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## Biz of Acq -- Sample Magazine Display at the Pratt Institute Library: 2003-2006

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# Biz of Acq — Sample Magazine Display at the Pratt Institute Library: 2003-2006

by **Susan E. Thomas** (Evening/Weekend Librarian, Assistant Professor, Borough of Manhattan Community College/CUNY, 199 Chambers St., S-434, New York, New York 10007; Phone: 212-220-8000 x7112; Fax: 212-748-7466) <stthomas@bmcc.cuny.edu>

Column Editor: **Michelle Flinchbaugh** (Acquisitions Librarian, Albin O. Kuhn Library, University of Maryland Baltimore County, 1000 Hilltop Circle, Baltimore, MD 21250; Phone: 410-455-6754; Fax: 410-455-1598) <flinchba@umbc.edu>

**Column Editor's Note:** *Finding effective means of including patrons in the collection development process can be difficult. Pratt Institute's Library successfully gathered patron feedback via a sample journal display and incorporated their results into their collection management decisions. I am greatly pleased to present with this article author Susan Thomas's Poem "Relax'Art Library," assembled entirely from patrons' comments written into sample magazines. — MF*

## "Relax" Art Library

Assembled from **Pratt Institute Library** patrons' comments written in the back of sample magazines.

I thought personally  
I'm digging this big time  
I have been waiting around  
with substance and meaning

Why haven't you already?  
architecture eye candy  
don't listen to him  
too many ads and corporate nah

Less hipster crap would be great too!  
would love to frequent this magazine  
if you know what's good  
seriously, from different countries

More fire, blaze it up!!  
the best Japanese magazines  
today's anarchists  
smash layout  
so "relax" art library

Upstairs. fabulous  
the word strange is a helpful reference  
and great all in one breath  
yes, I say I have always loved this one.

## Background

The **Pratt Institute** in Brooklyn, New York, offers undergraduate and graduate degrees in several design fields, fine arts, art history, and other disciplines. The library's expansive, rich, unusual periodicals collection is popular with the **Pratt** community and is frequently used by

individual students, staff, and faculty as well as classes. Librarians have taught library instruction sessions on the periodicals collections, including current, bound, and special collections. The collection includes periodicals about fine arts, art history, design, literature, current events, hard sciences, social sciences, library science (at **Pratt Manhattan**), and more. The Periodicals Committee consisted of all the librarians responsible for selecting materials for the library. Librarians contributed in their areas of specialty or research, with some librarians more deeply involved than others. As the chair, I worked closely with the Technical Services librarian and clerical staff on quotidian work like processing unusual issues, establishing binding schedules, and the like. Through 2003, the **PIL** periodicals collection was in two parts: Art & Architecture and Reference. In 2004, both collections were merged together.

Special Periodicals include historical titles like *Avalanche*, *Avant Garde*, *Creative Art*, and *The American Magazine of Art* as well as more contemporary titles like *Émigré*, *McSweeney's*, and *Gum*. Probably due to different perspectives on cataloging and processing over the years, some historical periodicals, like *Cahiers d'art*, have been classed as books and live in the Special Collection (books) or Rare Books collection. Most, however, have no call number and live in the Special Periodicals section of the Special Collection. **Pratt Institute Library** has an inchoate Zine collection, too.

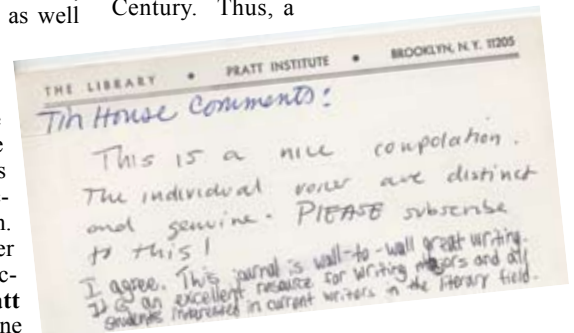
As with many open periodicals stacks and current displays, no hard statistics have been collected other than those related to the in-house use and occasional circulation of bound journals, which have barcodes. The librarians on the Periodicals Committee closely observed the use of the periodicals collections over the last several years; it is clear that the collections, especially the current periodicals, are heavily used. **Pratt** community members use the periodicals collections for many reasons:

- For academic research
- For creative research
- To teach classes (faculty bring in classes to study periodicals, with or without librarian presence)
- To stay current in their fields by regularly reading seminal journals and magazines
- To find periodicals to which creative work may be submitted and to which students may apply for internships

- For general interest and inspiration
- To examine design specimens
- To read about emerging artists, designers, and writers
- To be informed about current trends in and the avant-garde of creative fields
- To be informed about current affairs
- To become exposed to independent periodicals publishing, including magazines as well as zines.

## The Sample Magazine Display

One of the goals of the Periodicals Committee was to create more opportunities for patrons to contribute to collection development. Several years ago, many of the subscriptions beyond art, architecture, and design were straight out of the print *Reader's Guide to Periodical Literature*, *Social Sciences Index*, and *Humanities Index*. They were not necessarily the best periodicals for the **PIL** community in the 21st Century. Thus, a



great deal of work was done to select more relevant, important, and unique titles. The committee came up with a plan to acquire sample periodicals, display them, and ask patrons to write comments about why the library should (or should not) subscribe or regularly purchase a magazine. The committee read the comments and considered them during the course of its selection process. The committee thought long and hard about the collection and decided early on that a title need not be indexed or available via subscription to be selected for regular acquisition.

When we became aware of a new or established magazine of potential interest to the library community and curricula, we attempted to acquire a sample from the publisher or purchased an issue from a bookstore. Sometimes patrons would bring sample issues of favorite magazines, and those would be added to the display. In addition, a notebook was kept on display. In it patrons wrote the names of publications they thought the library should sub-

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**Biz of Acq — Sample Magazine**  
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scribe to or otherwise acquire. Acquisition as well as subscription is mentioned because the library had to purchase several titles regularly from bookstores because subscriptions did not exist (*Gum*, a design magazine), a credit card was required for subscription (*Tate*, etc., a UK art magazine), or EBSCO could not provide or could no longer provide (*Arquine*, a Spanish architecture magazine). In some cases the Library made bookstore purchases until EBSCO was finally able to provide a subscription. Examples included *Marmalade* (UK design magazine), *032c* (German art magazine), and *Bidoun* (U.S. published magazine about art and culture in the Middle East).

In 2001 and 2002, the Dean of Libraries approved a budget of a few hundred dollars so that librarians could purchase sample periodicals. The money came from petty cash in increments of no more than \$25. Librarians visited bookstores, made purchases, and were reimbursed. During those years, samples were not displayed but were studied by librarians only. Beginning in 2003, samples were put on display. Later, the budget was \$400 — later increased to \$600 — and was expanded to officially include sample magazines and bookstore purchases of regularly acquired magazines that did not offer subscriptions, including zines. Most purchases were made at **St. Mark's Bookshop and Spoonbill & Sugartown Bookstore** in New York. If unavailable at a bookstore where the **PIL** had an account, materials were purchased with petty cash. Without such a budget and such flexibility, the project would have been much weaker since the library would have had to rely on free samples (usually available only from well-established journals, not independent art and design publishers) and donations.

The magazines were typically displayed face out, next to the New Book Display. Another library could choose to display sample magazines with subscription and regularly acquired magazines, depending on the library's layout and other factors. One reason we put the display with the New Books was to avoid the sample magazines getting mixed up with the regular magazines. A sticker was placed on each sample magazine's cover, identifying the magazine as a sample and requesting the reader/browser to write comments in the back. "Why (not) should the Library subscribe to this magazine?" Patrons wrote on a piece of paper taped in the back. Samples were kept on display for sev-

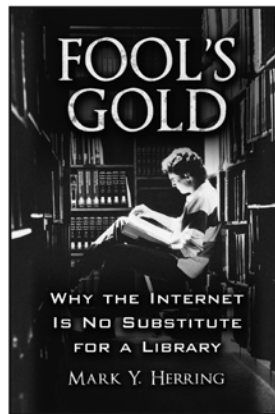
eral months — usually for about a semester.

**The Outcome**

I found comments written in most of the magazines. The comments in general were rather thoughtful, with the occasional, marginally useful "This sux!" or "this is great! Subscribe!" Useful comments included: "There is too much advertising in this magazine." "architecture eye candy, blah." "all style but no substance." Writers often responded to each other's comments, as well: "don't listen to him." "I agree, there aren't enough Japanese magazines in the library." Writers would often compare the periodical to the rest of the collection, noting that it was "unique," "popular," etc. One patron wrote that she gained an internship at one of the sample magazines. Someone else wrote that a part-time faculty member at **Pratt** was involved in the production of the magazine. Another said that she loved the new magazine so much that she ordered a subscription for herself and friends. Such comments were quite pleasant to read.

After a magazine was removed from display, I word processed all the comments and shared the results with the Periodicals Committee. Magazines that were clear "winners" were usually selected for subscription. A great example is *Gastronomica*: the journal of food and culture. Everyone loved that journal! Sometimes the committee selected a magazine for subscription even if the patron comments were not so enthusiastic (or were just lacking). Overall, the committee read the comments with great interest and used them as one tool in its selection process.

Then stickers were put on the cover and the magazines were returned to display for a short time. The stickers indicated that the Library would subscribe, thank you very much for your input; or the Library would not subscribe, thank you very much for your input. In some cases, the sticker said that the magazine was still under consideration. (Since adjustments to the EBSCO order were usually made during the summer, the committee sometimes had to wait before deciding. The library couldn't add anything unless something else was canceled or became defunct). There was a "good faith" agreement with the library administration that the total budget for new subscriptions would not exceed the amount of



**Fool's Gold**

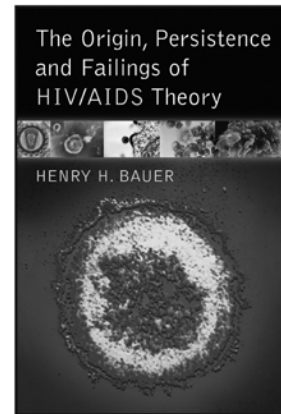
*Why the Internet Is No Substitute for a Library*

Mark Y. Herring

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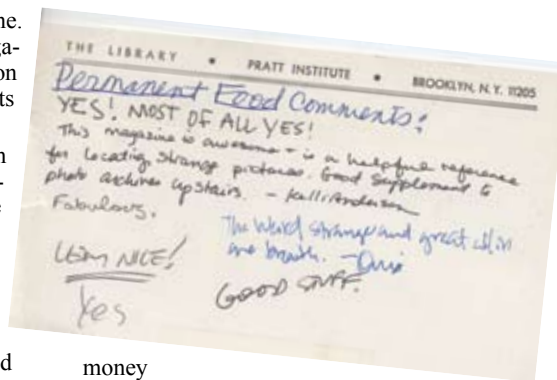
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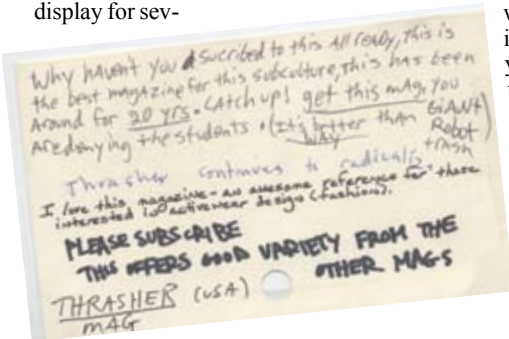
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money freed up by cancellations and defunct titles. Even so, the serials budget did increase every year because EBSCO increased prices. The "good faith" agreement was based on the popularity and heavy use of the periodicals collection. Good support from the college administration was key, as well.

Deselection was part of the process. The committee was not afraid to cancel titles infrequently used (based mostly on observation) or used but (now) available in a full-text database. Heavily illustrated magazines were never canceled; more likely to be canceled were seldom-used academic journals. The librarians attempted to include the discipline faculty in some of the selection and deselection; but, as most librarians will not be surprised to hear, many faculty members simply said that the library should not cancel anything in their

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work a lot,” one said it had helped somewhat, and one said it had had no effect. This consensus is remarkable because the common opinion is that library staff tends to be resistant to change, making a 2.0 tool like a **wiki** hard to implement successfully. Only a few months after the move to the **wiki**, our staff unanimously preferred it to the former documentation.

As part of the survey, I also asked the ordering staff to write in their opinions of the advantages and disadvantages of the **wiki**. Interactivity, such as the ability to add comments and suggestions, was frequently listed as an advantage. The other benefit cited by several staff members is the clear linking within the **wiki** to other departments’ Websites. One respondent wrote the best thing about the **Consul** procedures is “having other units’ procedures ‘up front’ and available.”

The main disadvantage mentioned by respondents was searching. Staff members wrote they wanted to be able to search by keyword. This is possible in **Confluence**, but not immediately obvious. There is a search box that searches across all “spaces” within **Stanford’s** installation. After an initial search, you can limit results to a particular space. The labeling I have done to link documents within the ordering space is another option for searching. The staff response on this subject shows a need for more training in **Consul** searching.

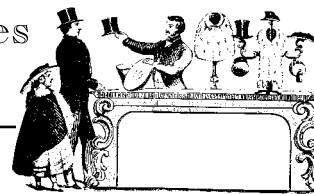
### The Future

The consensus of the ordering staff was that a **wiki** platform for the unit’s procedures was beneficial to acquisitions work. Procedures are kept current and we save managerial time with a tool that allows quick and easy Web updating. Since the creation of the ordering space, I have trained the managers of the other units within our Acquisitions Department to create and populate **Consul** spaces. At this point, every Acquisitions unit is in the process of transitioning to the **wiki**, and many other groups in the **Stanford Libraries** are creating spaces as well. Ultimately, as we standardize the tools we use for documenting procedures across the libraries, we will enable better cross-linking between units and as a consequence, a better and broader understanding of library processes. 🌱

discipline. The committee was caught between trying to do the right thing — which included explaining why a title was being canceled and conveying thoughtfulness, regret, and offers to find other libraries that subscribe — and simply conducting its business in a vacuum, inside the library and outside of the **Pratt Institute** community. The acquisition of full-text, multidisciplinary databases seriously improved the availability of journal articles in subjects like history, cultural studies, and literature.

At the time of the author’s departure from the **PIL**, the committee had nearly exhausted potential cancellations. The process of selecting new titles will become more difficult now that the collection of currently received titles has been so well tuned and shaped. It is inevitable, however, that numerous titles — even popular ones — will become defunct. Money may be freed up as a result. It is also possible that the budget will be increased due to patron satisfaction and interest in the periodicals, many of which are available exclusively in the print format. 🌱

## Standards Column — Electronic Resources: Challenges and Opportunities



by **Todd Carpenter** (Managing Director, NISO, 1 North Charles St., Ste. 1905, Baltimore, MD 21201) <[tcarpenter@niso.org](mailto:tcarpenter@niso.org)> [www.niso.org](http://www.niso.org)

The management of digital resources has never been an easy process. The rapid expansion of digital resources compounded with changing formats and sales models in the short life of Web-based delivery systems has particularly made the management process more complex. Further, from the very beginning, details relating to purchasing, licenses, access, and usage have been kept in ad hoc systems built by in-house teams or by the individual librarian needing to organize her workflow. It is hard to recall the days when digital resources played only a minor role in library management discussions.

It is from these very humble beginnings that a fairly robust community of vendors and librarians developed an entirely new type of library system — the **E-Resource Management System (ERMS)**. There are now several vendors providing more or less integrated **ERMS** services. The most dominant vendors of these systems are **Ex Libris**, **Innovative Interfaces Inc.**, and **Serials Solutions**. There are also community-developed projects such as **Colorado Alliance’s Gold Rush** systems as well as open source systems, such as **HERMES** at **Johns Hopkins University**. In addition, there are likely dozens (or more) home-grown systems that librarians are using to address complex management details. Even without a formal system in place, however, nearly every library is dealing in its own way with the acquisition, license, title, integration, and usage data information that accompany digital content.

**NISO** held a two-day seminar in Denver during September to bring together systems vendors and a diverse cross-section of librarians who are at different stages in the process of implementing a formal **ERMS**. It became apparent that these systems are relatively early in their development and deployment, despite some successes. Approximately one-third of the attendees had an **ERMS** in production, while the balance of the participants were either just implementing one, in the process of acquiring one, or still considering whether to purchase an **ERMS**. During this event we also learned that only about 400 institutions have functioning systems in development or production nationwide. Among the issues that were discussed at this forum were the role of **ERM** systems in the library; the **ERMS**

relationship to and interoperability with the standard **ILS**; which functionalities were most critical for adoption and use; and some of the barriers to implementation that have been experienced by the attendees.

When considering the amount of funds invested in electronic resources, the anecdotal indication from the group that gathered in Denver is that not nearly enough staff resources are being dedicated to the **ERM** acquisition and content-management lifecycle. Among **ARL** libraries, the average percentage of materials budget spending on electronic resources in 2005-06 is 42%, or nearly \$3.6 million, with the highest percentage being 73%. This expense amount is up 20% from the year before. The median percentage is up 5%. Despite this growing trend, we learned that even at some of the largest institutions, where annual acquisitions investment for electronic content is in the millions of dollars, fewer than five full-time staff are responsible for the full management of electronic resources and their acquisition lifecycle. Compared to the staff resources dedicated to managing the print material acquisition and management process, the e-resource **HR** investments seem modest. Obviously, every institution could use more staff, but the relative investment in print compared with the growing investment in digital content will necessitate changes in staff allocation that go well beyond the scope of having a system that manages these resources.

Perhaps the lack of staff resources is part of the reason that a relatively small number of the **ERMS** that have been purchased are up and running, or producing the anticipated results. To effectively populate, manage, and use these systems a significant time investment and significant shifts in organizational culture are required, steps that many institutions have yet to make.

One barrier to adoption that was discussed was the complexity of the problems that **ERMS** are trying to address, compounding the difficulty of rolling out such a system. Larger issues such as adapting workflows, restructuring staff resources to manage digital content, and systems interoperability with existing management tools were also pointed out as causes of delayed implementation. The sheer scale of the volume of data

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