

**ORDER AND  
ACCESSION  
DEPARTMENT, XVII**

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Order and accession department, XVII by F. F. Hopper

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**F. F. HOPPER**

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XVII

ORDER AND ACCESSION DEPARTMENT

FRANKLIN F. HOPPER  
The Tacoma Public Library

I. ORGANIZATION

The order and accession department of a large library should be in charge of some one familiar with book-trade conditions, prices and discounts, as well as with books and library needs. Knowledge of library technique is a secondary consideration. Certainly, however, the assistants must understand the details of library records. At the beginning of each fiscal year the librarian or board should determine the amount available for book purchase for each department, and roughly apportion the amounts to be spent for certain classes of books, such as sets of periodicals. The head of the department should conduct the correspondence, decide where orders shall be placed, see that the book funds are spent as apportioned, read auction and second-hand catalogs with the librarian or reference librarian, make or at least decide on the bids at auction sales, and in general see that the book buying of the library is conducted in the cheapest and most business-like way. There should be an order clerk competent to price books and check bills, and an accession clerk. In many libraries the accession work is a part of the catalog department. In libraries large enough to demand another assistant in the order department, there is usually one of higher grade than the two mentioned, who has charge of gifts, continuations, and statistics, and has immediate supervision of all records. Different libraries will necessarily vary the organization to some extent.

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## 2. PRINCIPLES OF BUYING

The cardinal principle in buying is business-like economy in securing the best prices possible, always taking into consideration the element of speed.

The first decision must be as to whether a book shall be bought at once. If so it will be ordered in America or imported if the English price be less. If not, a slip will be placed in a "desirable" file awaiting opportunities for cheap purchase at auction, at second hand, or at "remainder" prices.

If a number of new copies of a book are likely to be needed during a year it is wise to order them at one time. This will certainly mean economy in handling and in many cases better rates can be obtained.

Prices and service being equal, a local dealer should receive the business of the library. The speed with which books may be secured on approval and the close relationship which may be established between dealer and library are of great value. If the local dealer is unsatisfactory, it will be best to deal almost wholly with one firm in a book center.

It is generally considered unwise to make a practice of asking bids on lists of books. If not exactly unfair to dealers, it is at any rate poor business policy for the library. Trial orders sent to different jobbers with due insistence upon bottom prices, and subsequent comparison of the various bills will in the long run secure better prices. Occasional estimates from various dealers will doubtless give needed information in regard to the rates the library should be getting.

Book agents should be discouraged and extremely few books should be bought by subscription. Such books as atlases it may occasionally be necessary to buy in that way, but there are few other exceptions. Subscriptions should not be made without first seeing the books, except in the case of the publications of private presses and book clubs, which require subscriptions in advance of printing. New editions of encyclopedias and

in fact all subscription books need careful examination. If a subscription edition of a standard book is for any special reason considered desirable, it will almost certainly appear in the second-hand trade at greatly reduced cost in a year's time, but in general subscription editions are not preferable to good trade editions. If the library must subscribe, a discount should be demanded, for it can usually be obtained.

There are actually few rarities, although it often requires time to secure the less common books which only university or the largest public libraries are likely to want. Practically everything the average public library would buy appears in the auction or second-hand catalogs repeatedly. Consequently a library should seldom pay an excessive price for any book, no matter how desirable. There will be other opportunities to buy it.

Speed in getting books is often most important. One of the best ways to secure new books early is to inspect the samples of the publishers' "travelers" when they come to get orders from local booksellers, and then order the desirable ones before publication.

### 3. PRICES AND DISCOUNTS

Until 1901 there were no definite regulations in regard to the discounts which booksellers gave to libraries. Upon the plea of protection for the retail dealer, however, on February 13 of that year the "net price" system was adopted at a meeting of the American Publishers' Association, reducing the discounts to 10 per cent to libraries for most new books of non-fiction. The limitation of discounts was to be removed one year after publication. The Association agreed that all copyrighted books first issued by the members of the Association after May 1, 1901, should be published at net prices which the resolution "recommended" should be reduced from the prices at which similar books had been issued theretofore. It was provided that there should be exempt from this agreement all school

books, such works of fiction (not juveniles) and new editions as the individual publisher might desire, books published by subscription and not sold through the trade, and such other books as were not sold through the trade. The purely technical book publishers were not parties to the agreement. In accordance with the "recommendation" that list prices be reduced, librarians were given to understand that the publishers would reduce prices to such an extent that the cost to libraries would be increased only from 8 per cent to 12 per cent. The expectation of librarians in this respect was never generally fulfilled, the publishers maintaining that the increased cost of production and increased royalties to authors prevented any reduction in list prices. When libraries criticized the Association for failing to reduce the list prices the publishers replied that the Association had nothing to do with fixing prices, but only with maintaining them, each publisher being free to set his own prices. In February, 1902, an additional rule was adopted by which fiction issued by the publishers who were members of the Association was sold to those entitled to the 10 per cent discount on non-fiction at no greater discount than  $33\frac{1}{3}$  per cent. In January, 1904, "juveniles" were included in this fiction rule. In January, 1907, the American Publishers' Association, because of decisions of the courts relating to combinations in restraint of trade, changed its existing rules relating to net prices and then re-enacted them in a form in which no agreement to maintain net prices was stated formally. Recommendations only were made. Agreements to maintain prices are now made between the individual publisher and the booksellers. The new arrangement has caused no change, however, in the working of the net-price system as far as libraries are concerned.

The books now in print in this country and sold through the trade may be divided into the following classes:

1. New copyright non-fiction on which the discount to libraries is limited to 10 per cent within the year following pub-



lication. At the expiration of the year, a longer discount is allowed, but it is rarely as much as on "regular" books, and it is not often possible to obtain more than 25 per cent discount.

2. Fiction and juveniles treated as if they belonged to class 1. Few books were published in this class previous to 1910, when a large part of the fiction was issued at this net or "fixed" price.

3. Many scientific and technical books published at a "net" price but not under the same regulations as those in class 1. The discounts obtainable by libraries range from 10 per cent to 25 per cent.

4. Many school and college textbooks published at a "net" price. From 10 per cent to 16 $\frac{1}{2}$  per cent is the usual discount on this class.

5. Imported books listed in this country at a "net" price. The discount varies, but is usually short.

6. "Regular" books. Discount subject to no special limitation, but varies greatly. Many of the so-called "regular" books are those on which the copyright has expired. Previous to May, 1901, most of the new books were "regular," but the majority are now published at a net price.

7. From February, 1902, until 1909 most fiction published was called "protected." In January, 1904, "juveniles" were included in the same class. Discount to libraries was limited to one-third within the year following publication, but after the year a dealer was free to give whatever discount he could afford. Since the introduction of the "fixed price" fiction (class 2) the publishers seem to have stopped issuing "protected" fiction.

If a new book is to be purchased immediately and it is found that the English price is sufficiently lower than the American to justify delay, the book will be imported. In making the decision, it must be borne in mind that most new English books of non-fiction are net books on which there is no discount given to libraries. If the price in this country is net, one must find to which class of net books it belongs. If it has been published for more than a year, and belongs to either class 1 or 2 (that is, books published according to the rules of the American Pub-

lishers' Association), care must be taken that the library gets a discount larger than 10 per cent. Occasionally it is possible to obtain from a dealer an extra long discount on "regular" books if a sufficient number of "net" books are ordered at the same time. Publishers who are not also jobbers will almost always refuse, in the interests of the booksellers, to sell directly to libraries, although particularly large orders for a few of their titles have sometimes induced some of them to sell directly at a special rate. If a local dealer does not have a good stock of the popular books, both juvenile and adult, which libraries are constantly buying and replacing, or if he cannot furnish them at good rates, a library should not hesitate to buy them from the large city jobbers. The jobbers usually have regular rates of discount on the books of the seven different classes and sometimes of different publishers. If a trial order given to another jobber shows that certain classes of books or even certain titles can be secured more cheaply from him, it is very likely that your first jobber will meet his rival's figures or even beat them in order to retain your business. It is wise to deal mostly with one jobber, but the buyer must never forget or let the jobber forget that there are competitors who are after business. It sometimes happens that a library buys every year a very large number of certain titles, probably "juveniles." If the English edition is cheaper than the American, the library will import, although it may be inconvenient to do so because of the difficulty of getting many copies of a book through the custom house in one year. The lower English price, however, compels the library to import as many as it can. The American publisher of the book naturally does not like to see large orders for his own importations going to England, and he may be induced to sell the books to your jobber at such special rates that the jobber will be able to meet the English prices to the library. The buyer for the library must never forget that libraries are an important factor in the book market, not only because they get such large num-

bers of books, but because they are practically the only buyers of many items in the publishers' lists, because they keep many books in print by their orders for replacements, and because library business is sure pay.

#### 4. COPYRIGHT AND IMPORTATIONS

The copyright laws of the United States, contained in the law approved March 4, 1909, allow the importation, in one invoice, of one copy of any authorized edition of a book in English even if it has American copyright, when imported for use and not for sale by any school, university, or free public library. The importation of pirated editions is prohibited. Additional copies may be imported in subsequent invoices, and by a ruling of the United States Treasury Department, a copy may be imported for each branch of a public library, a branch being considered as a separate library (see Treasury decisions under tariff and internal revenue laws, etc., 1898, vol. 1, pp. 40-41). As the larger importers receive shipments each week, one copy of a book can be imported by them each week for each library and for each branch. It is necessary to make an oath before a notary preliminary to free entry for each shipment, declaring that the books are imported for use of the library named and not for sale. The importer must also make oath on the same sheet that he has imported the listed books solely for said library. In addition a receipt for every lot of books so imported must be filed within 90 days of entry. Neither oaths nor receipts are required for books in foreign languages or books in English more than twenty years old, but for dictionaries and works consisting of plates without text or with index only, which are considered dutiable at the regular 25 per cent rate, papers for free entry for libraries are required.

English books may be imported through London agents or American importers. Most libraries find that for small orders it is cheaper to buy through the importer, who will pay all