has worked in the American vendor trade, commented that reliance on a small number of vendors has meant that the major research collections get very similar titles, and that each library's unique exchanges have made individual collections distinct. However, Princeton moved to an approval plan because the acquisitions department stressed efficiency—placing firm orders for all Cyrillic-alphabet titles is not only labor intensive, but also means that there must be

enough staff with the requisite language skills.


Shapiro reminded the audience of the dark days, bibliographically speaking, of 1989-92, when the Soviet book publishing and distribution trade collapsed, as did *Les Livres Étrangeres*, on whom many had depended. Approval receipts now account for 80% of new monographic acquisitions, 15% are firm orders, and 5% exchanges. Shapiro noted the importance of profiling and also said that, from her experience, vendors in this field do not apply formal profiling methods—at least not by the standards of major western vendors. While expressing concern that approval plans are not good at building great and distinctive research collections, she stated that they are best for covering core areas, and in providing efficiency and cost savings. Approval plans are here to stay, and improving them will become increasingly important as experienced and knowledgeable selectors become an ever-rarer breed.

Grazyna Slanda reported that, in the early 1990's, Slavic collection policies at Harvard began to shift. They moved from

emphasizing exchanges and firm orders, to relying on commercial vendors and approval plans. Harvard is very unusual in having a separate department for Slavic materials, which handles all key library functions—collection development, acquisitions, approval plan administration, cataloging, and reference—so that operations are organized vertically. Each librarian handles all these functions in the country or language of her or his specialization. Approval plans are now used as much as possible (approximately thirty vendors are being used), and all are complex, varied, and changing. Slanda, who heads this department, is very satisfied with approval plans, and noted that, with staff only about half of what it was before, greater reliance on the plans is a necessity. Overall, the change has been successful. Of course, there are some problems, such as when plans or vendors need changing; other concerns include coverage of émigré publications (always a problem for area studies), and the availability of vendor-supplied bibliographic records, which cover only about 10% of receipts.

Nadia Zilper of the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, began by stating that her library administration's emphasis on streamlining practices strongly implies the use of approval plans. Firm orders and exchanges are used to supplement and support the approval plans. The approval plans are based on country of imprint, and thus cover predominantly publications in local vernacular languages. One notable exception is a single plan for Russian émigré publications. Annual buying trips also are of great importance. She is very positive about the library's large English-language approval plans, which include Slavic studies publications, noting the great sophistication and comprehensiveness of these plans. She also noted that the library's main US vendor is used for their out-exchanges to foreign institutions as well, so that the vendor accepts firm orders and can then ship directly to exchange partners. Finally, Zilper followed up on Shapiro's discussion of the bibliographic dark days. The collapse of the Soviet book trade and *Les Livres Étrangeres*, as well as simultaneously rapidly rising costs, led to sharp drops in receipts for monographs. Only now are receipts returning to the levels of a decade ago.

The lively discussion which concluded the panel covered a wide range of topics: the role of buying trips; broad vs. detailed profiles; the role that technological change has played in library acquisitions; concern over the possibility of vanilla collections developing as a result of the widespread use of approval plans from a small number of vendors; and the balancing of costs of individual receipts and of the cost of a total plan.

I originally organized this panel with the intention of learning about approval practices in Slavic studies, and helping others to gain a wider perspective. What I came away with was a greater awareness of two critical facts. First, research library collection development and management in area studies—not merely Slavic, but also others, including Latin American, African, and Asian—is very labor and knowledge-intensive. Second, there is an astonishing variety of acquisitions methods which librarians and vendors in the Slavic field include under the heading of approval plans. 

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