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Issues in Law Library Acquisitions: An Analysis*

Kent Milunovich**

Mr. Milunovich explores issues and trends in the field of acquisitions by reviewing selected library literature and placing it in the context of law libraries.

¶1 Although journals in the field of librarianship often include articles pertaining to acquisitions, they usually are geared to a broad audience and rarely tailored specifically to law libraries. Some of these articles, however, provide information that is germane to law librarians who work in acquisitions. The purpose of this article is to consider the best of recent writing about acquisitions against the context of law libraries. Where appropriate, distinctions are drawn between acquisitions in academic and nonacademic law libraries. The topics discussed include shrinking acquisitions resources, changes in legal publishing, building and managing an acquisitions program, preservation, outsourcing, gifts, and the Internet.

Shrinking Acquisitions Resources

¶2 Many law libraries have experienced a shrinkage in acquisitions resources in recent years. A significant factor contributing to this phenomenon is a clear trend of price increases that has existed since the late 1970s.[1] During the period from 1973 to 1996, for example, when the Consumer Price Index showed an increase of 253 percent, the average cost of legal serials rose 495 percent.[2] During that same time period, the most dramatic increase was in the category of legal continuations, which rose an astounding 1,006 percent.[3] Many explanations and justifications have been offered for these price increases: a strong U.S. dollar, a weak U.S. dollar, a high inflation rate abroad, or whatever is needed to justify such action. The fact is that for almost two decades, the price of legal continuations

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1. Leonard Schrift, *Is It Possible to Develop Libraries Without Resources*, J. LIBR. ADMIN., Vol. 19, no. 2, 1993, at 19, 20.
2. *See* KENDALL F. SVENGALIS, LEGAL INFORMATION BUYER'S GUIDE & REFERENCE MANUAL 2000, at 14 (2000).
3. *See id.*

(and the related cost of supplementation) has risen, and always at a rate higher than the overall inflation rate in the world economy. The impact of these increases on libraries has been an erosion of purchasing power for new acquisitions. And unfortunately, the increases have been coupled with a consistent pattern of budget and funding cuts over the last ten or so years to further lessen the resources available for acquisitions.

¶3 The problem of shrinking budgets has had a more onerous effect on state, court, and county libraries than on academic law libraries. While subscription cancellations and reduced book acquisitions may have reduced the growth rate in academic law libraries, they haven't yet experienced a zero or negative growth rate as have many nonacademic law libraries. Indeed, many smaller state, court, and county law libraries have had large-scale discontinuations of subscriptions during the past ten years.

¶4 One reason that publishers have successfully increased the price of looseleafs and supplements is that some law libraries are competing with other law libraries that can afford to keep up with the increases. Law firms can recover these expenses through a higher client-billing rate. Private law schools can recover expenses through passing on the cost to others in the form of tuition increases. But other types of law libraries usually don't have a similar means of recovering expenses.

¶5 It is true that the notion of shrinking budgets has different relevance in different environments. In many law schools, for example, there are stable funding sources that accommodate increasing subscription costs without crises. However, in recent years, matters have gotten worse for some law libraries. While price inflation has continued unabated, library operational and acquisitions funds have become more scarce due to state and federal government budget cuts.[4] Law libraries responded to increases in supplementation costs by evaluating what materials were particularly necessary to keep up to date and by discontinuing those titles that were not deemed critical for the collection as a whole.[5]

¶6 In part as a result of budgetary constraints, smaller law libraries in particular have been attracted to technological solutions. Legal authority, such as cases

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4. These budget cuts are less germane to private law school libraries, which are comparatively unencumbered by economic constraints imposed by federal and state governments.

5. *See* Joe Stephens, *Cost-Saving Tips*, CRIV SHEET, Nov. 1998, at 8 (*contained in* AALL SPECTRUM, Nov. 1998). By way of illustrating how paying increased supplementation costs leaves nothing for new acquisitions, Stephens suggests closely tracking price increases in specific titles over several years. Presenting that information to lawyers and judges can have a potential chilling effect on price increases, provided that publishers know that price increases are being monitored. *See also* Richard Humphrey, *Cost-Saving Tips*, CRIV SHEET, Nov. 1996, at 3 (*contained in* AALL SPECTRUM, Nov. 1996). In countering the adverse effects of rising serial, loose-leaf, and newsletter subscription prices, Humphrey advocates pulling "questionable" titles from the library's daily mail. "Questionable" means those titles that don't fit the library's current collection development goals or that might not have curricula that require their support. Ultimately, the library should delete those titles from the collection, replace them with a less expensive alternative, or keep them.

and statutes, has become much more commonplace on the Internet in recent years. Though not a cure-all, this access to information through technology has given the library immense new capabilities and has become a crucial tool in the management of the library itself. Technology provides a potent tool in matters related to data handling: storage, access, searching, relating, and retrieval.[6] As such, it enhances the library's role as an information center and as a research support resource.

¶7 It is only recently that electronic technology has begun to replace print resources.[7] There have been two relevant factors for acquisitions librarians to consider in choosing one format or the other. First, the reliance of the courts on the printed page for legal citation will keep primary materials around for a long time, even if the issues surrounding vendor- and medium-neutral citation are resolved. Second, all other factors being equal, cost-per-use is the best criterion on which to make decisions about choice of format.[8] The implementation of electronic formats can have a compelling upside, particularly for smaller nonacademic law libraries with space limitations.[9]

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6. *See* Schrift, *supra* note 1, at 25.
7. *See* JoAnn Hounshell, *Acquisitions*, TECHNICAL SERVICES L. LIBR., Mar. 1998, at 7. Hounshell focuses on some basic issues to consider in purchasing electronic subscriptions. She defines an electronic subscription as "any full text abstract or index published originally in or converted to an electronic format, including online databases, CD-ROMs and electronic journals." *Id.* She suggests four issues to consider:
   1. Methods used in acquiring print subscriptions do not always work well in acquiring electronic subscriptions. To this end, Hounshell advocates having a checklist of questions to ask the service provider regarding the specifics of an electronic subscription:
      a. What is the price and what is the price based on? Is there an academic discount?
      b. How many simultaneous users are allowed under their pricing structure?
      c. How is the price affected if the library acquires multiple formats, such as a loose-leaf ser vice available in print and electronically?
      d. What are the system requirements for accessing the electronic subscriptions?
      e. Is IP access available for Internet-accessed subscriptions?
      f. What type and how much technical support will the publisher provide?
      g. Is a trial subscription available and can the length of the trial subscription be extended?
   2. Librarians should consider ownership issues relating to electronic subscriptions. For example, will the library own all of the data, any of the data, or only the compiled database? Will the license agreement allow the institution to retain a right to archive the data?
   3. Who will have access to the electronic materials? Hounshell suggests that acquisitions librarians should negotiate the broadest range of access options.
   4. In addition to the traditional collection development activities, the identification and acquisition of electronic resources in support of the institution's educational mission has become a major focus for many academic law libraries. Acquisitions departments must now address the same mundane issues that arise with print resources (e.g., maintaining order/payment/receipt records, cataloging and processing materials). *Id.* at 8–9.
8. *See* SVENGALIS, *supra* note 2, at 112–23. Svengalis provides a cogent analysis of CD-ROM products vis-à-vis print and online resources. For example, he suggests that CD-ROMs are more desirable than books for accessing regulations, *Shepard's Citations*, legal forms, and specialized topical loose-leaf materials in such fields as tax and environmental law. *Id.* at 115.
9. *See* Pamela Bluh, *Acquisitions for a New Century*, 88 L. LIBR. J. 90, 93 (1996). Discussing ownership versus access, Bluh suggests that for most law libraries, comprehensive collection development is not feasible, so alternative means must be found to satisfy the needs of the patrons. Progressively

¶8 Leonard Schrift argues that the way to address the problem of budgetary constraints is for the library to change its view of itself internally and change its posture externally.[10] The library should not view itself as a passive and reactive "nonprofit" organization, but rather as an active, dynamic, and assertive organization whose aim is to seize the initiative in the pursuit of its objectives.

¶9 Law libraries are in a position to generate some revenue, but usually only enough to underwrite a portion of their expenses. Much can be done, however, to control expenses while pursuing collection development goals. The library must first define the purpose and the objectives of its collection. This accomplished, each library should consider the optimal balance in its collection by kind of material and by type and format of publications. This balancing must always be done in the context of anticipated future developments. Once established, the library's collection development policy must be codified into a clear, rigid formula embodying the library's collection objectives.[11] This formula will become the library's most potent weapon in its struggle to control expenditures and keep them within reasonable range. The formula represents the library's policy on the future development of the collection.

Changes in Legal Publishing

¶10 The legal publishing companies of today reflect the results of a decade of consolidations, mergers, and acquisitions. These business restructurings have brought several profound changes in the publishing industry, changes that, in turn, affect the library community.

¶11 More than ever, the responsibility for decision making is now in the hands of executives with a financial and merchandising background. Such people are likely to view the books and serials of their company as products, judging them mostly in terms of profitability.[12] Thus, the publisher is concerned with the imperative of "profit and loss" and cash flow considerations, and less sensitive to the needs of libraries.[13]

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greater emphasis is being placed on the rapid response time and the delivery of information in electronic form. *See also* Robert L. Buchwalter, *Collection Development in the Large Law Library*, *in* LAW LIBRARIANSHIP: A HANDBOOK FOR THE ELECTRONIC AGE 151, 161 (Patrick E. Kehoe et al. eds., 1995) (discusses space limitations and the ramifications of those limitations on format selection).

10. Schrift, *supra* note 1, at 29.
11. *See id.* at 30.
12. *See id.* at 22. *But see* e-mail from Steve Elkins, Head of Technical Services, University of Nevada, Las Vegas Law Library (Sept. 24, 1999) (on file with author). Elkins suggests that the phenomenon of mergers in legal publishing is perhaps the most significant force in law library acquisitions, not because prices went up but because the continuity, maintenance, and accessibility of the publications dissolved into chaos. He acknowledges that such chaos has had a cost impact during the past ten years, particularly when a new publisher would reissue an existing set at great cost.
13. *But see* Hugh Yarrington, *Pricing Legal Publications: A Publisher's Perspective*, CRIV SHEET, Feb. 1997, at 4 (*contained in* AALL SPECTRUM, Feb. 1997). Yarrington notes that the pricing considerations faced by publishers today are virtually the same as they've always faced, but that new media

¶12 Another consequence of the consolidation of the industry is the creation of publishing monopolies.[14] As a result of such mergers as Thomson's buyout of West Publishing in 1996, most aspects of legal publishing today are dominated by a small number of companies maintaining an overwhelming share of the marketplace. The resulting problems for the library and scholarly communities can be acute, as publishers, insulated by copyright protection, have the means of controlling the market through restricting competition.[15]

¶13 Another adverse consequence of the mergers has been the decrease in quality of sales support provided to customers. Where once publishing representatives would peruse a library collection to ensure that everything was up to date, now they must generate more sales. This new focus works to the detriment of supporting those materials already in place. Many customers have been dismayed to receive statements in which past due invoices are listed randomly among current charges, making it much more difficult to pay the bill.

¶14 Customer service departments have merged, resulting in a decrease in the personal attention that was previously accorded to customer needs. Gone are the days of calling a rep to order a replacement loose-leaf page. Companies have subdivided territories, resulting in the assignment of multiple reps to a single customer and making it difficult to know whom to contact for what.

¶15 The changes within legal publishing companies have presented a plethora of challenges to acquisitions librarians. Thanks in large part to the efforts of Ken Svengalis and his *Legal Information Buyer's Guide and Reference Manual*,[16] law libraries have responded to these challenges by controlling expenditures, a trend that, hopefully, will continue.

Building and Managing an Acquisitions Program

¶16 Now that we have considered the role of the law library budget, its evolution over time, and some of the forces that might affect it, we are ready to explore how to build and maintain an acquisitions program. This discussion has greatest

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have brought many new issues into the equation. Publishers aren't sure how to deal with many of those issues. He further suggests that pricing is more complex and difficult than ever before. In discussing the real costs of electronic publishing, Yarrington concludes that in trying to make new kinds of products and services attractive to customers, publishers have done themselves and others a disservice by not saying more about the underlying economic facts of electronic and print publishing. *Id.* at 5.

14. *See* Schrift, *supra* note 1, at 23.
15. *See* Jean Eisenhauer, *Acquisitions*, TECHNICAL SERVICES L. LIBR., Mar. 1997, at 5. Eisenhauer raises several problems with legal publishing mergers: (1) customer service and sales reps don't seem to know what's going on and are not yet familiar with all of the products; (2) complex accounts (several locations and thus several billing locations) cause confusion; and (3) publications of Company A are sent out by Company B with Company B's invoice, even though the library didn't have a standing order for Company A's product. *Id.* at 6.
16. SVENGALIS, *supra* note 2.

relevance to larger academic law libraries with multiple layers of technical services staff where the need for formal planning is more compelling, but it still should be considered by libraries of all sizes and types. Carol Pitts Hawks provides an overview of acquisitions management in four areas: organizing the acquisition unit, managing its resources, developing resources for decision making, and managing in times of change.[17]

Organizing the Acquisition Unit

¶**17** One aspect of organizing the acquisition unit involves defining relationships within the parent organization. A good way to achieve this is to empower one's own staff by leading the way in new initiatives and taking on responsibility in new areas before they get a foothold somewhere else.

¶**18** Setting departmental service priorities is also important. It is imperative for efficiency and good morale to identify what needs to be accomplished and in what time frames, and to share that information widely.

¶**19** Making decisions about personnel is another part of organizing acquisitions functions.[18] In making hiring decisions, it is wise to look for "people" qualities in addition to acquisitions knowledge and skills. Can the candidate get along with people and work as part of a team? Can he or she think creatively? To some extent, gut reactions are a part of hiring decisions, but only as a confirmation of what the interview and the facts indicate. Another qualification to consider is legal training. An individual with a law degree can assess products more effectively and may be better able to negotiate with vendors. Another part of personnel management is learning to make hard decisions.[19] Evaluating staff, including rewarding them when appropriate, is an important aspect of a staff-intensive activity such as acquisitions.

¶**20** A final means of organizing the acquisitions unit is managing by policy. For example, one policy might specify procedures for core activities, such as placing orders, receiving books, and paying invoices. Policies can be either written or unwritten; but whatever form they take, they help the unit avoid unreasonable demands by specifying ahead of time the range of acceptable activities.

Managing Resources

¶**21** A second aspect of building and managing an acquisitions program is the management of resources.[20] One part of this involves managing the materials bud-

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17. Carol Pitts Hawks, *Building and Managing an Acquisitions Program*, 18 LIBR. ACQUISITIONS: PRAC. & THEORY 297 (1994).
18. *See id.* at 299.
19. *See id.* at 301.
20. *See id.* at 303.

get. The role of the acquisitions librarian in administering the materials budget varies from institution to institution. Most academic law libraries, for example, have an automated system for purchasing library books and serials that is separate from the university's accounting and purchasing system. Keeping these two systems in sync and maintaining one's own system under appropriate audit control is the responsibility of the acquisitions librarian. Reviewing and even canceling subscriptions is part of managing the materials budget. If a title is judged not to be worth its price, the funds saved can be better used for other publications, perhaps newer, less expensive titles.

¶22 Another way to manage resources involves contracts and vendor relationships.[21] Maintaining appropriate business standards is paramount. For example, oral agreements are unwise because the individuals involved in any agreement may not remain in their positions for an extended period of time. Oral agreements are also unwise because it is much easier to go back to the written agreement rather than try to remember what was decided between two people, even if those people are still around.

Resources for Decision Making

¶23 A third method of building and managing an acquisitions program, Hawks suggests, is providing resources for decision making.[22] To this end, building and maintaining professional contacts cannot be emphasized too much. Whether by joining organizations, traveling to AALL functions, or serving on committees, establishing contacts outside the library to call or e-mail can provide avenues for help, information, and expertise that may not be available in the library.

¶24 It is also important to research and analyze before making key decisions. Research can be used to bolster a case when it is necessary to convince others of something an acquisitions librarian already knows. Even though the acquisitions librarians may be the ones with the most expertise regarding acquisitions, standard acquisitions practice may be unknown to others. Research can provide evidence to substantiate their decisions.

Managing in Times of Change

¶25 The fourth method of building and managing an acquisitions program is developing ways to successfully manage in times of change. Effective communication throughout the library is essential in times of change. A monthly report can facilitate this process by including comparative statistics, a listing of accomplishments in each area, and an indication of whether goals are being met.[23]

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21. *See id.* at 307.
22. *Id.* at 305.
23. *See id.* at 306.

Preservation

¶26 In discussing preservation, one should bear in mind that the purpose underpinning all legal publishing is currentness, and to meet this goal publishers create publications that will continually be revised or replaced. But there are ways in which law libraries can retain the quality of their print holdings.

¶27 Preservation goals can be enhanced by working closely with the acquisitions librarian.[24] The importance of educating the library's entire staff in the proper care and handling of materials cannot be overstated since each person has the potential to do good or harm to them. Regular workshops for staff members and student workers can help this effort.

¶28 Patricia Denham suggests that there are some ways in which acquisitions staff can promote preservation goals. One way is preorder searching.[25] In addition to ascertaining whether a title is either present in the library or on order, it is wise to check the condition of that title if present. Since some monographs will be retained for decades, when selecting new treatises for the collection, preference should be given to books that are printed on alkaline rather than acidic paper.

¶29 A second method involves the receipt of materials. Staff who open parcels need to be taught the proper ways to open boxes so that the contents are not put in danger. Books damaged during processing cannot be returned to the publisher for credit. Books should also be examined for missing or folded pages; pages bound out of sequence, upside down or backwards; smeared ink; insufficient or excessive glue on hinges, and so forth. If any of these defects are noticed, the books should be returned immediately to the publisher or vendor for replacements.[26]

¶30 Third, it is important to treat items carefully while they are being processed in the acquisitions and cataloging areas of the library. Book trucks should be stable so that books do not topple onto the floor. Bookends should be used with all upright books to prevent the hinges from becoming prematurely loose. Paper clips, rubber bands, and stick-on notes can damage pages and should not be used.

¶31 Fourth, gifts received by a library need to be handled differently than new acquisitions since the donated books are often older and not in optimum condition.[27] The books should be examined for poor binding structure, missing pages, and other evidence of physical problems. In addition, the general need for the item should be considered.

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24. *See* Patricia Denham, *Furthering the Goals of Preservation Through Acquisitions*, AGAINST THE GRAIN, Apr. 1994, at 76.
25. *Id.* at 76.
26. *See id.* at 77.
27. *See id.* The review of defective books should, of course, be conducted to the extent feasible within the library's limitations. A small law library, for instance, probably doesn't have the staff time or resources to closely scrutinize the quality of each book that arrives.

¶32 A fifth means of furthering the goals of preservation is through collection development.[28] Frequent communication between the preservation staff and those involved in collection development can help increase awareness of preservation needs, options, and costs. For instance, collection development librarians should recommend purchasing titles in need of extensive treatment only after a discussion with the preservation staff regarding all available options.[29] Both staffs should also work together in determining whether all copies of a title need to be retained when one or more need extensive treatment.

¶33 Sixth, when books are returned because of defects due to manufacturing or inadequate shipping, acquisitions librarians need to communicate the exact reasons for the returns and the results that they expect, such as replacement or credit.

Outsourcing

¶34 Jack Montgomery has discussed outsourcing as another challenge facing acquisitions librarians.[30] Outsourcing simply means contracting out a portion of a library's operation to a commercial entity to realize a cost savings or other benefit that won't occur if the operation is performed in-house. Outsourcing may also be a way of circumventing the difficult process of transforming an often resistant, entrenched, and tradition-bound work force into a more economically cost-effective work unit. The issues of employee resistance and lack of productivity are not faced by commercial vendors, where an employee's job security is based on his or her adaptability and productivity.

¶35 In the acquisitions context, librarians ask vendors not only to supply material based on detailed criteria and selection profiles, but also to supply the material "ready for the shelf" and accompanied by a machine-readable record that will be added to the library's online catalog simultaneously, or even in advance of the arrival of the publication itself.[31] Outsourcing has become a part of the acquisitions and collection development organizational culture. Librarians need to "behave more like a business" and perform tasks in their most efficient manner.[32]

¶36 In considering the possibility of outsourcing some acquisitions activities, it is necessary to define those areas of the operation being considered for outsourcing in light of the library's goals. Although it is unlikely that outsourcing

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28. *See id.*
29. *See* e-mail from James Mumm, Acquisitions/Serials Librarian, Marquette University Law Library (Sept. 17, 1999) (on file with author). Mumm advocates having a threshold for repair decisions. If it costs less to repurchase than it would cost to repair, and if the repurchase would result in a book of equal quality to a repaired book, then a new copy should be purchased.
30. Jack G. Montgomery, *Outsourcing Acquisitions?—Let's Meet the Challenge*, AGAINST THE GRAIN, Apr. 1995, at 66.
31. *See* Bluh, *supra* note 9, at 92.
32. *See* Montgomery, *supra* note 30, at 66.

will be used to replace all technical services functions, outsourcing some acquisitions tasks can significantly improve the productivity and efficiency of acquisitions work.[33]

¶37 For instance, Shelley Neville recently offered examples of how integrated library systems can improve productivity in acquisitions.[34] First, integrated library systems have the ability to load selection records directly into a purchase order or selection list. Second, they can load fully cataloged records with item level information that overlay the short vendor records based on library-defined criteria. Third, such systems can transmit electronic purchase orders, thus avoiding postage and printer costs. Finally, they have the ability to transmit electronic purchase orders with item level information, which allows the materials vendor to build the appropriate item level record.[35]

¶38 Ideally, outsourcing should allow staff to take on more complex tasks and thereby function on a higher level of work. However, the costs of outsourcing can be substantial, may require more rather than less oversight, and should not be regarded as a panacea for diminishing fiscal resources.[36]

Gifts

¶39 Gifts were discussed earlier in the context of preservation, but a few more issues regarding gifts should be noted. First, what is an acceptable gift? A library probably should not accept a gift when almost certainly 90 percent of a particular gift would duplicate present holdings.[37] The acceptance of a gift should be linked to a clear understanding of the role of the donated materials within the library's stated mission and collection development program. A gift policy will assert some level of control, particularly if certain conditions are attached to the donation.

¶40 It is important to create such a policy because it will ensure consistency in treatment of gifts, it will make procedures about gifts easily accessible to staff, and it can be provided to donors and prospective donors at any point in the gift transaction, from initial interview to acknowledgment.[38] According to Jack Montgomery, "an institutional gift policy should at least contain the following: (a) a statement of those responsible for the acceptance of donations; (b) the types of materials to be selected based on [the] same principles that guide the selection process; (c) a clear statement of conditions and terms of acceptance, ownership,

33. *See id.* at 68.
34. Shelley Neville, *Libraries, Outsourcing, and Integrated Library Systems: Peaceful Coexistence, or Contradiction in Terms?* AGAINST THE GRAIN, Feb. 1999, at 68.
35. *See id.* at 68.
36. *See* Bluh, *supra* note 9, at 93.
37. *See* Jack G. Montgomery, *Dealing with Generosity: Some Thoughts on Gift Management*, AGAINST THE GRAIN, Nov. 1994, at 34.
38. *See* Frank Caruthers, *Gifts and Exchanges*, *in* TECHNICAL SERVICES: TODAY AND TOMORROW 21, 22 (Michael Gorman ed., 2d ed. 1998).

and disposition; and (d) a statement outlining the record-keeping responsibilities of the library with regard to federal requirements, institutional records, and correspondence with donors."[39] One approach in the receipt of gifts is to note at the outset that the law library reserves the right to keep or discard the donated items. The donor should assume the responsibility of creating an itemized list of donated materials and of appraising the value of each item. The donor should be notified as to any policies concerning gifts and their attendant tax regulations.

¶41 Every library is occasionally offered materials for which it has no conceivable use. Response to these so-called "marginal gifts" presents one of the greatest diplomatic challenges to the acquisitions librarian. In declining such gifts, it is politic to express respect for the donor's motives and, where possible, to refer the donor to an institution where the material might more appropriately be deposited. If the material offered is a set that might have some resale value, the donor should be directed to a second-hand law book dealer.

¶42 When the process of evaluating and processing the materials has begun, proper organization and record keeping become important.[40] Solutions for disposition include exchanging duplicate or unwanted materials with other libraries through organizational agreements. A final option for disposal is to sell the unwanted materials to a commercial vendor for cash or credit. In short, the library should get something out of the donated materials or they should not be in the library.[41]

The Internet

¶43 Since the mid-1990s, the Internet has become an increasingly effective resource for law library acquisitions. IndexMaster,[42] for example, is a subscription-based legal publishing database containing the indexes and tables of contents of more than 4,000 legal treatises that is searchable by keyword, title, author, and publisher. Acquisition costs can be reduced because one can efficiently compare prices and content and then order directly from the publisher online.

¶44 Several Web sites contain information regarding publishers and vendors. Robert Richards of the University of Colorado Law Library has created a Web site[43] containing a list of legal publishers with their corporate affiliations and links to the published sites. It is routinely updated as new mergers occur. AcqWeb[44] is a comprehensive listing of publishers and vendors that contains an excellent sec-

39. Montgomery, *supra* note 37, at 35.
40. *See id.*
41. *See id.*
42. *IndexMaster* (visited Feb. 8, 2000) <http://www.indexmaster.com>.
43. Rob Richards, *A Legal Publishers' List: Corporate Affiliations of Legal Publishers* (last modified Mar. 31, 2000) <http://www.colorado.edu/Law/lawlib/ts/legpub.htm>.
44. *AcqWeb's Directory of Publishers and Vendors* (last modified Dec. 1, 1999) <http://www.library.vanderbilt.edu/law/acqs/pubr.html>.

tion on legal publishers. ACQNET is an edited listserv that facilitates discussion of issues of interest to acquisitions librarians and includes an archive for messages from previous months.[45] Even better for law librarians is LAWACQ, an electronic discussion list created and moderated by Cynthia Aninao, Acquisitions Librarian at the University of Cincinnati College of Law Library, which has content more focused on law library acquisitions.

¶**45** The Internet may have particular usefulness for acquisitions librarians with limited budgets. Law library Web-based catalogs are an increasing presence on the Internet and can serve as valuable tools. By perusing the list of law library catalogs maintained by Washburn University School of Law,[46] the acquisitions librarian of a library with a limited budget can construct a list of "favorite" law library catalogs and consult them frequently to ascertain which libraries have acquired a title the library is considering. If a given civil rights or disability treatise, for example, seems to be a desirable title to acquire, but few other law libraries have purchased it, perhaps the need to acquire such a title becomes less compelling. This is not to suggest that other libraries' decision making should cause the acquisitions librarian to disregard the needs of one's own patrons. Web-based catalogs of other libraries should supplement, not supplant, the limited-budget library's acquisitions decisions, validating the selection process, not controlling it.

¶**46** In recent years, law librarians have witnessed a mass migration of services to Web- based formats.[47] Many online systems are converting to HTML and Web formats.[48] LEXIS- NEXIS and Westlaw already have interactive Web sites. Federal and state governments provide free or low-cost access to primary legal materials via the Internet. Many publishers use the Internet for online "shopping" and provide title and keyword searching for customers to find product. Similarly, smaller legal publishers and vendors such as LOIS, HyperLaw, and VersusLaw now offer access for a fee to a variety of primary legal information.[49] As publishers enhance their presence on the Web and upgrade the quality of their Web sites,

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45. *See Information To and Information on ACQNET* (last modified Jan. 31, 2000) <http://www.library.vanderbilt.edu/law/acqs/acqnet.html>.
46. AALL/WashLaw Web, *Law Library Catalogs* (last modified Dec. 10, 1998) <http://www.washlaw.edu/lawcat/>.
47. *See generally* Robert C. Richards, Jr., *A Feast of Formats: Challenges to Choosing the Right Medium for Legal Information*, AGAINST THE GRAIN, Sept. 1997, at 52. Richards provides a detailed analysis of the ways in which legal information is migrating to a multitude of nonprint formats.
48. *See generally* JoAnn Hounshell, *Electronic Ordering of Monographs Part I: Blackwell's Collection Manager*, TECHNICAL SERVICES L. LIBR., Mar. 1999, at 11 (discussing the merits of Collection Manager, a Web-based acquisitions and collection development tool); Marla Schwartz, *Electronic Ordering of Monographs Part II: Yankee Book Peddler's GOBI*, TECHNICAL SERVICES L. LIBR., June 1999, at 8 (using the GOBI database to illustrate how online databases are increasingly being used interactively for ordering and as a source of records for integrated library systems).
49. *See* Richards, *supra* note 47, at 53.

the need for vendor interfaces and electronic data interchange (EDI) protocols will disappear.

Staying Current

¶47 The purpose of this article was to analyze issues and trends in law library acquisitions, as identified by recent contributions to the literature in this field. Staying abreast of trends and developments is important because this is a dynamic, rapidly changing area. Here are a few suggestions of useful resources for staying current.

¶48 The best treatise on law library acquisitions is probably Kendall Svengalis's *Legal Information Buyer's Guide & Reference Manual.*[50] The text is noteworthy not only for its utility as a reference guide to specific legal materials, but also for its initial chapters regarding legal publishing and day-to-day acquisitions. Svengalis's book is regularly updated and has proven to be an effective tool for law librarians in combating the rise in prices of continuations. Other excellent sources for additional reading are two journals: *Library Collections, Acquisitions, & Technical Services*[51] (formerly *Library Acquisitions: Practice & Theory*) and *Against the Grain.*[52] The "Biz of Acq" column in *Against the Grain* is particularly useful because the columns are often edited by law librarians and the topics are sufficiently narrow to be of greater interest to law librarians than those in similar periodicals. The "Juris Libris" column, when it appears in *Against the Grain,* is a good bibliographical resource for legal publications.

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50. SVENGALIS, *supra* note 2.
51. ISSN: 1464-9055. Published quarterly, $206/year. For subscription information, contact Elsevier Science, Customer Service Department, P.O. Box 945, New York, NY 10010, (888) 4ES-INFO, usinfo-f@elsevier.com.
52. ISSN: 1043-2094. Published six times a year, $40/year. For subscription information, contact Katina Strauch, Citadel Station, Charleston, SC 29409, <http://www.against-the-grain.com>.