

Simplifying Library Acquisitions With University Purchasing

THE UTOPIAN DREAM of all librarians, and especially acquisition librarians, is to have complete freedom in placing book, continuation, and periodical orders directly without having to go through any intermediate university purchasing department. In a state university this is often impossible due to various rigid purchasing procedures that must be followed. Several years ago the Ohio State University was no exception. All university orders had to be placed through the University Purchasing Department and all such orders had to be received, checked, and forwarded by Stores and Receiving to the Library. However, the goal has now been realized by the Ohio State University Libraries. The transformation from a rigidly controlled system by the University Purchasing Department was a five-year process, which was implemented by an understanding of library acquisition problems on the part of members of the University Purchasing Department, and a desire to cooperate with the Library in solving its acquisition problems.

The first change occurred in 1948-49, when permission was granted to the Director of Libraries to order out-of-print books and periodicals directly from the dealer offering them for sale. A confirming order was sent to the University Purchasing Department after the material had been received by the Library. The primary reason for this permission was

to prevent the loss of encumbered library funds, and the secondary reason was to enable the Library to procure many books and periodicals whose immediate availability was uncertain.

When such orders were processed through the University Purchasing Department, funds were encumbered for the purchase; consequently, these funds were lost to the Library when it was discovered that the material was not available too late in the quarter to permit the use of the funds for ordering in-print items.

Until the fall of 1950, out-of-print book and periodical orders by the Library were placed by writing an individual business letter asking the vendor to consider it an official order. This type of procedure was adopted to comply with an apparent desire by the University Purchasing Department to prevent any request having the appearance of an official order from being placed from any other entity of the University, thereby obligating the University Purchasing Department for payment. However, in the fall of 1950/51, a "form letter order" was printed and put into operation in an effort to expedite this type of order.

This direct method of ordering was due in part to the growth of the Library, which naturally tends to demand a higher proportion of books from abroad, from antiquarian catalogs, from small and little known sources. Ordering from these sources resulted in a high percentage of cancellations for items which were not available or which had been sold before the order was received. This direct

*Mr. Matthews is acquisitions librarian,
Ohio State University.*

OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY LIBRARY
ACQUISITION DEPARTMENT
COLUMBUS 10, OHIO

Order No.

Date

1. Report any item which is in press or temporarily out of stock.
2. Report before sending any item which is part of a series, unless order notes series.
3. Bill in U. S. dollars, or state current rate of exchange.
4. Bill the OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY LIBRARY in quadruplicate.

QUANTITY	ITEM
	<i>Acquisition Librarian</i>

Form 6002

OSU's Form Letter Order

method eliminated the extra delay in sending the order through the University Purchasing Department and having the material received and processed by Stores and Receiving and finally sent to the Library. As pointed out before, it also prevented the loss of encumbered library funds. The chief disadvantage of this direct method of ordering was the amount of clerical work involved after the items had been received. It was necessary to list each item and its price on a requisition in the Library and list them again on a confirming order in the University Purchasing Department in order to encumber funds and satisfy other requirements of normal purchasing and bookkeeping transactions.

The above system functioned until 1953, when permission was granted to the Director of Libraries to use a "John Doe blanket order." "John Doe" is an

inclusive term for firms which enables the Acquisition Department to include many firms on one requisition and one purchase order number. Requisitions were actually and not figuratively written to "John Doe" for "rare, out-of-print books and fugitive material" purchased from domestic or foreign booksellers in varying amounts at the beginning of each quarter and sent to the University Purchasing Department.

The University Purchasing Department would then issue a purchase order number, and invoices received and approved were paid for up to the amount of the purchase order without typing the titles and prices on a requisition and again on a confirming order. The advantage of the "John Doe blanket order" lay in the great efficiency in preventing loss of funds allocated for the purchase of books and the elimination of the unne-

essary typing and retyping of orders and requisitions by the University Purchasing Department. It should be noted that the above applied only to rare, out-of-print and fugitive material. Direct orders through the University Purchasing Department were still required for current material purchased in the United States.

The next development came in the Fall of 1954, when the Library was released from a quarterly book and periodical budget and placed on an annual book and periodical budget. This was a much-discussed item with the personnel of the University Purchasing Department. However, the process was not foreign to them, as an annual budget had been in operation in the 1920's and 1930's. The Library justified an annual budget on the following points:

1. The most important single advantage of an annual budget would be in preventing the closing, by the University Purchasing Department, of purchase orders that are not totally used each quarter.
2. The quarterly budget requires an undue amount of time spent in checking invoices, open purchase orders, balances, outstanding orders, and closed purchase orders, by the Acquisition Department, to encumber and spend its funds four times a year. An annual budget would reduce this amount of work, thereby releasing time to be used advantageously on other projects in the Acquisition Department.
3. An annual budget would enable the Acquisition Department, with the aid of the faculty, to spend departmental allocations more efficiently, more nearly completely, and would prevent one department from over- or under-spending. It would also make it possible for the Acquisition Department to send out quarterly financial statements of the book budget to the faculty concerned.
4. An annual budget would prevent such poor business procedures as: carrying invoices over from one quarter to the next or breaking larger invoices into

smaller ones, and reserving the summer for processing and catching up on invoices that could not be approved for payment in previous quarters.

5. An annual budget would enable the Acquisition Department to take advantage of special offers, sales, and quotations which it is unable to do on a quarterly system.
6. Since a large proportion of Ohio State orders is for books published abroad, it is difficult to complete the transaction within a three-month period. Further, it is impossible to know whether or not the order will be supplied. Orders are often placed for out-of-print books as offered in dealers' catalogs, and such items must be placed promptly when the catalog is published; but this may mean placing the order at the end of a quarter.
7. The Acquisition Department is normally faced with two peak seasons for book orders. These peaks are generally reached in the fall and the winter quarters, with a tapering off during the spring quarter. These peaks are created by several factors, such as the activity of new faculty members, establishment of new courses, and new research undertaken at the University. Another factor is the habit of publishers to concentrate on publishing and releasing new titles during the fall and winter.

The final step to the annual budget goal was reached January, 1956, through the willingness of the University Purchasing Department to work out more efficient and timesaving procedures for handling current trade publications. The Library was permitted to place orders for current publications directly with the vendor, as had been done for some time in the case of out-of-print, rare, and fugitive materials.

This represented a very substantial improvement in the entire acquisition program, in the amount of work required to process requisitions and invoices in the Acquisition Department, and in the University Purchasing Department.

The Acquisition Department now places directly with the vendor all domestic or foreign "John Doe" orders for current material as well as for rare, fugitive, and out-of-print items. Extreme care is exercised to insure that invoices exceeding \$500 to any one vendor are not paid on a "John Doe" purchase order, but that separate purchase orders are written to those vendors with whom we do a substantial business. This procedure is due to the fact that on orders over \$500 the University Purchasing Department must secure a vendor's certificate of "no collusion."

The advantages of direct ordering by the Acquisition Department for current materials can be summarized as follows:

1. fewer requisitions to write
2. more flexibility in placing orders
3. one less budget file to maintain
4. receipt of books from two to four weeks earlier
5. less delay and misrouting of invoices received
6. fewer purchase orders to write and close

The Acquisition Department processes

invoices in quadruplicate by placing on each invoice the purchase order number and the date, and by having the Acquisition Librarian sign each copy of the invoice.

This procedure is in accordance with instructions issued by the University Purchasing Department. The fourth copy of the invoice is retained in the Acquisition Department for bookkeeping purposes; the other copies go to the University Purchasing Department, University Auditor, and State Auditor.

In summary, the Acquisition Department now has complete authority in purchasing books, periodicals, continuations, and other library materials. The Purchase Division of the Acquisition Department types a seven-part multiple order form, and places all orders directly. This authority was achieved on a step-by-step basis, and only after each step had proved satisfactory did the next step develop. It was imperative at all times to have a clear understanding of the problems of the Library Acquisition Department and of the University Purchasing Department and to work toward a mutually advantageous system.

Remington Rand Grant Renewed

A second grant of \$5,000 from the Remington Rand division of Sperry Rand Corporation continues ACRL's Remington Rand Fund, established as a part of the ACRL grants program in 1956. The fund will be distributed for use in purchase of equipment by college libraries. Subgrants will be made from the Remington Rand Fund in the fall by the ACRL Committee on Foundation Grants.

The Remington Rand grant brings the total of the funds to be distributed in subgrants by ACRL in the fall of 1957 to \$40,000. Grants of \$30,000 from the U. S. Steel Foundation and \$5,000 from the New York Times Company were announced in the May issue of *CRL*. Instructions to be followed in submitting applications for subgrants to the ACRL Committee on Foundation Grants will be published in the September issue.