
ACQUISITIONS ROUNDTABLE

**MISSING ISSUES:
A RESPONSE**

MARGARET LANDESMAN

Monographs Order Librarian
Marriott Library
University of Utah
Salt Lake City, UT 84112

I am inclined to retitle this article "Missing Issues: One Technique for Doubling Staff, Postage, and Xeroxing Expenses While Needlessly Alienating Vendors." I cannot, of course, be sure it would double expenses as the author does not supply figures, but we utilize the spare moments of one part-time student to fill in a very simple two-part form (without certified mail, return receipts, or Xeroxed copies of previous correspondence) to order our missing issues. It simply has to be a great deal cheaper than the elaborate contortions described (and I think enjoyed) by Mr. Edgar. Of course, his results may be better. Then again, given the very unflattering response of the vendor I showed this article to, his results may *not* be better.

What is the point of Mr. Edgar's system? "One must not let the dealers push him around," and "No dealer will try your mettle more than once." Life in Ohio must be ferocious. Here in Utah, we do not have a problem with vendors "pushing us around" or "trying our mettle." We ask vendors to cancel our orders in three months. They do! They may send quotes on older orders in case we still want them, and we feel that is a nice service. If occasionally they make a mistake and send an older order, we have been known to err ourselves. If a vendor does this frequently, and it happens, we find another vendor.

Also, we do not feel when returning an item to a vendor that we need to send "court acceptable evidence" that the dealer agreed to accept the return. We are dealing, after all, with a vendor, and we presume our vendors are friendly and reasonable until proven otherwise.

The sheer number of letters Mr. Edgar writes is overwhelming. We, and I suspect most libraries, send the vendor our order and pay the invoice—seldom is any correspondence involved. Edgar, on the other hand, recommends a letter to order sent certified mail with a return receipt requested; a confirming letter when a shipment is received; a copy of the first

letter with a copy of the return receipt when returning items; a letter after thirty days confirming the cancellation, again enclosing a copy of the first letter, the list and a copy of the return receipt again sent certified mail with a return receipt requested. This can all happen when the vendor *follows* all the instructions. If the vendor does not, of course, you send letter number three (again, with copies of letters one and two and return receipt one and two sent certified mail with a return receipt requested). Legal, it may be. Sensible, it is not.

And what are the ethical considerations of keeping as gifts issues which arrive after the order has been cancelled? Certainly, the vendor has been forewarned that you plan to do this. But if you still need the item, isn't it reasonable to pay for it? After all, had the vendor quoted the item, you would presumably have asked him to send it and would have paid for it. If you no longer need the item, why not return it? In either case you can warn the vendor that repeated ignoring of instructions will lead to finding another vendor.

Despite my objections to his style, the substance of Mr. Edgar's method may be sound. Giving a vendor a thirty-day period with firm instructions not to search or back order and recycling orders every thirty to sixty days may produce a higher and speedier rate of return. I have no idea from the article since he gives no figures. On the other hand, there is the possibility that when a vendor says he can give you better service if you give him time to back-order, he knows whereof he speaks. It would be interesting to see a study to prove the point one way or the other. Meanwhile, were I a missing issue dealer, I would be inclined to send Mr. Edgar an invoice (with appropriate Xeroxes, certified mail with return receipts, etc.) marked "If not paid in 30 days"