

Against the Grain

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The Grass is Often Greener -- It's Academic

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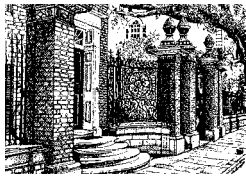
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The Grass is Often Greener — It's Academic

Column Editor: **Forrest E. Link** (Acquisitions Librarian, The College of New Jersey;
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In July of 2010, after a period of unemployment occasioned by the corporate buyout of my former employer, I had the good fortune to be hired by a college library untroubled by my unconventional resume and imaginative enough to see the advantages of bringing a former sales rep into academia. After nearly thirty years as a commercial traveler for three different book vendors, I had learned a thing or two about the industry and the folks who inhabit it, and I was about to use that experience in the service of **The College of New Jersey**.

My plan in this series of articles is to reflect on my transition from an itinerant peddler to a stationary buyer, hoping to inform and even reassure others contemplating a move either to or from the commercial sector.

Taking up the Challenge

Six months into being a college librarian, I'm no longer the newbie here. In fact, we've hired two new librarians since my arrival. But I still marvel at this life. Time is different. There is something wonderfully comforting about the rhythms of the academic calendar, like a secular echo of the liturgical year. During my commercial life, time was marked off in months and quarters, in continually renewing numbers on printouts, in sales goals met and

missed. Seasons were reflections of customer budgets and worries about how weather would affect travel. Winter brought delays and cancellations; summer good parking but scheduling problems. The year was punctuated by corporate meetings and library conferences. In academia, we flow from commencement to midterms to winter break to — well, you get the idea.

Here at **TCNJ**, I have a constant coterie of stimulating colleagues. Instead of passing through the world, I find the world passes through my comfortable corner. Commercial travelers, my former fraternity, bring news and gossip from afar. In these interactions, I, no longer the supplicant, am courted, cajoled, flattered. I like it here.

New Projects

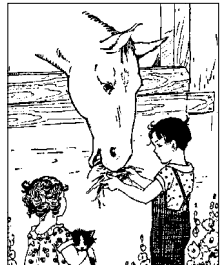
When I was hired, one of my charges was to look into starting an approval program. This had been a part of the planning when the new library was built some five years ago. An area had even been set aside in Technical Services for approval book examination. But things can move slowly here, and the untimely loss of my predecessor had added to the delay. Now, being satisfied with the workflow streamlining we had accomplished with firm orders, I took the first steps.

An approval plan is not a turn-key operation. Having profiled and managed programs from the vendor side, I have found that setting up a plan entails considerable coordination and compromise. Our vendor rep schedules herself weeks and sometime months into the future and, unlike a standard service call, a profiling visit consumes days, not hours, of her time. I needed to accommodate not only her schedule but those of eight library selectors for group and individual meetings. All of this happened, but, of course, not as quickly as I had hoped.

Having assembled and briefed the principals, I was pleased to see that profiling went well. Our selectors were enthusiastic about the project and eager, even impatient, to see the results. Then came the delays.

Through some miscommunication between us and our vendor, each thought the other was hard at work refining the final details of the profile. Each side being patient and understanding (winter break was upon us) waited for word from the other. When at length our patience frayed, I made inquiries. Amid red faces all around, the process again lurched forward. Finalized profiles were presented, tweaked,

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Vital Statistics

- Number of employees: 270 in Bristol and 30 in our international offices
- Total number of journals currently published: 65

History and Brief Description of Publishing Program

IOP Publishing is a not-for-profit company wholly owned by the **Institute of Physics** and is one of the largest publishers of physics information in the world. **IOP's** publishing activity dates back to 1874 and includes a wide range of journals, magazines, and community Websites including *Physics World*, *Nanotechnology*, and the *Journal of Physics* series.

In the last 10 years **IOP** has doubled the number of journals it publishes. In 1999, **IOP's** catalogue contained 33 journals; today it publishes more than 60. Many of the journal titles are produced in partnership with other societies and publishers seeking a wider, more internationally visible audience. There are seven open-access titles in the portfolio including *New Journal of Physics* and the *Journal of Physics: Conference Series*.

As an organization we are focused on making the most of new technologies (such as the popular **iPhone** apps for *Physics World* and *IOPscience*) and are continually improving our electronic interfaces to make it easier for researchers to find exactly what they need, when they need it, in the format that suits them best. For example, *Physics World* has just changed to a digital publishing format, and **iPad** and **Android** versions will also be available shortly. In another example, the *New Journal of Physics* has recently launched a new integrated video abstract service which lets authors go beyond the constraints of the written article to personally present the importance of their work to a global audience. 🌍

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and implemented. After another brief delay, our selectors were suddenly swamped with notifications. (This was a deliberate feature of the profile. We plan to review the selections in a few months and, in all likelihood, make significant revisions. Depending upon the results it is entirely possible that part of the program may grow to automatic book shipments.)

While our approval plan is finally off the ground, I worry a bit now that our selectors' excitement over the helpfulness and convenience of the notifications may be overshadowed by frustration. Because we are now far into the budget year, some selectors have exhausted their allocations. I can only hope that this will not discourage them from reviewing titles which must be deferred for several months.

Speaking of new projects, as the brash, new acquisitions librarian, I have become something of an eBook gadfly here at TCNJ, peppering

our selectors with eBook articles and inviting representatives from major aggregators to come in to speak to our library faculty. So far, our forays into eBooks have been limited to a small **NetLibrary** collection augmented annually through purchases with a local consortium. The titles chosen have tended to be on the popular side, but we are getting respectable usage. I have undertaken a study to see just how and where eBook titles might supplement (or supplant) our current collection practices, and I hope and expect to see our involvement grow, but I have again run into budgetary realities.

For good or ill, things just take more time in academia. Our budget is parsed and allocated months ahead of the new fiscal year. There is no money in our current budget for anything more than the **NetLibrary** collection. Assuming the proposed spending is approved (and in New Jersey's current political climate this is a true act of faith), I'll get my chance this summer. I'd like to start with a big splash — an eBook collection and some promotion. We'll see... 🌱

Rumors from page 56

mailing of *Against the Grain* way back when it was first being published.)

The second person I ran into on the same aisle, not far away was **John Riley**, now of **BUSCA**, and **Michael Cooper**, the owner and brains behind the operation. We had some great Philly cheese steaks (I would sure like one right now, it's supper time!) Anyway, have I told y'all about the **BUSCA blog**? It's fun and very informative <http://buscainc.blogspot.com/>.

Guess that y'all have heard that **Jonathan Tasini** is at it again! Remember *New York Times Co. v. Tasini*, 533 U.S. 483 (2001), which went all the way to the **Supreme Court**. The lawsuit was about licensing material contributed by freelancers' online databases without providing compensation to the freelancers. Well, **Jonathan Tasini** and some bloggers from the **Huffington Post** (which was recently bought by AOL) have filed a \$105 million class-action lawsuit against the

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