Buyers Talk

“One thing that is badly needed is for someone to serve as a technology tripwire or assessor on behalf of the community. There’s all kinds of technology that comes out that is wildly hyped, and we need a mechanism to sort through what’s real and what’s not as well as to give early warning of emergent technologies.” Cliff Lynch, executive director of the Coalition for Networked Information, in Library Journal, August 1997, pg. 34.

The vast majority of additions of language and literature titles to academic library collections are selected by the faculty. Librarians “always” or “almost always” automatically buy any book requested by a faculty member for course support. Journal of Academic Librarianship, “Developing Language and Literature Collections in Academic Libraries: A Survey,” by James A.H. Sweetland and Peter G. Christensen, March, 1997, pg. 120.

The general collection development guidelines for electronic information resources include, in priority order, “relevance and potential use of the information, redundancy of the information contained in the product, demand for the information, ease of use of the product, availability of the information to multiple users, stability of the coverage of the resource, longevity of the information, cost of the product, predictability of pricing, equipment needed to provide access to the information, technical support, and availability of the physical space needed to house and store the information or equipment.” Collection Building, “Developing an Electronic Information Resources Collection Development Policy” by Gary W. White and Gregory A. Crawford, 1997, pg. 50.

Harness Customer Loyalty to Increase Marketing Effectiveness

Library vendors may find word-of-mouth “marketing” more powerful than traditional advertising, direct mail, and catalogs. Librarians report that recommendations from colleagues and peers influence purchasing decisions more than vendors’ marketing and sales activities. In academic libraries, faculty recommendations also carry significant weight. Internet listservs and professional conferences foster dialogue that rapidly spreads librarians’ perceptions about products and services throughout the market.

To harness the power of word-of-mouth, look for opportunities to expose your loyal customers to a wider audience, for example:

- Organize events that pair your customer advocates with targeted prospects.
- Make testimonials and customer application stories widely available, perhaps on your Web site.

Positive word-of-mouth integrated with traditional marketing can greatly increase library committees’ interest in your products. Focus on direct, interactive contact with library decision makers in preference to passive marketing techniques. Give librarians a chance to “test drive” your product through a free trial or demonstration disc. Whatever marketing methods you choose, encourage customers to communicate back to you. Provide incentives for customers and prospects to respond so that you can learn more about them and their needs.

Leigh Watson Healy.
Healy consults in business and marketing strategy.
She is currently researching the technology needs of digital libraries.

Interesting Library Resources

P. O. Box 4234, Stamford, CT. This very expensive resource ($1,495) is packed with statistics, trends, expenditure patterns, marketing strategies, and future predictions for all types of libraries. It includes profiles of 27 library vendors and publishers with a high interest in the library market.

Association of Research Libraries. Intellectual Property: An Association of Research Libraries Statement of Principles. The research library community is committed to working with publishers and database producers to develop model agreements that deploy licenses that do not circumvent fair use or other copyright provisions. ARL, 21 Dupont Circle, NW, Washington, DC 20036. The full statement of principles is available on:

Censored Books

Banned Books Week was celebrated September 20-26, 1997. During the week, the American Library Association reported receiving 664 reports last year of formal challenges to materials in schools, school libraries, and public libraries. The “most challenged” titles were the popular Goosebumps series of horror books for children by R. L. Stine. The series drew complaints from parents and others who believe the books are too frightening for young people.

The challenges reported reflect a continuing concern with a wide variety of themes. Other “most challenged” titles were: The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn by Mark Twain, for its use of language, particularly references to race; It's Perfectly Normal, a sex education book by Robie Harris, for being too explicit, especially for children; and The Chocolate War by Robert Cormier, for language some consider offensive and for sexual content and violence.
**TCR Profiles OCLC: The Industry’s Largest Cooperative**

Q: What is OCLC?
A: OCLC (the Online Computer Library Center), based in Dublin, Ohio, is categorized as a membership run, not-for-profit computer service and research organization. It claims to be the world’s largest library information network. Its goal is “furthering access to the world’s information and reducing information costs.”

Q: How large is OCLC?
A: OCLC reported gross revenues for 1995/96 of $148,000,000 (1996/97 figures are not yet released) and presently serves 23,000 libraries of all types in 63 countries and territories through a suite of products and services.

Q: What types of libraries does OCLC serve?
A: OCLC’s membership truly is made up of all library types, with 26.1% academic, 12.35% public, 9% federal, 8% community colleges, 7.26% corporate, 6.66% law, 6.5% medical, and the remaining 24% divided among other categories including library schools, schools, processing centers, research libraries, etc.

Q: What services does OCLC offer to publishers? Is OCLC a publisher?
A: OCLC’s Forest Press Division publishes the Dewey Decimal Classification system. Primarily, OCLC considers itself to be complementary to the publishing industry, with emphasis on delivery mechanisms including document delivery and electronic archiving.

OCLC’s Electronic Collections Online (ECO) product has signed agreements with 18 publishers to provide online access to approximately 650 journals.

Q: Why is OCLC putting so much emphasis on electronic archiving?
A: Member libraries have mandated this area to OCLC, stating that until they have confidence in an electronic archiving system, publishing will not take off. No single library can afford to mount these archives, so an aggregator role makes sense for OCLC.

OCLC wants to work with publishers and offers “technology and expertise”; OCLC has flexibility in its approach and can even support a “3rd party archiving” role for publishers who have cut private deals with individual libraries or library consortia, in essence providing the E shelf space libraries require.

Q: What else should publishers and vendors know about OCLC?
A: OCLC is truly governed by and reflects the values and needs of its membership. Vendors should not be surprised by long lead-times or ramp-ups for projects, given library budgets and planning processes.

Also important for the for-profit community to recognize is the rising role of online indexing, abstracting, and full text delivery services for OCLC. While the traditional cash cow remains cataloging production, these new information delivery services are rapidly rising both in importance to the membership and in financial performance.

This article is based on marketing literature and an interview with past OCLC chair, Nancy Eaton, the newly-named director of libraries at Pennsylvania State University. For more information, see http://www.oclc.org/.

---

**By The Numbers**


# In four recent surveys of users of major public libraries, all respondents named the use of popular materials as their main reason for coming to the library. At the Saint Louis Public Library, fiction and multimedia circulation accounted for 61% of the library check-outs.

# Eight of ten public, academic, and special libraries have access to the Internet. *Library Journal* survey reported in the April 15, 1997 *LJ*, pg. 12.

# The average public library budget is distributed as 57% for staffing, 19% operations, 18% acquiring materials for the collection and 6% other. *Library Administrator’s Digest*, June, 1997, pg. 42.

# Nearly $1.8 billion worth of books are purchased by libraries annually, representing 10% of publishers’ domestic book sales. Book Industry Study Group, *Trends for 1997*.

---

**Leaders Speak**

The ALA president-elect Ann Symons, who will assume office in summer 1998, will place strong emphasis on intellectual freedom, advocacy for school libraries, and ALA chapters.

“The way libraries can retain their place in the community is to see that the library infrastructure from the era of print is adapted to incorporate the visual media, which is the way most people today receive their information. Key to the successful shift for libraries will be the integration of all formats in the digital age, and for libraries to move from being experts in content to being experts in access.” Ken Dowlin in *American Libraries*, “Videoconference screens Motion Media & Library of the Future” August 1997, pg. 25.

At the Los Angeles Public Library, people are asked to relinquish a terminal after 30 minutes if there are others waiting. With hundreds of terminals throughout the system, they almost always have people waiting. Susan Kent, director, LAPL.

At a recent conference on The Future of Scholarly Publishing and the Intellectual Property Dilemma, the general feeling was that universities should take the lead as advocates for maintaining the principles of fair and free use. Three directions are: implement Web sites to offer access to articles before publication, share the responsibility for archiving information, and explore alternatives to commercial publishing including the “reuse of copyrighted material for educational purposes.” reported by Corinne Nelson in *Library Journal*, August 1997, pg. 18a.
Approval Plans Help Publishers Too

Buying books is a costly business for libraries, something true whether or not the books themselves are expensive. One academic library recently published data to show that the cost of buying a book was at least $10.85, a calculation factoring only the costs easiest to track. It adds up to major expense, especially when books are bought on the mass scale characteristic of the larger academic and public libraries, who typically buy tens of thousands every year.

It’s no wonder in these downsized times that librarians look constantly for ways to reduce the cost of buying books (sometimes, with the object of buying more of them!). The approval plan, a mechanism first developed in the 1960’s, has become a common answer. Under this arrangement, the library and vendor establish a “profile,” an understanding covering the publishers, subjects, and formats wanted by the library. The vendor’s job is to screen new books and ship automatically those falling within profile and accept returns for the ones off target, adjusting profiles to keep returns low. A recent survey of the largest research libraries revealed that 93% used approval plans in some fashion, a pattern emerging in smaller libraries as well.

Curiously, the usefulness of approval plans to publishers, who benefit in parallel to libraries, has never been documented. Prepublication orders from vendors, such as Yankee Book Peddler (YBP), create a floor of sales at the start of a title’s life cycle, sales resulting from a single large purchase order, rather than from dozens of small ones. Approval plan vendors promote new books by sending paper or electronic bibliographic announcements to interested libraries and by sending the book itself if within profile.

Vendors keep availability and price information always within reach of librarians through their electronic databases, once a by-product of the approval plan, now themselves an essential vendor service. A growing interest in shelf-ready books, cataloged, labeled, stamped, and otherwise processed to library specifications, has begun at some libraries to take the “approval” out of approval plans, with libraries agreeing to accept all books shipped.

Publishers aiming regularly and routinely to place their books in academic libraries could hardly have a better agent than the approval plan vendor, and, in fact, could hardly do without today’s approval plan.

Bob Nardini, Regional Vice President, Collection Management & Development Group, Yankee Book Peddler

Upcoming Library Conferences

There are regular opportunities for publishers and vendors to market to libraries at national conferences. The biggest show is the summer conference of the American Library Association where over 10,000 librarians can walk by your booth. Most state library associations have a conference, and there are several regional groups in the northeast, southwest, midwest, mountain plains, etc. For your calendar, here are the major national conferences:


Information Management in Research Libraries: A Collaboration of Librarians, Vendors, and Publishers. Florence, Italy, February 14-17, 1999. (This is the Charleston Group’s first international conference.)


Trends

✔ Outsourcing of cataloging is escalating because it is “quicker, cheaper, and better” than most in house work. Technicalities, “Stream of Consciousness: Cataloging Isn’t a Library Thing Any More,” by Sheila S. Intner, June 1997, pg. 3.

✔ “To offset the problems created by the information explosion coupled with insufficient budgets and increasing costs, libraries rely on an ever-increasing use of document delivery, interlibrary loans, computer databases at remote sites, and materials such as CD-ROMS whose ownership is shared among a group of partners.” College and Research Libraries, “Access vs. Ownership: Do We Have to Make a Choice?” by Laura Townsend Kane, January, 1977, pg. 60-62.

✔ “Beyond the obvious challenges—aging buildings, starved budgets forcing cutbacks in staff and hours, dwindling literacy, changing immigration patterns—is one that could determine the 21st century library: Should precious funds go for hardcovers or high tech?” USA Today, July 19, 1997, “Libraries Are Torn Between Books, Bytes.”

✔ Private funds and equipment and software donations from major corporations are becoming the main source to fund library access to the Internet.

✔ Libraries are increasingly using technological aids to match readers’ interests with their holdings. One popular source is NovelList from the CARL Corp, which is currently licensed for use in one of every 15 public libraries. It provides information, expanded access, and reviews on 57,000 fiction titles.
Short Takes

The younger the reading starts, the better the effects. Thirty-one percent of children who were read to by their parents learned to read before age 6, compared with 12% of those who were not read to. Gallup study, 1990, quoted in American Demographics, March, 1997, pg. 42.

Labor Secretary Alexis Herman has set as her priorities retirement security, lifelong learning, and welfare to work. WSJ, August 15, 1997, pg. A1.

Twelve million Americans visit eye doctors each year because of computer-related problems—one of every five people who came in for an eye exam. American Optometric Association.


Thirty-one percent of adults with household incomes of $50,000 or more would ban popular books from libraries, compared to 60% of those earning $15,000 or less. American Demographics, August, 1997, pg. 32.

How Libraries Buy: Selling Materials to Libraries

A practical preconference to the Charleston Conference Wednesday, November 5, 1997, 1:00-5:00 PM College of Charleston Lightsey Conference Center

You won’t want to miss this information-packed afternoon of important tips and techniques. Speakers include Julia Gammon (University of Akron), Alice Peery (Public Library of Charlotte & Mecklenberg County), and Anne Caputo (KRL/Dialog) on “Trends affecting purchasing in academic, public, and special libraries,” Tom Gilson (College of Charleston) on “Use of trials for new reference services,” Sue Flood (Auburn University) on “ARL approval plan survey results,” Leigh Watson Healy (independent library marketing consultant) on “How to manage committee decision making,” see related article in this issue of TCR, Rebecca Seger (McGraw-Hill), Corrie Marsh (Gale Research), and Dana Alessi (Baker & Taylor), and others with personal and practical tips on “what works” when marketing to libraries.

There’s still time to register! Contact College of Charleston, Lightsey Conference Center, Charleston, SC 29424, 803-953-5822, FAX, 803-953-1454, email: coned@cofc.edu for the “How Libraries Buy” preconference. This meeting is sponsored by The Charleston Report.