Demystifying Library Acquisitions: Insight on How Academic Libraries Select Dissertations for Their Collections

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Why This Topic
Because. . .

Unresolved Questions Brought up By Sandy Thatcher at Last Year’s Conference

- “And so it came to pass that, according to Yankee Book Peddler’s former resident sage, Hellmut Schwarzer, libraries began to ask their vendors to inspect the front matter of each book for any signs that it had its origin in a dissertation and, if such evidence was uncovered, to omit that book from the lot purchased through the approval plan. As far back as six years ago, Schwarzer told me, these instructions resulted in 40% of the sales of these books to libraries disappearing.”

- From the University Presses – Dissertations into Books? The Lack of Logic in the System. Against the Grain, April 2007, Vol. 19 Issue 2, 75-77
And Because. . .

Article in *Chronicle of Higher Education*

- “The press has come to assume that ‘most libraries and library vendors will not buy or recommend purchase of ensuing books that are based substantially on them [ETDs].’”
- “Any dissertation that’s on the Internet and has taken on a life of its own, that would be a selling point to me. . . There’s [potential] for an even greater market for a revised, edited, well-marketed version.”
- “The more crucial question for us. . . is whether the author can explain the extent to which and how the submission differs from the original.”
Disclaimer
Gain an Understanding of How...

- Academic libraries’ use approval plans;
- Approval plans could impact the purchase of books created from dissertations;
- To discuss issues of concern with graduate students.
What is an Approval Plan

• Efficient way for libraries to add some – not all – books to their collections
• Use detailed profiles/plans to set parameters for selection process
Approval Plan Language

• Profiles/plans – a series of gates
  – a targeted publisher list,
  – a defined set of non-subject parameters, and
  – subject-specific instructions.

• Global rules
• Slips
• Exclude
• Revised and unrevised dissertations
Approval Plan Basics
First Gate

• Series – Books the library already receives on standing order;
• No books in these series can come through the approval plan;
Next Gate

• Publisher

• Does the library want to “ship”, “slip”, or “exclude” books from specific publishers?
Non-subject Criteria

• Binding (Spiral or Looseleaf)
• Format – includes unrevised or revised dissertations
• Language
• Non-book format
• Place of publication
• Price ceiling
• Reprints
• Many, many more
Subject Criteria

- Uses Library of Congress Classification system
- Can be very broad – BM – all Judaism
- Can be very granular – BM650-747 – Practical Judaism
- Even if dissertations “gated” at the format level, library could decide to set an exception at the subject level
More Approval Plan Language

- Basic-Essential
- Research-Essential
- Basic-Recommended
- Research-Recommended
- Specialized
- Supplementary
Sample Approval Plan -- Religion

- Books – Research-essential; Basic-recommended; Research-recommended; Specialized
- Slips – Basic-essential; Supplementary
- Slips – specified for some specific subject areas
- Exclude – Judaism, Practical Works
Sample Approval Plan -- Chemistry

• Books – Research-essential; Research-recommended; Specialized
• Slips – Basic-essential; Basic-recommended; Supplementary
• Slips – for specific historical works
YBP Data – Full Disclosure

• YBP Baylor Library’s approval plan vendor
• Not the only approval plan vendor, but primary book vendor for:
  – 85% of the ARL libraries and
  – About 80% of academic libraries in the U.S.
• Longitudinal data from 3 FYs 2009, 2010, 2011
• Some data a “snapshot” of their current set of profiles
Titles Profiled

FY 2009
FY 2010
FY 2011

All Titles Profiled
Total Dissertations
% Dissertations of All Titles

FY 2009: 2.80%
FY 2010: 2.75%
FY 2011: 2.95%
Approval Titles
Revised vs. Unrevised Dissertations

FY 2009: Unrevised Dissertations 1,700, Revised Dissertations 1,650
FY 2010: Unrevised Dissertations 1,750, Revised Dissertations 1,650
FY 2011: Unrevised Dissertations 1,850, Revised Dissertations 1,900
Approval Titles Sold

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<th>Year</th>
<th># of Titles</th>
<th>Total Dissertations</th>
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<td>FY 2011</td>
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<td>200,000</td>
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Approval Dissertation Titles Sold

![Bar chart showing the number of dissertations approved over FY 2009, FY 2010, and FY 2011. The chart compares unrevised dissertations and revised dissertations.](image-url)
Overview of Current Plans

• 3,497 Total Approval Plans
• 61% (2,124) with Global Dissertation Rules
• 39% (1,360) with Non-global Dissertation rules
## Analysis of Plans With Global Rules

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<th>Revised</th>
<th>Unrevised</th>
<th>Number of Plans</th>
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<td>246</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>379</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Analysis of Plans with Global Rules

• 45% exclude unrevised and no global rule for revised
• 12% slip unrevised and no global rule for revised
• 9% slip revised and exclude unrevised
• 6% slip both revised and unrevised
• 27% exclude both revised and unrevised
• < 1% Exclude revised and slip unrevised
What Does Baylor Do?

- YBP plan slips revised dissertations and excludes unrevised dissertations
- 1,635 revised dissertations (deduped) met our YBP profile in 2011
- 158 (9.7%) of those titles purchased (thus far)
  - 103 print
  - 51 e-books
  - 4 e-books “shipped” on approval
What Does the Data Say?

• Libraries unlikely to purchase unrevised dissertations
• YBP data shows a 3-year trend of an increasing number of dissertations sold
• 39% of the plans don’t use global rules – the decision point is something other than revised dissertation
• 27% of the plans exclude both revised and unrevised dissertations
  – Small colleges??
  – Community colleges??
Other Factors?

- Monograph budgets shrinking for 15+ years because of cut budgets & the cost of electronic content
- High cost – limited audience
  - 1,635 titles; average cost $85, with a range of $10-$405
  - Brill: 126 titles; average cost $146, with range of $60-279
- Purchase based on clear need, not blanket approval plan
- Tradeoffs – for each revised dissertation purchased, one or more other deserving books not purchased
What About Demand Driven Acquisitions
What About Demand Driven Acquisitions

• For e-books only;
• Library works with vendor/publisher to create a profile based on collection development policies;
• Library provides a sum of money in a deposit account and other financial parameters
• Vendor provides (MARC) records for the online catalog;
• Users initiate the e-book purchase
For Grad Students. . .

• Open access can be double-edged sword
  – Some publishers “concerned” about open access and choose not to publish OA dissertations
  – Other publishers look at high use of OA dissertations as bell weather for sales of revised dissertations
• Consider broadening narrowly-focused thesis in the dissertation when moving to publishing
• Make a case on how the proposed book is different from the dissertation
It's QUESTION TIME!!