Buyers Talk

Libraries need a smooth and efficient way to print a variety of databases from public PCs. Debit-card laser printers must adapt to all types of databases. Problems include difficulty printing portions of text rather than full articles, confusion with text “left hanging” in the buffer, and patron questions about how to purchase debit cards and how to use them. Palm Beach County Public Library, FL.

We are beginning to talk with potential library partners and vendors about developing software that will automate the assignment of public computer stations and time allowances for public use. Our goal is to simplify the management of search station availability, particularly in medium and large public libraries where large numbers of public access computers are becoming standard. Multnomah County Public Library, OR.

The large expenditure to purchase Web of Science from ISI was explained by the Princeton University Library as follows:

1) It is of value to all subject specialties in the library, including difficult to cover inter-disciplinary fields and areas for which there is no satisfactory index.
2) It provides unique searching capabilities.
3) Items appear as rapidly as in the online version of Current Contents.
4) The capability for multi-year combined searching and for searching all cited authors, not just first authors, is a very major improvement, not available in CD-ROM versions.
5) The ability to access the system easily on the Web anywhere on campus, not just through the machines in the library, is very important.

Public Library Budgets Are Up

After depressed public library budgets for most of the '90s, funding is now on the upswing. Several factors are involved including a growing economy, increased property values and sales tax revenues, new services such as Internet access which are attracting attention, and an emphasis on fundraising and applications for grants.

In 1997, voters approved additional funding for public libraries 70% of the time. Notable successes include Multnomah County, Portland, OR, where the passage of a levy is increasing their budget by $10 million or 30%. The director, Ginnie Cooper, says they will be challenged to spend all the book and materials budget wisely and in a timely fashion.

Ohio libraries are well known as one of the best funded states and continue their record of successful local levy increases. The latest winners are Medina County, Toledo-Lucas County, Newark, and the Morley Library in Plainesville.

Materials budgets are projected to be up in 1998 by 7% according to a Library Journal survey of 2000 public libraries (January, 1998, pg. 48-51). The study also showed that in the past five years, libraries have tripled the amount of money they receive from fundraising from an average of $53,308 in 1992 to $137,476 in 1997.

In Maryland, state surpluses are being directed towards libraries primarily to enhance their materials budget. Libraries will get a $5 million increase above the current $17.5 million budget in the state's first action to restore the budget cuts of the early 1990s. This represents a 26% spending increase over the next three years.

In Pennsylvania, Governor Tom Ridge has boosted his allocation for libraries by $11 million with most of the money earmarked for technology. One component is $1.25 million for subscriptions to full-text online periodicals.

Other growing states include Georgia, North Carolina, and Texas. Many states, such as Colorado and Illinois, are emphasizing interconnections of technology to create access in every community.

Academic Library Budgets Grow

In a survey by Against the Grain of academic libraries (ATG February 1998, pg. 42), half of the libraries reported an increase in their materials budget while only 10% said the budget would decline. Three quarters are increasing their journals’ budget and boosting their allocation for electronic access.

At the same time, two-thirds have decreased their professional staff. And, they are changing the way they buy materials. Over half have switched subscription agents in the past five years. They are incorporating the Net into their routines through electronic ordering, searching publishers' Web pages, e-mailing inquiries, and searching for out-of-print materials.
Publishers' Mailings

What do librarians do with everything that you mail to them? A recent survey developed and administered by Karen Schmidt, director of collections and assessment at the University of Illinois at Urbana, asked this and many other questions. Here is a sampling of the answers from over 6,000 public, academic, medical, law, and special librarians:

- 61.5% open all the mail they get from publishers.
- 72% say the mail comes to them addressed by name.
- Almost half (46%) say they are more likely to read something that comes addressed to them by name (as opposed to 35% who say it doesn't matter).
- 70% of the respondents maintain a file of publishers' catalogs.
- Respondents like to see Table of Contents before ordering. In 70% of the cases, it "strongly and positively" affected their acquisitions decisions.
- Additionally, 70% of the librarians are more likely to buy a journal if they get a sample issue, and 68% are more likely to buy the journal when they know where it is indexed and/or abstracted.
- Not surprisingly, 81% feel strongly that having a trial access to an electronic product makes them more likely to buy it (or buy access).
- Only 33% think it is helpful to have publisher reps come to call.
- Over 80% read the ads in professional journals for products.

Computers in Libraries Conference

One exhibitor said, "Better than ALA Midwinter for some vendors!" The 13th Annual Computers in Libraries Conference was held March 1-5, 1998 in Arlington, VA. This year's conference was "red hot" by many reports with attendance at 3,600. Those topics attracting the most attention were PC security, Internet filtering, content access and pricing, and digitizing resources.

The exhibit hall attracted librarians from all types of libraries. Booth traffic was brisk with attendee interests covering a wide range of products and services including document delivery, CD-ROM/Multimedia, Internet products, and online publishing. The 1999 conference will again be in Arlington on March 8-10. For more information, look at www.infotoday.com or phone 609-654-6266.

Future Issues Will Feature
- Top Five Factors in Making a Purchasing Decision
- Usage of Publishers' Web Sites
- What Public Libraries Buy
- Notable Computer Software

Report From Down Under

Information Online & OnDisc (held every two years in Sydney) and the Victorian Association for Library Automation (VALA) (held alternate years in Melbourne) are the major Australian forums for technology in libraries.

VALA's 1998 Conference, just completed on January 28-30, 1998, featured popular topics such as:

- Artificial intelligence, knowledge based systems
- Electronic publishing and the role of the library
- Management of digital collections
- Copyright and electronic collections
- Networking capabilities using the Internet, technology, and overall management of the networked environment
- £39.50 as an important aspect in database searching as well as cataloging and other applications of library systems
- Ariel delivery for individual ILL documents

The "theme" of the program, "From Robots to Knowbots—the Wider Automation Agenda," indicated an overall shift in the approach from collection information management to the application and use of technology.

Information Online & OnDisc is set for January 21-23, 1999, in Sydney. For more information, contact them at Online99@acms.com.au or phone +61 2 9332 4622.

Urban Libraries' Materials Expenditures

In a review of the materials expenditures for 25 of the largest public libraries in the country, serving populations from a low of 116,646 to a high of 3.3 million, the per capita ranged from a low of $1.05 in Contra Costa County, CA, to a high in Cuyahoga County, OH, of $10.39. The average per capita expenditure for materials was $3.18.

The percentage of the budget spent on materials ranged from a low of 7% in Los Angeles County to a high of 25% in El Paso, TX. The median percentage of the 25 libraries was 14.4% in Phoenix.

As a comparison, the October 1997 issue of American Libraries surveyed 112 public libraries serving populations of over 25,000. The average per capita expenditure for materials was $2.93 and an average of 15% of the budget was devoted to materials.

The Charleston Report, Business Insights into the Library Market is published six times a year by The Charleston Group, 164 Market St., Suite 213, Charleston, SC 29401. Subscription price per year is $95 (U.S.) and $110 (outside the U.S.). FAX 803-722-0366. The Charleston Report is written for publishers, vendors, product developers, merchandisers, and wholesalers who are interested in expanding their library market. Readers will gain insights in effective marketing to libraries, early alerts to library trends, access to library leaders' future plans, library budget projections, library strategic plans, technology directions, and publications needs.

For comments and contributions, contact Linda F. Crisman, editor, 303 Mariner Dr., Tarpon Springs, FL 34689. 813-937-2974, FAX 813-937-1370, Crisman@aus.com. (c)Copyright, the Charleston Group, 1998. All rights reserved. ISSN: 1091-1863.

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Interesting Readings


“H. W. Wilson Co. had a niche-marketer’s dream: a unique product too costly for competitors to duplicate. So, Wilson went to sleep.”


The five most important features to physicists and librarians accessing the Institute of Physics Publishing site are: searchability of abstracts, local print capability, browsability of tables of contents, full peer review, and typeset quality of graphs. Of least interest were video, color, simulations, and how articles are added.


Links to more than 700 fun, exciting, and useful Web sites for children and their grown-ups.


A list of over 50 commonly-used pricing models for electronic products. The driving forces creating the variety of models are customer pressure for lower prices, desire to maximize revenues, different models needed for different products, technology enabling pricing models that reflect value more accurately, and greater complexity as a result of sublicensing.

PLA Hot Topics

The Public Library Association’s biannual meeting attracted thousands of librarians, publishers, and vendors to Kansas City in March. The exhibits were crowded with many librarians having increased operational and capital money to spend. They were looking for new ideas, the latest technology, and outsourcing opportunities. The hot discussion topics seemed to be:

1. **Technology**: finding the right balance, predicting the future, filtering on the Internet, and balancing the new with the traditional.

2. **Buildings**: retooling for technology, selecting architects and learning the bidding and construction process.

3. **Book Selection**: a number of meetings were devoted to different subject areas including science, African-American authors, romance and science fiction.

4. **Politics**: political savvy, community relations, partnerships, and funding referendums.

5. **Public Relations**: telling the library story and improving communications techniques.

By The Numbers

The lion’s share of public library budgets goes to current titles, with 14% spent on backlist selections. Library Journal, February 15, 1998, pg. 106.

The Hawaii State Public Library System, after a state audit, has revised upward the costs from the now defunct Baker & Taylor contract to select, catalog, process and deliver books. The initial cost was projected at $20.94 per item. Revised costs showed $37.93 for the first year (including one-time start up costs) and $25.85 for subsequent years.

For academic libraries’ materials budgets, 30% is spent on books, 50% on journals, 10% on online resources and gateways, 4% on CD-ROMs and 6% on AV and other resources. Against the Grain, February, 1998, pg. 42.

Commercial document suppliers fill only 12% of the photocopy requests for research libraries. And, 61% of research libraries use reciprocal agreements to avoid paying fees. Association of Research Libraries.

Blackwell Book Services reported an average list price of academic monographs as $49.65 in 1997, a 10.5% increase over the year before. A study from Academic Book Center’s approval plan showed in 1997 the most “popular price” of a university press title was $45 and of a non-university title was $59.95. Against the Grain, Dec/Jan 1998, pg. 54, and February, 1998, pg. 33.

Electronic Pricing Models

Elsevier Science 1998 electronic journal pricing model, which offers products at a variety of different price levels, is designed not just to sell more subscriptions, but to learn more about what customers want and to help the company make informed future decisions. Russell White, the chief executive officer, predicted that as publishers discover more about article usage, new pricing models are bound to be created. Professional Publishing Report, February 27, 1998, pg. 5.

The relationship in a print journal between information and subscription price are were relatively well understood in that more readers lead to more demand, which, in turn, leads to more subscriptions in a library and more money spent by the library. Web technology unbalances the value equation: customers expect more functionality and rapid delivery. Libraries perceive lower incremental costs for additional access that publishers provide electronically despite the fact that publishers’ costs for providing electronic information are not low. American Chemical Society.

Chadwyck-Healey offered in February to make one of its online databases free to anyone in the U.S. or Canada if libraries pledged to give it a total of $400,000 by the end of April, 1998. Several states (Texas, Georgia, Indiana and New York) have accepted another Chadwyck-Healey offer to pledge $10,000 each to gain access to ArchivesUSA for public, academic, and school libraries in their state. Some librarians feel that the databases in ArchivesUSA were given free to Chadwyck-Healey, and, therefore, the product should be offered at no charge.
Libraries on the Move

The California state budget includes $3 million to initiate the California Digital Library which will provide access to university libraries for all Californians.

The King County Library System, WA, has funded a five-year technology plan which sets a basic level of service in all of their 40 branches. Each library will offer computer workstations with a graphical catalog, a selection of office software for word processing, spreadsheets and resumes, along with printers, and standard reference products online (e.g., Galenet, Encyclopedia Britannica). They will provide training for staff and patrons and are adding staff to address the skyrocketing need for technical support in the branches.

Johns Hopkins University Library has established a new department, the Digital Knowledge Center, to support research and development efforts, online publishing, and online instruction. Some of the Center’s responsibilities will be to influence intellectual property policy and management direction at the university, to serve as a center for copyright permissions and education, and to become a hub at the university for the creation, prototyping, marketing, distribution, and archiving of multimedia information.

Rice University has received its largest donation ever, a $21.4 million gift from the Hobby Foundation, to expand and upgrade its Fondren Library. The gift is part of a $65 million plan to retool and expand the library.

Short Takes

Eighty percent of all public libraries in the U.S. serve populations of 25,000 or less.

It costs 30% less to run a bookstore than to operate a branch library of the same size. American Libraries, March 1998, pg. 41.

The goal of the American Library Association is, “to ensure that all Americans have the information skills and resources they need to live, learn, and work in an information society.”

“A new generation of librarians and information professionals is emerging, people who may have different degrees than the MLS, who expect to operate within a broader range of career paths from traditional libraries to the information industry to their own companies, who consider making or creating databases as normal a function as handling negotiations for large vendor files, and who work the Web before they use any other source.” Barbara Quint, Searcher, January, 1998, pg. 4.

The University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign entered the 38 millionth bibliographical record into the OCLC Online Union Catalog, WorldCat, on November 24, 1997. It was for a microfilm copy of a music score, Herman, by Austrian composer Johann Michael Hayden.

Sources Used Most For Adult Book Purchases

The Library Journal annual Book Buying Survey for 1997 ranked the sources most used by public librarians for making adult book purchasing decisions. The opinions of 2,000 librarians are:

- Reviews in trade journals 96%
- Patron requests 89%
- Best seller lists in trade journals 74%
- Consumer media 68%
- Publishers’ catalogs 65%
- Wholesaler/distributor catalogs 56%
- Word of mouth 54%
- Wholesaler/distributor rep. visits 33%
- Publisher rep. visits 27%
- Specialty newsletters 18%
- Online book retailers 17%
- Telemarketing 11%
- Publishers’ Web sites 10%