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The Use of Digital Technologies In the Selection and Purchasing of Library Materials among Special, Academic, and Public Libraries

by **Barbara Blummer** (Librarian, Center for Supercomputing) <bablum@super.org>

Although the procedures for the selection and purchasing of library materials differ among academic, public, and special libraries, all are incorporating digital technologies to expedite the process. Traditionally acquisitions and collection development activities have been print based operations. However, within the last decade technological changes such as the proliferation of material available from the Internet, the digitization of collections, and the popularity of integrated library systems with online public access catalogs and acquisition modules have affected the operation of libraries, especially technical services. A questionnaire was posted on various listservs requesting information on the relationship between collection development and acquisitions and the responses analyzed for an illustration of the selection and ordering processes in libraries. Fifteen individuals responded representing two special, three public, and ten academic libraries. The data highlighted the use of email, Web sites, online book databases, publisher's catalogs on the Internet, and integrated library systems to facilitate collection development and acquisitions activities. The continued availability of new technologies and databases available through the Web suggest further automation in the selection and purchasing of library materials.

In "Management for Change in Acquisition in Academic Libraries" **Moid A. Siddiqui** noted academic libraries' use of the Internet to enhance collections, expand services and improve operations. **Siddiqui** specified usage as email, online public access catalogs, and publisher's catalogs (352). She described how the Internet can facilitate acquisitions through email with vendors, the use of online library and publishers' catalogs for bibliographic checking and ordering books online and for electronic publishing. (354). The author also emphasized the importance of electronic data interchange (EDI), which represents direct communication of messages such as orders, acknowledgements, and status reports between vendors and acquisition modules (356). Moreover, her article also illustrated the significance of the Internet as a resource for publisher and library catalogs for book selection (355).

In "Collection Development Policies in University Libraries: a Space for Reflection" **Barbara Vignau** and **Grizly Meneses** also recognize the importance of digital technologies for the selection and ordering of library materials by analyzing collection development in sixteen Cuban centers of higher and technical education. The authors describe both the Internet and intranets as vital work tools that support collection development activity by facilitating distribution through the local acquisition network or aid in the solicitation of informa-

tion about potential purchases. Moreover, they note the majority of libraries in their study describe publishing catalogs as well as the use of the Internet and subject librarians as the most important resources for the selection of sources (40). Their recommendations center on the creation of collection development policies that recognize the emergence of new information technologies and communication opportunities such as the practice of making subscriptions to electronic publications through Web based agencies (37).

The acquisitions module of integrated library systems is at the technological core of the selection and purchasing process and staff must be knowledgeable in its capabilities. Unfortunately in many libraries staff typically use the minimum functions necessary to perform their duties. Although this is especially true in special libraries that only process a small number of orders annually, it is also prevalent in other library types. At the recent **Mid-Atlantic CODI Regional Conference** in Williamsburg, Virginia, one participant representing an academic library stated the fact that the staff wasn't aware that different budget codes could be used on a single purchase order. This individual then praised her institution's practice of hosting regular library departmental meetings to discuss best practices, modules capabilities, as well as software update features.

While the specific features of acquisition modules of integrated library systems differ among vendors, standard functionality includes the ability to create selection lists, purchase requests, purchase orders, pay invoices and monitor expenditures. During the last few decades as technology developed to create **X12**, **EDIFACT**, and **BISAC** standards, acquisitions modules adapted to the new standards, allowing libraries to adopt electronic ordering practices. The **Accredited Standards Committee (ASC)** created **X12**, an **American National Standards Institute** format for inter-industry electronic interchange of business transactions, in 1979. **EDIFACT** represents ISO 9735 electronic data interchange for administration, commerce and transport. **BISAC** stands for **Book Industry Standards and Communications**, and was the main standards forum of the **Book Industry Study Group** until 1995 when the Internet Commerce Committee of the **Book Industry Study Group** ended support for the format (Thronson 34). **BISAC** cannot handle the 13 digit ISBN and libraries using this format will need to adopt **EDIFACT** or **X12** for electronic ordering, thereby allowing libraries to look beyond their current workflow once again

to determine more efficient and effective ways of procuring information for their customers.

Two vendors capable of receiving orders via **EDI** include **Baker & Taylor** and **Ingram Book Group**. These companies are especially helpful in facilitating electronic ordering in libraries. In one public library an acquisitions staff member described how the book vendors provided detailed instructions on what fields to complete in their integrated library system to submit orders. Another vendor provided an **FTP** program that is installed on computer hard drives and is used to transfer orders to the vendors.

Familiarity with the report functions within the acquisition module is especially important since reports facilitate tracking and evaluation of the acquisitions process. Report capabilities vary widely among integrated library systems and many offer additional report functionality for customization of statistics. Some standard reports include: budget and expenditure tracking for multiple lines or budget groups, monthly statements, and acquisition details specific to vendors and titles.

Using an acquisition module among consortium libraries requires special adjustment as many systems lack the ability to track budgets among multiple libraries. Recently **Rey Eloise Smith** of the **University of Puerto Rico**, Central Administration described her consortium's unique acquisitions module workflow to track spending for the seven libraries in the consortium. Libraries in this consortium employ a two-letter library location code, which is restricted to use by authorized staff, as a prefix for many acquisition functions. They also create unique, rather than automatic numbering, for purchase orders which also allows them to generate separate lists by library. Moreover, **Ms. Smith** believes an acquisitions system that would interface with their purchasing department would further improve services.

Other studies also illustrate the importance of digital technologies in changing acquisitions and collection development patterns. In "Purchase on Demand: A Better Customer Service Model" **Richard Hulsey**, Director of the **Willard Public Library** in Michigan describes his efforts to improve service and increase user satisfaction by purchasing rather than borrowing materials. In 2000 public service desk staff at various branches armed with credit cards, purchased materials online from the Internet. The success of this venture led to purchasing out-of-print items from out-of-print bookstores

continued on page 24

such as **Amazon.com**, **Abebooks.com**, and **AddAll.com**. According to **Hulsey** this system is superior to interlibrary loan since he believes they have access to a holdings database he defines as the Internet that has materials at reasonable prices, with delivery services, and at improved speed.

Digital technologies are also used to promote collaboration among interlibrary loan, acquisitions and collection development departments in two academic libraries. In "Collection Development Based on Patron Requests: Collaboration between Interlibrary Loan and Acquisitions" **Suzanne M. Ward**, **Tanner Wray** and **Karl E. Debus-Lopez** describe the on-demand interlibrary loan/acquisitions partnerships at **Purdue University** and the **University of Wisconsin-Madison**. In both libraries, the process utilizes the **Online Computer Library Catalog (OCLC)**, Clio interlibrary loan management system, online book jobbers, and an interlibrary loan fund within the acquisitions module. Circulation data from the universities' integrated library system also illustrates the use of on-demand titles by other patrons and justifies this procedure for collection development activities in these libraries.

The availability of the Internet coupled with the popularity of electronic resources fosters the use of database trials in the selection process for evaluating online sources for all library types. In a "Tale of Three Libraries," **Moralita Freeny**, Director of **Prince George's County Memorial Library System** in Maryland, emphasizes the importance of electronic resource trials for their libraries where two thirds of the materials budget in 2003 was spent on electronic resources. According to **Freeny**, every product goes through a trial period at the branch level before a contract is negotiated. The **Dudley Knox Library** which supports the **Naval Post Graduate School** also offers trials for online products. The library maintains a **Current Trials** Web page that describes ongoing trials for electronic resources and solicits input from users regarding the relevance of potential purchases.

In light of the above studies and to better understand the process of acquisition and collection development in libraries, the author posted a questionnaire on various library listservs. An analysis of responses to a questionnaire posted on **SERIALST**, **AUTOCAT**, **ACQNET**, **NRLA**, and **STS-L** listservs regarding the interaction between acquisitions and collection development also highlight the importance of digital technologies for these activities. The responses underscore the benefits of the Internet, integrated library systems, and email for the selection and ordering of materials in all types of libraries, particularly special libraries.

The answers submitted from special libraries revealed that collection development and acquisitions processes in these institutions, while informal in nature, also incorporate digital technologies. Both special libraries respondents noted their use of electronic databases to

track acquisition expenditures prior to the availability of an acquisition module. The purchase of the acquisition module quickly led to the adoption of this technology for ordering, budget tracking, and statistical reports. According to these special libraries, input for material purchases is solicited from library committee members through meetings or email. Both libraries' Web pages contain purchase request forms for staff. In addition, trials are always used to evaluate potential database purchases.

In special libraries with low levels of professional staffing, support staff assumes responsibility for book ordering which is accomplished through online databases such as **Amazon.com**. Both special library responses noted that serial orders are facilitated through the services offered through **EBSCO's** Web page. Acquisitions staff is also responsible for finding out-of-print items typically located through Internet book vendors. Permission for copyright is also within the duties of the special libraries acquisitions clerk and is handled through email communication.

Special libraries are very receptive to further incorporating new technologies into the acquisitions and selection process. One respondent described his plan to utilize online book jobbers to make selections and order materials especially for reference materials. This manager also noted his intention to purchase more materials in eBook format rather than print. The other special library hopes to acquire an electronic resource management system to manage database and electronic journal subscriptions.

The responses from academic libraries illustrated the selection and purchasing of materials in institutions of higher learning as a structured process that centers on digital technologies and involves faculty liaisons, collection development librarians and acquisitions staff. Faculty liaisons or selectors recommend titles to collection development librarians and these are provided to the acquisitions staff for ordering. In one library, selectors utilize the email functions of online catalogs such as **Bowker's Books in Print** to submit requests. In another example, selectors send book orders to acquisitions staff for ordering. Ultimately the final orders are submitted to online book vendors through the Internet. Selectors are also provided read-only access to the fund accounts of the acquisitions module for monitoring budget allocations and expenditures. One academic collection development librarian suggested that access to the circulation history of items would be helpful for the de-selection of materials.

Collection development librarians recognize the importance of faculty liaisons in academic libraries and utilize digital technologies to facilitate their role in the selection process. One respondent described plans to conduct workshops to instruct liaisons in using electronic tools for purchase decisions. These tools include usage statistics for digital resources, interlibrary loan statistics, and online review sources. Another university collection development librarian provides training sessions for faculty or selectors and their secretaries in the use of the email function of **Bowker's Books In Print** online database for placing requests.

Many academic libraries offer a collection development page describing tools available for selectors. The **University of New Hampshire Library** posts a **Letter to New Faculty** on their collection development Web page. This letter outlines the process for ordering books through the library and the page also includes links to further support the faculty's efforts to place orders for materials. Moreover, the **Dudley Knox Library**, which supports the **Naval Post Graduate School**, provides their collection development policy on the library's Website. This policy outlines their process for collection development centering on a subject specialist who also considers input from library staff, faculty and members of the NPS community. In addition, the **California Digital Library (CDL)** also maintains a site for collection development which serves as an overview of how purchasing evolves and also provides users with a mechanism to check on the status of orders. Some topics on the **CDL** Website include the advisory structure, current activities, policy and procedural document and toolkit.

The responses of academic libraries to the acquisitions and collection development functions in their institutions highlight the importance of digital technologies. One respondent praised their acquisitions staff efforts in locating out-of-print items on the Internet. This library also lauded the benefits of using vendor services for electronic ordering with records that are compatible with their online library system. Another academic library respondent described their use of **GOBI (Global Online Bibliographic Information)** system from **YBP**. According to the collection development librarian, this service allows acquisitions staff to submit an ISBN for book ordering and receive shelf ready books complete with **MARC** records, labels and barcodes. The **GOBI** Website describes their product as an acquisitions and collection management system that allows querying, selecting, ordering, reporting, and approval plan profile management functions for a database of nearly 2 million titles.

The importance of digital technologies for acquisitions and collection development librarians is illustrated in the **University of South Florida (USF)**, Tampa collection development Web page. This site posts competencies for their collection development librarian; included among these competencies is familiarity with the use of electronic resources within their assigned area. Collection development librarians are also encouraged to establish a personal Web page to facilitate communication with faculty and students in their assigned area. Most importantly these librarians are required to "generate new acquisitions lists such as new approval or firm order acquisitions or holdings within an assigned **Library of Congress** classification system."

OCLC is also used as an online tool in the acquisitions process among academic libraries. In one academic library, staff commissioned **OCLC** for a report comparing their holdings with lists from the **Books for College Libraries** and **Choice Outstanding Academic Titles** for a retrospective purchasing project. According to

continued on page 26


The Use of Digital Technologies... from page 24

the respondent, the library was under funded for years and had some deficiencies in its collection. With a recent increase in funding, the library hopes to utilize the report to purchase relevant titles for its collection.

In the public library arena, the selection and purchasing of books also follows a structured model that incorporates many types of digital technologies to facilitate communication among parties. All responses emphasized the use of email in acquisitions. The utilization of email for communication is especially important in public libraries as acquisitions staff is typically housed at the library headquarters and other librarians, including collection development staff, are dispersed at various branches.

In public libraries, unlike many academic libraries, staff librarians typically do selection at the branch level. A respondent described the process in their library as reference and children's librarians selecting items through **Baker & Taylor's** Website using a shopping cart. The cart is forwarded to the catalog manager who processes the orders. Another public library respondent outlined how collection development staff members place requests directly into the library's acquisition system. One public library selector utilizes **OCLC Connexion** to download records into their acquisitions

module. After the order appears in the acquisitions module, staff gathers the titles and transmits order to the vendors.

Special, academic, and public library administrators are embracing numerous technologies to facilitate collection development and acquisitions duties. Foremost, the move from print to electronic tools in the selection and ordering process fosters the need for training staff on the availability and use of new technologies. The rise of online auctions for acquiring library materials, especially out-of-print items, also highlights the need for institutional policies to govern these purchases. In addition, the popularity of leasing and purchasing electronic resources underscores the importance of a librarian's knowledge of electronic licensing, digital rights management, and digital copyright issues. Moreover, the recent marketing of electronic resource management systems by integrated library system vendors illustrates the complexities posed by electronic resources that are beyond the capabilities of the acquisitions module in managing online subscriptions. The continued availability of new technologies, different modes of communication, and digital information on the Internet will further impact the selection and ordering process in libraries. Continued cooperation among acquisitions, collection development and other library departments continues to be important as technology moves us into the 21st century. 

Appendix

Interaction between Collection Development Librarians and Acquisitions Librarians

- 1) Describe the responsibilities of collection development librarians and acquisitions librarians in your institution. How large is staffing in these areas and are they professional positions?
- 2) How are purchasing recommendations by collection development librarians forwarded to the acquisitions department, — email, written forms, or verbal? Do you have regular meetings to discuss selection and purchasing?
- 3) What responsibilities, in addition to those outlined in question 1), does acquisitions have in the ordering process? For example, do they check for duplication, language, editions, etc?
- 4) How are difficulties in purchasing handled, such as out of print, price increases, and lack of availability? Is this information forwarded to collection development librarians or are acquisitions librarians responsible for all purchasing type decisions?
- 5) Which group assumes responsibility for the negotiations of the licensing of electronic databases?
- 6) How is monitoring of purchases handled? Do acquisitions librarians keep collection development librarians informed of the status of purchases?
- 7) What role do collection development librarians have with the acquisitions budget, especially in monitoring throughout the year?
- 8) What is the physical proximity of the two departments, collection development and acquisitions?
- 9) Are collection development librarians and acquisitions librarians familiar with each others' job responsibilities?
- 10) How might the process of selecting and purchasing be improved?
- 11) Do you have any best practices suggestions?

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Rumors from page 16

mation provided by **TDNet**, without requiring library staff time. They have completed testing with **Google Scholar** and can integrate their **Full Text Link Resolver (TOUR)** into the

Google Scholar. Stay tuned for more information on this as it is just rolling out this month. Meanwhile, info is available by contacting **Brian Noone** (Director, Library Technical Resources <brian@tdnet.teldan.com>). Even more exciting is how people are reacting to **TDNet's Searcher/Analyzer** product — far more

robust than mere federated searching. Pretty cool technology and drawing a lot of interest from customers worldwide. www.tdnet.com

The **Joint Information Systems Committee (JISC)** has agreed to the terms of a five-year renewal for **Web of Science(R)** on behalf

continued on page 30