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## Issues in Vendor/Library Relations-Barbara Kawecki Interviews Mary Bushing (Montana State University)

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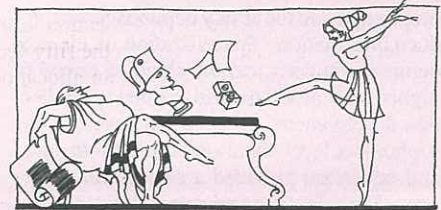
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# MILLENNIUM

# Minutes

## Some Thoughts on a Period of Tremendous Change

by **Heather S. Miller** (Assistant Director for Technical Services and Systems, University Libraries ULB34, University at Albany, State University of New York, 1400 Washington Ave.; Phone: 518-442-3631; Fax: 518-442-3630) <hm766@csc.albany.edu> (please note new email address)



**H**ere are some thoughts, but I doubt that they differ much from those of others of my age:

The time I've spent working in libraries has gone by in a flash and has covered a period of tremendous change. I began as an accidental library clerk at **Michigan State University**. I only got that job because the person they really wanted turned up pregnant and, in those days, that was automatic disqualification. I did added copy cataloging and ran a branch library in a dorm complex. The most technologically advanced equipment we had was an electric eraser. I still thought that erasable typing paper was a great step forward. We handled a lot of cards, pulled them, typed copy numbers on them and refiled them. In the dorms we did inventory by reading the shelves against the shelf list cards. I spent much of a summer doing that. Does anyone inventory any more?

The collection consisted of books and periodicals - printed ones - and recordings of twentieth century American composers. We checked materials out by stamping cards and

putting them in files. There weren't any photocopiers. *PW* actually listed all the new books and I read it every week.

I was at **Harvard College Library** when that institution resisted joining **OCLC** because they feared being a net lender. I was trained to catalog "right" and catalog cards were typed by clerical staff. Then I moved to **Duke** where I was retrained to catalog "right." The two "right" ways to catalog were different. On my first day I was horrified to find a typewriter at my desk and to realize that I was supposed to use it! We all used the unforgettable pale green **NUC** books to find cataloging copy. I was there when **Duke** first began to create a computerized serials list. At the **Massachusetts Horticultural Society Library** I worked with a unique classification system devised just for its collection. It has since gone the way of homogenization, subsumed by **LC** and **OCLC** in the interest of sharing and communication, but to the detriment of specific classification.

I was here at **SUNY Albany** when the first PC, a gift from a vendor, arrived in Technical Services. It lived for some time in a closet

because no one knew what to do with it. Now we have more than 450 PCs and servers and every staff member has a PC that is essential for his or her work. We are on our third automated system and are rapidly moving toward the fourth. Filing in the card catalog has disappeared, but no one noticed any gain in time because of it.

In the early days I was sure my salary would never top \$10,000.00. I never thought I would become an assistant director. Although I had considered attending **Harpur College** (which became **SUNY Binghamton**), I never imagined working for **SUNY** until I landed on its doorstep. In high school I refused to take a typing course because I was not going to be anybody's secretary. Nobody has a typewriter anymore, but everyone types more than they ever expected to and that includes me. Some things have stayed the same such as the **Baker & Taylor** staff book accounts, one of the great perks of this business. And the basic tenets of librarianship remain with us, but the profession is immersed in a very different environment now. 🌱

## Issues in Vendor/Library Relations — Barbara Kawecki Interviews Mary Bushing

by **Barbara Kawecki** (EBSCO Information Services)

Column Editor: **Bob Nardini** (Senior Vice President & Head Bibliographer, YBP Library Services, 999 Maple Street, Contoocook, NH 03229; Phone: 800-258-3774 x3251; Fax: 603-746-5628) <rnardini@ybp.com>

**BK:** Tell me about your background and specifically, how you got into collection development?

**MB:** As with all career choices, I think that we fall into them by accident. We don't grow up thinking and planning that we will be librarians. The desire to be a collection development librarian was a natural evolution in my professional career, given how my mind works. Collection development requires that you be able to see the forest through the trees and also to see the trees themselves.

**BK:** What was the golden age of collection development? What were some of the milestones or turning points?

**MB:** Being the optimist that I am, I am inclined to think that we're still in the golden age of collection development. There may have been times in the past that many people in our profession would identify as the golden age. The ability to do title by title selection was a golden age for some people. You can only identify such things as the golden age when you have hindsight and I'm not sure that we know enough yet to identify a true golden age. There have been a couple of turning points that have changed the environment for collection development. Going back a bit further, the tremendous increase in what you could purchase, coupled with major inflation, was a major turn-

ing point. The electronic and the move to electronic full text changed how libraries do business as well as how vendors and publishers do business. Has it been an improvement? The jury is still out. For end users, it has been an improvement. Certainly, by leveraging their buying power, many libraries have been able to vastly increase the amount of content that they can offer end users as well as improve the delivery mechanisms.

**BK:** What have been the major factors that influenced collection development?

**MB:** One that we rarely mention any more is the Supreme Court's 1979 ruling in *Thor*

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*Power Tool Company v. Commissioner of Internal Revenue*, a tax case that impacted long print runs and publisher's inventories. The influence that this case had on the publishing environment and the influence of electronics greatly affected the ability of publishers to produce information. Specialization within academic institutions and the changed nature of higher education has also influenced collection development. Even at the freshman and sophomore level, there isn't room for the general education provided a generation or two ago. The scientific and research agenda has dramatically influenced collection development. We see that primarily in the journal marketplace. The Internet is only the latest piece of the changing marketplace for information.

**BK:** You have spent the last portion of your career in Montana...what is different about collection development in this part of the world?

**MB:** There are many factors that are different. While resources are much sparser, both in terms of the number of libraries and in terms of funding, the big advantage that we have is knowing one another and having long histories of collaboration and empathy for one another. A good portion of our success is due to the fact that we know each other's communities and we are not in competition the same way that libraries in more established, more populated areas of the world are. We do not break down our libraries by type of libraries within our community. We see ourselves as part of a broad library and information plan and we try to integrate the differing missions of different sizes and types of libraries.

**BK:** What type of usage information (or usage data) have you had to guide your collection policy or philosophy?

**MB:** We use a variety of usage data, but that is not the only criteria we apply. A good deal of the decision-making process is based upon knowledge of the institution, knowledge of the curriculum, number of faculty and/or number of undergraduates in a particular area and the amount of research dollars. Those are all pieces of the equation. My collection development philosophy is based on knowing your users. Another piece of the puzzle is the existing collection. We use conspectus data to understand our collection and to analyze different areas. Understanding the marketplace is another component. You cannot do collection development well if you don't understand

the economics of the marketplace you are operating in. And, finally, you can't do collection development well if you can't explain all of the pieces of it to your constituency. You have to not only understand your environment but be able to communicate in a meaningful way. Usage alone doesn't tell you enough. In the electronic realm, as we look at usage of electronic resources, full text databases or e-journals, we have to keep in mind who our users are and what the population is that is using the resource. That same model translates to other areas of the collection as well and also to print. For example, *Philosophers Index* has only 5% as much use as *Academic Universe*. That does not mean that we can cancel it. We have five philosophy faculty and over 12,000 undergraduates. You need to understand your population in order to make intelligent decisions.

**BK:** What are some of the challenges you face in today's environment?

**MB:** The environment has become so complicated that there is a whole other layer in the supply chain, the consortial layer, both formal and informal. So, not only do we need to know and understand the end user, the library, the vendor, and the producer layers, we now have the consortial layer. Keeping track of what we are buying with whom is a huge part of collection development today. Because of these arrangements, we spend an incredible amount of time in the selection and negotiation process.

**BK:** How has electronic information such as electronic journals and ebooks impacted collection development and/or changed the nature of acquiring information?

**MB:** It has made the entire process far more complicated and it has also simplified things. It has reduced the cost per unit in the case of e-journals if one buys the entire publisher suite. However, we have to take the chaff with the wheat. In other words, we end up with titles that we would not have chosen to purchase, but we are paying a lower average cost for those journals. Our interlibrary loan traffic has been radically reduced because we acquire a lot of electronic journals. Therefore, overall operation expenses within the library have been reduced. The impact on the library operations can't be looked at just in terms of collection development; there are true organizational savings. Our interlibrary loan statistics are down 30% in the last year because of electronic journals. There is a major staff savings. We do not have to check in, shelve, bind, and check out electronic journals and this represents cost-savings to the entire organization.

**BK:** If you could start over, how would you sell electronic information to libraries? Would you a) package by subject or discipline; b) sell by choosing individual titles; or c) sell by article?

**MB:** If I could really start over, I would say by article, but

you wouldn't really know what to buy until after the fact. By article is not a viable option unless we eliminate this ambiguity. Choosing individual titles is not the best method either due to efficiencies and the inability to provide comprehensive coverage. Packaging by subject or discipline makes the most sense. What we have done with books in terms of approval plans is in effect a packaging model. On the serials side, most publishers do focus on a subject or discipline. **Project Muse**, for example, allows us to support our humanities and social sciences departments, while the **Wiley** package helps us to support the scientific areas of our curriculum.

**BK:** Do you think consortia have advanced, stymied or had no impact on collection development?

**MB:** It has had a tremendous impact. They have given us more bang for our dollar, but it has cost us in terms of what we must keep track of in terms of negotiations, communications and consortial arrangements. It's going to take another three to five years to determine whether this was a good way to go or not. What has it really cost us in terms of staff time and could the producers have come up with more reasonable pricing structures in the first place to make it more feasible not to work with consortia? We appear to have saved through the consortial arrangements, but the cost has been tremendous in terms of library staffing, vendor staffing and publisher staffing.

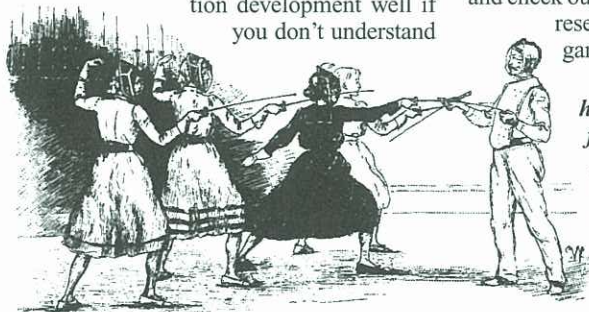
**BK:** Can you see into the future and predict when and if the scholars will take back publishing from the commercial publishers?

**MB:** If you had asked me 3-4 years ago, I would have said yes. However, with the advent of publisher journal suites, I'm not sure that it will happen. The major incentive is no longer as obvious as it once was. An example is a major journal that we all know and love which is now costs about \$20,000 per year for an annual subscription. The faculty at my institution do research and publish in this journal and I have to spend university dollars to buy back the information that we funded in the first place. Being able to purchase the entire journal suite brings the average costs of even the high priced journals down to only about \$200.00 on an annual basis.

**BK:** Do you see ways in which the publishers have influenced collection development in recent years?

**MB:** Yes. The ability to buy the whole enchilada at a price not that much different from buying a smaller piece has had an impact on collection development. However, I think that we're in the first stage of this development. The number of titles available in the serial world is going to decrease because both libraries and publishers now have usage data. Libraries are not going to buy little used journals and ultimately publishers are not going to produce them. In the next go around of negotiations, within the next 2-3 years, we might be saying to a major journal publisher that we only want to buy two-thirds of their package

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and there will be even more evolution in the price of titles and packages. I don't think that the current pricing model is a model that is here to stay.

**BK:** You will be retiring from MSU in May 2002. What are your plans?

**MB:** I think that calling it retirement is a misnomer. I am thinking of it as changing my focus. For 30 years, I have done all kinds of consulting and provided continuing education in the profession in addition to my job. I am changing my focus in that I will only be putting one third of my time towards a post retirement position at **Montana State University** and the rest of my time towards consulting and continuing education in libraries.

**BK:** What advice do you have for librarians choosing to pursue collection development?

**MB:** First of all, be certain that your skills are appropriate for collection development. By that I mean, to be successful in collection development you need to be comfortable with a great deal of ambiguity. For every decision that you make, there are two dozen variables. One needs to be skilled at decision making, comfortable with the variables and not be a hand wringer. To do collection development well, intellectual curiosity has to be an energizer for you. You really do have to find all of the pieces and the variety interesting. For example, sitting on my shelf awaiting decisions are the following titles: *The Philosophy of Nothingness*, *Industrial Cowboys*, *The Symbolic Politics of Ethnic Wars* and *Houdini, Tarzan and the Perfect Man*. These topics need to be as interesting to me as the things that I really love, like quilting or poetry. You have to

## Biography for Mary C. Bushing

**Mary C. Bushing**, Ed D. is the Information Resources Development Librarian at **Montana State University's Renne Library**, where she is responsible for collection development and acquisition of all library materials. Prior to joining the staff of MSU in 1989 as Collection Development Officer, she was a public library director in Illinois and a library development officer for the **Montana State Library**. Mary received her doctorate in adult and higher education from MSU in 1985 and is widely sought after as a speaker and consultant in the areas of collection development, project management, respectus training and library administration. This year, **Mary** received the **Sheila Cates Award** for Librarian of the Year, given to a Montana librarian in recognition of outstanding leadership and accomplishment in library service.

understand the economic models and the historic as well as the current context of those economies in order to do collection development. Lastly, something that was initially overlooked in the collection development track is you have to have great people skills, because to do your job well, you have to work well in the vendors, publishers, and consortia. You have to be able to communicate well and that includes listening to your users. You have to be able to work within your organization whether it is 3 people or 300 to coordinate the complexity that is now collection development. You can't confuse being linear and understanding numbers as a prerequisite for collection development. It's not about the numbers and acquiring the most stuff. It's about acquiring the right stuff.

**BK:** What advice do you have for library vendors?

**MB:** As in any marketplace, the importance of integrity and trust remains paramount. The same products are available from a variety of avenues. It isn't libraries that do business, it is individuals in libraries that do business. Trust, integrity and communication are

critical components of the relationship between libraries and vendors. Secondly, you have to have something to sell and to be honest, you're selling service more than anything else. I once heard a statistic that the number of mistakes in shipments leaving the loading docks of publishers is somewhere between 15-20% and that the mistakes from a library vendor are less than 1%. That's the level of quality service that we want and are willing to pay for. Otherwise, it ultimately comes out of our hides. This is becoming more apparent with electronic information. We want you to fight our battles. Dealing directly with producers is not a model that we want to revert to. My library would have to hire at least three people to replace me if we had to deal directly with publishers. We should not backwards just because we are all dazzled by electronic resources. Finally, hang in there... the dust hasn't settled yet. The first line providers of information cannot provide the quality and timeliness of service that libraries have come to expect from their vendors. It has been the vendors that have created a niche for themselves by providing that service. Don't lose track of that.

## Bet You Missed It

### Press Clippings — In the News — Carefully Selected by Your Crack Staff of News Sleuths

Column Editor: **Pamela M. Rose, M.L.S.** (Web Services & Library Promotion Coordinator, Health Sciences Library, University at Buffalo, 3435 Main St., Buffalo, NY 14214-3002; Phone: 716-829-2408 x129; Fax: 716-829-2211) <pmrose@acsu.buffalo.edu> wings.buffalo.edu/~pmrose

### TO HELP OR HINDER, THAT IS THE QUESTION by Pamela M. Rose (University at Buffalo)

A petition demanding that the government require scientists to publish code under open-source of "free software" licenses was drawn up by three software developers (<http://www.openinformatics.org>). Advocates say sharing is essential for eliminating duplicative research, and feel results can't be properly evaluated without looking at source code used to obtain them. Critics warn that such mandatory sharing could reduce financial incentives (thus hindering research) and may violate federal law. A workshop on the licensing issues will be held in January at the **O'Reilly Bioinformatics Technology Conference** in Tucson, AZ.

See — "Petition Seeks Public Sharing of Code," by **David Malakoff**, in *Science*, p. 27, Oct. 5, 2001.

### INDEPENDENCE RESEARCH

by Pamela M. Rose (University at Buffalo)

A dozen of the world's top medical journals enacted uniform requirements that seek to guarantee the scientific independence of investigators doing research funded by drug companies. Scientists submitting a study for publication must now sign a statement indicating they take full responsibility for the findings, had access to the data and controlled the decision to publish.

See — "Medical Journals Act to Limit Drug Firms' Influence" in *Medscape* <http://www.medscape.com/reuters/prof/2001/09/09.11/20010910plcy002.html> [registration required to view].

