



Access

News from the University Libraries

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CONTROLLING THE COSTS OF CURRENT SERIALS

Escalating serials costs have been a common phenomenon for libraries for a number of years. This is a matter of particular concern at Notre Dame because our overall budget has not kept pace with the inflationary factor in serials. As a consequence, despite several systematic reviews of our subscription lists, the funds available for the acquisition of monographic material have been declining, with the result that we are acquiring an ever smaller proportion of current monographic literature. The situation will worsen when the currently available NEH funds are exhausted, as these have provided a cushion for retrospective buying in a number of academic areas.

Viewed statistically, in 1974-75 serials and parts/sets expenditures represented 62% of the University funds allocated to the Libraries for acquisitions. In 1977-78, it was appropriately 72%. It is currently projected that in 1980-81, this figure will be almost 100%! The only funds available for monographic buying will be endowment income, cash gifts, and grants and other outside funds. While monies from these latter sources have been increasing significantly over the past few years, our situation in 1980-81 will be very difficult; indeed, there may be as little as \$160,000 available for monographs, apart from NEH funds.

Nor is this phenomenon one effecting only a few disciplines: inflation has been almost as rampantly active in the humanities and social sciences as in science. To complicate the situation, important new journals are being started regularly in all disci-

plines. These new publications cannot be ignored if the University Libraries are to truly serve as a research resource. Finally, a freeze of the current serials lists would be particularly inappropriate, since it seems clear that these lists contain at least some titles that would be less important than a number of new periodicals.

To avoid a serials freeze and at the same time to insure that a minimally reasonable amount is available for buying books, a number of steps are being taken. First, the library is carefully and critically reviewing those journals not currently assigned to a specific academic department. This will include some general reference titles, general interest and popular periodicals, and education and library science journals. Secondly, given the fiscal situation, it is essential that duplication be avoided wherever possible. Accordingly, after appropriate consultation with academic departments, virtually all duplicate subscriptions will be cancelled. Demonstrated need, rather than convenience, will have to be the guiding principle for retaining a duplicate subscription. Thirdly, we will be looking critically at areas where the library purchases, on a current basis, materials also acquired by the Center for Research Libraries. Except under the most unusual circumstances, the library will cancel its subscription, since access to such material is readily available through the Center.

The amount of money available for new subscriptions will depend in good part on

on the savings realized by these efforts. In addition, a special standing committee on serials is being established, consisting of the Assistant Director, Collection Development (chairperson), the Arts & Humanities Bibliographer, the University Science Librarian, the University Engineering Librarian, the Head of the Acquisitions Department, the Head of the Reference Department, and the Head of the Collection Management Department. The Committee is charged with reviewing and approving all requests for both new serials subscriptions and cancellations of existing subscriptions. It will also be asked to advise the Director on general policies effecting the Libraries' serials program and the funding of that program. Detailed information on procedures for both new subscription requests and cancellations is available from the Collection Development Office, which can also deal with any questions which may arise. Finally, although this is not the best time of year to conduct a systematic review of all subscriptions, suggestions for cancellations of less important titles may be submitted to this Committee. Lists, by fund, of serials titles to which we subscribe will be made available to academic departments by the Collection Development Office.

The various steps which we are undertaking will adversely effect almost every area of the University. We are taking such steps most reluctantly and carefully and will try

to minimize the impact of our tight fiscal situation.

The Provost is well aware of the budgetary difficulties of the Libraries and of the real shortcomings of the Libraries' existing collections. During the current fiscal year he has made additional funds available to the Libraries to build up resources in music and to help alleviate our general fiscal difficulties. I am confident that the understanding and support of the Provost will continue and that the pursuit of significant additional endowment for the Libraries will be successful. I am hopeful that the convergence of these two factors will significantly improve the Libraries' fiscal situation. It is important to understand, however, that the age of library self-sufficiency is over (if indeed there ever was one) and that future library adequacies will be judged on the basis of careful marshaling of available internal resources and the efficient exploitation of external and cooperative programs such as the Center for Research Libraries.

The year ahead will not be an easy one. I am convinced, however, that we can deal with this situation in a way that will have minimal impact on the availability of appropriate resources for the students and faculty of this University.

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