**Book Reviews**

It's no doubt that reviews are important to both public and academic librarians. Faculty and public library patrons will also request materials as a result of reviews. Francine Fialkoff, *Library Journal* editor, said at the 1998 Charleston Conference on Issues in Book and Serial Acquisition that *LJ* receives over 30,000 titles to review but are only able to print 6,000 reviews. She offered the following advice to publishers on how to get a book reviewed:

1. Send the book in advance of publication, ideally two months before street date. Galleys are appreciated. If a book is received too far after publication date, it may be rejected. Highly illustrated books are an exception where *LJ* would prefer to see the finished publication.
2. Include a pitch letter that is informative.
3. Establish a relationship with the editorial staff and the reviewer in your field. They welcome calls to bring to their attention major forthcoming works.
4. Be aware that the timeliness of the subject and the reputation of the author and publisher counts.

Reviewers are selected for the knowledge of the book's topic. They are expected to be objective and fair. *LJ* chooses reviewers who are sympathetic to the subject; they try to avoid people who are not political, religious, or ethnic odds with the content of the book.

The review must be fair, but not necessarily positive. If a publisher writes a letter in disagreement with a review, *LJ* will print the letter when they can. They will make a correction for a factual error. If a book is rejected for review, this decision is rarely reversed. However, if a case can be made that the reviewer simply did not do the review or if the editor thought the review was too biased, the book can be given a second chance.

**Consortial Buying Requirements**

Consortial buying is becoming a more common mode of acquisition of electronic and other products. Virtually all academic and three-quarters of the public libraries are members of consortia who buy common products, according to a 1998 UMI survey.

Some of the more recent trends include multiple pricing within a consortia and multi-year contracts. Eligibility for access to resources is being extended to alumni and to participants in distance learning programs, which raises questions about how to describe the user population. Although licensing language has become more understandable, realistic, and comprehensive, there still are significant issues of privacy, authorization/authentication, and usage definitions. Technology is providing greater opportunity for access.

The UMI survey discovered that of the library dollars spent on databases and electronic products, academic libraries in 1998 attributed 36% to consortial spending (vs. 22% in 1997) and public libraries attributed 40% in 1998 (vs. 25% in 1997).

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**Why Do Librarians Purchase Materials?**

*The Charleston Report* continues to share results from an extensive survey by Karen Schmidt at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign of 5,300 librarians. The responses came from both academic and public librarians. The top factors that strongly influenced a positive decision to buy a book were:

1. Potential use
2. Support of the curriculum
3. Patron requests
4. Reviews
5. Cost
6. Author's reputation
7. Publisher's reputation

The top factors that influenced the librarian to not buy a book were:

1. Cost
2. Reviews
3. Language of publication
4. Potential use
5. Publisher's reputation
6. Author's reputation
7. Support of the curriculum

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**Public Library Budgets Growing in 1999**

According to a January 1999 *Library Journal* survey of 533 public libraries, total library budgets for FY99 are up by 4.4% while the materials budget has increased by 6.5%. The spending per capita has also continued its upward growth rising to an average of $26.99, up from $26.08. (The highest per capita spending is in New York, at $36.96, followed by Ohio at $34.68.)

Further, since 1993, fundraising is up 228%, with more than two-thirds of the libraries confirming they have a fundraising arm. The average dollars raised increased from $137,000 in FY97 to $151,000 in FY98. Six out of ten libraries are receiving an average of $110,000 in grant money and are spending it primarily on technology and on books and other materials.

The largest materials budget increase was in libraries serving a population of 10,000 to 24,999 at 8.6%; their average materials expenditure was $82,200. The largest libraries serving over one million people experienced a 2.3% gain and had an average materials budget of $3.6 million. Libraries serving 500,000 to 999,999 gained 7.3% and had an average materials expenditure of $3.1 million.
Libraries on the Move

Missouri libraries will receive from the state $950,000 per year for the next decade to enhance collections. State aid in Pennsylvania has grown to $30.3 million a year, up 31% over 1997.

Virtual Academic Library Environment (VALE) is New Jersey’s first major collaborative academic library initiative formed to make their information resources more accessible. A common, customized search interface will use the OCLC SiteSearch software.

A reciprocal borrowing agreement was effective December 1998 for Florida’s 28 community colleges and ten public state universities. Called Florida’s Distance Learning Library Initiative, the consortium has five components: borrowing privileges, user training, reference and referral, electronic resource sharing, and document delivery.

Libraries in 2008

In 1998, 3M Library Systems invited 35 library administrators from public, academic, special, and systems libraries to a retreat to create a vision of libraries in 2008. The most desirable library scenario from the meeting was a market-oriented, customer-driven library with a combination of free and revenue-generating services and products making it less dependent on tax dollars.

Out of a long list of potential issues facing libraries ten years from now, participants name the following as most likely:
- The average person is overwhelmed by information.
- Massive information investments are needed.
- Patron technology training consumes staff time.
- Libraries are unable to compete for quality IT professionals.
- Libraries begin accepting advertising subsidies.
- E-connections with patrons increase productivity of library staff.
- Franchise-model libraries take off.
- Patron profile systems achieve rapid acceptance.
- Marketing/public relations are a must for funding.
- People perceive self-service options as better.
- Libraries open their doors to retail businesses.
- Libraries aid the economic development of the community.

Short Takes

The Association of American Publishers is sponsoring a series of ads in May 1999 promoting a “Get Caught Reading” campaign. Whoopi Goldberg and Rosie O’Donnell will be featured reading. The Book Industry Study Group will conduct research to see if there is any impact from the campaign on reading and book buying.

A record 151,024 patents for inventions were issued in 1998, a 33% jump over 1997. IBM led the pack with 2,657 patents received. Software-related patents represented the largest group at 17,500 with biotechnology and Internet-related electronic commerce ranking second. The current trend is to file for a patent rather than keeping the technology breakthrough as a trade secret.

Florida is about to launch one of the nation’s first statewide Internet filtering systems, enabling school districts to screen out pornography and other “objectionable” Web sites from classroom computers. The state will purchase Little Brother by Kphans which includes a database of Web-rated sites. St. Petersburg Times, January 5, 1999, B1.

“As more information becomes available in electronic format, organizational responsibilities on university campuses have become less distinct. Today, digital information and communications technology are shaping new relationships among librarians, their information technology counterparts, and faculty members.” Deanna Marcum, Council on Library and Information Resources.

The Educational Paperback Association launched a new Web site in January at www.edupaperback.org. The site provides information on EPA member publishers and distributors giving discounts on paperback and prebound books for classrooms and libraries. It links to related Web resources. ChoiceReviews.online subscriptions begin April 1999 at a special introductory offer of $325 per year until June 30th. This service provides access to a searchable database of Choice reviews published since September 1988, an e-mail update and notification service, and customized list management functions. For more information call 860-347-6933x33 or contact subscription@ala-choice.org.

America’s Best Public Libraries

American Libraries (January 1999, pgs. 72-76) has ranked the top public libraries using six input and three output measures. The three factors weighed highest are cost per circulation, visits per capita, and expenditures per capita. The largest of the four population categories and the overall state rankings are as follows:

Top Public Libraries Serving Over 100,000 Population

| State Rankings | 1. | Naperville, IL |
| 2. | Johnson Co., KS |
| 3. | Columbus, OH |
| 4. | Schaumburg, IL |
| 5. | Hennepin Co., MN |
| 7. | Santa Clara Co., CA |
| 8. | St. Charles City-Co., MO |
| 9. | Loudoun Co., VA |
| 10. | Montgomery Co., MD |

| State Rankings | 1. | Ohio |
| 2. | Minnesota |
| 3. | Washington |
| 4. | Indiana |
| 5. | Massachusetts |
| 6. | Wisconsin |
| 7. | New York |
| 8. | Kansas |
| 9. | Iowa |
| 10. | Utah |
Buyers Talk

According to an Against the Grain survey, librarians are using credit cards to purchase rush materials, prepayments, videos, software off the Internet, out-of-print items and conference proceedings. Credit cards are used to purchase materials from local bookstores, book vendors, desktop publishers, and online bookstores, especially Amazon.com. As for the problems, it is harder for the librarian to reconcile purchases against charges, it requires another workflow, and security concerns are increased. ATG, November 1998, pgs. 19, 27.

"Progressive libraries must be the vanguards and advocates of new formats, welcoming them into collections gradually and sharing with the public those resources that will be hallmarks of information gathering and processing, no matter what format they take in the future. We must balance radical and revolutionary information media with the mundane and traditional. This role is what distinguishes us from bookstores." Christine Lind Hage in American Libraries, January 1999, pg. 79. (Ms. Hage is also president of the Public Library Association.)

"The contribution of full-text databases and electronic journals still cannot compare to the value placed on print resources, but they are making positive and constructive inroads as a solution to the journal price dilemma." Paul D. Burnam, Ohio Wesleyan University in College & Research Libraries, September 1998, pg. 420.

By the Numbers ###

# The Institute of Museum and Library Services has awarded $135.5 million in grant money to states to promote access to learning and information sources in all types of libraries. Using a population-based formula, California received the most funds, $7.3 million, followed by New York, $4.2 million, and Florida, $3.4 million.

# The Department of Commerce’s Telecommunications and Information Infrastructure Assistance Program is awarding $17 million in 1999 to governments, non-profit entities, and libraries. The funds give priority to reaching the underserved and are to be used for innovation in education, support for more responsive public institutions, increased public access to health care, and the use of advanced network technologies.

# In the past five years, public library materials budgets have grown by 36% while the portion of the materials budget devoted to audiovisual has grow by 53%. Library Journal’s Purchasing Audio/Video Survey, November 15, 1999, pgs. 30-33.

# Blackwell’s Australian office reports the weakness of the Australian dollar has put additional pressure on already tight budgets. Australia, like Canada, imports 80-90% of its library materials. The combination of annual price increases plus the exchange rate impact produced budget shortfalls for 1999 of up to 25-30% in some cases.

# The “Library of California” has been created to allow every library in the state to share resources. A virtual library will be created over the next 12 to 15 years at a cost of roughly $100 million annually. Library Journal, November 15, 1999, pg. 20.

Academic Vendor/Library Partnerships

At the November 1998 Preconference on “Collection Management Solutions: Creative Uses of Technology,” held at the Charleston Conference and sponsored by The Charleston Report, Sue Ellen Johnson and Catherine Tierney of Stanford University Libraries outlined their Fast Track project to redesign technical services.

Stanford has experienced a 10% budget cut in technical services in the last two years. Fast Track is based on reengineering principles used to redesign workflows, introduce more technology and take greater advantage of vendor services. Stanford’s goal was to reduce costs, while maintaining or improving service quality, by a minimum of $750,000.

Using a new local system, SIRSI’s Unicorn, and working with three book vendors, Yankee Book Peddler, Harrassowitz, and Casalini Libri, Stanford developed EDI transmission of acquisitions data using the EDIFACT standard. They also began receiving shelf-ready books. In addition, online invoice data transfers to the University’s accounting system were implemented.

As a by-product of Fast Track, Stanford’s relationships with its vendors have been strengthened. Their advice to librarians is to be realistic about the mutual benefits and to have clear expectations up front. Feedback is essential all along the way with a working relationship as intelligent colleagues and not adversaries. It is not appropriate in most cases to ask the vendor to do something just for one library. Such customized requests are a sure way to escalate costs. Libraries should take into account that only a few complex services work exactly right the first time.

Agreements between vendors and libraries should be in black and white. As the relationship builds, some risk taking will be necessary as changes and modifications are introduced. Critical, open, timely, and honest communications will be important. The goal is to view vendors and librarians as a team working together to improve the service of the library.

For a complete background report on this project, including the vendor selection criteria, see http://www-sul.stanford.edu/depts/diroff/ts/redesign/redesign.html.

Challenges to Library Materials

In 1998, there were 478 challenges to library materials in public libraries, schools, and school libraries according to the American Library Association. The number of complaints is down from the 1995 high of 762.

The “most challenged” fiction book in 1998 was The Chocolate War by Robert Cormier that was cited for being “sexually explicit, offensive, and inappropriate for teenagers.”

Sex education tops the list of most challenged non-fiction titles with It's Perfectly Normal by Robie Harris receiving the most criticism.
Library and Publishing Standards—Quick Definitions

Confused by the alphabet soup of library and publishing standards? The following list is excerpted from “Standards, Ever Changing!,” a paper presented at this year’s Information Online and Ondisc Meeting in Sydney, Australia, by Geoff Payne, General Manager, Information Services, Association for the Blind, Kooym, Victoria.

MARC  Machine Readable Catalog records, dating from the late 1960’s.
ISO  International Standards Organization.
NISO  The National Information Standards Organization of the U.S.
Z39.50  A NISO standard for linking systems, also now ISO 23950.
ISO 10160/61  Inter-Library Loan Protocols.
HTML  Hypertext Mark-Up Language, a document format which allows Web pages to be created by users with little training.
SGML  Standardized Generalized Markup Language, a descriptive markup language which identifies types of information within a document.
XML  Extensible Markup Language, a middle ground between the simplicity of HTML but with the flexibility and power of SGML, minus its complexity.
Unicode  An international language encoding standard.
PDF  Portable Document Format, developed by Adobe Systems, essentially a bit-mapped image of a document as it would appear in print.

For an excellent overview on these standards and their use, be sure to read Payne’s full article at http://www.csu.edu.au/special/online99/proceedings99/104a.htm or consult the author index at the main Online99 site.

A Special Librarian’s Book Selection Techniques

The January 1999 issue of Inc., The Magazine For Growing Companies profiles library product supplier Highsmith Inc. in an article titled “The Smartest Little Company in America.” According to the CEO Duncan Highsmith their secret tool is their librarian.

As part of the story, assistant corporate librarian Genevieve Mecherly listed a few words which, when they appear as part of the title of a book, would trigger her decision to purchase the title. The helpful words were “real-world,” “tools,” “directory,” “dictionary,” and, the best, “concise dictionary.” She especially liked books with applications for both employees and customers. On her out list were words like “directory of online sources” as too out of date, “all,” “key,” “inspiring,” and any title ending with an exclamation point.

Librarians Pick their Top 20th Century Fiction

In response to the Modern Library’s list of top 20th Century books, Library Journal asked their readers to name the best books of the 20th Century. One librarian gave the criteria as: 1) the books had to be “memorable,” 2) they had to be books she “read over and over,” and 3) they had to have “taken me to places and points of view I never would have discovered on my own.”

So, here are the librarians top ten fiction of the century:
1. To Kill a Mockingbird, by Harper Lee
2. The Catcher in the Rye, by J.D. Salinger
3. Lord of the Rings, by J.R.R. Tolkien
4. Gone with the Wind, by Margaret Mitchell
5. Beloved, by Toni Morrison
6. The Color Purple, by Alice Walker
7. Nineteen Eighty Four, by George Orwell
8. Animal Farm, by George Orwell
9. Lord of the Flies, by William Golding
10. Catch 22, by Joseph Heller

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