

Acquisitions in a Nutshell

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Acquisitions in a Nutshell

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Abstract

Designed specifically for librarians new to the field of acquisitions, this session featured an informal introduction to the basics of acquisitions librarianship from three standpoints: a veteran acquisitions and serials librarian, a library director with a background in acquisitions, and a librarian who began her first professional appointment in 2013.

The session covered a variety of issues related to the acquisition of both monographs and serials in various formats, plus database and backfile purchases. Discussions included definitions, ordering considerations, avoiding purchase of duplicate resources, negotiating prices and access options, licensing, selecting vendors and jobbers, and various services that vendors' representatives can provide to assist librarians. The presenters discussed various aspects of access versus ownership of e-books and periodicals and the impact of each on space and budgets both current and future, and suggested the best times in the annual budget cycle for different types of spending decisions.

Introduction

The session opened with the introduction of presenters Linda Creibaum, Jeff Bailey, and Star Holloway; a brief description of their professional backgrounds; and a statement that the session was not specific to the procedures, resources, or services of Arkansas State University. Instead, the presentation would be an open presentation of a variety of issues related to library acquisitions, and the fact that every library does things differently due to a variety of factors.

Holloway began with a brief review of terms such as firm order, standing order, license, embargo, and backfiles that led into a conversation about some similarities and differences between acquisitions, collection development, and collection management. The discussion pointed out that there are many varieties of organizational structures for academic libraries and that the makeup of the unit(s) that perform these functions is likely different in almost every library.

Discussion Topics

Creibaum introduced the topic of general ordering considerations for each library. This included the

value of obtaining trials before making final database purchasing decisions, and the difference between canceling and not renewing a subscription. Also discussed were issues associated with the purchase or subscription of resources with license agreements and the need for each institution to have an authorized person designated to read and approve each license.

The presenters covered various steps to take when a subscription ends. These include giving the vendor sufficient notice of non-renewal and getting the word to the campus community. Remember to notify library personnel so they can remove the resource from a discovery service, disable and remove links on website(s) and in course management systems, delete records in the library catalog and journal A to Z lists, and update other materials, including user guides.

Creibaum and Bailey discussed their experiences with selecting vendors and ordering resources. Different ordering considerations and/or purchasing or access arrangements can exist for different types of materials. Acquiring e-books includes the decision as to whether to subscribe, purchase, or lease titles via demand-driven acquisition. Print book and media purchasing

involves considerations beyond price and availability such as approval plans, shipping charges, return policies, and the usability of the vendor's website. All these factors, plus any others which may be unique to the individual library, should be considered when choosing a vendor or jobber. Bailey addressed the importance of including customer service and response time as criteria in any bid process that may be required when selecting vendors or a subscription agent.

Holloway then addressed services vendor representatives may be able to provide to assist acquisitions librarians in their jobs. These services may include overlap analyses and title comparisons between resources, combined invoicing, and possibly information on packages of titles for libraries with limited funds or a very specific content need.

Vendors who supply a wide range of products for libraries are often able to list multiple subscriptions on a single invoice, or may be able to modify the start/end dates for database subscriptions to be payable at a more convenient time in the library's budget cycle.

Bailey mentioned the importance of tracking annual expenditures for budget planning purposes, and also that there is a great need for both long and short range budget planning. Long range planning considerations may include platforms that provide legacy access for online journals no longer available from any other source and digital preservation considerations.

As the session drew to a close, Creibaum discussed the role acquisitions can play in weeding and freeing up shelf space, including options to keep, store remotely, or weed print volumes as digital copies are acquired. Librarians were also reminded to carefully check all invoices for errors, including errors in prices, subscription dates, and even the name of the subscriber.

Attendees were advised to consider using end-of-year funds for one-time purchases of either firm order items or static online content such as datasets or journal backfiles, though library personnel should be aware that there are sometimes annual hosting fees for datasets and backfiles.