

## Against the Grain

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Volume 25 | Issue 6

Article 39

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2013

# Collection Management Matters--Selecting Books on the Side

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### Recommended Citation

Alvin, Glenda (2013) "Collection Management Matters--Selecting Books on the Side," *Against the Grain*: Vol. 25: Iss. 6, Article 39.  
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.7771/2380-176X.7434>

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When historical research is fruitful, oftentimes, findings are shared in articles, books, and presentations. In 2013, attendees at the CAMA medical history symposium had the opportunity to hear about the first century of **Rosalind Franklin University of Medicine and Science** by archivist **Kelly Reiss**. A book, *Rosalind Franklin University of Medicine and Science, A Centennial View* by **Judith R. Masterson** was published in 2012 by the university. Surgeon **Donald Wood** spoke on the topic “**Lloyd M. Nyhus, MD, FACS**: Surgeon, Mentor, Visionary.” His 2013 book, co-written with **Michele Rapaport** and published by **University of Illinois at Chicago (UIC)**, is entitled *Lloyd M. Nyhus, MD, FACS: Surgeon, Mentor, Visionary for 20th Century Surgery*. Other 2013 symposium speakers presented on topics that may continue to be researched, or will provide fodder for more presentation or publication. **Dr. Brigid Lusk** of the **UIC Nursing History Resource Center** shared information on “Nurses’ Exposure to Radiation in the Early Twentieth Century,” and librarian **Holly Burt** spoke on “Patient Safety: Physicians and Librarians-Partners in Charge.” Library school professor **Catherine Arnott Smith** shared her findings (including the Chicago connections) on “Two Sisters: The Doctors Riddle Against The World,” and archivist **Sue Sacharski** concluded the day’s programming with an interesting story she called, “The Little Old Lady in Black: The Hospital Haunting of Edith Patterson.”

Chicago will be the site of various meetings in 2014 that promise medical history buffs and researchers opportunities to network and continue delving into medical history. In May 2014, the annual meeting of the **Medical Library Association** (May 16-21) will include presentations organized by its History of the Health Sciences Section. Earlier that same month, from May 8-11th, the **American Association for the History of Medicine (AAHM)** will gather in Chicago, and meetings of affiliated and related groups, e.g., **Archivists and Librarians in the History of the Health Sciences (ALHHS)** and the **Medical Museums Association (MEMA)** are scheduled to take place prior to that conference. And in the fall of 2014, another **CAMA Medical History Symposium** will again be scheduled...

AAHM — <http://www.histmed.org/>

ALHHS — <http://www.alhhs.org/>

CAMA — <http://www.chicagoarchivists.org/cama>

MEMA — <http://www.case.edu/affil/MeMA/memahome.htm>

MLA — <http://www.mlanet.org> 🌱

## Collection Management Matters — Selecting Books on the Side

Column Editor: **Glenda Alvin** (Associate Professor, Assistant Director for Collection Management and Administration, Head, Acquisitions and Serials, Brown-Daniel Library, Tennessee State University, 3500 John A. Merritt Blvd., Nashville, TN 37209; Phone: 615-963-5230; Fax: 615-963-1368) <[galvin@tnstate.edu](mailto:galvin@tnstate.edu)>

I recently had to explain to two colleagues all of the responsibilities that fall under my job description, and when I finished they both responded: “You do a lot!” When I got promoted to Assistant Director for Collection Management, which included supervision of the Cataloging Department, I had to keep my former title and responsibilities as Head of Acquisitions and Serials, two departments that merged after I was hired as the acquisitions and collection development department head in 1997. Along the way, database selection and procurement, the open URL linking product (WebBridge), and ERM were added to my duties. I also worked with the systems librarian to launch our discovery tool, troubleshoot database and ejournal access, run collection analysis reports, coordinate the liaison program, etc. The department also handles payroll, supply orders, book repair, binding, and government document processing.

Managing e-sericals and databases can dominate my day and diminish some of the time I use to devote to book selection. I sometimes feel like I am doing book selection and collection development in my spare time or on the side. Our faculty is allocated 80% of the book budget, and the liaisons have 15% of the academic department’s allocation. We have many departments and some library liaisons that never spend their allocations. At one time or another, I have investigated the feasibility of maintaining an approval program, but I fear that I will get the same or less participation from the faculty. I have also considered patron-driven acquisitions (PDA), but I like having control over what specifically is added to the collection. In March I start selecting books for departments that have been dormant, so that the collection is kept current and balanced. When accreditation time rolls around and the department heads request reports on library holdings, we can always show that our collection provides the current scholarship in the field in print and electronic format.

If I have a department that has a significant budget, but a history of not ordering books or even responding to emails and telephone calls, I go to **Midwest Library’s** Interacq system and create a profile of books published in the LC classification area for that department. Then I open the acquisition module in Sierra and check for duplicates as I do my selection. I signed up for their STM slip service, and I occasionally will have my heart made glad when faculty members come to my office with a whole stack that wipes out their budget for the fiscal year. Aside from Interacq, I can compile lists from *Books In Print* or *CHOICE*.

In the case of *CHOICE*, I also subscribe to the cards, which I distribute to departments and library liaisons; however, I set aside and order the ones I think are essential for the library. I seldom need to create a list of titles in the online version, because the titles I need have already been ordered from the card selection. *CHOICE Reviews Online* provides Outstanding Academic Titles (OAT) as well as subject-specific Forthcoming Lists. The featured Bibliography Essay comes with a “Works Cited” list at the end, which can be useful for new purchases as well as filling gaps.

Having little time to leisurely peruse print copies of publishers’ catalogs and *Library Journal* (Oh! Those were the days!), I have become fond of what I call “ready to go” subject lists. I usually start with **Baker and Taylor/YBP Academia** (<http://www.ybp.com/acad/index.html>) and go through all of the lists, but I especially like the *Academic Essentials* and “Spotlight on...” I can export the titles to Excel spreadsheets and delete the ones I don’t want or we already own, before I give them to the library assistant for processing. When really pressed

for time, I can download the spreadsheet, cross off the ones I recognize as already ordered, and hand it to her to check the status. I also print the lists and send them to the library liaisons and departmental library representatives to see if I can get a response. This year, I got a wonderful and thorough selection from a

comprehensive list I sent the Women’s Studies Coordinator. **Midwest Library Services, Baker & Taylor/YBP**, and other vendor Websites have complete lists of the latest award-winning books, which can be useful.

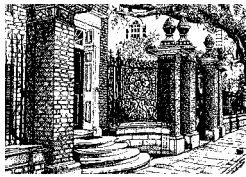
My favorite “go to” selection Website is **Amazon**, which I grew to love one year when our *Books In Print Online* subscription lapsed. It may be because I shop Amazon for my own personal books, as well as for my church bookstore, and the familiar ease of use carries over. For newer titles, I like being able to read the snippets of remarks from reviewers from a cross section of library periodicals and scholarly journals, but most of all from the readers themselves. For older books that I am trying to replace because they are worn beyond repair, it helps to know that the book is out of print and the cheapest used book dealer is selling it for \$250. That makes me want to put the book back on the shelf to see if it has a few more years of circulation left in it. Best of all, I enjoy scrolling through the “Customer Who Bought This Item Also Bought...” because I can find really interesting books on related subjects, that I never came across any other place.

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Listening to **National Public Radio (NPR)** is a major addiction for me. If I don't like what's playing on Nashville's FM station, I move over to the AM station. I go online to listen to the programs that my local stations do not carry. I even listen to it at my desk while I am working on spreadsheet lists. Consequently, I hear a lot of author interviews and book reviews. I started going to the book page to find the title that I heard discussed on the drive home, but could not remember the author or the title. There are several fiction and non-fiction lists for adults and juveniles on the **NPR's** book page (<http://www.npr.org/books/>). What is unique about some of their lists is the crowdsourcing method they use to compile them. They will request readers' recommendations for their favorite books in a genre and compile a list of the ones that get the most votes. I am not a science fiction reader, so I know very little about the popular authors in that field. I used **NPR's** Best Science Fiction books list to update our collection.

Doing book selection on the side does not have to be labor-intensive or time-consuming when you have a few trusted places that you can turn to for quality reviews. The key is to not let too many months go by and have a backlog of lists, so I try to check my sources on a monthly basis. 🍷

## Hidden Collections — Are there “Hidden Collections” in Special Collection Libraries?

Column Editor: **Allison Day** (Kentucky Librarian / Assistant Professor, Special Collections Library, Western Kentucky University) <[allison.day@wku.edu](mailto:allison.day@wku.edu)>

**S**pecial collection libraries house a variety of rare and unique materials within their collections. The majority of special collection library collections include rare books, manuscripts, photographs, letters or diaries, newspapers, broadsides, scrapbooks, or ephemera. Researchers search for new ways to access these special collection materials for vital information that might be crucial to their research.

However, there may be “hidden collections” within a special collection library that are unavailable for researcher use. Unprocessed or uncataloged materials are inaccessible to outside research while library personnel work with the items. The underlying problems and overwhelming workload associated with hidden collections have drawn my attention for new ways in which we could process inaccessible materials to provide that critical research potential that otherwise would remain undiscoverable. For example, historic newspapers that are extremely rare are unavailable to researchers because of inherit preservation issues associated with the extremely brittle and acidic makeup of the paper that prevents

researcher use without great care and supervision by conservators.

### Why Collections Remain Hidden

Several challenges can delay or prevent rare collection materials from being processed for researcher use. Inadequate personnel, small budgets, unavailability of special scanning equipment, and preservation issues can also prevent the quick processing of various collections. Although hidden collections may become available to the public faster with new researcher interest, increased preservation needs or more funding opportunities are usually needed.

Internal collection management software like Past Perfect that is used by several special collection libraries, archives, or museums may not be completely compatible with on-line library catalog or management systems, depending on the needs of the facility. Some collections or objects may not display properly for researchers to locate the items without time-consuming backup assistance from software or content managers. However, Past Per-

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