

of the acknowledgment letter to show the value of the items and the number of bound volumes and/or loose issues received. We assign a dollar value by using the following steps:

- Use the institutional subscription rate listed in the actual journal (as if we had subscribed to the title that year) to determine the per-volume or per-issue price.
- If the subscription price is not given in the received item, consult a printed price guide provided by one of our subscription agents. The Serials Department has guides going back to 1973.
- If a price is not obtained from a printed guide, a table developed in-house that estimates the original cost of a volume by subject for a given year is used. This table, which covers the period from 1900 through 1993, was created to help calculate the value of our main journal collection.
- The amount of the postage reimbursement is added to arrive at a total value for an item.

These internal copies of the acknowledgment letters are used to create an annual-gift purchase order in our acquisitions subsystem. The titles, value, number of bound or unbound items, volume and issue numbers, budget code, city and state of the donor, and a subject category are all included in each item record of the purchase order.

When other libraries request items from our lists of duplicates, we respond to each by letting them know what items are being sent, or that all their requested items are gone. We believe a prompt reply enables the requesting library to act accordingly. We save money on postage by using jiffy bags, stiff cardboard mailers, or small boxes from our current journal issues. We also reuse packaging whenever possible from duplicate items we have received.

Every item shipped is stamped "Library Rate" several times, and "Used Journals, No Value, Open for Inspection if Needed" is hand written. These notes differentiate uninsured duplicate exchange packages from insured interlibrary loan packages in the campus mail room. On foreign shipments, we add the notation "Surface Mail." Inside each package we include a small peel-off return-address label to facilitate returning postage.

For Fiscal Year 1995/96, Rowland Library added a total of 818 bound volumes and 1,417 individual issues. Approximately ninety percent of these volumes and issues came from the two electronic lists, BackMed and BackServ. The estimated value of all items added

to our collection was \$29,661.96. During this period, our estimate for postage reimbursement was approximately \$1,300.00. These figures indicate an addition of \$23.00 of value to our collection for every \$1.00 spent on postage.

Is it worth Rowland Library staff time to use BackMed and BackServ? Yes! Working with the lists is time consuming, but the commitment has yielded striking results. These new e-resources are valuable tools for filling in gaps, extending title holdings, and replacing worn out or "surgically altered" volumes and issues. These listservs supplement the claiming process, stretch the backfile budget, and demonstrate to our university administration that every dollar spent on our collection in this way yields a bigger "bang for our buck".

NOTE

1. BackMed scope message from the Readmore home page. <<http://www.readmore.com/electron/backserv/back-med.html>>

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EUROBACK: GOALS AND ACHIEVEMENTS AFTER ONE YEAR

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EUROBACK is but a European clone of BackServ. It was launched because those who conceived it had a positive experience with the American-based electronic list. This article will explore why EUROBACK is necessary as a separate list, and it will compare librarianship on the North American and European continents, where library materials are viewed quite differently.

HISTORY

European libraries trace their histories back to the Middle Ages when books were rare and only a few people had access to them. Literacy was not the rule, but the exception, and the knowledge gained through books

was intimately associated with power. In the United States, libraries flourished centuries later, at a time when education was a priority and science was seen as a source of progress and welfare for the majority of people.

The historical perspective is not anecdotal; it has determined the attitude of generations of librarians toward the written word. One perspective has evolved to emphasize the materials themselves—the books, the manuscripts, and the incunabula—while the other view emphasizes access to information. The former treats library materials as museum pieces, with a maximum of care and respect. The latter perceives books and journals as a means of getting information to a large number of readers.

In Europe, some librarians favor the written record with a nearly religious fervor that can inhibit managerial action. Because of this difference in attitudes, libraries that prefer not to weed can end up burdened with short runs of recent periodicals received through private or corporate gifts. In those cases where libraries do decide to weed their collections, they generally turn to a back-issue dealer, but there are only a few firms that accept very recent materials, and they accept them at an absurdly low price.

In the United States, cooperative efforts such as the Duplicate Exchange Union (DEU) or USBE make the process of weeding and exchange much fairer and easier. No such efforts exist in Europe, at least on a large scale, although they may take place through personal contacts or the initiatives of professional associations. To date the problem is difficult to tackle because conventional communication channels, such as letters and phone calls, are time consuming and bureaucratic.

The first experiment to use computer communications for library exchange on a wide basis in Europe was based on an idea of Pierre Belbenoit-Avich, who created a database called "Doubles," which was searchable online at the SUNIST server through the TRANSPAC network. Unfortunately, the application did not gain sufficient momentum to be economically feasible or to be exported outside of France. When Doubles ceased after ten years, the way was cleared for a new project.

The BackServ concept was timely, and some European librarians began to use it through the Internet. Because the Internet now offers fast and inexpensive communications to academic libraries, it also offers a unique opportunity for creating new exchange activities.

MEMBERSHIP

EUROBACK was launched in August 1995, and its membership at the time this article was written was 244 and steadily growing. It was first advertised on the French discussion lists BIBLIO-FR and ADDBS-INFO, where messages regarding "needed" issues sometimes appeared. The lists are read by most French-speaking information professionals. EUROBACK's birth was also announced both on Backserv, where some European librarians do their wanted-issues shopping, and on SERIALST.

Europe is a patchwork of nations. Each country has its own culture—composed not only of a rich heritage in the arts, sciences, and humanities—but also of different social attitudes and traditions, which are reflected in every phase of daily and professional life. It is hoped that the Maastricht Treaty and the forthcoming EURO currency will ease communications across the former borders, but there is still a long way to go. Thus any European-wide endeavor immediately faces a huge challenge.

Because Europe is diverse, it is preferable that messages be submitted in more than one language, usually in French and English. France has the greatest representation in EUROBACK, with ninety-seven members (forty percent). But since a majority of Belgian, Swiss, and Canadian members come from the French-speaking parts of their countries, almost fifty percent of the EUROBACK membership is actually French speaking. Italy is represented on EUROBACK with about thirty-six members. The third largest group is North American, with thirty-three members from the United States and Canada. This is not surprising since duplicates exchange is a recognized function in North American libraries. Conversely, EUROBACK has few British or Dutch members (eight and three, respectively), perhaps due to the presence of a big lending center in each country, the British Library Lending Division (BLLD), for example, in the UK and a network of specialized academic libraries in the Netherlands with the library of Delft Technological University, the medical library of Erasmus University in Rotterdam, and the library of the Royal Netherlands Academy of Arts and Sciences in Amsterdam. German-speaking countries are represented on the list (ten members from Germany, nine from Austria), but southern Europe, Italy excepted, is under-represented. We know that researchers from Spain, Portugal, and Greece communicate through the Internet, but the Net may not have penetrated their libraries to any extent. Scandinavia is under-represented as well. There is also an absence of most former

Eastern-Block countries. Perhaps they are unaware of EUROBACK or are simply uninterested in exchange activities.

BIAS OF THE LIST

For an exchange to be successful, a “want” or “available” list has to be read by a librarian working in the same subject area. For instance, an art historian generally does not read medical journals and a psychologist rarely searches for a physics text. From the archives of EUROBACK, it is evident that two types of documents are most likely to succeed: general scientific literature and medical journals. The same situation occurred in BackServ, which split into two lists, BackMed being exclusively devoted to exchanging medical and health related serials. It is too early to split EUROBACK into two lists, but medical libraries have numerous issues to offer for exchange and thus have an incentive to create their own list. In the meantime, the subject area of each list must be indicated in the subject line so that users can immediately separate what is potentially useful to them from what is not.

To date, detailed statistics on success rates are not available, but even a low initial success rate should not convince a library to abandon use of the list. On the contrary, it is necessary that specialized libraries try to convince others in their field to become more active in offering duplicates for exchange so as to increase the success rate. In time, EUROBACK can also become a source for local, and sometimes hard-to-find, European materials. The list is still relatively new and not yet sufficiently well known. It is most often advertised through personal or association contacts.

POSTAL CHARGES: THE BIG PROBLEM

The most active EUROBACK members know that the mailing charges within Europe, and from Europe to the outside world, are prohibitive. It is commonly five times more expensive to send materials to the United States than to receive them from the US. Moreover, it is difficult to tackle the problem as there are no common European postal rates, although some standardization is slowly taking place. For the moment, the number of EUROBACK users is too small for them to form an effective lobby. But the problem needs to be raised within our professional associations, which could in turn relay our need for a library rate, such as exists in

the United States, to their governments and/or to the EC authorities

EXCHANGE LISTS: A COLLECTION DEVELOPMENT TOOL?

Why do librarians create exchange lists and accept the workload of maintaining them? They collect books and journals not for themselves, but in order to offer maximum sources of information to the greatest number of users. Since library budgets are squeezed by sky-rocketing prices of books and, to an even greater extent, journals, opportunities to add to their collections at low costs are certainly appreciated. In countries where library acquisition budgets are insufficient or even non-existent, such as those in Africa and Eastern Europe, exchange lists can provide a means to collect journals inexpensively. Many projects—projects supported by UNESCO, BIEF or the ECC—exist to get library materials to underdeveloped nations, but there is often a lack of information about these programs in libraries. We would be gratified to see EUROBACK become a forum for the exchange of ideas and practical tips on the library-exchange process, or even a laboratory for appropriate projects.

CURRENT STATUS AND FUTURE PLANS FOR EUROBACK

Currently EUROBACK’s archives are maintained on two large and well-visited Web sites. The first is the Web site at the French Comité réseau des universités (<http://www.cru.fr/listes/euroback@vm1.ucl.ac.be>). The second is a site maintained by Birdie MacLennan at the University of Vermont (<http://www.uvm.edu/~bmaclenn/backexch.html>). Having the archives at two sites visited by different user populations may give a wider base to the list and hold promise for its future development.

Prior to writing this essay, the authors conducted a survey of EUROBACK members. Some users pointed out that deadlines on exchange offers would be helpful, and we agree. They also requested a searchable and dynamic database to display the material offered or needed by members. Although this will be a time-consuming step which will require additional computing resources, it is nevertheless what we plan to tackle next. The demand indicates that the effort would be worthwhile.

We are grateful to Marilyn Geller and Amira Aaron of Readmore, Inc., for the authorization to copy the BackServ concept in our list, to the staff of the Centre des Ressources Informatiques of the University of Rennes for hosting our archives on their site before its transfer to the CRU, to Birdie MacLennan for so much support and fruitful discussion, and to the computer center of our University (SEGI) for technical support.

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USBE: TRADING BACK ISSUES ON THE INTERNET

John T. Zubal

As the main clearinghouse for back issues, the United States Book Exchange (USBE) has been dependent on, linked to, and a strong advocate for facile means of communication between libraries and the organization. With this longstanding interest in communication, USBE welcomed easy access to the Internet as a supplement to otherwise traditional ways of communicating for purposes of business and for the transmission of information. At USBE, we hope that before the end of the 1990s, e-mail, the Web, chatrooms, and similar Internet-based venues will dramatically reduce the dependence we all have on the postal service and other traditional, but antiquated, ways of communicating.

In 1991 USBE acquired its Internet domain and began to communicate with libraries via the Internet. Our address, <usbe@usbe.com>, which is simple and easy to remember, has come to enjoy instant and wide recognition among serials librarians. In those early years of the Internet, from 1991 to 1993, it was our experience that librarians seldom used the Net as a vehicle for trading, acquiring, and deaccessioning serials, seeing it instead as a channel to be used primarily for disseminating information about job opportunities, conference planning, and technological advances that would have an impact on librarianship. Most librarians were not disposed to use the Internet to ease the humdrum work of serials acquisition and organization. Indeed, our early attempts to inform librarians of USBE's purpose and services via the Internet were gen-

erally rebuffed, sometimes with embarrassingly hostile or severe admonishments. Starting in 1994, however, we noticed a change in serials librarians' appreciation of the Net's potential impact on their work. That year, for reasons still difficult to explain, librarians began to recognize the labor-saving, cost-reducing, and time-enhancing ways the Internet could be exploited in their work, especially in serials acquisition and replacement. We started to receive via e-mail regular, then frequent, inquiries about our services, as well as requests for lists of available back issues. Soon applications for membership and actual orders for back issues and volumes accumulated in our e-mail box. While there is still resistance among some librarians to conducting "business" on the Internet, most seem to understand that this new medium is not necessarily adversarial and, in fact, should be exploited to make their work easier and their budgets go farther.

In mid 1995 we built our home page, the URL for which is <<http://www.usbe.com>>. The USBE "Shelf List" is at the nucleus of the Web site. It is a frequently updated alphabetical directory of about 16,000 periodicals, title-by-title, in USBE's stock. More important, the "Shelf List" is completely searchable by key words or phrases, thus enabling browsers to determine instantly which titles in certain fields (for example, "history," "economics," or "nursing") are available from USBE. In addition, the complete "Shelf List" may be downloaded and made resident on users' computers, further reducing time spent online and allowing users to manipulate the list to suit local needs. The search mode is also tied to an automatic ordering process, which enables users to prepare orders offline and transmit them via e-mail to USBE. Our ongoing Web page census indicates that it is checked by an average of 100 librarians each workday.

USBE's Web site likewise offers information on membership and special sales, news about our participation at national and international conferences and conventions, and the latest antics and adventures of Greystoke, USBE's feline mascot. On a more serious note, the Web site also helps libraries with deaccession planning and programs; it also provides guidance on how to participate in USBE's "Donational Program" (which makes publications available to libraries at no cost other than shipping charges) and "Operation Reachout" (which makes American publications available to libraries that historically have been unable to collect them, in such countries as Cuba and North Korea). The USBE newsletter, "For Members Only," can also be found at the Web site and downloaded.