



# Purchase of Out-of-Print Material in American University Libraries

FELIX REICHMANN

LIBRARIANS, BOOK COLLECTORS and bookdealers are members of a large brotherhood, and no query on any aspect of book selection and book procurement can be undertaken without the participation of all three groups. I have, therefore, read the literature\* and have contacted by questionnaire, personal letter or interview representatives of all three classes in order to clarify in my own mind the problems connected with the out-of-print (o.p.) book.<sup>1</sup>

"O.P.—that means only promises."<sup>2</sup> Such a witty remark will elicit from almost everybody a chuckle or at least a smile, but it does not help us. Neither do we solve the problem by denying its existence. One of our colleagues wrote, "I do not consider o.p. searching as a special project, inviting an elaborate routine and a philosophy of bookhunting."<sup>3</sup>

There are at least three easily distinguishable types of books which the buyer and selector frequently put in the same pot under the generic heading of an o.p. publication:

1. Texts available as reprints or in microforms: Much important research material is being made available by reprint publishers and much is being offered by publishers of various types of microforms. The librarian attentive to the development of the collection will overlook these sources only at his own peril. The selection and procurement procedures for reprints and microforms, however, do not differ from those connected with the acquisition of current printed publications and, therefore, pose no peculiar problems. (The buyer interested in the original editions only will, of course, disregard this group.)

Felix Reichmann is Assistant Director, Cornell University Libraries, Ithaca, New York.

\* See the ADDITIONAL REFERENCES at the end of this article for a bibliography which includes most of the topics covered in this article.

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2. Texts available through dealers' catalogs: Selecting and ordering from dealers' catalogs or similar lists is the most painless, efficient and at times the most thrilling method of buying o.p. books in their original editions. There is no book selector who will not readily subscribe to the confession of Sylvestre Bonnard: "Je ne sais pas de lecture plus facile, plus attrayante, plus douce que celle d'un catalogue."<sup>4</sup> Purchasing from dealers' catalogs differs from the acquisition of present day publishers' output in only one important respect. The utmost speed in placing orders is necessitated because titles are available in one copy only.

3. Specific texts needed: Trying to locate a specific title is at present the most expensive and least effective means of acquisition. Sometimes it is like trying to find a needle in a haystack. Obviously we cannot sift all the haystacks and even the most fervent believer in the limitless application of electronic machines will be chastened by calculating the input costs of the rapidly changing reservoir of o.p. books. We, therefore, must find a powerful magnet to locate the needle and finding such a magnet, or the best substitute for it, is really the crux of the matter.

Since the librarian's main supply of books readily available for purchase is in the hands of the booktrade, I turned first to our business associates to get advice. The bookdealers use more or less the same techniques employed by librarians; in many cases, however, they are more efficient, have better connections, a grasp of the complexity of international trade and a solid knowledge of books in their special field of interest; unfortunately they have not yet found the magnet. They keep want lists, check their holdings and current acquisitions, consult other dealers' catalogs, advertise (they have more advertising media at their disposal than most libraries), employ book scouts—and hope for the best. Libraries are important customers of the booktrade, but by no means the only ones, nor are they always the most consequential patrons. They give excellent financial security, but we librarians can make life miserable for a dealer by cumbersome ordering procedures, complex billing requests and delays in payment. Therefore, it behooves us to treat our business associates with sympathetic understanding.

Searching for a desired book is hardly financially rewarding. Searching cost, staff time, postage and general upkeep quickly diminish any possible profit. Whereas librarians can write off many such outlays as

hidden expenses, the bookdealer has to be realistic; and in charging a realistic price he runs the risk of an indignant outcry from an outraged customer. The number of firms which continue an active search service is, therefore, steadily diminishing; the few faithful ones do it less for commercial reasons than for the "good will" to be gained by accommodating an old customer. All have to cut expenditures and risks. Some accept firm orders only, while others make it quite clear that an efficient search is preconditioned on a *carte blanche* (a time limit of six to twelve months and a price limit).

Private book collectors face the same problems as librarians. However, they take the trial and tribulations of bookhunting in better stride. They can afford infinite patience as they collect for themselves and not for a large and at times impatient campus community. Some give full discretionary powers to a trusted dealer, but many are avid readers of catalogs and love to browse in bookstores.

Extending my search for the magic magnet, I next turned to my American and Canadian colleagues. Librarians are mainly interested in people who read or who are at least potential readers: they try to give to every patron who enters the library the title he wants or the book in which he can find the answer to the question in which he is interested.

### *The Literature on O.P. Buying*

Fourteen (a little more than 20 percent) of those who responded to my questionnaire have published papers on the acquisitions of o.p. books or formulated procedures as part of a general acquisitions manual. All these papers are descriptive, many are very informative and give excellent advice, but for the most part they are limited to the operation in a single library. The profession as a whole is not overly enthusiastic about this literary output. Only one-third have found the papers helpful and even so there are two negative comments ("with reservation" and "quite limited"). Outstanding contributions which give much pertinent information, however, are widely acclaimed; 50 percent of all who answered my question positively quoted the excellent paper by Eldred Smith.<sup>5</sup> Two-thirds of our colleagues are not impressed by anything they have read on the acquisition of o.p. titles and seemingly do not read the professional literature too carefully. Thus, I received remarks like: "Usually by and for book-sellers," or "We rely largely on our own experience." In contrast to this apparent lethargy, 82 percent of the answers were decidedly in

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favor of more intensive research; only twelve (18 percent) hardy souls put their thumbs down on any future study, probably because they consider it a waste of time; only one softened his judgment by adding "Not warranted but interesting."

### *Administration*

The administration of searching o.p. material shows interesting variations. About 35 percent of the libraries questioned have a special searching section; the number of such sections seems to be on the increase; some libraries report plans for an antiquarian acquisitions librarian and for a centralized searching unit. In 70 percent of the libraries the acquisitions department has administrative responsibility; at times responsibility is shared with the serials department (8 percent) and with the reference department (2 percent); bibliographers frequently (18 percent) control searching operations. Bibliographers are rapidly acquiring major importance for the over-all development of book collections and will very likely continue to extend their administrative responsibility to certain aspects of the technical services, most likely the searching operation itself and perhaps even ordering.

### *Desiderata Files*

Many libraries (70 percent) maintain a general desiderata file, although most have reluctantly come to the conclusion that a large accumulation of wanted titles is not the magic magnet needed. Ten percent of the libraries ask bibliographers, curators and department librarians to maintain their own files, 2 percent keep serial want lists only. General desiderata files are kept as separate units, but 5 percent of the libraries report interfiling in the in-process file. Electronic machines may change this situation basically and intelligent programming based on a very carefully controlled input may well revitalize this time-honored tool. One institution reported: "The new machine system produces a file but no real use has been made." The size of the files maintained varies between 40,000 and 150 titles. The median is 5,000 or less. Faculty and library staff share equally in supplying the titles for the desiderata file. A few additional titles come from suggestion boxes and interlibrary loan requests. The maintenance of the file leaves much to be desired. Cards stay in the file too long. For 70 percent, the length of time a title remains in the file is almost indefinite; 5 percent of the libraries remove a title after three years, 15 percent after two years and 10 percent after one year. Titles re-

ceived are removed from the file by almost 80 percent, but a continuous careful screening is done only by about half the libraries questioned.

### *Second-hand Book Catalogs*

All libraries pay close attention to second-hand book catalogs as it is realized that these lists provide the most important supply of o.p. books. The careful checking of general desiderata files against catalogs is cumbersome, time-consuming and inefficient, but a perusal of all incoming lists by a qualified selector is a must. In 10 percent of the libraries second-hand catalogs are sent directly to the offices of the top administration; in the remaining 90 percent, the handling of second-hand catalogs is divided three ways, almost equally. In one-third catalogs are received by a mail clerk or student assistant and distributed probably according to some written plan; in one-third they are sent to bibliographers and departmental libraries and in one-third they go to the acquisitions librarian. The various methods of distributing second-hand catalogs most likely fail to give a realistic picture, because the catalogs are probably distributed further by the librarians to whom they are first routed. Moreover, many faculty members and departments receive catalogs directly.

Bibliographers (fifty-two times) and faculty (thirty-seven times) are mentioned most frequently as book selectors from catalogs. These two groups probably work closely together and the importance of faculty selection may actually be larger than indicated by this statistic. Both the rare book librarian and the acquisitions librarian are named twenty-one times, the top administration seventeen times, the reference department fifteen times and the serials division five times. A new position and a new administrative division concerned with book selection have made their appearance, namely the coordinator of acquisitions and the division of collection development.

Over 60 percent of the libraries which found the question on faculty selection applicable (10 percent of the institutions queried had no faculty) credited the teaching staff with major activity in choosing from catalogs. It is generally assumed that faculty participation is on the whole decreasing. The answers I received confirm this hypothesis. One library wrote: "Pressures of teaching and research have limited the [selecting] activity of the faculty markedly." Many comments run as follows: "The faculty is encouraged but. . . ." "A few

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departments are active, the rest not." "History and language is very active, otherwise negligible."

Although we all know that speed is essential in ordering from a second-hand book catalog, only 15 percent of the libraries impose a definite time limit. I would have to stress the meaning of the word definite to the breaking point if I wanted to summarize the answers. Practically, there is not much difference between the libraries which have a time limit and those which do not. We all stress speed and we know that every selector is conscious of this necessity. The majority of the catalogs are returned within two days but one week is by no means rare and delays between two weeks and two months were reported.

Some libraries have given up the struggle: "We have made a basic assumption that policing of requests made from old catalogs is more expensive than processing time used up in ordering sold items. We have attempted to minimize the delay in library processing time in order to partially compensate for ordering from outdated lists." Another librarian wrote: "No rule can be imposed on the higher echelon." Nobody wants to be a martinet, but neither do librarians want to waste searching time on outdated lists. Thus, many libraries have adopted a common sense way out of this difficulty. If the catalog is older than one week, the dealer is requested to report the titles still available and place them on short reserve; the catalog is then processed rush. This system works well and some libraries are inclined to use it for all catalogs regardless of date. However, if too many libraries adopt this system for all lists, we may very well run into some dealer reluctance to cooperate.

Purchases of \$1,000 per title must be approved by the director in many institutions; very expensive acquisitions may have to be communicated to the library board. Most book selectors have an annual budget and can spend their allocation at will. However, regardless of whether they can only recommend or whether they have the final say, somebody must make the decision: "Should we spend so much money for this title?" Here we come to the second tricky problem in the acquisition of o.p. books: What is the right price?

1. There is no such thing as the right price independent of time, space and the need (or the desire) of the prospective buyer. A price rejected by library "A" may be fully justified according to the acquisitions policy of library "B."

2. Never lose your temper because a price seems too high. Price quotations are not a personal insult nor do they inflict bodily harm.

3. Do not haggle about prices. If correspondence is necessary at all, inform the dealer politely that your need for the title offered is not so great that you feel you can justify its purchase—but thank him for the offer, nevertheless.

4. Bear in mind that the dealer's price is based on his own purchase price, his over-all expenditures and his expertise. Librarians' salaries are based on the expertise they bring to the job as are the fees of physicians and lawyers. The second-hand book dealer is a professional in his own right and must charge for his experience.

5. Whenever we judge a price as too high we accept one of the following underlying assumptions:

a) We can buy the same title in the same condition immediately at a lower price.

b) We do not need the title so urgently as to pay such a price.

6. Prices are like taxes; they always seem to be too high for those who have to pay and appear fully justified by those who demand them.

In buying current books we accept the publisher's price; the publisher wants to sell his books to several thousand customers. His prices are carefully calculated, and we feel that we have at least the safety which lies in numbers. Moreover, in general, the price per title is comparatively small and some variation in prices asked (which occurs at times) is not too painful. The o.p. book on the other hand is offered in one copy; the second-hand book dealer's calculations differ radically from those of the publisher; large differences in prices do occur; some are certainly justified (differences in preservation, binding, provenance, association, etc.) while others are not easily explainable. Prices per title are higher, and a mistake on our part may hurt the institutional pocketbook badly. Thus, librarians dealing with o.p. books may be uneasy, insecure and, therefore, suspicious. At times (I hope it happens very rarely) librarians see a hold-up behind every price quotation; this is not only wrong but also foolish and is likely to impair relations with the dealer. We should never forget that good and, if possible, personal relations with our business associates are the preconditions for any success in the acquisition of o.p. books.

Granting a high degree of arbitrariness (a less offensive term would

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be individual judgment) in price quotations, there are a few guidelines which can be applied with great caution. The pricing of all commodities is to a degree dependent upon supply and demand; the great difficulty in the book market is to ascertain these two elements. We may look in *Book-Prices Current* or in some similar reference tool only to find a price which is probably obsolete. Likewise the description of the copy is incomplete and misleading. The one thing we can learn is how often the title has been offered in an auction. There are also several handbooks which list prices according to dealers' catalogs. Under present day market conditions all evaluations are quickly outdated. Good bookdealers are in a more advantageous position as they have their own files, many have an enviable memory for prices and because of daily buying and selling they have a flair for the market.

In his "Reflections on Rarity," John Carter gives four methods to calculate rarity and price: 1) position of the book in the history of scholarship or literature; 2) number of copies printed (he adds the word "survived" would be better); 3) occurrence in the market; and 4) public demand. But finally he concludes by quoting a sentence by Richard Curle, "Some books are commoner than might reasonably be expected and some decidedly rarer."<sup>6</sup>

Thus, we must have the courage to make a personal decision. The private book collector may ask: "How much joy and satisfaction will the possession of this copy give me?" The librarian's decision will ultimately depend on the question "How important is this book for my institution?"

Some of our highly prized acquisitions will be placed in the custody of the rare book department. Although we realized long ago that a rare book department is not a luxury or an ostentation but a necessity for a scholarly library, we should not forget that the term *rare book*, if limited to the holdings of one department, is utterly misleading in terms of a research collection. Some large serials are more expensive and rarer than many titles in the rare book department. Moreover, the foremost function of university libraries is to provide material for teaching and research. Rarity is frequently, but by no means always, identical with scholarly importance. For me personally (I am afraid some of my colleagues and bookdealer friends will sharply disagree with me) rarity and the correspondingly high price is an unfortunate accident. Finally, a library should never be tempted to pay a higher price than warranted in order to snatch a rare edi-



tion away from a sister institution. The strength of American librarianship lies in the holdings of all libraries and not in the luster of a single institution.

After a title has been selected, searched and approved for purchase it has to be ordered. All libraries understand that acquisitions procedures have to receive top priority. Unfortunately, there is at times a hiatus between theory and practice. The vast majority of the institutions observe a close time limit between selection (which does not always include searching) and ordering ranging from one to three days; some even try to place orders within a few hours. Other institutions probably less well staffed admit deplorable delays. The semantics of the phrase "great variations" does invite an ominous interpretation. About half a dozen libraries frankly admit a rather lengthy postponement of ordering. For example, some replies reported ten days, two weeks (three institutions), two to four weeks, one month at least, usually longer, and two reported one to three months. Fast communications are used without exceptions. Domestic orders are placed by telephone (25 percent) or by telegram and air mail. For foreign orders use of the telephone was not reported. Cables are mentioned by 40 percent and air mail by the majority; obviously a combination of the two methods frequently occurs.

### *Auctions*

Along with dealers' catalogs, auctions are an important source for the acquisition of wanted titles. General auctions (especially for slaves) were a feature of life in classical antiquity.<sup>7</sup> Suetonius tells of a practical joke with dire consequences which occurred at an auction of art objects owned by Caligula. The Emperor who supervised the auction noticed that one of his courtiers had fallen asleep, and every time the poor man nodded in his sleep Caligula ordered his bid raised. Book auctions are rarely reported but they may well have occurred much more frequently than extant records indicate. Cicero acquired books at auctions and his own library was bought by the bookdealer Doras. We also know of frequent book auctions in the later Middle Ages.<sup>8</sup> I have not been able to discover any sale by auction during the Renaissance. The Dutch book trade is generally credited with having re-introduced this type of book distribution at the beginning of the seventeenth century. Probably Ludwig Elsevier conducted a book auction in Leiden in 1604. Within the next two generations bookdealers all over Europe adopted this method and

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advertised their auctions under the slogan "Sale according to the Dutch Manner." Within the next century London became, and probably still is, the international center for book auctions. The Great Roxburghe Sale of 1812 is undoubtedly one of the landmarks in the history of the rare book trade. Book auctions are held today in every part of the globe. American librarians probably buy frequently from German, Swiss and French (Hotel Drouot) sales. Sotheby, however, who recently acquired Parke-Bernet, is undoubtedly the leading firm in the field.

American libraries use auction sales sparingly. Fifty percent of the institutions questioned bid less than five times a year; 20 percent not at all; and only 30 percent buy frequently at auctions. Reasons for this negative attitude were not given except for one library which states: "State procedures make it nearly impossible to purchase via auction." The active participation of the faculty in selecting from auction catalogs seems to be small. I have to say "seems" because the relation between the bibliographer and the teaching faculty of his discipline is not clearly brought out and varies greatly. In 25 percent of the fifty-three institutions reporting the use of auction sales, the faculty has a major share in selection. In 50 percent it is on the whole minor and in 25 percent it is zero. Within the library staff the lion's share of book selection falls to the rare book librarian, closely followed by the bibliographer. In half a dozen institutions the top administration selects and in a couple of cases the reference department. An exact percentage cannot be given because my question and, therefore, the answers were not specific enough. Half of the institutions bid through an agent or directly according to the situation; one-fourth always bid directly and the same percentage always employs an agent.

It is advisable to give one's bid to a trusted dealer. The bookdealer is familiar with the techniques which are essential for successful bidding at an auction. In the words of John Carter: "He can play a bid as a good fisherman plays a fish." He will inspect and collate the books on the premises and suggest a reasonable price to his client. He will not hesitate to acquire "a sleeper" at a bargain price, not charge one cent above his commission, but express his sincere satisfaction to his client that he had been to make such an advantageous acquisition. The auctioneer knows him, respects him and will accede to any justified complaint without any difficulty. The notorious conspiracy of the trade to defeat every bid of an outsider, which in

trade lingo is known as the "Knock Out" or "The Ring," hardly exists today. However, the appearance of a stranger at an auction is noted and his moves may be watched with suspicion. A 10 percent commission to the dealer is well spent and well earned.

*Antiquarian Book Trade*

Libraries are the recipients of catalogs produced by an active book trade. If we want to find the magic magnet we should take the initiative by challenging the trade to offer the titles we want. Before we can present such a challenge, however, it is imperative that we understand the working habits of the o.p. book trade and the personalities involved. Such a knowledge is not easy to come by. We can distinguish<sup>9</sup> six main classes of antiquarian bookdealers:

1. The top level rare bookdealers who deal only in extremely choice and rare items. Their material will be high-priced but usually these men know their subject very well and will be able to supply titles one will not likely find elsewhere.

2. The large-scale general antiquarian bookdealers. These dealers are our most important business associates. They, too, have rare items but they do not limit themselves to this class of material. They generally have a very large stock because they maintain close connections with other dealers and with the auction market and frequently buy large private collections; most of them gladly cooperate with a good customer.

3. Specialist bookdealers operating either from small shops or from their own homes, usually by means of catalogs only.

4. Bookscouts, who in England are frequently called runners. Hamilton gives a good definition: "A scout is a part time or full time dealer who makes his living by searching out materials which he sells to collectors or dealers. If he visits private homes in quest of books (autographs) he is known as a bellringer—in England a knocker. The scout may carry his entire stock in a valise and his office is usually his home or apartment."<sup>10</sup> A recent English detective novel is based on the living habits of a runner (Bernard Farmer, *The Death of a Bookseller*).

5. Dealers in publishers' remainders who in Germany are called "Modernes Antiquariat."<sup>11</sup>

6. Junk dealers who sometimes include books among their wares.

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They usually serve libraries badly because they are forced to live on a cash-and-carry basis.

Many histories of the book trade mention the o.p. trade in short chapters; a small number of treatises on specific phases can be found in diverse publications, but there is no general history of this important economic and bibliographical activity. The trade with titles not currently available (the term out-of-print would be anachronistic in the manuscript age) is well documented for classical antiquity.<sup>12</sup> In the Middle Ages, Italy, especially Rome, was for a long time the goal of everybody who was interested in hard-to-find titles. From *ca.* 1100 on, Paris was the center of attraction. Gravity again shifted south in the protorenaissance, since the Italian trade (as well as Italian business activities in general) had the best organization. The earliest second-hand bookdealer in Rome had his shop in front of the old church of St. Peter in the closing years of the fourteenth century. With the development of the printing press the number of available copies increased dramatically, and it is only at this point that we can really justify the expression, o.p. book. It seems that o.p. booktrading was largely left to outsiders (also previously this commercial activity had no high social standing). The aristocrats of the book trade were the publishers and those individuals in the distributing trade who maintained a very close relation to publishers.

England was the first country to develop a respectable o.p. book-trade in the eighteenth century. It has maintained, if not always a pre-eminent place, at least high standing in this field ever since. The first antiquarian bookdealer of truly international fame was Bernard Quaritch (1819–1899), and the king of all book scouts was Thomas F. Dibdin (1776–1847). A serious second-hand book trade did not develop in the rest of the world before the middle of the nineteenth century. Prior to this time we find mainly a huckster-like activity; the frequently mentioned Diogenes Helmert may be regarded as a slightly ludicrous forerunner. Neither he nor the famous and picturesque bouquiniste on the Seine<sup>13</sup> belong in the same class as Kraus, Rosenthal, Maggs, Rosenbach, etc.

Scores of outstanding personalities, men able to combine solid scholarly research with business acumen, have been associated with the antiquarian booktrade during the last hundred years. It is fortunate for the student of books that he has access to a number of autobiographies and biographies of these prominent dealers. From such books we can gain a knowledge of important titles and price

fluctuations (generally noted with nostalgia) but can learn little about the techniques of the trade. If we want to understand the outlook of our business associates, we must use these books with caution; not every soldier is a budding Napoleon and not every o.p. dealer has the unique scholarly qualification of an E. P. Goldschmidt.

All librarians realize the pivotal role of the antiquarian bookdealer as a source of o.p. books and maintain business relations with a great number of them, both general bookdealers and specialists. Almost every library turns regularly to many dealers. One library reported doing business with 315 bookdealers in Europe, while another reported dealing with 122 in the U.S. and Canada. One library stated it has business relations with twenty-five dealers in Latin America, while another turns to as many as thirty-six dealers in Asia and one library uses four dealers in Africa.

Over 80 percent of the libraries questioned place their request for a title with one dealer at a time. However, most libraries report that they do not hesitate to deviate from this technique whenever the situation seems to demand it. When titles are sent to different potential dealers, they are frequently asked only to quote prices, not to search. This situation occurs quite often when a title is urgently needed and no effort can be spared to locate it. About 40 percent of the libraries do not give a time limit; the general expectations are to allow six to twelve months. Over 80 percent request an offer before the book can be mailed. A small number of trusted dealers are permitted to ship all titles requested as long as they are within a stated price limit; for instance \$10 for a domestic title and \$25 for a foreign one. Satisfaction with the services of individual dealers varies considerably; fairly constant praise is given to a few of the large European export dealers well-known to all of us.

### *Want Lists*

About 70 percent of the libraries queried regularly combine individual titles desired into larger want lists; two institutions use this technique for serials only. The majority of institutions compile both general lists and specific subject lists. Among the forty-eight libraries which reported a frequent mailing of want lists, the preparation of these lists is generally credited to the Acquisitions Department (thirty-one times); bibliographers and departmental librarians are mentioned twelve times; serials department, three times; the director's office and the computer, one time each. About 81 percent of the

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libraries maintain carefully selected lists of dealers who receive such want lists.

#### *Advertisements*

About 40 percent of the institutions questioned no longer advertise because they feel that past results were too poor; the rest continue to advertise but in many cases only for books in English. The vast majority (about 75 percent) advertise directly, while the rest ask the dealer to place the advertisement. Some use both methods. Domestic booktrade periodicals are patronized almost exclusively; foreign journals are mentioned sporadically. The English *Clicque* (available to the trade only) and the Spanish *Elenchus* were quoted once each; no mention was made of the *Bibliographie de la France* or of the *Bulletin de la Librairie Ancienne et Moderne*. It should be noted that the columns of many German trade journals are for the exclusive use of the trade.

Within the domestic scene only two journals count: *TAAB*<sup>14</sup> and *AB Bookman's Weekly*.<sup>15</sup> It is generally accepted that lists should be short; an optimum of fifty titles was suggested. The same statistical frequency well known from circulation reports, etc., can be observed in our success from want lists. A few titles are quoted frequently; the rest sparingly or not at all. The record keeping of multiple quotations is cumbersome and only a few institutions have found an efficient solution.

#### *Book Scouts*

A few large bookdealers who buy both for their own voluminous stock and an ample clientele make efficient use of book scouts. Most libraries do not meet the necessary commercial qualifications to make this technique advantageous for both parties concerned. Only four institutions reported the *regular* service of a book scout. Three more contemplate using such service in the near future. The financial rewards of a book scout are generally on a commission basis, rates varying according to the magnitude of the operation and in relation to the price of the title in question. A charge of 20 percent makes sense only in the case of a very expensive item. Generally it may be anywhere between 50 percent and 100 percent. One library reported the services of a faculty member of its institution and noted that one-third of his salary was accepted as a part of the library's budget.

*Buying Trips*

Forty percent of the institutions queried do not send library staff members on buying trips. One colleague wistfully comments "unfortunately." Forty-one libraries (60 percent) do, but five add the limitations such as "occasionally," "infrequently," "exceptionally." Two-thirds of the libraries do not encourage faculty trips. The emphasis lies here on the word encourage. That probably means that the library does not pay traveling expenses. Undoubtedly the services of a well-informed specialist are gratefully accepted by every institution. One-third of the libraries go beyond this passive acceptance and suggest buying trips to the subject specialist of the teaching faculty. In a few instances the traveller has with him a small list of items especially desired; generally he will ask the dealer to offer to the library all the titles provisionally selected. It is understood that such offers have to be acted upon immediately and that both the dealer and the selector must be informed of the action taken.

*United States Book Exchange*

Another important source for locating out-of-print material is the United States Book Exchange (USBE).<sup>16</sup> This non-profit organization was formed twenty years ago as the successor to the American Book Center for War Devastated Libraries. It has grown rapidly and now has a stock of three and a half million items. In 1968, it distributed with the help of 101 book lists, thirty-eight periodical lists and five special lists, *ca.* 600,000 items to its 1,739 members, of which 1,510 are in the U.S. and Canada. The yearly turnover of its stock is about 12 percent. Members pay a membership fee and handling fee per item bought. On the whole American librarians do not use the services of this institution as intensively and efficiently as they might. Forty-five percent do not check USBE lists at all; of the 55 percent who at least go through the motion of checking, two institutions are interested in serials and one only in Latin America. Twenty-seven libraries (*ca.* 40 percent of sixty-seven) regularly send requests of items wanted to USBE. Two libraries send only serial requests. However, the amount of money spent on purchases from USBE is very small. Most libraries estimated it with phrases such as "insignificant" or "very small." A few libraries reported a four digit figure for 1968, but only one approached a five digit figure. The general verdict with respect to the usefulness of USBE is a favorable one. Of the thirty-

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seven libraries which regularly check the lists, twenty-nine (*ca.* 80 percent) were satisfied, although some did add minor reservations.

#### *Reprints and Microreproductions*

Research libraries need both the originals and modern reprints.<sup>17</sup> In many cases, but by no means without exception (*caveat emptor*) a reprint will be less expensive than the original and clearly the easiest available purchase. Fifty-four (80 percent of libraries) check more or less systematically the catalogs of reprint publishers. One library adds the limitation for "undergraduate libraries and serials only." The early enthusiasm for this important source is slightly on the wane and some reluctance on the part of the buyer is waxing. Publishers are inundating libraries with offers, many of which are by no means bargains; and, most unfortunately they are publishing identical titles with great price differences. These prices may be justified in terms of production costs but are not always competitive with prices asked on the o.p. market. Worst of all, the selection of some reprint publishers is at times questionable. We see reprints of titles which have been a drag on the o.p. market for decades, and we frequently read reviews in our scholarly journals which clearly point out that the vastly diminished scholarly value of a given title did not justify its reprint. Thus, the conscientious book selector becomes increasingly cautious and sometimes rather reluctant.

Forty-nine libraries (about 75 percent) check reprint catalogs before giving an order or a request for searching to an o.p. dealer. In-so-far as our limited bibliographical control of reprints permits, such a check should be made a standing operating procedure. We should be in a position to compare prices; moreover, as many o.p. dealers check reprint catalogs automatically nowadays, we should give our business associates all the information we have on hand.

If an antiquarian reprint is not available we may consider the purchase of a microfilm. Forty-six institutions (*ca.* 70 percent) still give preference to microfilm, probably because the bulk of microforms available on the market is produced in this form; the pendulum, however, may swing in favor of microfiche. Fifty-two institutions (*ca.* 80 percent) order xerox copyflo in lieu of a microform. For newspapers and for many periodicals most libraries prefer microforms to originals. For monographs no generalization can be made. The decision of what to buy is dependent on the scholarly purpose and urgency of the re-



quest. In many instances a microform is fully acceptable as a substitute, but sometimes the library may want to continue its search for an original in spite of the availability of a microreproduction.

*Serials*

Although this paper is primarily but by no means exclusively concerned with monographs, it should be noted that the procedures for acquiring o.p. serials do not differ radically from those used in buying o.p. monographs. A detailed discussion of serials purchases would, however, be out of place as another paper in this issue is devoted to this field.

*Budget*

Thirty percent of the libraries were unable to estimate the percentage of the general books and serials appropriation spent for o.p. material. The estimate of the forty-seven (70 percent) libraries reporting ranges from 4 percent to 75 percent; the median lies with libraries that spent between 20 and 25 percent. A detailed breakdown runs as follows:

<i>Percent</i>	<i>Libraries Reporting</i>
5 and under	5
10	5
15	2
20	9
25	5
30	9
Over 30	12
Total	<hr style="width: 50px; margin: 0 auto;"/> 47

These are of course approximations only; most of them are not based on exact bookkeeping but are only estimates. Moreover, it is doubtful whether all libraries combine as a single category all types of o.p. material, originals, antiquarian reprints and microforms.

Only ten libraries identify in their budget proposals the percentage of the budget they will spend for o.p. material. Some libraries hope to be able to exceed their original estimate; thus, I received reports such as: "We will go beyond the estimate if possible" and "A massive sum for o.p. purchases is planned."

### *Purchase of Out-of-Print Material*

Of sixty-seven libraries queried, fifty-eight commented on their experiences in acquiring o.p. material. Two libraries were very content: twenty-seven expressed general satisfaction; six leaned toward a negative answer; and twenty-three admitted frustration. Thus, on the whole, opinion is evenly divided between satisfaction and discontent.

The rate of success is in direct relation to the amount of staff time libraries can devote to this problem. The question of whether it is worthwhile to divert staff time from other important activities to this time-consuming task can be answered only in accordance with the acquisitions policy of a given institution. Libraries with insufficient staff will probably do better to concentrate on dealers' catalogs and select those books which are available.

Locating o.p. titles is difficult and laborious and the vast majority of librarians reported their inability to assign enough staff time for this job. As an example of this attitude, I quote from one of the letters received:

Out-of-print searching, like the price of freedom, takes eternal vigilance and an attention to detail which can become tedious. Although we have tried all obvious methods such as compiling subject lists for subject specialists and faculty travelling abroad, area lists by country of origin, general lists to be searched through dealer's stock, other general lists to be searched on the open market, and advertising, we have never seemed to arrive at the successful combination for appreciably reducing our want lists. Dealers do not seem interested in searching our lists, we do not have staff time to check the dealer's catalogs through our desiderata.

Some bookdealers are wont to blame our limited success on librarians' ignorance of the usances of the trade. Such an indictment may be at times correct but we compensate for it by our sincere desire to comprehend the working habits of our business associates. Moreover, ignorance is not the monopoly of one profession. Certainly some dealers, too, lack a sympathetic understanding of the complexity of library administration. Libraries are not independent institutions but are bound by the regulations of their governing bodies. Throwing bricks will not solve the problem. The words of one of the most important English antiquarian bookdealers, "I am sure that there is a supply of both good profits and good will for someone who can solve this problem," have only reaffirmed my conviction that to find a better way to locate o.p. titles is one of the most important tasks of librarianship and the booktrade. Nobody can deny that a solution

of this thorny problem would be equally advantageous to both parties concerned. Pooling all our expertise both in booklore and in management will be needed to find the magic magnet or at least the best substitute this imperfect world will grant us.

### *Overseas Library Procedures for Securing O.P. Books*

In my search for the magnet I finally turned to libraries overseas. Unfortunately I received so few answers that my sample is unreliable. Not only are there many differences in organizational structure, but the diversity of language and the semantic difficulties in translating technical terms can easily lead to misunderstanding. Nevertheless, I venture the tentative hypothesis that the problems of overseas libraries remain unsolved even as ours.

A short summary of the answers received from overseas libraries gives the following picture. No publication was mentioned, not even the *Handbuch der Bibliothekswissenschaften*. Libraries do not have special searching sections for o.p. material; the majority have a desiderata file in which titles not found are retained for three years and longer. The subject specialist selects from second-hand catalogs with little activity on the part of the faculty. Orders are placed at least within one week, often on the day following the receipt of the catalog. Purchases from auctions are made infrequently, generally with little faculty participation. Both general bookdealers and specialists are asked to search and offer. No price limits are given but an offer is required. Want lists are issued infrequently but advertisements for desired titles are placed. No book scouts are employed but buying trips by library staff members do occur. USBE is known to only a few of them. Reprint catalogs are checked as systematically as time permits.

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1. I record with thanks the great assistance given to me by my friend and colleague at Cornell, Miss Josephine Tharpe, University Bibliographer. Sixty-seven American and Canadian libraries returned my elaborate questionnaire, some of my book collecting friends discussed the problem with me and about a score of bookdealers were good enough to reply to my different queries. I would like to express my sincere thanks to my colleagues, fellow collectors and business associates for their highly appreciated cooperation.

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3. From an answer to my questionnaire. For the sake of making an argument I am very unfair to the excellent and most pertinent observations made by my

### *Purchase of Out-of-Print Material*

colleague. I am quoting his beginning sentence only; he then goes on and stresses correctly the wisdom of buying from catalogs instead of hunting for a specific title.

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