Art Libraries Society of North America, 33rd Annual Conference, Hilton Americas, Houston, Texas, April 1-6, 2005

Session 22: Working with the Best of Them: Evolving Vendor-Art Library Relations

Tuesday, April 5, 2005, 1:30-3:30 PM

Moderator: Lucie Wall Stylianopoulos
Information Services Librarian, Fine Arts Library, University of Virginia

Speakers:

Wayne Terwilliger, Assistant Director and General Books Manager, University of Virginia Bookstore

Linda Tompkins-Baldwin, Library Director, Baltimore Museum of Art

Betsy Peck Learned, Associate Dean of Libraries, Roger Williams University

Recorder:
Annette Haines, Art & Design Field Librarian, Art, Architecture and Engineering Library, University of Michigan

Wayne Terwilliger: Thinking Locally: The Success of Bookstore and Library Cooperation

Wayne Terwilliger spoke about his relationship with the libraries at the University of Virginia. Terwilliger observed that recently the focus of academic libraries has begun shifting from a “collection focus” to a “user focus.” To address this change, the University of Virginia has set up four programs with the University Bookstore. The first of these programs works to enhance the University of Virginia’s special collection of American literature. The UVA Bookstore delivers all new first editions of American literature from a selected list of authors as well as all books by Virginia authors and books about Virginia. For the second program, the UVA Bookstore acquires for the Library all books reviewed in the Sunday New York Times Book Review and the Sunday Washington Post. The Bookstore receives reviews in advance and delivers the books to the Library on or before the book reviews appear in print. The third program is a patron-rush program. In this program the Bookstore will acquire a title within seven days of a request. The fourth program involves purchasing university press books for the Fine Arts Library. Benefits for Terwilliger include over $100,000 worth of retail sales per year. His relationship with the UVA Libraries also ensures that the bookstore is included in the academic effort of the University. Although the Bookstore cannot provide certain benefits that large vendors can, they offer personalized services such as keeping the Library and faculty members abreast of new titles from all types of presses. They also offer immediate service, and accountability. Terwilliger noted that in order to create such programs, a library must work with an independent bookstore that can do its own buying.

Linda Tompkins-Baldwin: Museum-Friendly Vendors
Linda Tompkins-Baldwin talked about vendors who will work with smaller operations such as museum libraries. For domestic titles, she works with the Baltimore Museum of Art’s Museum Shop. The Museum purchases books from Ingram and resells to her Library without a markup. She also advocated using Amazon.com to purchase books as they offer up to a 35 percent discount and can often be the cheapest source. In addition they do not charge shipping for orders over $25 and one can use a single credit card to purchase both new and used books under a single invoice. Alibris also has a wide selection and provides personal service. Like Amazon.com, they offer the ability to purchase from multiple vendors with one credit card and one invoice. For purchasing foreign titles, Tompkins-Baldwin did not recommend ordering directly from overseas as many European museum publishers are government subsidized and they are, therefore, not motivated to sell to the United States. She recommended going through Erasamus for foreign titles (especially from France, Belgium, The Netherlands, Luxemburg, Germany, Switzerland, and the United Kingdom). Erasamus has been very helpful in terms of educating Tompkins-Baldwin about foreign publishers and she enjoys their personalized service. Erasamus is particularly strong in their ability to provide European exhibition catalogs. In addition they bill in USD and their markup is minimal. They also provide antiquarian searches in Europe beyond what can be found at Addall.com. She noted that Michael Shamansky provides a similar service. She also recommended Casalini Libri for Italian and Spanish publications. In addition, Tompkins-Baldwin purchases books from Worldwide as they have an excellent website and are very responsive on the phone.

Betsy Peck Learned: Building Great Collections Together: 20 Years with F.A. Bernett

Betsy Peck Learned began by telling about how she came to know Peter Bernett of F.A. Bernett. She discussed how Bernett’s commitment to visiting clients came from his parents who began the business F.A. Bernett in 1944 in Manhattan. Peter joined the business in 1950. Peck Learned described how Peter Bernett became acquainted with his current business partner, Larry Malam, who joined the business in 1988. Peck Learned then went on to discuss in detail the F.A. Bernett process of acquiring, cataloging, and selling books. She showed slides of Bernett and Malam traveling in Europe and Japan to purchase books and discussed how the books are shipped back to Boston and cataloged with descriptive detail and historical notes. She noted that 80 percent of F.A. Bernett’s business is with libraries. Bernett and Malam also travel across the country to visit one-on-one with librarians. They bring with them a large briefcase filled with cataloged cards organized by medium and/or period. Librarian’s can then sort through the cards and photocopy those that interest them. Bernett will hold books until the librarian makes a decision to purchase. Learned Peck points out that the materials she has received from F.A. Bernett have been of extremely high quality. To illustrate, she presented some slides of books she has purchased from F.A. Bernett. She closed with glowing quotes about F.A. Bernett from several well-known art librarians including Max Marmor, Amana Bowen, and Ed Teague.