



The Acquisition of Serial Publications

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CONCERN WITH THE ACQUISITION of serials has become intensified during the past ten years or so largely because of the increasing numbers published, rising subscription costs, and the generally heightened complexities in handling and processing this form of publication. Fifteen years ago Robert W. Orr wrote an article, "A Few Aspects of Acquiring Serials" in which he termed serials as "brash upstarts" in the area of graphic media.¹ If anything, in recent years they have become even more brash, since the need for rapid communication is greater than ever before. Although serials have now passed the three hundredth birthday anticipated by Orr, time has not been a mellowing factor—their growth, form, and costs have not been stabilized. Trends in the acquisition of serials and the consequent problems have undergone some changes in particulars; however, title proliferation and cost factors remain a common theme to both the past and the present.

An examination of library literature provided some information as to patterns being followed in the acquisition of serials. It seemed, however, that the most pragmatic answers to serial acquisition questions could be obtained from librarians involved in the day-to-day solutions of serial problems. Toward this end, a questionnaire was sent to a number of libraries who are members of the Association of Research Libraries. Non-member libraries having serial collections of at least 5,000 titles were also queried in an effort to see if there were any significant differences in approach to problems of serials acquisition. Forty-nine libraries responded to the questionnaire. In addition, I talked with several subscription agents from large firms about some problems they felt existed, particularly those which are the result of library serials acquisition procedures, payment of invoices, service charges, and related matters.

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In an effort to establish a common ground as a point of departure, the questionnaire carried this preface:

The following definition of a serial has been taken from the A.L.A. *Glossary of Library Terms*: "A publication issued in successive parts, usually at regular intervals, and, as a rule, intended to be continued indefinitely. Serials include periodicals, annuals (reports, yearbooks, etc) and memoirs, proceedings, and transactions of societies."² If the definition of a serial in your library differs, please indicate what that difference is.

Note: Numbered monographic series would also be regarded as serial publications and, although cataloged as separates, would still be handled by the serials acquisitions unit on a standing order basis.

The response indicated that 91 percent of the libraries agreed with the definition in the A.L.A. *Glossary*. Some indicated differences which were subtle variations of the A.L.A. *Glossary* definition, which, for practical purposes, could be considered the same.

Proliferation of Titles

The number of serials and the complexity of problems involved in serials acquisition work have greatly increased since Orr wrote his article. On the other hand, the number of subscription agents serving libraries has shrunk.

Some idea as to the growth in the number of serial titles can be obtained from a brief review of standard serial statistics during the past decade or so. The 1953 edition of *Ulrich's Periodicals Directory* listed about 14,000 titles, which was an increase of 4,000 over the 1951 edition. *Ulrich's International Periodicals Directory 1967-68* (twelfth edition) listed in Volume I, "Scientific, Technical and Medical Periodicals" over 12,000 titles and in Volume II, "Arts, Humanities, Business, and Social Studies" 18,000 serials, a 50 percent increase over Volume II of the eleventh edition. Granted that part of this increase was due to the inclusion of titles not previously cited, many were the result of the upward spiral in the publication of new serials. These two volumes of the twelfth edition of *Ulrich's*, along with the three supplements, contain some 35,000 periodical titles; the third supplement (1969) carried about 4,500 titles "new to *Ulrich's*" of which approximately 1,000 began publication after 1966.

The growth in non-periodical types of serials has been equally accelerated. In 1967 the first edition of *Irregular Serials and Annuals*:

An International Directory edited by Emery Koltay was published. It contains some 14,500 irregularly published serials.

Other evidence of the phenomenal growth of serials over the years and the resulting acquisition problems is shown by the development of the *Union List of Serials*. The first edition (1927) contained 75,000 titles; the third edition of *ULS* published in 1965 contains 156,449. Each month *New Serial Titles* adds to this figure.

The number of serials appearing on the market reflects both the science and technology explosion and the greater use of serial publications for exchanging information in all fields. The number is also increased by the practice of publishers in all subject areas of placing many monographic titles into series. With the desire that librarians have for complete files, the publisher has an assured market. Libraries, particularly academic libraries, are concerned with the selection process in many disciplines, especially in the area of science and technology. Once they have established that a certain series is producing materials which fall into their sphere of concern, the next step is to see that a standing order is entered to receive everything in the series automatically. A decade ago this monographic series phenomenon was in its infancy; it has attained fullgrown status now.

Costs

No figure was uncovered which would reflect the large sums libraries are expending for serial publications alone. However, the American Library Association's *Library Statistics of Colleges and Universities, 1965-66, Institutional Data*³ shows that U.S. college and university libraries in 1959-60 were receiving in the aggregate 1,271,000 periodicals; by 1964-65 this figure had risen to 1,800,000. In 1966, the figure for serials (it now included periodicals, annuals, proceedings and transactions) had increased to 2,700,000. The figure for expenditures for books and other library materials including serials, rose from a modest \$40,760,000 in 1959-60 to \$111,000,000 in 1966. Between 30 to 50 percent of this figure, or \$30,000,000 to \$50,000,000, is an estimate of the expenditure for serials in 1966.

The concern with increased subscription costs in terms of the annual budget has become a basic routine during the past ten years. Not that such concern was not always present, but in these highly inflationary times coupled with the magnitude of subscription price increases, the matter has become one of paramount importance. Nevertheless, only three libraries said they actually examined their

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serial titles in terms of a per unit cost increase, while the remainder expressed dependence on the cost index figures for periodicals and serial services which appear in the July issue of *Library Journal* each year and are reprinted in *The Bowker Annual. Publishers' Weekly* was also a source for gaining some idea of the percentage of increase necessary in the new annual budget in order to stay even with the library's serial acquisitions program.

Some idea of serial cost increases can be seen from the following samples taken from "Index of Periodical Prices by Category . . ." and "Index of Serial Service Prices by Category . . ." which appear regularly in *The Bowker Annual*:⁴

<i>Periodicals</i>	<i>Average Prices</i>			
	<i>1957-59</i>	<i>1963</i>	<i>1965</i>	<i>1968</i>
Business and Economics	\$ 4.96	\$ 6.06	\$ 6.39	\$ 7.45
Chemistry and Physics	10.04	16.07	18.42	24.26
Engineering	5.40	6.69	7.70	10.02
Fine and Applied Arts	4.52	5.89	5.92	6.61
History	4.42	5.29	5.30	6.03
Journalism and Communications	3.90	4.67	5.32	5.63
Library Science	3.55	4.43	5.15	6.26
Literature and Languages	3.77	4.56	4.65	5.30
Math., Botany, Geology, and General Science	6.27	9.58	10.96	15.42
Philosophy and Religion	3.78	4.39	4.64	5.30
Political Science	4.21	5.23	5.57	6.14
Sociology and Anthropology	4.08	4.91	5.26	6.09
Zoology	8.04	9.51	10.31	13.49
<i>Services</i>				
Business	78.75	94.14	109.34	119.35
Law	28.46	42.84	49.70	57.65
Science and Technology	13.50	26.09	38.80	64.02
Miscellaneous	23.80	33.69	34.99	45.65
U. S. Documents	17.51	14.85	16.59	18.40
Soviet Translations	43.38	46.31	65.20	90.39

Organization for Serials Acquisitions

Who is responsible for the acquisition of serials in the library? In 49 percent of the libraries serials acquisitions are administered by a serials department, section or division. In some cases acquisition responsibility of such a department includes both current serials and backfiles; in other instances only current serials or only current periodicals, excluding annuals, transactions, etc. Some serials departments also acquire documents. Ten libraries had serial departments which did not include acquisitions responsibilities. In 1959 a check of six-

teen selected college and university libraries revealed that only one library had an organizational unit doing all serials acquisitions work.⁵

Fifty-three percent of the libraries responding felt their present serials acquisition organization was satisfactory. Dissatisfaction with their present set-up was expressed by about a fourth of those libraries with serials departments and a third of those without serials departments. Some of the suggestions for improvement included: "Centralize selection and ordering of new serial responsibilities with serials librarian," "Put serials cataloging in with serials records," "Put ordering into serials section," "Serials should order backfiles," and "Make a proper central record." Many complained of staff shortages. The desire for more centralization of serials activities seems apparent.

While there is no one "best" system for acquiring serials, the increasing importance of serials demands some standardization and specialization. In view of the increasing number of serials published, it would seem that more and more institutions will find it profitable to establish serials departments which would handle the acquisitions of serials. Underlying many of the answers in the returned questionnaires was an acute awareness that the acquisition of a serial title set in motion a chain reaction involving many decisions such as the number of copies, the matter of obtaining retrospective files, should these retrospective files be hard copy or microform, renewals, the maintenance of complete files and the problems of replacements. In addition to these acquisition decisions, one becomes involved with the bibliographical vagaries inherent in serials such as title changes, mergers, splits, frequency changes, as well as with the shepherding of claims for those items ordered.

Policies

Serial acquisition policies generally are not formalized. Of the libraries questioned, only 12 percent had a formal policy for serial acquisition. Some libraries included serials in the general acquisition policy, but the majority indicated they had no codified policy. In 1962 only 6 percent of the libraries had written statements of their serials acquisition policy. Those libraries that do not have a written policy, however, do not do their serials acquisition work by ear since unwritten guidelines have been developed over the years based on the curricula of the institution served, traditional areas of strength, new programs, and budgetary capabilities.

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Selection

The selection of serials is becoming increasingly important because of costs, numbers, space, and other housekeeping problems involved. While there are internal pressures in every library from faculty and users to have materials immediately at hand, there are economic and space factors which might make more practical cooperative acquisition of little-used titles.

The responsibility for selection of serials is divided between librarians and faculty; in some instances suggestions from other users or students are considered. Serials in subject areas are selected by the faculty in 45 percent of the libraries, by librarians in 35 percent and by a team effort in the remaining institutions. In only a few instances were general serials selected by the faculty. Seventy percent of the libraries reported selection of general serials was largely the responsibility of librarians.

Weeding is not widely practiced. Twenty-four percent of the libraries regularly review their serial titles to determine if they are still needed—one does so on a monthly basis, six annually, and four review periodically ranging from every few years to “continually by divisions.” Several libraries pointed out that, with certain title exceptions, it would cost more to do such an annual review than the amount which might be saved in cancelling a few subscriptions. Several libraries had a policy not to discontinue titles once they were acquired, based on the rationale that the selection process had been properly exercised at the time of acquisition.

When it came to placing orders for added copies of a title, almost half of the libraries did have special rules, usually requiring justification and approval of added copies to prevent unnecessary duplication and often requiring that these added copies be charged to the requestor's funds. Several of the libraries which had no rules indicated that added copies were not permitted or discouraged.

Sharing of library materials through inter-library loan, formation of groups having a regional depository, and informal arrangements are being considered more and more by libraries, especially as it pertains to little-used serials. The cost of serial sets, their increasing numbers, and the space to house them are a major concern. A recent study, *Library Cost Models: Owning versus Borrowing Serial Publications*, examines the costs incurred by four university research libraries in providing access to serial literature.⁶ Mathematical models are de-

veloped regarding use frequency and the economic factors which would make it less expensive to provide a photocopy of an article than to buy, maintain and house the serial. It is concluded that if a subscription costs \$20 a year and is not used more than about six times a year, obtaining photocopies of needed articles would be less costly.

Serial Lists in Acquisitions Work

The importance of the *Union List of Serials* and *New Serial Titles* to acquisitions work is unquestionable. However, regional union lists, produced in great numbers in recent years, have played a very small role. Over thirty libraries claimed that they made no use of them in serials acquisition work. A few found them of use in deciding whether or not to purchase a title if held in a nearby institution. About half (twenty) of the libraries had compiled and printed lists of their own holdings. Serials acquisition personnel found these useful for finding and filling in gaps, bibliographic searching, evaluation of holdings in a subject area and analyzing duplication. Seven of these libraries, however, did not use them in their serials acquisitions work.

Forms and Equipment

Multiple order forms are used by over 75 percent of the libraries for serial acquisitions. A few libraries are finding that for Latin American materials, well-written Spanish and Portuguese language form letters give the best results. "Quick" letters (exclusive of claim forms) as a means of curtailing paper work and typing costs are used by less than half of the libraries. The visible file continues to be the most popular in serials acquisition work; it is used by 76 percent of the libraries.

Electronic data equipment has made some inroads into serials acquisition work. At the beginning of this decade, Orr found that out of sixty-six libraries, nine used some electronic data equipment for fiscal control; forty-nine had no data processing equipment. Today almost 40 percent (nineteen) of the libraries returning questionnaires use such equipment in serials work. The largest use, as might be expected, was in the area of accounting. Ten libraries are using such equipment in other phases such as ordering and claiming. Twenty-two libraries indicated plans, some to be implemented immediately and some exploratory, to automate part or all of their operations within five years, while only seven libraries did not plan to use automation equipment.

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Number and Kinds of Serials Received

The number of serials handled on a current basis by the libraries returning questionnaires ranged from around 5,000 to the approximately 200,000 "live" titles received by the Library of Congress. Most of these libraries received between 15,000 and 25,000 current titles.

Many libraries were unable to show what portion of serial orders were in the subject areas of science-technology or in humanities, as they kept no such statistics. Of twenty-seven libraries who did reply, many gave estimates only. These replies indicated that between 40 and 60 percent of serial orders were in the science-technology area, while 11 to 30 percent of purchases were in the field of humanities. It has always been assumed that there was an emphasis on science-technology serials since the largest part of new serial titles appear in these fields and, in addition to being the most numerous, science and technology journals are also the most costly.

Charles M. Gottschalk and Winifred F. Desmond in their "World-wide Census of Scientific and Technical Serials" estimated that in 1961 there were published about 35,000 scientific and technical periodicals.⁷ Another idea of what the science-technology market is cluttered with comes from J. R. Porter's article in which he cites the figures of 8,000 technical reports and 9,000 to 11,000 house journals.⁸

The lack of a comprehensive bibliography permits no on-going analysis of any subject fields for serials. It is hoped general speculation and educated guesses by the subject specialists will eventually be replaced by serial data banks which can produce title citations and other data for subject areas. Eventually, it may be possible to coordinate a general program such as that at the Library of Congress with that of the specialists in isolated areas of industrial research and development. Until such control is developed the question of how comprehensive any serial acquisition program is in any subject field can only be speculated. In the meantime, the serials librarian is thankful for such guides as the *Guides to Scientific Periodicals: Annotated Bibliography*⁹ which helps in his effort to stay even with the board while facing the serious influx of serial publications in this area.

Service publications in this area are approaching the 2,000 mark and have received attention in *A Guide to the World's Abstracting and Indexing Services in Science and Technology*.¹⁰

Investment and business services create special serial acquisition

problems. They appear in many forms—on cards, loose-leaf sheets, and in continually superseding cumulations. During the past ten years the number of these services has grown significantly. W. Hausdorfer cited 776 services in 1956 based upon the definition used by the Special Libraries Association. A supplement to his *Handbook of Commercial, Financial and Information Services* in 1958 cited forty-nine new ones. The new edition which came out under the title *Directory of Business and Financial Services*¹¹ edited by Mary A. McNierney, published in 1963, listed over 1,000 services. Among the largest publishers in the field are Prentice-Hall, Commerce Clearing House and Standard & Poor's. The major categories included in this large and complex network are: advisory and interpretative, factual business information, investment, credit, and management consultation services.

Cost increases in the past ten years have been astronomical in the area of serial services. For example, one of the larger services published by Prentice-Hall has risen from \$995 in 1959 to \$1,887 for a current subscription in 1969. This can be seen in the table of comparative average prices which appeared earlier in this paper.

The number of new serial titles acquired each year depends on the size of the library's budget, the size and types of programs which the institution supports, the use of gift and exchange programs in serials acquisition work, and the relationship a library has developed relative to regional serial programs or inter-library loan activities. Over 90 percent of the libraries responded to the question relative to the number of orders placed for serial titles new to their library each year. The average figures ranged between 500 to 1,000; eight libraries placed less than 500 new orders annually.

However, when it came to reporting the number of orders placed for volumes to fill in incomplete sets, 60 percent had no information available. The remaining 40 percent ranged from one library which placed less than 100 such orders to two exceeding 3,000; most fell between 400 and 1,000 volumes.

Back Files and Reprints

Back volumes of serial files are available in several forms. The most popular among the libraries questioned are reprints and microforms. There was a decided preference for hard copy although the cost differential between microforms and reprints is a factor, especially in the case of little-used materials. Search and quote letters for original copies are still sent to dealers by many libraries.

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Reprint serials are a major development in the serials acquisition programs of most libraries. Only a few years ago serials acquisition personnel in large university research libraries, as well as college and public libraries, were compelled to buy partial sets and trust that the dealer would see to "filling in" the gaps on a search-and-quote basis. Sometimes the paper in these originals was badly deteriorated, the bindings less than sound, and the number of missing issues a problem. Ten years ago the filling in of sets of periodicals depended heavily on the educated searching done by out-of-print dealers in this country and abroad. Only a few years ago the daily mail in large research libraries carried offers from dealers for pieces of sets which their records indicated the library needed or *ULS* showed were lacking. The number of these personalized offers has been scaled down considerably by the wide market in serial reprints since the early 1960's.

The selection of available serial reprint titles multiplies daily. This is a high-dollar market moving toward a 45 million dollar annual business.¹² An examination of the large reprint catalogs turns up thousands of available titles; this material is now under reasonably good bibliographic control. Although good publishers and high quality reprints are beginning to crowd out the inadequate, some caution in buying must be exercised still. A number of reprint companies are becoming involved in "hard-sell" campaigns. Titles which are so esoteric or of a type that a regional copy should suffice are pushed and advertisements for reprint serials are widely distributed. Faculty recommendations often compel a library to obtain little-used serials at substantial cost. In some instances a title is reprinted by several companies. There are also instances of wide deviations in prices.

The scholarly reprint business has developed rapidly, dominated in the United States and Europe by a very few companies. Reprint companies received enthusiastic cooperation from libraries who, prompted by a concern for scholarship, made their files representing years of collection effort available to the reprinter.

Today a new library with adequate funds can readily acquire a complete file on good paper (some guaranteed for 300 years or more) with a sound binding. It is in most cases an error to purchase a back file of original volumes to fill in broken sets if first one does not take into account the condition of the binding and the paper of the volumes now in the collection. There is little reason to believe that the original volumes being offered will be in any better condition than the ones you have. A check of the various reprint catalogs often shows

that the money differential between the unbound original and the bound reprint is compensated for by not having to be worried about paper preservation and rebinding problems.

Allocations for Serials Acquisitions

Slightly over 50 percent of the libraries have a comprehensive serial fund from which all serials are purchased—periodicals, newspapers, proceedings, annuals, etc. The rest use general book funds often divided into subject areas or into departmental allocations. These subject areas, in turn, are sometimes divided into various groups such as new subscriptions, periodicals, continuations, newspapers, etc.

Funds for back files are allocated by slightly more than 35 percent. In the majority of the libraries, general funds or subject area allocations are used for retrospective buying.

Of these libraries, 42 percent allocated money for the annual purchase of serial titles new to their library. This ranged from eight libraries who used from 1 to 5 percent of the book budget to one library which set aside over 40 percent of its budget for new serial titles. The same number, 42 percent, did not earmark part of their budget for the acquisition of new titles. Comments from libraries not having specific allocations for new serials indicated that the purse strings were held by departmental librarians. Thus, building up the library's general serial collection was controlled by subject area specialists and influenced by their specific needs. As a result, new serial titles frequently must compete with monograph purchases for funds. In these instances continuance or discontinuance of a subscription could be controlled outside the serials department, if there is one.

Although libraries are actively buying back files, if the growth of the serial reprint market is any gauge, less than half are making any specific allocation for such purchases. Allocations from book budgets for the filling in of incomplete sets ranged from fifteen institutions who used from 1 to 15 percent to one institution using between 30 and 40 percent of its book budget.

A centralized control of serial funds is advantageous in developing a balanced serial collection. When the administrative control of funds for serials purchases is placed outside of library channels or even outside of the serials or acquisition department, purchase of peripheral or interdisciplinary titles, the maintenance of subscriptions and the building of the serials collection become complicated.

For the most part, the bid system is unpopular with agents and

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serial librarians alike. However, in a few situations such a procedure is required by law. In the case of academic and research libraries, the annual or biennial bid system for serials has all but disappeared. Of the forty-nine libraries responding, only one sends out lists of current serials for bids and does so because state law requires it.

Agents and Services

In 1955 R. W. Orr observed that:

The services of dealers are employed on the basis of the quality of service rendered and on the discounts offered. The choice of dealers is also influenced by such additional factors as geographical location, specialization in publications of certain categories, or of countries. Some of the large research libraries are showing a tendency to place their orders for foreign serials with dealers located in the countries where the publications originate. In many cases the dealers selected are the ones serving as agents for the Farmington Plan.¹³

Many of these practices are still in vogue in 1970. However, two things mentioned are changing. First, the subscription discount has all but passed into history; in its place a service charge or operating cost is frequently substituted. Second, is the spreading tendency for libraries to order expensive serials directly from the publisher to avoid the agent's service charge. This growing practice does not single out foreign sources as referred to in the above quote, but is even more applicable to domestic publishers today. The titles ordered directly usually are in the science-technology field since they generally carry the high price tags, but other fields are also involved.

However, handling a subscription without the middleman can have some drawbacks. Additional work is necessary to process payment for a large number of individual companies as compared with having a central billing source. An agent can sometimes supply missing order information and expedite the placing of an order with an esoteric source, although this service is disappearing. There once was also the comforting feeling that placing orders was the agent's business, and his experience could reduce the necessity for sending orders to a great many places. Quality service from an agent can provide assistance in riding herd on a great many orders, troublesome details are left in the hands of the expert.

The question now becomes one of expertise and how much one

is willing to pay for it. Service charges and lack of multiple year rates can be measured in dollars and cents. An across the board service charge of 10 percent on a \$5.00 title may not appear significant and even be well worth the cost to have an agent handle the order. Examining this a bit farther, however, the across the board charge for a scientific journal billed at \$55.00 becomes a \$5.50 service cost, or the price one is paying for the first journal including service costs. If a multiple-year rate is involved, the chances of receiving this rate are remote if it is handled by an agent. This may have meant that the \$5.00 journal could have been obtained on a three-year basis for something like \$12.00 if dealing direct. Using the agent, thus, could cost the library for these two titles over a period of three years, if the price remained the same, \$21.00. The multiple-year rate also carried with it the insurance against subscription price increases for the period. In essence, using a dealer's service is a matter of buying clerical help out of the book budget, and this is usually necessary in most serial operations.

All libraries use subscription agents; the number of agents used varies. Of the forty-nine libraries involved here, forty-three used more than one agent—twenty of them used two agents, four used more than seven agents. Six libraries used agents for special categories such as science-technology, humanities, medical, Slavic and social sciences.

The number of orders placed direct with the publisher ranged from three libraries who entered 5 percent of their orders in this way to four libraries who give 50 percent of all orders to direct. The median point fell between 20 and 25 percent of serial orders being placed directly. Comments ranged from "We order direct only when agents can't handle" to "There is a tendency toward more and more direct orders." This last phrase is an indication of the direction in which one aspect of serials acquisitions work is proceeding.

Standing Orders

Standing orders can be handled in a variety of ways: they can be placed directly with the publisher, through a dealer or a subscription agent and, in turn, these may be on a "till forbid" basis, annual renewal, multiple-year, or, considering the ingenuity and individualism of serials personnel, a number of variations on these approaches.

The use of "till forbid" arrangements have proven by far to be the most popular way of handling subscriptions, as forty-two libraries made clear in the questionnaires. Of course, even while relying heav-

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ily on "till forbid" procedures, there are always certain serials which must be handled directly with the publisher only. In some cases of the "till forbid" arrangement, there are instances when a multiple-year subscription is paid for because of the significant discounts involved. The "till forbid" and the multiple-year subscription do not demand an either/or choice. The two can be, and are, worked in harmony.

"Till forbid" orders represent a definite time-saving factor in the acquisitions work of serials. They are a step toward insurance against missing issues, bibliographical changes which might be overlooked in a dealer-library relationship, unnoticed deaths, mergers and, in the case of multiple-year renewals, price increases. Only 6 percent of the libraries did not use "till forbid" because of institutional or government restriction.

Among the serial acquisition headaches is the publication that cannot be acquired on a standing order basis either by the library directly or through an agent. Only three libraries indicated they could count on agents to perform the renewal function. Over 60 percent of the libraries follow through themselves by using first-of-the-month renewal files, notations on calendars, flags, tickler systems, looseleaf books, notations on cards and a variety of other home remedies. Seventeen libraries passed on this question. It is apparent that here is an area where a subscription agent who is well along in a computer-based system could take over a bothersome area.

Blanket Orders

Over the years there have been a number of special and general blanket order approaches which include serials. However, since there is an article in this issue on "The Blanket Order" only brief reference is given here in terms of the acquisition of both domestic and foreign serials.

In spite of the increased use of blanket orders, serial librarians have considered blanket orders involving serial publications cautiously. A number of reasons may account for this. Blanket orders for serials have not been found as dependable as the straight standing order for a title. The idea is deceptively simple at first glance; however, blanket orders create selection problems, budgeting problems, claiming problems, and most of all, add to a lessening of bibliographical control of serials. The agent many times simply does not recognize monographs in series and gives them the same handling as books which causes internal problems in the individual library.

Exclusive of publications received on institutionally affiliated memberships in societies, associations, etc., twenty-seven libraries said they do not use blanket orders in acquiring serials; eighteen said they did, some of these also included memberships and Latin American Co-operative Acquisition Program (LACAP). Of those using blanket orders, ten libraries used them with commercial presses and thirteen with university presses. Blanket orders, used intelligently and with discretion can be an asset to a serial operation. The phrase "with discretion" needs to be emphasized.

Gift and Exchange Programs

Of the methods used for acquiring serials, purchases far outstrip gifts and exchanges. Eighteen libraries had no figures as to the proportion of their acquisitions obtained through purchase, gift or exchange. Out of the thirty-one libraries commenting on gift and exchange receipts, six libraries indicated they receive as much as 40 and 50 percent through such sources which included P.L. 480 receipts.

Ninety-five percent of the libraries have gift and exchange programs in operation. Attitudes toward the programs were, on the whole, ambivalent. Many librarians felt it was useful, especially since it sometimes was the only way to obtain some serials; however, more felt the program did not pay its own way.

The acquisition of serials through gift and exchange produces a special group of problems. It is not conclusive from the opinions expressed whether or not exchange units are really functional today or if they are vestiges of an era when people could devote more time to shepherding gift and exchange relationships, such as actively recruiting exchange partners and maintaining the program. However, the many area programs now established continue to make it necessary to work out some forms of exchange for certain institutional or governmental publications. This may be done through purchases of subscriptions in this country for titles to be sent abroad, or it may remain within the province of the institution using its own publications for barter. The former procedure has gained favor in many libraries having little in the way of institutional publications to offer.

In 1962 Orr reported that 45 percent of the libraries were satisfied with their gifts and exchange programs. Of those who replied to this question in 1969, 34 percent were satisfied. The negative reactions were usually qualified. Typical comments were "Not enough titles

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available to exchange," "Value of material received is uneven, some is not of research value," "Poor service, erratic receipts," "Too big to keep up properly," and "Too much time and too little in return." Almost all institutions felt gift and exchange programs were necessary, and even had great potential. However, the majority felt that they were not adequately staffed and did not have control of a substantial number of publications to offer in exchange which would make such a program profitable.

The United States Book Exchange (USBE) is used in a limited way as a source of back issues of serials by the majority of university libraries. Here, too, it is often found that the staff time required to check USBE periodical lists is disproportionate for the most part when compared to the material acquired. However, smaller libraries having adequate staff can certainly make good use of the extensive resources USBE provides at small cost.

Foreign Serials

The increase in the number of foreign serials acquired by libraries can, in many cases, be attributed to the large number of area study programs which have developed in the past ten years. Programs for Africa, East Europe, Latin America, Asia and other areas are expanding and there is a heightened demand for serials, particularly the government journals, of these areas.

Often the establishment of area study programs calls for "crash buying" of materials with limited personnel. An inquiry into the problem of support of area programs showed that of the thirty responding to this question, twenty-two libraries received special funds for materials while only ten libraries received special funds for staff, and in these cases usually only token amounts. The serials acquisitions work for these programs was absorbed into the daily work load, producing a severe strain on the regular staff.

Sources for obtaining foreign serial publications are constantly being explored and expanded. The Farmington Plan, P.L. 480 and LACAP have brought to United States libraries thousands of foreign serial titles. ARL's Foreign Newspaper Microfilm Program, which now would draw on resources of the Center for Research Libraries, the Library of Congress and other ARL members, will give greater coverage and bibliographic control in this area. Libraries are using increased blanket order coverage through agents, publishers and official government printing offices in the different countries themselves.

Bibliographic identification and supply present difficulties in many cases. Among acquisition problems pointed out by libraries were "Few agents who can handle well," "Direct communication with publishers is difficult," "Little or no feedback on outstanding orders," "Time lag in receipt of invoice and receipt of material," and "Slackness in publishing and distribution arrangements."

The Farmington Plan was originated with the intention of assuring at least one copy of important foreign research materials being acquired by a U.S. research library and is under the guidance of the Association of Research Libraries. Certain libraries have accepted responsibility for acquiring materials in certain subject and/or geographic areas. There are now eight resources committees operating under this plan providing coverage for Africa, Latin America, South Asia, West Europe, Far East, Middle East, Slavic and East Europe.

The Farmington Plan brings to the attention of participating libraries new serial titles. It provides a selection tool by sending an initial issue of a serial to the library covering the particular subject area involved.

Statistics for the Farmington Plan were compiled up to 1965. However, they did not include serials, government publications, newspapers, etc., and numbered monographic series were excluded from the Plan altogether. Thus, no figures of serial growth through this plan are available other than what each library may have compiled itself. The University of Illinois Library has kept statistics of the new continuations publications (titles issued less than three times a year) for a number of years. In 1963/64 Illinois was receiving 563 continuation titles as a result of the Plan. In 1968/69 this had been increased to 1,364 different titles for which standing orders were placed. Multiplying the acquisition potentials the Farmington Plan provides other Association of Research Library libraries, it is quite apparent that this cooperative acquisition approach is bringing to the country many new serial titles. Some of them would very likely have been overlooked without the diligence of the Farmington Plan agent for the particular area involved.

Even though there are bilateral ties with other institutions, libraries continue to make deliberate unilateral decisions regarding acquisition in specialized areas. The result is a heightened competition for publications already in short supply, and increase in costs for serials. Some thought has been expressed to the effect that the Farmington Plan is now outdated. It has been suggested that an acquisition program

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similar to P.L. 480 under Title IIC with a national lending library would be more effective. This central lending source would supplement basic serial publishing and resource materials acquired by the individual library. In the case of serials, this would be particularly helpful since these are not usually available on inter-library loan.¹⁴

The P.L. 480 program continues to be one of the most prolific sources of foreign serial titles from the areas presently covered. Forty U.S. libraries receive complete sets of P.L. 480 materials for one or more areas while 310 libraries receive English language materials.¹⁵

The number of serial titles received from each country has been determined from the latest available P.L. 480 accessions list containing the annual list of serials for that country, with the exception of Yugoslavia, and are as follows:

India	5,460	Yugoslavia	889
Pakistan	792	Ceylon	180
U.A.R.	576	Nepal	84
Israel	1,656	Indonesia	228

It was found that forty-seven of the forty-nine libraries returning questionnaires participated in the P.L. 480 program and the breakdown by countries was as follows:

India	44	Yugoslavia	20
Pakistan	42	Ceylon	19
U.A.R.	33	Nepal	20
Israel	24	Indonesia	25

Forty libraries stated this program brought in valuable serial publications to the library, while three felt it did not.

Opinion was almost evenly divided on serial acquisition problems created by this program—twenty libraries felt there were problems, while twenty-three did not. There were such problems as slowness in receipts, claiming, duplications, storage, and language difficulties.

Although there are thousands of titles in English and foreign languages being collected by U.S. libraries through the P.L. 480 program, many are of such a nature that they will receive very little use, and it would seem regional cooperation would suffice. In line with this possible approach, the Center for Research Libraries became a full recipient of all P.L. 480 serials effective January, 1969. Thus, member libraries should now find it possible to screen more closely the P.L. 480 serial titles they keep. The acquisition of Farmington serials is

an obligation to the total program, and the library is expected to keep these materials; selection is only within defined limits and the library is invoiced accordingly. The P.L. 480 serials on the other hand are in the nature of gifts and the participating libraries are free to weed out those titles it does not want to keep.

Unlike other cooperative plans such as Farmington and LACAP, where libraries pay as they go, the P.L. 480 program allows serial title commitments without any cash outlay. Some libraries have been looking at this "sleeper" with concern for the future. The titles being received, along with the binding which is now also provided on P.L. 480, could add up to a large funding operation if it became necessary to take over such subscriptions. Six of the libraries responding to the questionnaire shared the concern expressed by one of them, "The problem of picking up subscriptions if P.L. 480 aid is withdrawn could be substantial."

As of June 1, 1967, thirty-eight institutions participated in the Latin American Cooperative Acquisition Program. Acquisition statistics for serial titles sent to this country through LACAP operation could not be estimated. M. J. Savary cited the number of "imprints" received from 1960 through 1965 from the twenty-six countries covered by LACAP but gives no breakdown as to the number of serial titles involved.¹⁶ Stechert-Hafner regularly issues catalogs of publications acquired under the LACAP programs. However, serials are not listed separately.

The libraries participating in the P.L. 480 and Farmington Plan programs belong to a closed shop. However, LACAP does not operate in that way but invites libraries to participate in the program and tailor their blanket order to suit their needs.

Although many libraries feel their needs are adequately met by LACAP, some do not use this service or feel that the plan does not solve their serials acquisition problems in this area. The Latin American serials situation was described as follows: "Service and communication erratic," "Difficulty in finding reliable dealers," "Almost impossible to deal with these publications," "Difficulty in starting subscriptions and maintaining standing orders," and "Claims are seldom filled."

Another area of expansion of serial acquisitions in recent years is Africa and its developing nations. Bibliographical identity of official publications, of which a large number are serials, has been greatly assisted by a number of rather substantial bibliographical guides

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which in addition to standard bibliographic information also cite libraries having the publication. Libraries are having difficulty in locating proper agents. They complain that it is hard to find out what is available, that they have to order official material direct, there is a lack of standing order facilities for many government publications, and that it is hard to get publications of exiled political groups.

Areas which present peculiar acquisition problems include Cuba and China, as a U.S. license to purchase must be obtained and even then procurement and payment problems must be overcome. Obtaining serials from the U.S.S.R. is largely dependent on exchange arrangements and this is not likely to change in the near future. Replacement or back issues of Russian serials often are unavailable because of their limited runs.

On the bright side of the foreign serial acquisitions picture is Japan. Libraries reported very good service with no complaints other than that they themselves did not have much to offer for exchange purposes.

In connection with foreign serials, a question was asked about the National Program for Acquisitions and Cataloging (NPAC) and its value to serial acquisition work. The responses, besides showing divided opinions, also revealed an apparent lack of acquaintance with NPAC by a number of libraries. Seventeen libraries felt it benefited them while twelve libraries felt it was of no value for serial acquisition work because of its slowness. Although this program has great potential, the cataloging and availability of cards is still too slow at this time to make it a vital force in serials acquisition work.

Over the years efforts have been made to control serials through union lists, national bibliographies coupled with up-dating services. Although most of these works have proved important and impressive, some markedly so, such as the *Union List of Serials*, they now must be considered as way stations and not the ultimate goal. The control of serial publications requires an accelerated access to basic bibliographic data which cannot be achieved through present bibliographic citation procedures. The Association of Research Libraries has been concerned with a new approach to the bibliographical control of serials.

In 1966 the ARL established a Serials Inventory Committee at its Board Meeting of July 9. This committee was subsequently attached as a sub-committee to the Joint Committee on the Union List of Serials. In turn, this new Sub-Committee asked the Library of Congress to develop a proposal for a National Serials Data Program. This

eventually resulted in the working paper prepared by Elaine W. Woods, *National Serials Data Program (Phase I); A Working Paper*¹⁷ from which the following information has been taken.

The National Serials Data Program, it is hoped, will lead to the development of a national data bank of machine-readable information on all serial publications. The program will be developed in four phases:

- Phase I — Preliminary Design
- Phase II — Reduction to Practice
- Phase III — Pilot Project and Planning for Large-Scale Conversion
- Phase IV — Conversion and Implementation of the Total Program

The first phase of the program has been undertaken as a joint effort of the Library of Congress, the National Agricultural Library and the National Library of Medicine. The Joint Committee on the Union List of Serials, who proposed the program, will serve in an advisory capacity.

The over-all objective of this program is to create a computer-based central store of data relating to the description and location of all known serials, from which many services could be provided, such as:

1. An exhaustive identification of the world's serial literature.
2. Information on holdings and locations for all serials.
3. Machine-readable data for local serial processing which would eliminate duplicate keypunching.
4. Acquisition and selection tools, such as print-outs of accession lists.
5. A basis for cooperative acquisition programs.
6. A basis for standardization.
7. A method of measuring abstracting and indexing coverage, including an analysis of patterns of overlap or gaps in coverage.
8. A unique registry of serials.
9. A means of publishing and disseminating special union lists by categories, e.g., by region, by discipline (subject), by abstracting and indexing coverage, and for maintaining current published union lists of serials.
10. A serial record maintenance system which would include centralized notification of birth, death, mergers, and changes of title.
11. Aid to cooperative microfilming projects.

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Many of the libraries feel the program holds promise. Some are holding off on automation hoping to have a program compatible with the National Serials Data Program. Most (thirty), however, feel it is too early to know if the program will be useful to them or will affect serials acquisition procedures. Typical comments were: "It will provide standardized bibliographic data," "May make it economically possible to convert present records to computer system," "We may be able to forgo purchasing expensive and obscure items," "If NSDP has all information available (price, classification, etc.) it can speed acquisition and cataloging work, especially if not yet picked up by NST. Even after picked up by NST, it could save time by providing the entry in machine readable form."

It is still a bit early to tell, but when this NSD Program is developed, it could be a distinct help in serials acquisitions work. The most recent development has been the publication in August 1969 of *Serials, A MARC Format*, which is a working document comprised of seventy-two pages. This "format" was prepared by Elaine W. Woods and Lenore S. Maruyama under the direction of Henriette D. Avram, Assistant Coordinator, Information Systems Office with the assistance of others in the Information Systems Office. The publication presents the MARC format for serials and is an exceedingly important forward step in the development of the National Serials Data Program.¹⁸

However, at the present time serial librarians must continue to cope with such problems as the vanishing subscription agent and reduced services, the increasing number of serials and their inherent headaches, and the high costs of current titles and retrospective volumes. Cooperative acquisition programs combined with shared-use plans, particularly for little-used serials, need to be explored in greater depth than has been done to date. Many libraries around the country, public, college and university, have automated their operations to various degrees. The tendency has been toward individual solutions hinging on the needs, staff and funds of a particular library. The automation of serial programs is a difficult problem which calls for action on a national scale. Hopefully, this will be provided with the development of the National Serials Data Program.

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