



### **Scraping by on \$7 million a year**

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Whenever we talk about electronic resources, the phrase that comes up is: “We have no money.” I am tired of hearing myself say, “We don’t have the money.” Is this true?

We have money. My campus spends \$7 million a year on library materials. Most of the libraries in my state and even my country – and certainly many other countries – would think this a handsome sum. We are spending ten times that - \$75 million - to gut and rebuild our building. Our 1968 building doesn’t meet earthquake standards; and in a large quake it would pancake.

Of course, we didn’t know this when we started poking around in the walls because we wanted to gut and rebuild it. It’s an indisputable, but conveniently discovered, fact. The building trumped collections - before we knew we had a safety issue. Many libraries – public and academic – seem to be finding this.

Why?

### **Maybe the balance has tipped – dollars invested elsewhere produce greater user benefits than dollars invested in collections?**

Despite putting collections at top of the institution’s priorities and funneling a substantial percentage of the new money coming into the university into them, we have not succeeded in meeting the needs of our graduate student and faculty users.

We calculated what it would cost to reinstate just the 4,000 journals Marriott Library has cut over the past decade. These titles cost \$2 million at the date of cancellation and would cost \$2.8 today. If you add in the Health Science Library cuts and the cuts in book and standing order and binding budgets, it’s much higher than that.

Users remain unhappy – at Utah and nationally about their access to journals. Would more money solve this problem? Not really. Libraries which spend millions more than we do still report unhappy grad students and faculty.

Libraries, like their campus administrations, have lost hope of ever being able to buy enough of what the faculty wants to make them significantly happier than they are now.



Our funding sources, I believe, have a renewed faith in the belief that research libraries are black holes – not that they didn't always think that – but now they are really sure. And I kind of think I may be coming to agree with them.

Perhaps our best course as a university is to continually refine how we spend the \$7 million we have, put in place services to purchase, rent, lease, borrow (or I know some publishers believe, steal) information as it is needed, and stop asking for more money in a world in which we aren't going to get any anyway.

### **What (other than no) might “We have no money” really mean?**

- Maybe it's not compelling enough for the library to be willing to do the work and take the flack to free funding?
- We suspect users have found ways outside of libraries to getting it?
- We suspect users are settling for whatever it is they can get - and just ignoring the rest?
- We worry users can't find and connect to the online collections we have?
- Resources don't get used unless there is a librarian “champion” out selling the title to the faculty – maybe, for this title, we don't have such a person?
- Maybe it really is “on the want list” – not the folder labeled “want list” – if we're serious, it's in our mental list.
- We'd rather fund our own digitization and Institutional Repository efforts?

### **How do we make purchase decisions?**

Let's be accurate in describing how choices are made. We cite deliberative processes employing a delicate balance of many factors. Is this how it really happens? Every time?

Should it? Do we really consider it a good use of librarian time to compile lists and have endless committee meetings to decide what to buy?

“Following our Collection Development policies” may be an accurate but not illuminating description. There are changes in the ways we make decisions – which don't necessarily show up in the way we talk about the way we make decisions.

### **Changes include:**

- Many content decisions are made at campus or state level
- Electronic packages seldom fit in a single selector's budget; journal packages often have no subject focus
- More patron driven acquisitions and pressure to match Amazon in speed of delivery
- User expectations that online information be online instantly
- Bundled titles mean we acquire many titles by happenstance.
- Stress on new initiatives – interdisciplinary and international – is growing fast, with major implications for collections (but without new funding)

- Selector is no longer the only faculty contact. Faculty work with the Technology Assisted Curriculum Center, Library Instruction, Audio-Visual, Special Collections...
- Selectors busy with instruction and outreach are less active in selection. Firm orders for books are main remaining selection duty (and fading fast as those budgets fade.)
- Less and less of what we buy is a one-time purchase— so we spend more time reviewing existing subscriptions, leases, whatever-you-want-to-call-them and less in choosing new titles.

Given these changes, what did we buy, what didn't we buy, and what would we like to buy?

### **What we bought: Journals, articles, back runs**

We bought as many subscriptions as we could, knowing that the price is to plan cancellations for this year and every year.

Lists of titles cancelled and added are on the Collection Development web page. Here's what we said about Journals Added for 2006:

#### *Journals, 2006*

•Marriott Library continues to start new subscriptions and to change to the online format most readers prefer for most journals. Over 300 titles were enhanced or added this year. There is no budget for new journals; they are paid for by canceling other subscriptions.

•We start subscriptions when:

-someone asks us to. We receive [suggestions](#) and try hard to start them. More than 2/3 of the faculty requests last year were honored.

-patrons are consistently requesting interlibrary loans for a journal Marriott doesn't own.

-publishers add a title to their package. Some scholarly societies and university presses have reputations for quality and reasonable prices. We buy package deals and receive every new title. This explains added journals which seem peripheral to campus interests.

-we participate in a regional or national project. The Utah Academic Library Consortium buys titles like JSTOR for all its members. Marriott is committed to supporting new models of [scholarly communication](#) by buying products [SPARC](#) endorses." (Barbara Cox, Marriott Collection Development).

We know we cannot meet needs through subscriptions and must add continual speeding up of ILL, and document delivery, especially unmediated article purchase by faculty. Funding to do these things often comes from the materials budget.

Every other year, we use the LibQual program to survey users. LibQual tells us about our own users and lets us compare ourselves to other libraries. Faculty and grad students locally and nationally are unhappy with journal access – but – interestingly – our own users are slightly less unhappy than they were two years ago.

It feels to me as if there may be some lessening of the urgency with which faculty lobby for journals. I wonder if they have just given up – or are finding their own paths – writing to authors or paying article fees. I also doubt that current grad students as they enter faculty ranks will be content with the current model. They want to read stuff now – won't they want other people to read their stuff now? Will they wait to submit a journal article, knowing it is available only to scholars at schools with subscriptions?

And to share just the article – not the data backing it and discussion among themselves? If the journal system survives, it will surely need to include much more than it does now.

### What we bought: Books

I don't feel good about the books we bought. We are still spending a lot of money – a million and a half – and still not getting closer to the goal. The goal has not changed. We need to be sure no books are lost altogether; and that enough copies of each are preserved in appropriate collections so that every reader needing access can get it.

Books are still being lost – probably in increasing numbers as ephemeral and self-published works escalate in number. We buy ever-fewer non-English titles. Readers still have a hard time getting books they need – though they have a growing number of non-library options and seem to be making use of those.

Some of the books we bought are what I call “books of lasting value” - humanities, fine arts and core sciences. But I find myself resenting money spent on titles which will date quickly, often before anyone uses them. We need to preserve them – but we don't need a copy in every library. Why not focus on titles at true preservation risk – not meaning that you can't get them in my library. Meaning that you can't get them.

There are books which get used - many in our **Browsing Collection**. Titles here circulate three times a year. In the stacks, a book has a 25% chance of circulating in a given year. We put good stuff we'd like students to find here. It seems a promising direction for getting them actively involved with printed books.

We also work at getting users to tell us what they want, encouraging everyone to use the “*Suggest a Purchase*” button on our home page. When we buy a book this way, we know it will have at least one reader. It has not been particularly burdensome – most requests are books that would be purchased anyway. You do get authors pretending to be users, but that's easy to detect and besides – sometimes they're good suggestions.

### What we bought: Stuff we didn't used to buy

Our recent purchases are interesting in that many are not online replacements for printed collections – they are materials of a sort we didn't use to collect - and often we are choosing them for reasons that have little to do with content.

As an example, the *Learning Express Library* “provides a completely interactive online learning platform of practice tests and tutorial course series designed to help patrons, students, and adult learners succeed on the academic or licensing tests they must pass. By registering, you get immediate scoring, complete answer explanations, and an individualized analysis of your results.” We didn't use to buy much material of this sort. It is also, of course, the case that we don't have a budget – so this – like other new things – comes out of existing budgets.

**E-books** - As we begin to understand more about the ways in which eBooks are used, we are more comfortable with them as an integrated part of collection strategy. Compared to the statistics for online journals, they don't look great. But compared to the circulation for printed books, they look good.

. **Audio Books** –Students more and more expect audio material and delivery to iPods, PDAs, cell phones, whatever. It isn't clear what our collections will need to include, but it seems a good idea to get some experience; and we are experimenting with PlayAways – adorable little self-contained individual books/players – to see how users respond. We hear reports from public libraries as to the popularity of this format and expect that our users may also come to want us to offer titles.

- **Image and audio collections** – For reasons which aren't fully clear, but I don't think have much to do with changes in the curriculum, ARTstor, Smithsonian Global Folkways and almost all sorts of audio-visual content are ever more in demand. We re beginning to build state-wide collections of streaming videos for the most popular PBS sorts of materials...

#### •Portico and LOCKSS

We took these costs out of the book budget – where else?

#### •Staff and equipment for digitization projects and our Institutional Repository

We are, increasingly, funding these sorts of projects from collection budgets – they are, after all, collections. And once we have them, we own them and can share them with everybody else.

As faculty realize how much of their data and curricular stuff is at risk and as they become more activist about Open Access, we think they are likely to think along the lines of: “Why put it on your own webpage when the library will put it, properly cataloged and archived, on theirs?”

•**University presses** – as university administrators say “you want them – they're yours...” (no new money).

We very much wanted ours. Now we have it and will fight to fund it and to see that it grows and prospers, we hope.

#### What we didn't buy

•**Expensive individual journals which we really, really need.**

•**Unsustainable “Big Deals” with large annual DOLLAR increases.**

These are two facets of the same problem. There are expensive journals – some we need badly and others are marginal – which it will be sensible for us to provide only on an article by article basis. The Elsevier Verlag publishers suggest that a bundle is cost effective and that price increases are “among the lowest in the industry.” That's true if you measure increases in percentages. But, since we pay in dollars, a 1 % price increase in such a contract is many more dollars than a 50% increase in the price of a lower priced bundle. Such bundles with “low increases” consume a greater percentage of materials budgets each year – and, since these titles are removed from the list of titles to be considered for cancellation, smaller and/or reasonably priced titles are

cut to pay for the increases. Purchasing all-title bundles gives visibility to titles we don't need - and in which we don't want to encourage our faculty to publish. It's like putting out advertising for a product you don't want to buy. Why would you do that?

. **“Apple Pie & Motherhood”**

Who's going to say – “We don't care about 16<sup>th</sup> century English books? Or early American periodicals? There are expensive sets – mostly converted from microfilm – which are obviously desirable for any research library. But the prices – most seem to be “half price, all the time” or at a discount which takes the price below six figures – but not too far below – are such that only the largest libraries can afford them. Use rates have been disappointing for my own library and among others with whom I have spoken.

What would make sense is to share such purchases consortially – but the kind of price breaks which would make this feasible are not forthcoming. The alternative - waiting for Google – is not ideal. But we can afford it.

. **Journal back runs we wish we had.**

We bought back runs, but fewer than anticipated. We have always believed them to be at the top of our want list, given our experience of steady usage. However, as we study usage, we are finding it low enough that other stuff on the list sometimes competes well.

It is easiest for users if we offer complete back runs - and it is better for the journals to be seen in their entirety. The gaps users currently see resulting from embargos on current titles in aggregators, titles which offer current issues only, titles with long back runs and a gap here and there between the back run and the currents...etc. – drive our users nuts. Us too.

There are some titles that just don't languish on want lists. We bought a *Chronicle of Higher Education* site license – instantly and without consulting anybody – and could tell it was a hit because users actually noticed – right away.

**What would we buy if it were out there?**

•**BioOne 3,4,5,6 – more MUSE titles – more university press projects**

We would invest in journals from non-profits and reasonably priced publishers which show promise of becoming sustainable investments to meet the budgets of future libraries and the needs of future scholars – even if they are not immediately competitive in terms of price/quantity/quality.

Not everyone agrees with this strategy.

•**E-book approval plan**

We would share a comprehensive plan for electronic full-text with the libraries (preferably including the larger publics) in our state. Each library could then tailor print buying towards user requests, a strong

academic browsing collection, and titles to build up important collections – books we will look at in a decade or two and be glad we bought. We wouldn't necessarily spend less on books – but we would use the online as a surrogate and as a finding aid and add print copies when and where they are needed.

#### •Audio-visual content

We would like to stop buying outdated formats – like DVDs – and to buy online access with pricing options flexible enough to allow us to meet growing demands from faculty for curriculum related materials. Again, we wouldn't necessarily expect to cut costs – but realistically, we won't be able to put a lot of new money into these budgets. On demand pricing and paying by the piece might make a lot of sense.

#### •Some subjects

There always seem to be subjects – I would cite nursing as an example – where the demand for materials is high at schools from small community colleges to research universities and there just isn't anything affordable out there to buy.

#### •Materials to support new interdisciplinary and international programs

It is with some alarm that we hear our university administration announce that we will be diving into programs involving – say – India, Russia, Brazil and China. We are supportive – but unclear as to how we will manage to support these new programs. And then there are the new interdisciplinary teams of research faculty hired to break new ground in new areas. And the new Institute of the Brain. We have abandoned the old habit of whining about this – of course the university needs to break new ground and of course we will support it – but – one does some days wonder just how....

#### •Textbooks??

Something will happen here. And whatever it is, I want libraries to be involved. Leaving it to the faculty to deal with publisher reps strikes me as foolish – libraries have experience with licenses – let's use it. Helping with the licenses does not mean we agree to pay the bills.

#### Tips the balance towards the “Frugal Library”

All this leads to the most urgent environmental scan of all for an academic library. If my institution were today given \$13 million annually to build something, would it be a library? Just like this one? If it wouldn't, in a time when my institution is struggling to hold market share and to convince its funders to fund it, that's a problem.

Maybe we need to start thinking about the “Frugal Library.” A library which:

- Can buy most of what we know most users will need.



- Can plan ways to get the stuff which will be available later, at the time of need, and set aside money to do that.
- Can invest in the future first, including investing in our own capacities for digitization and publishing
- Can retain budget flexibility – don't let on-going expenditures lock us in, because we don't know what will happen next, but we think it will be different and will cost money.

If there is not such a thing, perhaps we could invent it.