

## Against the Grain

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# Convictions -- Lessons for Library Benefactors

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## Not Such a Big Deal from page 67

magazines, for CDs, for 300 rolls of paper towels or 50 cartridges of toner. It feels very good to buy as much as we can when we can justify it by thinking about all of the money we are saving when we buy in bulk.

Retailers and catalog companies understand this mentality. Buy two tee shirts and get the third one at half price. Or, better yet, buy five and get the sixth one for free. I now have a white, beige, grey, black, navy, and red. I had been looking for lavender. Oh well, I'll just return the purple denim jeans. I'm not pleased about this because by buying the purple ones along with the new blue jeans I had needed, I was saving some money. At least I think so.

In addition to cost savings, package deals are compelling because we don't have to take the time to think about making choices. Our



days are crammed with busyness: work-related responsibilities, decision making, emails, conferences, phone calls, commutes, home and hearth, leisure activities, and the nation's favorite pastime, shopping.

At the same time, our senses become overwhelmed by the sheer magnitude of offerings for merchandise and services, things we need, things we need that we never needed before, things we need we never knew we needed, and things we want that didn't exist until recently. It is increasingly hard to pick and choose.

Librarians know well the appeal of the "Big Deal," especially for online publications. Why shouldn't you purchase a deal that gives you the most journal titles? Less input from faculty is required, fewer subscriptions need to be placed individually, and "My Library Collection

Will Be Bigger Than Yours" has bragging rights.

The big deal, however, costs big bucks.

The adage "Get the most for your money"

is time-honored and still powerful today. Many librarians acknowledge that their budgets are consumed by big deal packages which means that there is little, if anything, left for titles that are offered from other publishers and society publishers. Would it not be better to insist upon selectivity options to be coupled with price points that are reasonable and appropriate?

Otherwise, journals in embryonic fields and focused endeavors that should be included in library collections are turned away because the funds have been exhausted by the big deal. Research becomes more focused all the time, and such journals make a significant contribution to the fields they serve. Librarians should be alerted to the importance of such publications and no piggy bank should be so broken that there isn't room in the budget for the inclusion of these periodicals.

This summer, I'm still hoping to put on a lavender "tee," spread a beach blanket, and read the magazines I really want, most of which don't come my way in "My Big Deal."

Next time I'm offered "Big Deal or No Deal," I hope I'm wise enough to say, "No, Thanks." And I hope you'll think about doing the same. 🐷

## Convictions — Lessons for Library Benefactors

by **Matthew J. Bruccoli** (President, Bruccoli Clark Layman; Phone: 803-771-4642; Fax: 803-799-6953)

*8thly That my said Library be continued in its present form and noe other books mixt therewith Save what my Nephew may add to them of his own Collecting in distinct presses. That the said rooms and books so placed and adjusted be called by the name of Bibliotheca Pepsyiana.... 12thly And that for a yet further Security herein the said two Colleges of Trinity and Magdalen have a Reciprocal Check upon one another. And that the College which shall be in present possession of the said Library be subject to an Annual visitation from the other and to the forfeiture thereof to the like possession and Use of the other upon Conviction of any breach of their said Covenants.*

— From the Last Will and Testament of Samuel Pepys, 13 May 1703

**Samuel Pepys** provided a model and a warning for bookmen who desire to safeguard their personal libraries by placing them in institutional libraries. His books have their own library at **Magadelen College, Cambridge University**. But **Trinity College** never exercised its right to count them: his instructions were ignored. There are at least two morals in this history: You can't run the world from the grave — although **Pepys** came close; and don't trust librarians. Give your books to the library where you want them to be or where they ought to be. Then forget about them.

**Charles Feinberg** provides an exemplum. He came to America a poor immigrant and

made his fortune — much of which he spent on **Walt Whitman**, who represented to him the spirit of America. **Charlie** wanted to express his gratitude to America by placing his monumental **Whitman Collection** in the **Library of Congress** through his generous gift-purchase arrangement. At the end of his life he was painfully unhappy about the mistreatment of his **Whitman** by the nation's library. Among other betrayals, the **Library of Congress** failed to unpack and catalogue the entire collection.

Many other donors of great collections to libraries have had similarly bitter experiences. Libraries accept research collections they don't know what to do with and may not really want, in order to avoid blame for rejecting them. Then they neglect the collections. A library benefactor who has donated a dozen major collections to a dozen libraries complains that none of these institutions has given proper attention to his books or to him. Admittedly he is a pain-in-

the-ass; but he is a generous pain-in-the-ass who expected that his benefactions would be valued. He also expected gratitude — not systematic ingratitude. He is a slow learner: once or twice are bad luck; but twelve out of twelve are enemy action. The experienced benefactor understands that although it may be possible to make conditions or stipulations about cataloguing, shelving, and maintenance, they will not be honored. There is no such thing as a grateful institution.

Until recently I deprecated collectors who justified auctioning off their collections by claiming that they could not have acquired their books if other collectors hadn't sold out. I have written articles insisting on the duty of a serious scholar-collector to keep his books together in an institutional library. Moreover, I have argued that the purpose of book-collecting is to build a collection that expresses the taste, courage, and knowledge of the collector; that a serious book collection is unduplicatable; and that the constituent elements enrich each other. Book collections beget books. I'm not so sure now. I've seen too many important collections mistreated by the book-dopes and book-enemies who are responsible for preserving and protecting them.

These are recommended policies for donors of books, manuscripts, and other literary research resources:

1. Give them while you're alive so that you can check on their treatment. It probably won't do any good, but you can try.



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## Convictions from page 68

- Specify that nothing be discarded.
- Specify that everything be maintained in the rare books/special collections department of the library: that the books are not to be scattered.
- Tell librarians who express concern about *duplication* — the shibboleth that terrifies the products of schools of information science and librarianship who orgiastically and orgastically discard and destroy the precious objects they are charged with protecting and preserving — that a duplicate copy is not a duplicate until proven so. Even then, three copies are better than one. **Bowdoin's Hawthorne-Longfellow Library** declined **Frazer Clark's** magnificent **Hawthorne Collection** on the basis of putative duplication.
- Provide money for the compilation and publication of a proper catalogue — on paper and on telly. Do this while you are alive and can attempt to supervise it.
- Do not leave your money to a library for an acquisitions endowment. The book-dopes will mis-spend it because they won't know how to spend it on books and will waste it on something else that is meaningful to them — like furniture.
- Do not be conned into trusting the administrators' statements of gratitude. No matter what they say, they resent you and your books because the books remind them of their exclusion from the things that you value. They also resent your money and the way you have spent it. There is a wide breach between those who spend their own money on books and those who do not: these constitute responses to life. What you spend your money on defines you. Never trust a bookless library administrator.

## Rumors. from page 59

Speaking of pre-conferences, we have NINE planned. **Electronic Resource Management Systems: Learning from Experience** with **Kristen DeVoe** <[devoek@cofc.edu](mailto:devoek@cofc.edu)>, **Evaluating Digital Repositories and Platforms: A Look at Projects and Products** with **Becky Lenzini** <[rlenzini@earthlink.net](mailto:rlenzini@earthlink.net)>, **George Machovec** <[george@coalliance.org](mailto:george@coalliance.org)> and **Bernie Reilly** <[reilly@crl.edu](mailto:reilly@crl.edu)>, **Negotiating with Vendors: Do's and Don'ts** with **Buzzy Basch**, **Marketing for ROI: Branding and promoting your collections and services** with **Elisabeth Leonard** <[elisabeth@elisabethleonard.com](mailto:elisabeth@elisabethleonard.com)>, **Acquisitions Basics** and

There are notable exceptions to the book-enemy librarians: I was trained by the great **John Cook Wyllie**. But the bad ones are in control on the administrative level. It is not a sound idea to select the institutional recipient of your cherished books on the basis of the curator or library director. The good ones die and are replaced by long-lived incompetents and frauds. The best attitude for a collector-benefactor is **Dr. Johnson's** "frigid tranquility." 🐼

**Beyond** with **Paul Rittlemeyer** <[pvr3y@virginia.edu](mailto:pvr3y@virginia.edu)> and **Dawn M. Waller** <[dwall@virginia.edu](mailto:dwall@virginia.edu)>, **Crime on the Coast** with **Ann Hamilton** <[ahamilton@georgiasouthern.edu](mailto:ahamilton@georgiasouthern.edu)>, **Serials Resource Management** with **Buzzy Basch** <[buzzy@basch.com](mailto:buzzy@basch.com)>, **Creating the Capacity for Change: Transforming Library Workflows and Organizations** with **Rick Lugg** and **Ruth Fischer**, and **Are publisher licenses compatible with library technology?** with **Simon Inger**, **Tracy Gardner** and **Pinar Erzin** <[simon@sic.ox14.com](mailto:simon@sic.ox14.com)>. Check out the descriptions [www.katina.info/conference](http://www.katina.info/conference).

What did you do for Memorial Day? **Becky Lenzini** was in Southern Illinois visiting with her dad who is an incredible octogenarian! He is driving around the country like a thirty-

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