

## ACQUISITIONS PRECONFERENCE 3: THE SUMMARY

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The Acquisitions for the Eighties Preconference, sponsored by the Association of American Publishers and R.T.S.D., was intended to bring together publishers, wholesalers and acquisitions librarians to explore the issues that will affect acquisitions in the coming decade and to consider ways in which the three groups might, both individually and collectively, respond in meeting the changes that may be expected.

There seemed to be three predominant themes throughout the conference: inflation and fiscal retrenchment; computerization and the ways it will affect both what we acquire and how we acquire it; and "collection management" within the context of increasing and necessary inter-library cooperation. The consensus was that fiscal retrenchment is and will remain a fact of life, but that developments in computerization and more advanced technology can be used to offset the effects of fiscal problems and the explosion of information through interlibrary cooperation and collection management, both at the local and national levels.

The effects of inflation in conjunction with fiscal retrenchment necessitated by the drying up of funds, especially on the federal level, were seen by all as a very serious problem. Inflation has been running 10% for books and 13% for periodicals annually, well above the level of inflation in the economy as a whole. This trend is expected to continue, with one vendor (B.N.A.) predicting that inflation for books could run as high as 14% this year. Even with technological advances which may bring down some production costs, the rising cost of raw materials will ensure continued price increases. At the same time, funding at all levels is becoming increasingly inadequate. While many speakers stressed the necessity of cooperative lobbying effects among publishers and libraries in an effort to offset this trend, the general feeling was pessimistic. Funding, especially at the federal level, is generally expected to be inadequate in the coming decade.

The second major theme of the preconference was computerization. Advances in technology will radically affect the format of what we acquire, the means by which we acquire it and, as accessibility to rather than possession of information becomes the goal of a research library, even the question of what sort and quality of information is acquired by any individual library.

Many new formats of information storage, including videodiscs, digital videodiscs, computer chips and teletext systems were discussed, with participants expressing different views as to which

will become important to libraries and as to the rate of change in information format to be expected. Some participants felt these new developments will have a tremendous impact on libraries within the next few years. Others (and perhaps the majority) noted that change is generally slower than we expect and things always take longer than we think they will. It was generally agreed that the technology to bring about sweeping change already exists, but there was less agreement on the question of how fast such technology will be implemented. It was also noted by Edward Shaw of R.L.G. that utilization of new forms of communication, is neither to nor, unfortunately, under the leadership of libraries. Researchers are acquiring an increasing percentage of information they need from sources outside the library which tends to divert resources from the library. If libraries are to retain their position as the central disseminators of information on university campuses, they must become more active in university-wide planning of the implementation of new computerized methods of information access.

The effects of computerization on techniques for the acquisitions of materials are already evident in the proliferating number of actual and planned automated acquisitions systems. Such automated systems are being employed by publishers and wholesalers, as well as by libraries, and their advent will affect the distribution system in the information industry as a whole. Computer to computer communication is becoming increasingly accessible and will be utilized by libraries, wholesalers and publishers. It was noted that these developing systems are geared almost exclusively to the needs of acquisitions systems and not to cataloging and circulation systems as they focus on providing information on availability and price rather than on questions of bibliographic control. Wholesalers' computers will communicate directly with publishers' computers and libraries' computers directly with those of both publishers and wholesalers. Standards for such communication are being developed by IBSAC which has come up with a format allowing publishers' and purchasers' computers to talk to each other and ANSI, which is working on Standard Address Numbers to be assigned each library, publisher, wholesaler and school. How these developments will affect publishers and wholesalers is unclear. Eisenberg, of Ballen Booksellers, felt that the small wholesaler oriented to the academic market will likely disappear to be replaced by large organizations which can provide the automated services libraries increasingly demand but which will be less flexible in meeting other needs of academic customers. Knapp, of Ringgold Management, on the other hand, foresaw the possibility that the local bookstore, with its own computerized access to many sources of supply, and its convenience for local libraries, might reemerge as the library's primary vendor. He also thought it possible that libraries might use their computerized systems to by-pass middlemen altogether and order directly from publishers, a development which would be bad for vendors. Publishers will also be affected by the demand for automated accessibility to their inventories and Lamm, of W.W. Norton, felt that some publishers might affiliate for purposes of order fulfillment but not for publishing and editorial aspects.

The speed with which sophisticated systems which would eventually become entirely paperless, with ordering, reporting and invoicing done entirely on-line, will emerge was again a matter of debate. Knapp noted that while they were widely predicted for the next decade and the technology already exists, they require industry-wide standards for the transmission of information. BISAC is working on such standards, but Knapp questioned the commitment of those involved to adhering to the standards they develop. In addition, Paul Mosher of Stanford pointed out, that in many areas of the world the quality of bibliographic control is actually declining. The acquisition of materials from such areas will remain a problem.

Computerization was also seen as of vital importance if libraries are to cope with the conflicting pressures brought on by inflation and decreasing funding on the one hand and the information explosion on the other. The day of the self-sufficient library, whether a small public branch or a major research institution, has passed and the library of the future will be what Mosher described

as a "distributed" library, sharing responsibilities and resources through networking liaisons with other libraries and information-providing institutions. The library's function has changed from acquiring and making available materials of its own to provision of access to information from a multitude of sources to meet the needs of its patrons. "Collection management" will replace "collection development" as the focus of the library's efforts.

The collection of each individual institution will be increasingly geared to user needs which will be ascertained through long term use studies utilizing data provided by the automated circulation systems. The concept of the "permanent" collection will fade and ongoing review and weeding, especially of periodicals, will become important. Libraries will rely more on resources and collections at the regional and national level, which they must actively support and help to build. Interlibrary cooperation must increase and will be relatively easy to achieve in some areas, such as shared use of existing resources, but more difficult in others, especially that of distributing collection development responsibilities. Access to the purchase and in-process files of other libraries as well as to their holdings must be provided, and retrospective conversion stimulated. Requirements for The National Periodical Center were also discussed by several participants. Publishers and wholesalers stressed the need, in discussion of such a center as in the development of networks, to ensure that publishers are adequately compensated.

As with the other issues, some speakers felt there were caveats in this fairly rosy view of a computerized and cooperative future. Eisenberg of Ballen Booksellers, in what was probably the conference's most controversial paper, stressed the adversary nature of the relationship between the commercial sectors of publishing and wholesaling and the not-for-profit library world. The commercial sector will not, he feels be particularly receptive to resource sharing on the part of libraries.

Mosher, of Stanford, felt that while lip service will be given to cutting according to user needs, the pressure to cut expenditures will be such that libraries will cut what is quick and easy to cut rather than what users don't need.

Lamm, of W.W. Norton and Norman Dudley of U.C.L.A. focused on the dangers of becoming overly committed to use as a criteria for judging the worth of a title, whether in considering publication or in considering acquisition by a library. Lamm, in an extremely interesting paper, discussed future trends in publishing and the increasing pressure publishers are under to show a respectable profit. Both Lamm and Glikes of Simon and Schuster argued that while it is necessary to cut down on the present waste and hazards of the publishing business, if publishers go too far in attempting to publish only what will sell, the quality of information and of our culture as a whole will decline. Such pressures could lead to what Glikes characterized as "a new dark age" and Lamm as "a nation of dullards." Dudley stated that while we must and should think more in terms of the present use of our collections, we cannot forget our responsibilities in building graduate and research collections. He stressed that no one has yet learned how to predict what will be used and that we must still have a certain critical mass of material available, even though this means we will continue to acquire some books which will never be used. Libraries, he felt, must share with the publishers the responsibility for seeing that we do not become Lamm's "nation of dullards."