An Overview of Acquisitions and Cataloging

at the University of San Francisco Gleeson Library/Geschke Center

Jonathan Leff

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Introduction

The following is an overview of the acquisitions and cataloging processes at the University of San Francisco Gleeson Library/Gleschke Center (University of San Francisco, 2010), and is based on interviews and follow-up emails with the heads of Cataloging, Acquisitions and Systems, as well as the librarian in charge of acquisitions and cataloging of non-book materials and the library assistant in charge of acquisitions for the Gleeson Library’s Distance Learning Program. Library Systems

Library Systems is the section of Technical Services that whose function it is to maintain all the cataloging systems the library uses, as well as the purchasing interfaces used by the Acquisitions section. Both the Cataloging and Acquisitions sections use stand-alone software interfaces as part of their processes, and therefore Library Systems must maintain these interfaces to ensure that they remain functional and current. In addition to maintaining the cataloging and acquisition functions, the Library Systems department is also responsible for ensuring that all of the libraries systems are operational. This includes the OPAC called Ignacio, and the next-gen OPAC known as Doncore, which is the Gleeson Library’s personalized name for the Encore OPAC interface, as well as the databases to which the library subscribes. The Library Systems section is also responsible for maintaining the databases that contain library user records, as well as the systems used by the Circulation department.
Acquisitions

The role of the Acquisitions section is to procure materials that have been identified by the various collections sections as desirable for library’s collections. In addition to physical materials, this also includes purchasing subscriptions to databases. The databases are published by companies which often publish a variety of databases and reference materials, in both electronic and print editions (H.W. Wilson Company, 2010).

Nearly all of the materials at the Gleeson Library are ordered through Acquisitions. This includes individual book orders, books received on standing orders, and gifts. Rare book materials are purchased through the Rare Book Room. Bibliographic records for batches of electronic resources – in particular, e-books ordered from ebrary (ebrary, 2010), electronic government documents ordered through MARCIVE (MARCIVE, 2010), and aggregated databases ordered through Serials Solutions (Serials Solutions, 2010) – are loaded into the catalog by the Library Systems department.

Libraries often purchase book materials from book jobbers, such as Blackwell (Blackwell, 2010) that provide services including announcements of new titles and a tool with the proprietary name of Collection Manager, that provides access to databases that list book titles, allows libraries to place standing orders, and do repeat searches for books on specific subjects. In addition, Blackwell and other book jobbers allow librarians to download MARC records for incorporation into their own catalogs. The Gleeson library uses an integrated library system (ILS) called Millennium (Innovative Interfaces Inc., 2010), that incorporates acquisitions, cataloging and circulation in one system. One of the values of working with book jobbers is the automation of acquisition services that they provide, especially as the software interfaces that book jobbers use also allow
libraries to set up funding information and invoicing functions. In addition to standing orders, many book jobber provide the option of allowing libraries to either automatically order selected titles, or even cancel orders based on certain criteria determined by the library (Smith & Sasse, 2010).

However, whereas book jobbers can be useful when it comes to bulk ordering, for single items, it is often more efficient to order items individually. This is done both in the case of items purchased for libraries that are located on the University’s Regional Campuses and for non-book materials ordered for the Gleeson Library.

The library assistant who works in the Gleeson Library’s Distance Learning department handles acquisitions of books for the Regional Campus Libraries in Cupertino, Sacramento, San Ramon and Santa Rosa. Books to be purchased are chosen based on Faculty recommendations and requests, Student requests, and listings in Choice Reviews Online (American Library Association, 2010) for new and noteworthy books. The library assistant has a purchasing card (p-card) provided by the library and orders books from Amazon.com. After receiving the books, they are sent to cataloging for processing, after which they are shipped to the regional libraries. Two copies are ordered for each title. One copy is sent to the particular regional library for which it was ordered and one is added to the collection at the Gleeson Library. Approximately 200 books are ordered for each location per year.

Non-book items – such as DVDs – are also ordered through individual vendors, as many of them are documentaries and educational DVDs that can often only be ordered from specialty vendors. In addition, they are not always available as mass-market items, or are often released first through specialty vendors before they are available for purchase.
through mass-market distributors such as Amazon.com. Purchases of non-book materials are also made through use of a p-card that is provided by the library.

The Gleeson Library also participates in the Federal Depository Library Program (FDLP) (Federal Depository Library Program, 2010), and is designated by the program as a selective depository. The FDLP was started in 1813, and the University has been a part of the program since 1963, and has acquired most of its government documents collections since then. The library decides which agencies and sub-agencies, and which particular publications and/or types of publications it would like to receive. The FDLP provides lists of government document publications that are available for selection. The library has a profile with the FDLP, and is allowed to add categories or items for acquisition only once a year, though it is allowed to drop items or categories from its profile at any time. Deaccessioning of materials can only be done once every five years, and must be reviewed by the California State Library before items can actually be disposed of. The California State Library is the designated regional library that reviews all requests to dispose of government documents. Permission is needed to dispose of government documents, as they are the property of the federal government.

Another form of acquisitions is through the receipt of gift materials to the library, which is also handled by the librarian who is responsible for acquisition and cataloging of non-book materials. The librarian reviews offers of gifts to see if they library would like to acquire them. If they are not wanted, the gifts are disposed of, often by selling them to BetterWorldBooks (BetterWorldBooks, 2010), which is a book dealer in Goshen (Ind.) that donates the profits to combat global illiteracy. Often, the librarian will provide
potential donors with recommendations about other libraries or entities that may be willing to accept the gift in question.

Classification and Cataloging

The Gleeson Library uses two different classification systems in its catalog. Government documents are classified using the Superintendent of Documents (SuDoc) classification system. The system is organized by provenance, and call numbers are organized based on government agencies, followed by sub-agencies and publication, and is used only for federal documents (U.S. Government Printing Office, 2004).

The remainder of the materials in the library’s collections are cataloged using the Library of Congress classification system (LCCS) (Library of Congress, 2010). According to the head of cataloging, the Gleeson Library switched to LCCS in the late 1930s. The reason for this is that LCCS is suitable to large libraries and academic libraries of all sized as it is more easily expandable than the Dewey Decimal classification system (DDC).

There are two methods of creating catalog records, which are original cataloging and copy cataloging. When a librarian uses original cataloging, he or she is creating a record for the first time. Approximately 5% of the books in the Gleeson Library require original cataloging. These books tend to be either published in foreign languages, or only available from obscure publishers. As no MARC record exists for these items, it is necessary to create an original catalog entry for each one.

Copy cataloging allows the librarian to download a pre-existing record from the Online Computer Library Center (OCLC), which is a union catalog containing catalog records from libraries around the world (Online Computer Library Center, 2010). All of
the records in OCLC are created using MACHine-Readable Cataloging (MARC) encoding.

After a book is received from Acquisitions, it takes about a week on average to catalog and label it. After cataloging, rare books are sent directly to the Rare Book Room; print journals are sent back to Acquisitions and then on to Periodicals; books for Reference or the general stacks are sent on to Access Services where they are shelved the same day they receive them.

I recently had the chance to sit down with one of the librarians in the cataloging section. This librarian is responsible for acquisitions and cataloging of non-book materials, and supervises the technical processing of government documents. The library had recently acquired a copy of a DVD titled “Children of the Camps”, that is a documentary about the experience of Japanese-American children living in internment camps during World War II. The library acquired this item as the only copy it had of the documentary was on VHS, which was in danger of becoming worn out through use. The only vendor from whom the item can be purchased is the Center for Asian American Media (CAAM). The librarian ordered the item using the Millennium ILS, and needed to catalog it. The librarian searched the database of records in OCLC using a software interface supplied by OCLC. A record of the DVD version of the documentary was found. The librarian wanted the record for the DVD to be as close as possible to the library’s existing record of the VHS version. As part of the acquisitions process the librarian performed a technical viewing the DVD to make sure that it worked correctly, especially as it was recorded on a recordable DVD (DVD-R) that often do not function properly in stand-alone or computer-based DVD players. One thing that was discovered
in the technical viewing is that the subtitle on the container differed from the subtitle on the title frame of the documentary. The title frame is the chief source of information for the DVD, and therefore the subtitle on the DVD was the correct one. However, a note was made in the record of the alternate subtitle.

The librarian preferred to edit the new catalog record directly in the OCLC interface, as the interface provides direct access to the Library of Congress Subject Headings (LCSH) and name authorities. The librarian copied information from the VHS record into the new record, and was able to automatically verify the correct forms for each LCSH. Names had to be individually checked to verify that they matched the Library of Congress name authorities (Library of Congress, 2009). As part of the cataloging process, the librarian scanned a pre-printed bar code label to connect it to the library record. This code then appeared in the MARC record. The call number (which was also entered in the MARC record) was written directly on the DVD using a felt-tip pen to prevent the DVD from jamming in a player. When the new record was complete, it was downloaded directly into Millennium, and therefore into the catalog. According to the librarian, Millennium is the catalog. Once an item is in Millennium, it is in the catalog, and no further steps need to be taken.

Conclusion

Acquisitions and cataloging are two of the technical services that the modern library depends on to ensure that users, be the members of the academy or members of the public, have access to the materials and information they desire. Acquisitions ensures that libraries obtain materials that support the goals of their collections, whatever those goals may be. Cataloging ensures that the various items in the collection are well
organized and easily located by the library’s users. Without these processes, the modern library cannot function.
References


