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MSc INTERNATIONAL INFORMATION STUDIES

**Book selection and acquisition: the role played by
libraries between publishers, vendors and customers in
university and public research institutes in Italy**

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DECLARATION

This dissertation is the sole work of the author, and is developed from a research proposal submitted by the author in Year two as part of the BP101 Unit (Independent study unit for information studies 2) of the course.

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ABSTRACT

Book selection and acquisition: the role played by libraries between publishers, vendors and customers in university and public research institutions in Italy

by Maria Agnese Giraudo

Selection and acquisition have mostly been considered in international literature as a collateral aspect of Collection Development and many surveys have been carried out to assess library acquisitions, such as the evaluation of collections through comparisons with well-known bibliographic lists, users data regarding loans, user requests, etc. Recently a considerable number of publications have dealt with the evaluation of bibliographic sources on the Internet and the integration and interoperability of library management systems with vendor systems for selection and acquisition purposes.

Considering the scant information and data regarding Italian libraries, the aim of the research was to describe and explore the situation in Italian university and public research libraries regarding selection and acquisition procedures with the focus on books. Taking into account the increasing importance of journals, this choice was dictated by many factors, such as the increasing cuts in funds for books, the intention to understand their role in the scientific environment, also considering the evolution of the electronic publishing sector.

Moreover, the objectives were also to explore vendors operating on the Italian market, their policies and attitudes toward libraries and how they are coping with the tremendous changes in the sector: the Internet, the aggressive policies of publishers and the shifting of publishing from printed to the electronic format.

The research followed a qualitative approach with the purpose of describing and exploring libraries. Therefore a questionnaire was drawn up. After carrying out a pilot test, it was sent to university and public research libraries all around the country. Although, due to the low rate of respondents, there were not sufficient quantitative data to develop a more complex analysis, some significant data could be analysed. At the same time, from 9 Vendors contacted 6 (Blackwell, Burioni, Casalini, Celdes, DEA and Esia) were interviewed using the technique of non-structured interviews. The conversations provided interesting information and suggestions on issues not previously considered, thanks also to the collaboration and the interest shown by vendors in the initiative. The interviews of two librarians, chosen in the scientific environment, provided more insight and additional information during the survey. After the analysis of data from the questionnaires and interviews and the following data processing, the findings were shown to the Key Informant, an expert in library management and electronic resources at the Faculty of Engineering and Architecture of the University of Parma.

From a comparison of the questionnaire and interviews issues emerged that would need more in-depth analysis, such as: acquisitions procedure integration, purchasing power of the structure and competence of actors, terms of contract with vendors. A stimulating question was proposed, "Why don't librarians and vendors develop a path of collaboration and partnership so that both can cope with the aggressive policies of publishers? Moreover, collaboration is needed to keep up with innovations and to cope with fund reductions and lack of recognition the profession of a librarian receives.

ABBREVIATIONS

ARL Association of Research Libraries

BIDS Biblioteca Digitale della Sapienza(University of “La Sapienza” Digital Library)

CAB Centro di Ateneo per le Biblioteche (Libraries University Center)

CD-ROM Compact disc read-only memory

DD Document delivery

ENEA(Italian National Agency for New Technologies Energy and the Environment)

ILL Inter-library loan

ISS Istituto Superiore di Sanità (Institute of the Department of Health)

IULM Istituto Universitario di Lingue Moderne (Academic Institute of Modern Languages)

KI Key Informant

LIS Library and Information Science

LS Library System

MARC Machine-Readable Cataloguing

OPAC Online Public Access Catalogue

SBA Sistema bibliotecario di Ateneo (University Library System)

SBN Sistema bibliotecario nazionale (National Library System)

SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences)

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1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Problem statement

The acquisition and selection procedures of libraries are facing a challenging transformation keeping pace with developments in the electronic world of information on the web. On the other hand, vendors and publishers have, in the last few years, restructured their organization, developed new services and they are still on going, in a very competitive environment. The cascade effect of Internet expansion - more effective and diversified ways of information transmission, even more structured - from the trade world, leaps into libraries to leverage procedures and services. Moreover, the increasing cost of printed publications and reduced funds has pushed libraries to explore new paths in acquisition policies and procedures. At the same time, the roles of vendors / jobbers and publishers in the publication provision chain have shifted from being clearly defined, with different functions, to competitive and overlapping roles.

The most impressive impact can be noticed in serials which have been transferred, in a massive measure, from printed into electronic format with the advantage of content being rendered independent from the support, which is more flexible and therefore more searchable and accessible. But changes are happening fast: all sorts of new services are coming up on the Internet: information, data, bibliographic citations and links to full-text and, moreover, electronic publishing products: e-books and publishing packages. Vendors (aggregators) and publishers have provided portals to enable their consultation that have a whole series of research, reference and updating facilities and, above all, searchable databases, providing access links to full-text documents and the possibility of downloading (if on subscription) or purchasing them on-line (pay to view).

This vortex of change seems to have put into question the very existence of books as such, not only their role and function. In some scientific research sectors books are already only used marginally, then there is the effect of reductions in library budgets on book acquisitions and the shift from book to journal acquisitions, particularly in the STM area.

In fact, books appear less important than journals in the scientific area, which requires continuously updated information to keep up with international competition. Such differences in communication traditions in scholarly disciplines continue also in a changing electronic environment (Branin, Groen, Thorin, 2000)

Nevertheless, books maintain their central role in scientific areas, not just as reference, manual and learning materials, but more because of their comprehensive content and structured arrangement of scientific topics. If books have a long shelf life in humanity areas and, to some extent, in fiction and leisure reading, their function as a source of knowledge on all subjects is a matter of fact and needs greater consideration and acknowledgement.

Therefore, this study also proposes to explore the role of books in university and research institute libraries in Italy, focussing particular attention on the scientific field. As previously mentioned, since the use of journals and databases is gaining ground, one objective was to find out whether books still played an important role in research and in which areas. The study also intends to investigate the selection and acquisition procedures and find out whether they are connected to a defined policy of collection development. Another objective is to investigate relations with vendors. As mentioned in the literature review, in US libraries, cooperative and partnership work relations with vendors are ongoing, opening unexplored avenues. Does this challenging shift from outsourcing to continuous cooperation in book acquisition and selection procedures have any chance in Italian academic and public research libraries?

1.2 Research aims, objectives and questions

Aims

The aims of the research are to focus on book acquisition and selection practices in Italian research and academic libraries, pointing out first of all the relation between libraries and vendors and also aspects linked with the policies of publishers and customer attitudes. The research also refers to the more general issues of *collection development*, although it is not a specific aim of investigation.

Moreover, it aims to:

- Identify the methods followed in book selection and acquisition
- discover librarian perceptions and expectations regarding vendors
- discover vendors point of view regarding their collaboration with libraries
- understand the role of books in scientific areas.

Objectives

The objectives of the research are the following:

- identify procedures, sources and criteria for book selection
- identify structures and staff taking part in selection and acquisition procedures
- recognize models of acquisition practices, their suitability and effectiveness
- discover or highlight connections with library collection development policies
- connect acquisition practices with ILS and the administration environment
- explore vendors/libraries work experience: feelings, expectations and trends
- consider book selection and acquisition in an academic scientific environment.

Research questions

How are acquisitions being made in Italian academic and public research libraries in the Internet era?

How much does the economic situation effect book acquisition policies and what strategies have been put into effect to optimize acquisitions?

How do the traditional practices work alongside automated procedures and management policies?

To what extent is the selection and acquisition process integrated to that of other libraries and the external services of vendors?

2 BACKGROUND INFORMATION

2.1 Information on Italian university and public research libraries

The first consideration to be made is that the Italian situation is highly diversified: libraries are different in size, buying power and in organisational structure. Moreover, selection and acquisition procedures vary from library to library, various individuals are involved, different procedures and technologies, etc. are used. Recently, there has been a technological and entrepreneurial development in Italian Universities that has both positive and negative aspects, and, from an organisational point of view, a growing gap can be detected between public and private structures in the use of human resources and investments in technology.

There are considerably progressive cases to be found in both southern and northern Italy, where administrative procedures and institutional bureaucracy have also gained advantages from technological development, having significant repercussions on the organisation and management of institutes. In other cases, bureaucracy still lays down the law and transformation is hard to achieve.

Regarding library acquisitions and collection development policies in Italy it is hard to represent a complete and unitary report: too many differences have to be taken in account and also the fact that comprehensive national statistical data have only been available since 2003. Data and informations are available by *The annual reports on Italian libraries*, published by the Italian Library Association since 2001(1). Contribution on methodology was provided by Anna Maria Tamaro (2) and Elisabetta Pilia (3) and the Italian translation of the IFLA guidelines “Measuring quality” by Anna Galluzzi, applied in the surveys of the academic and public libraries(4). The first survey of the Italian Universities, made by the Monitoring Centre of the Ministry for Universities and Scientific and Technological Research in 1998(5), followed by that of 2003 (6). The project on defining suitable indicators to survey Library University Systems also includes the CAB (Libraries University Center) report of the University of Padova.(7).

With regard to the Italian universities, the first survey made by the Monitoring Centre of the Ministry for Universities and Scientific and Technological Research in 1998 to assess the university system provided partial data and results. However the report of a second survey of the 2003, made by the Interuniversity Group for Monitoring University Library Systems (GIM), provides data concerning almost all the Italian Universities. However, 4 out of the 77 Universities surveyed did not provide any information on their SBA.

Gabriele Mazzitelli and Serena Spinelli describe the well-known situation of the Italian Universities that is very contradictory. “These data contribute to giving a clearer picture of a complex and, in some ways, conflicting situation, where seemingly incompatible situations coexist: surges of innovation and investments for the future, ever more digitalized, coexist with the difficulties of rationalizing and managing every day activities; developments in integration systems with in-house autonomist drives; new instruments for organizing and managing innovations with bureaucratic-administrative formalism, a culture oriented towards service with the historic centralism of academic users, and so on...”(8)

2.1.1 Statistical data on Italian university libraries

The data reported came from the 2003 survey on the libraries of 77 universities, so the data refer to the previous year 2002.

One of the advantages of the survey has been that it enabled the definition of an analytical framework of the services offered by Italian Universities:

- considerably fragmentary and diverse dimension of services
- rich collections of monographs and periodicals
- great financial commitment of Universities, nevertheless
- reduction in new acquisitions
- expansion of automation and organization in Library University Systems

A first consideration regards the **types of libraries** found in Italian Universities:

- Ateneo(University)
- Centro (Centre)
- Department
- Faculty
- Interdepartmental
- Interfaculty
- Institute

More than half of the libraries that replied were Departmental, amounting to 640 (47.6 %), on a total of 1,345 libraries with a loss of 175 libraries, 13.3%. The report explains that the higher number of Department libraries compared with the others: 167 Faculty (12.4%), 84 Institute (6.2%), etc. was because Departments are traditionally structures devoted to research, therefore, it could be supposed that library services are more important to them. Comparing these data with that of the previous year, a reduction in the number of libraries is found, from 2,200 to 1,345. This trend, to reduce the fragmentation of the structure, is very positive with a view to unifying services to optimize their use and reduce costs.

Collections

The collections, in their totality, consisted of 70.2% monographs (new + old books + manuscripts), 26.1% periodicals and 3.7 % other material (CD-Rom, microfiches, audiovisuals, etc.).

The rate of growth of collections was very low: 75.4% of respondent libraries increased their collection by 1,000 new items annually of which 59.9%, less than 500, consisted of published material in printed format. These data are very impressive and illustrate the difficult financial situation Universities are in. A comparison of both surveys clearly shows the extent of the cuts in new acquisitions:

Table1: Comparison of acquisitions and subscriptions (Data from surveys of 1998 and 2003)		
Acquisitions	1998 Survey	2003 Survey
New acquisitions	1,799,000	1,095,700
Subscriptions to printed periodicals	264,000	240,700

However, we must take into consideration that these data do not consider subscriptions to electronic journals that are managed centrally by the university central system, but only local resources. “These data are very worrying because the most concrete risk of these acquisition restrictions is a certain lack of diversity of collections, catering for the interests of university staff [...] and, in some cases, concerned with didactic support, which does not guarantee ample coverage of subjects that can alone meet demands of more long-term studies, updates, research of university users” (9)

Compared with public libraries, academic and research libraries, on which the investigation is focused, have far higher budgets for acquisitions, due to the extent and quality of their

collections. Even if not comparable with some libraries in the U.S., Italian university and research libraries spend a vast sum of money on the acquisition of prestigious publications edited and published abroad, mainly in Europe and the U.S. Without considering other DB subscriptions, *journals* take the largest share, not only in financial terms, but also because of their increasing predominance in research. Books, such as textbooks, handbooks, monographs, reference books, proceedings and so on, also have considerable incidence on budgets. Fund reductions in Public Administration and, at the same time, increases in publication costs, in particular journals (as also found in above mentioned data), place book acquisitions in an increasingly critical position. This is even more apparent in the scientific field, since the costs of journals have increased dramatically.

An assessment of the Library System of the Politecnico of Torino (10) , made over the period 1986-2000, found that despite the increase in the unit costs of serials 215%, that led to an overall increase in Serial expenditure of 210%, a reduction in the acquisition of serials was made that only amounted to 5%, whereas in the case of monographs, the increase in the cost per unit (appreciable but considerably less) was 68%, an overall increase of 66% , that led to a greater cut in acquisitions (9%). These data show how current acquisition policies in the STM area lead to an increasing imbalance between serials and monographs in library collections, consisting of a further reduction in monographs. Moreover, the increasing number of publications on the market requires new effective procedures and tools for selection and acquisition. Therefore, it no longer seems possible to maintain the customary procedures for book acquisitions.

How relevant is expenditure on books in academic and research libraries is shown by **International comparisons of data** about European HE libraries acquisitions in 2000. It appears that the UK spent 236.7 Million Euro, while Italy spent 124.2 millions Euro. Out of the 29 European countries, Italy ranks third after the UK and Germany in the expenditure on library acquisitions in 2000. However, taking the number of staff and students also into consideration, Italy is ranked 11th (11).

American libraries “ have been adversely affected by draconian increases in serials costs . As the cost for serials surged, fewer dollars were available for scholarly books A review of data released by the Association of Research Libraries (ARL) for their 46 members revealed ... that between 2000-2001 the average ARL member had a budgetary increase of 5.8%. The increase of electronic expenditures was 13.5%... A review of serials and book allocations illuminates the severity of this problem. Academic libraries are spending fewer dollars for books. The ARL average budget was split 62.2% for serials and only 33.5% for scholarly books...However a number of libraries exceeded this “62-33” ratio...The end result for US book publishers was unsettling. Fewer library book dollars meant fewer book sales... to 2007 additional slippage in academic library book allocations, it is likely that many publishers will be compelled to re-evaluate (perhaps downward) book title output, a development that could have a catastrophic impact on scholarship, the financial health of some US publishers and the reading population” (12).

2.2 Acquisitions and collection development: confrontation with the international environment

Although significant investments in acquisitions are made, Italian academic and research libraries, seem to follow different paths in setting up a collection development policy, including selection and acquisition procedures. For some of them, such procedures are simply based on customary practice, for others, selection and acquisition result from a policy not yet formally expressed in writing, whereas other cases have a policy with its own evaluation criteria, distinct from those of other libraries. However, some have set up written acquisition, selection and

collection development policies comparable with international standards and, consequently, have implemented suitable procedures.

The path of Italian libraries take to arrive at defining a policy of collection development is very different from that found in Anglo-American culture. *Giovanni Solimine* highlighted that difference and explained that the approach of Italian librarians to Collection Development comes from the fact that they consider their collections more from a bibliographic point of view than from the point of view of their management. Due to the historical importance of the majority of Italian library collections, the attention has been put more on bibliography and preservation than on acquisitions. Moreover, the Anglo-American libraries have traditionally always had considerable funds for acquisitions available that are not comparable with those in Italy. Therefore, the important consideration that acquisitions and collection development achieved in that countries. Moreover, he traces the path of Italian collection development way from *Rinaldo Lunati* (13) that focused mainly on selection, then on *Madel Crasta* who, for the first time, wrote about “building collections, that is the line of policy for resource and service development[...]” (14) complaining that in the Italian library tradition this aspect has been underestimated and all the attention has been focused on document access through catalographic treatment.

In the last five years in Italy, increasing interest has been shown on the issue of *collection development* in public and university libraries. Workshops and seminars are being organised to discuss this issue (15) after interest in the issue had become more widespread through different channels, such as academic teaching, as in the case of Giovanni Solimine, vendors intervention with the introduction of Approval plans, the linking with the international professional environment, such as **IFLA Guidelines**, that will be analysed in the literature review. Some libraries have started an assessment of their collections, in some cases, applying the *Conspectus method* and writing up collections card. (16)

A written collection development policy underpins every library procedure regarding selection and acquisition and weeding. IFLA Guidelines (17) present **selection** as “the main reason for having a written collection development policy.” Book selection must therefore be based on a collection development policy which

“provides guidance to staff when selecting and deselecting (printed and electronic) resources for the local collection...for each stage of materials handling...This reduces personal bias by setting individual selection decisions in the context of the aims of collection building practice, and identifies gaps in collection development responsibilities. It ensures continuity and consistency in selection and revision. Moreover, it clarifies the purpose and scope of local collections and allows selection decisions to be evaluated...”, other reasons mentioned in the IFLA guidelines are: *planning, public relations* and a *broader context*.

”The section regarding **subject profiles** is based upon collection assessment...The preferred presentation is a set of **Conspectus** reports, which include all appropriate collection information. ...The assessment is achieved by a number of steps which include planning, gathering data, assigning collection depth indicators (or levels) and language codes” (18)

The ALA guidelines also use the Conspectus system to define and therefore assess collections, which was devised in the US by the Research Library Group (19).

2.3 Book selection and collection development

Following a strategy of collection development, the *selection* procedure starts from the definition of a protocol containing:

- Area (subject or Classification)
- Budget allocated to that area
- Budget distribution, allocating specific sums to monographs and reference material

- Corresponding budget distribution to the various sectors of a library, taking into consideration the importance of certain subject in a determined sector.
- Distinction of acquisitions by: typology, chronology, geography, language, etc.
- Information sources for the selection of acquisitions: special and reliable bibliographies, library catalogues, review journals, specialized journals
- Protocol of assessment and checking the effectiveness of criteria adopted. (20)

Solimine underlines the importance of relying on reliable and specialized (if it is the case), bibliographic sources and warns against following commercial information that, on the other hand, are more easily available and up-to-date.

Evans compares six *theories of book selection* (21) from McColvin “theory of book selection of 1925 and, among others, mentions Ranganathan. The aim of all these theories is to guarantee a complete and objective book selection mostly for public libraries that correspond to the real needs of every community group, avoiding bias caused by personal criteria and conviction of selectors. The aim of guaranteeing the entire population free and independent information and learning, has always been a very important issue for public libraries in US that therefore developed, for that purpose, services such as loans, reference and so on... This view was connatural to the US concept of democracy, that from the beginning of the Federation was achieved by groups of people that after having occupied the territory had begun productive and civil lives.

The situation in Europe is very different, libraries have been established for centuries and, in many cases, were at first connected with aristocracy, the church and public authority, before becoming, in some cases, the legacy of university and public libraries. It also very easy to understand why *approval plans*, were devised and became highly successful in the US, it was due to the necessity of starting collections from scratch as they were not based on previous donations or pre-existing libraries.

Returning to the practice of selection, book direct examination is the best practice but today it is no longer a realistic proposition due to the enormous production of publishers in every field. Therefore, the success of **approval plans** enable the direct examination of books but, at the same time, define an acquisition profile according to predetermined criteria agreed with the library. Nevertheless, vendors need to be assured that the rate of restitution is low. In US libraries, “blanket orders” are used which are similar to standing orders: the provision of everything regarding subject, or a country publications etc... But this would not be feasible in Italy.

“**American university and research library**’s interests and needs dominate the professional literature...due to numerical superiority of the size of their collections and the number of their staff, as well as the money spent per year on operations...Such libraries range from a few hundred thousand to more than 10 million volumes...collection development and selection work requires more time and attention [in these libraries in comparison with college libraries]... In small libraries with limited funds, there is a strong faculty involvement, sometimes the faculty has sole responsibility for building the collection. As the collection, institution and budget grow, there is a shift to more and more librarian involvement and responsibility. (22)

Problems of coordination in collection development and selection are common in US University libraries, due to having too many staff members involved that do not have clear responsibilities, this situation could create inconveniences such as the purchase of duplications and the risk of missing important items. Also for this reason Approval plans, standing orders or blanket orders are better solutions.

In the above paragraph has been pointed out how **Italian libraries** consider collections with regard to selection and acquisition. These practices have always been carried out by librarians with the direct involvement of teachers and researchers, following more personal requests rather than

general need after collection assessment. The **practice of previewing books** has always been very common but it has nothing to do with approval plans, as we will see in the following chapters. On the other hand, the priority of the older generation of librarians was to preserve the collection and to continue in the same way with serials and firm orders. The present interest of Italian libraries concerning collection development and selection and acquisition strategies seems very productive, open to innovations and stimuli from abroad, but, of course, keeping in mind the specificity of our situation.

Evans treats the argument of selection at different levels: in his detailed analysis he considers different type of libraries, materials, formats: nevertheless he does not mention the Whittaker method of book selection which has also been adopted by Italian public libraries and adapted to their particular needs (23) and also recommended by Solimine (24)

Regarding the sources for selection the outline of Evans is very clear and comprehensive, that categorizes sources (25) into the follow types:

Type	Example
Current sources for in-print books	AM Book Publishing Record (ABPR) Books in Print
Catalogs, flyers, announcements	Publisher's catalogues, PTLA
Current review sources	Library Journal, Wilson Library Bulletin Choice, Booklist, Whitaker Bookseller
National Bibliographies	British National Bibliography National Union Catalog
Online databases	OCLC, RLIN

Today, the sources for selection have increased tremendously, not only printed brochures and lists continue to be distributed in printed form but also e-mails, alerts and e-bulletins are submerging the people who deal with acquisitions as well as everybody. The sources of information are also more diversified because also reference services provide suggestions and users are more stimulated to make proposals by searching the Internet bookstores and publisher sites. From a research comparing functions and processes of the treatment of printed and electronic books, selection results are much more time-consuming with electronic products than with printed.(26)

2.4 Book acquisition procedures

The following methods are used for book acquisitions:

- **Approval plans** The items chosen by the vendor are automatically shipped to the library. Usually the majority of the books have been bought and very few are returned. It is crucial to get the books needed to develop a fully comprehensive and articulate profile with the vendor's plan. The profile covers a certain number of subjects and must take into account the level of treatment (researcher, teacher, graduate, etc...), geographical, linguistic coverage, format...
- **Firm order** This is the ordinary method for buying the books the library wants and the order is based on the main bibliographic data (author, title, publisher and so on...) this order can also be sent directly to the publisher but increases the amount of staff work.
- **Standing order** It is best suited for serials and monographs published in a serial. When ordering, they are treated as a single subscription, as a journal subscription and the vendor

procedures, of sending and invoicing, follow automatically. The advantages of standing orders are the time it saves staff and vendor collection control, the disadvantages are the unpredictable nature of the number of issues and therefore of costs. In the case in which only an issue of the series is requested, concerning a specialist topic for a few customers, the expense does not generally seem to balance with item use.

The acquisition processing changes in some way depending on which method has been adopted but operations are the same:

Acquisition processing

The following procedures take place either automatically or manually: preorder recording, ordering, receiving, fiscal management and record keeping. The effectiveness of the procedure relies on accuracy, speed, simplicity and lower costs.

Request processing

Requests come in different formats: verbal communication, e-mail or written note. Normally, the practice is to fill out library request forms. This is changing in the electronic environment, where bibliographic sources are searched online, such as trade and national bibliographies, OPACs and Publisher/Vendor DBs to generate computer-generated orders.

Preorder work

The preliminary work deals with:

- *Data verification*: identification of the correct author, title, publisher, etc.
- *Searching*, if the library already owns the item
- *Checking order*, book in preview/AP, standing order files.

These procedures are partially reduced if the system allows the OPAC to be checked through for the ordered and received status of the books. Moreover, verification and searching seem unnecessary if the ILS is connected with the vendor DBs. In this case, the record of the item required can be captured from the vendor DBs and matched with the library catalogue. Moreover from this source the client can check the the status of order of an item, and in with way is in order (firm order, standing order, AP)

Verification of financing available

Ordering

- Electronic or paper/electronic procedure
- Sending information to the vendor (What are the information standards)
- Checking of order status
- Claiming and handling supplier reports

Reception of material

- Verification and updating of order status (if it is not automated)
- Updating of the orders archive
- Notification of the person concerned.

Inventory and payment

- Preparation of invoices for payment
- Registration into inventory file
- Stamping
- Application of inventory number.

Sorting

Identification of priorities

Dispatch for labelling, cataloguing and placement

Collateral work regarding

- Lists of newly acquired books
- collection of user proposals.

These are the common procedures, whatever way the acquisition is managed, of course it would be simplified if there were integration and interoperability between the library management system and the vendor's system. This subject will be treated in more detail in the following chapters, these issues need to be considered as a consequence of the automation of the acquisition procedures. The Approval plans are not taken into account because they follow a different procedure, the first step being an agreement with the vendor, then a profile is drawn up and financial availability assessed. The trend of increasingly integrating functions and information collected in the system has yet to be implemented by the library management system with a module for acquisitions. The following steps of integration should be made through the SBA (University Library System). They involve the integration of library resources and services and thirdly, their integration with vendor systems.

2.5 Staff

University and research libraries in Italy have to face at the same time: fund reductions, technological innovations and inadequately skilled staff. The situation is not consistent, from library to library one observes very different situations with regard to staff training. In some cases, services are generally inadequate throughout the university or public body, but this is no longer compatible with the electronic environment in which librarians have to work. University and public research institute libraries have, however always been depositaries of knowledge not only because of the works they possess or provide access to, but because of the tradition of knowledge, channelled by expert librarians and university teachers that have created not only collections but actual centres of knowledge.. One may ask who has replaced the old-fashioned librarians that were selectors but, above all, readers and considered as sources of critical knowledge. Another question poses itself and that is whether alongside the research engines and databases, that are extraordinary and irreplaceable instruments, there are librarians that continue to operate that are capable of and put in the condition to be able to develop a competence in the sector they work in, a critical capacity and not only a passive submission with regard to technological devices which one can nevertheless do without.

2.6 Acquisition of electronic products

Selection and acquisition of books and databases in electronic format requires a more careful analysis and consideration of additional aspects. Regarding books it's needed to take into account: the *Content*. Is it the electronic version of the printed one? Comparing printed and electronic versions, what aspects are added or are lacking? Quality, accuracy, authoritativeness and currency of data. In particular all these issues must be analysed:

- In which *support*?
- Some CD-rom are added to a printed version and incorporate only a portion of the printed copy.
- What are the facilities that electronic version provides?

- In the case of reference books, are they updated? How often?
- Is there a Trial to test the product?
- How many access are needed?
- How long is it available?

2.7 Vendors

Although vendor evaluation is not an issue of the research, some parameters are listed to highlight aspects that could provide suggestions for the research:

- Timeliness
- Provision of new titles lists
- Provision of books of small and less known publishers
- How many titles are in stock
- Publishers coverage
- Out of stock materials
- Out of print materials
- Subject specialization
- Discounts
- Services

The librarian must take a decision regarding:

How many vendors to use. Regarding this issue Solimine suggests to order books to more suppliers as a way to improve the quality of the service(27), on the other hand Evans underlines that to choose *consolidation*, i.e. to use only one supplier, will provides some advantages that could be a better discount and free additional services.(28)

How vendor handles *out of stock* requests

Additional services:

- Books shelf-ready
- Electronic ordering
- Electronic accessing to electronic version of *Books in Prints* bibliographic database: **Global Books in Prints** is the database provided on-line by bookstores and booksellers in Internet.
- Automatic *electronic order* procedure through the Library management system
- Provision of statistics that could analyse data on supply time and *outstanding orders*
- More accurate and frequent *reporting by vendors*
- Information of the vendor *prices* (timeliness)

When to buy *directly by publisher* for books that vendor cannot handle

Problems of *small vendors*

The situation of small vendors in the US and in Italy seems in both cases very difficult. Many aspects of their services must be taken in consideration: such as personalized services, the ability of dealing with special targets and of understanding their needs.

Evans suggests also the issue "*Vendor's viability* because small firm can't cope with the requirements of continuing investments in technology"(29) and syntetized the expectations of libraries and vendors as follows:

"*What do libraries expect from suppliers?*"

A large inventory of titles

Prompt and accurate order fulfilment
Prompt and accurate reporting on items not in stock
Personal service at a reasonable price

What do suppliers expect from libraries?

Time to get to know what the library needs
Cooperation in placing orders
Paperwork kept to a minimum
Prompt payment for services”.

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3 LITERATURE REVIEW

3.1 Introduction

The literature review on book acquisition and selection is based on the analysis of the international literature of English and Italian language publications from the 1996 up to the present. Although the aim was to consider all types of publications, the focus was on the change in course due to implementation of selection and electronic order on-line. Therefore the articles have been the main primary source.

3.2 Book acquisitions and *collection development*

Although *collection development* is not object of the present research it's not possible, dealing with selection and acquisition, to avoid it. There is a large literature, in particular regarding American libraries on *collection development*, while in Italy, only recently the interest has been focused on it. Book selection/ acquisition and collection development seem have great consideration in U.S. main public libraries and university libraries where collection development officers and subject specialists (with a degree in one or more subjects and knowledge of several foreign languages) coordinate or have the responsibility of a subject.

At first the book of Evans(1) deserves to be mentioned again, now at the 4th edition, treating the issue in a comprehensive way and inside a more theoretical and general context. He evaluates the nature and the function of information, of players: from publishers, distributors, vendors, aggregators, and buyers: libraries and the community of their users. He takes in consideration current in-depth transformation trends: the transition to electronic formats and to on-line and the controversy not yet solved between *ownership and access*. He emphasizes the importance of setting up a *collection development policy* providing suggestions and practical advises regarding how to write it. He analyses rules and procedures for each type of library, highlighting differences in term of documents, formats, users and services. Also financial, legal and fiscal aspects haven't been neglected. Although these last issues are not useful for the European libraries, this book is remarkable because it 's a rare case of technical literature in librarianship dealing with competence with different subjects of other professional sectors. Evans's view of emphasizing selection/acquisition as an integral part of collection development seems to consider collection development neither restricted to printed materials nor finalised to collection preservation and continuity but dealing with the organization of document collections for users, in whatever format and access mode.

Nevertheless, every day work is similar everywhere. A high percent of US libraries "do not support and reward collection development activities". A reason for this, in the opinion of Sorgenfrei and Hooper-Lane (2) may lie in the fact that librarians often report to the head of their section and rarely to a collection development officer. However, the importance of having direct knowledge of the field is emphasised by the cited authors. They found that the more the number of publications available increased, the less time librarians had to read, also because of all the additional tasks related to customer tutorials and assistance and the new tasks connected with web pages.

Collection development or *collection management* regards also Italian libraries, although many of them have considerable collections from the historic, bibliologic, either bibliographic point of view, in areas of STM and Humanities. Following Anglosaxon traditions, Giovanni Solimine (3) deals acquisitions in the context of collection management (or collection development). In fact he considers that "the management of library acquisition policy should

monitor and assess constantly library collections – either for bibliographic and cultural aspects than for financial ones. Inside library development planning and service design, collection development criteria, are very important and can't be disjointed from general cycle of library management. The assessment provided by measuring library use and the evaluation of effectiveness of this action and through user satisfaction evaluation, set up indicators on which to base selection of acquisition". Other methods of collection evaluation cited by Solimine deal with all phases of book acquisition: from selection: *Whittaker grid* (4), consultation and circulation assessment and use of *Conspectus* method (5).

IFLA guidelines assert "the techniques available for evaluating collections may be divided into two groups: those that are primarily *collection-centered* and those that are *client-centered*. Collection-centered techniques examine the content and characteristics of the information resources in order to determine the size, age, scope and depth of the collection in comparison to an external standard. Client-centered techniques describe how the collection is used and indicate the effectiveness of the collection relative to use. Collection assessment is likely to be most accurate and produce the most useful results when combinations of client-centered and collection-centered techniques, including both quantitative and qualitative results are employed in the data gathering and description process". (6)

3.3 The situation of acquisitions in Italian libraries

As has been noticed in the precedent chapter the situation of the Italian libraries is following a trend of transformation. With awareness of economic constraints and general rise of prices librarians are devising solutions in order to go on and to rationalize services. The situation at the present is not yet well defined and some interesting contributions on the issue of book acquisitions are available on the web by initiatives of local public libraries more than by universities and public research institutes.(7) Regarding them, at the moment the impulse of carrying on new experiments in acquisition through electronic orders and with approval plans is still limited and some contributions have been published, among them that of the library of the Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore di Milano about a project of *approval plan*. (8)

From 1995 both public and university libraries have developed skills and strategies to rationalize and automate some process dealing with acquisition and selection although the acquisition policy didn't change. (9) Some innovative decision has been taken regarding the the LS (Sirtex) and some also in the use of OCLC (10) for selection.

A survey was carried on regarding acquisitions in some Italian public libraries taking part at SBN catalogue: the National library of Turin and the National library Braidense of Milan . Although huge differences between public and university libraries regarding collections, users and services, it's possible to find common issues. In the first case, total expenditure for books and periodicals in 1995 is of 535 millions of liras. The expenditure for periodicals is quite 100 millions higher than for books. Inside expenditure for books, the major quota is that for series and continuations (more than l'80%). Similarly in the Braidense National library the amount of series is very high. It's also considerable expenditure for electronic publications, about 100 millions, much higher than that at the National library of Turin, of 32 millions of liras (11) An other article published was published the same year (12) dealing with acquisitions in the National library of Turin. It analyses how automated procedures could change files management of local LS and of SBN for acquisitions procedure. The university libraries of the Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore (Catholic University of Sacred Heart) of Milan and of the IULM (Academic Institute of Modern Languages) are described in 1997

(10) in a transitional phase of their organization. The Library of the Catholic University had at that time the intention to develop a policy of collection management, acquisitions were decided by a commission while in the case of IULM by the Head of the library. Acquisition procedures were not-automated and both libraries used more than one vendor.

3.4 Book selection and acquisition

Book acquisition and selection have gained greater attention and expectations with the development of new services through the Internet. Nevertheless, the publisher printed lists and *brochures*, as *reviews journals* and *new titles lists* traditionally used by selectors are still available, with new on-line versions and search facilities. Then with the Internet a great deal of free bibliographic sources can be consulted such as the OPACs of the main libraries: British library, Library of Congress etc, publisher web sites, and reference sites.

A common research approach is that of a series of articles on *the assessment of book acquisitions with comparison of library holdings and well-known selection sources*.

A milestone in recent research, is a large survey of 50 academic and public libraries in the U.K.: structured interviews and discussions with librarians, booksellers and service suppliers with samples in others countries (13). The research shows a comprehensive vision of the bibliographical information for book acquisition. It provides a complex representation of bibliographic data suppliers, their evaluation through specific characteristics previously analysed and moreover suggestions by librarians on improving their services.

What is more innovative is the question regarding how librarians use bibliographic data. They are widely used in many procedures: starting from acquisitions 83.8%, cataloguing 73.5%, interlibrary loans 71%, selection 43.8%, lending 40% to inquiries/reference desk 36.4 %. These results highlight the value of bibliographic data not just in acquisition but as data common to all library management procedures.

A small survey deals with the evaluation of the importance of book reviews in selection practices of a College Faculty (14). A detailed analysis shows the impact of bibliographic resources (reviews, holdings, university press and publisher sources) on collection development of the libraries in the California State University. Moreover, Calhoun (15) analyses many bibliographic sources (in depth: Library Journal and Choice but also, among others, Book Review Digest, Wilson Indexes, etc.) and offers a wide survey of book reviews and reviewing methods, book selection and collection development evaluation methods.

Following a preview survey of ARL libraries providing data of production, pricing and holdings of books and serials(16), a further survey focused on assessing the fall in monographic acquisitions in ARL libraries and other academic libraries by matching them with the “Outstanding academic books reviewed in Choice” DB. Library holdings have been analysed through descriptive and inferential methods per library group, subject and year. The results show a significant holding reduction over time, particularly in Humanity areas. (17).

A more comprehensive approach is that of projects regarding **procedures and organization of selection and acquisition practices**. At the Kean University, Union, New Jersey USA book selection run currently by faculty members was the object of study in order to identify and assess selectors and procedures. The sample consisted of 185 faculty members involved in selection from 1995 to 1998. The information gathered was: academic status of faculty selectors - ordering pattern of faculty selectors - audience – purpose - criteria and sources prioritised by faculty selectors (18).

The library liaison system set up at the Charleston College allows collaboration between librarians and faculty members using different approaches and flexibility in selection: for example, between computer and English collection (the first, requiring very updated publications through approval plans, without any contributions from the faculty, whereas the second required firm orders with the direct involvement of the faculty) (19).

As bibliographical reviews on the subject show (19-20) the theme of collaboration in selection and collection development have been studied long before the introduction of web innovations. Nevertheless, a general effort to reorganize acquisition services is witnessed in many libraries in the Internet era. Different models of the organizational structure of library acquisition services "can be summarized as ...structures based on format or function or subject..." Six case studies from academic libraries"(USA) in 1922 show different and opposite solutions in acquisition transformations. A survey on 119 respondents, 102 from academic libraries (USA) "indicated that change in organizational structure at their libraries came as a result of an overall effort to reorganize the library and it was due to the role electronic resources were now playing in the collection etc." (20).

Differently from other situations in which changes were not planned with a clear policy and aims, in the Roesh library at Dayton, Ohio (21) acquisitions restructuring came after a survey of the service was made, collecting information from a wide range of people. The outcome was that all the librarians participating in collection development were in charge of a subject area and a portion of book budget. As well as subject assignment to librarians the rationalization of the acquisition procedures took place although it was not yet working in electronic form.

Book acquisitions are not often treated as a subject per se but as an integral part of collection development. Data sources on acquisition trends have been provided by publishers and by libraries.

The Library Journal publishes a "Book report" every year with data on book acquisitions made in public libraries in the USA (22). A great deal of data on acquisitions made between 1980 and 1998 in both public and academic libraries in UK have been analysed (23). The aim of the research was to find "changes in acquisitions and stock management in UK academic and public libraries during that period of time". The items taken into consideration were:

- time between publication and acquisition
- proportion of hardbacks and paperbacks
- pattern of acquisition of different subject categories
- the price at the time of publication.

An astonishing result was that "compared to public libraries, universities are making smaller proportions of their total acquisitions near to the publication year (during the 1990s, two-thirds of academic library acquisitions were made in the year of publication or subsequent year)". Regarding subject analysis of academic libraries, the dominant position is taken by social sciences (from 40 to 45 % of all acquisitions in the 1990s). Moreover, considering costs "the ratio for academic library acquisitions are noticeably similar to those for public library non-fiction acquisitions...(i.e. academic libraries purchased well below the average price of all the academic books published." A case study of twelve public library systems provides information regarding tasks they perform and sources used in collection development. (24)

3.5 Book acquisition methods and procedures

The following considerations regarding book acquisition procedures, reflect more specifically traditional and innovative ways of working in U.S. libraries..

Changes in acquisition policy and procedures are mainly due to the interconnection of online bibliographic sources with the LS and moreover to the increasing number of electronic products that require different acquisition approaches, such as having trial periods and leasing rather than

owning materials. The increasing use of computer-generated orders reduces the paper work and optimises procedures, avoiding repetitive tasks and transcription errors which therefore saves the librarian time to devote to other activities. At present, very few libraries handle all the order process only electronically, storing the transaction logs in both the LS and the vendor computer, the majority, also in the U.S.A., use both electronic and paper supports.

A consequence of such an environment is the coordination and integration of reference, acquisition and collection development services, which libraries had formerly been identified as having specific roles and procedures.

The acquisition activities, requiring qualified skills in different fields, from subject expertise to financial issues, are: assessment, prediction, control, choice, validation, qualification and also assistance in providing information on book and electronic sources, in selection and collection development, etc.

Regarding **acquisition methods: Firm order, standing order and approval plans**, the last is more demanding in term of competence, skills and time. "Approval plans can and do serve as beneficial additions to a library's collection developing process. Establishing an accurate approval plan profile is a challenging task"(25).

A comparison of approval plans and standing orders is provided by the Mississippi State University Libraries (26). Books were received through both avenues for eight months therefore costs, timeliness of delivery and responsiveness of titles have been considered and compared. Books received from one source but not the other were closely examined... Subjects of books not received on approval were evaluated for addition to library profile..." The outcomes show that "approval plans saved 4.72% over the prices charged standing order presses". Regarding timeliness of delivery "82% of the books were received first from standing order publishers. 94 books not received through approval plans... represented 29% of standing order. The privilege of examining books in person and the ability to return those not wanted was cited as an important advantage of approval plan over standing order". This decision was confirmed after a follow up considering the advantages of standing order providing titles of publishers not comprised in approval plans. Also small libraries found benefit in participating, as members of OHIOlink, in an important business deal with YBP (Yankee Book Peddler's). YBP approval plans presented book areas, not covered by major source reviews (27).

Advantages and disadvantages of purchasing *continuations* as standing orders or on approval plans are summarized (28) in:

Advantages of standing orders:

- discounts, quality control, notifications of any change of status in the series, YBP supplies
- continuations from publishers who do not accept standing orders, bill for each item, check-in
- records are maintained to enable libraries to generate claims.

Disadvantages of standing orders:

- every volume must be purchased
- minor discounts.

Advantages of approval plans:

- higher discounts
- the possibility of evaluating each volume.

Disadvantages of approval plans:

- inability to track expenditures
- gaps in the collection.

Collaboration between librarians and vendors in approval plans is a central issue in academic libraries and is facing a considerable change with the possibility for librarians to consult vendor databases. Although approval plans have been studied and analysed since the 1960s, now with these new opportunities offered by vendors, the process of acquisition has been reconsidered, to

the benefit of both partners. “ On-line access to vendor databases for title availability and specific client/profile match information has eased the problem of not knowing what is coming on approval.” Moreover these systems are updated and “libraries can query these systems to determine whether or not a title is eligible for the plan, the status of a title, and whether or not the title has been shipped or a referral slip was sent”. (29) “Staff who places firm orders should already be familiar with the approval plan profile...and, thus, can screen out firm orders that will duplicate receipt of a title” (25).

Librarians and vendors, by working together, seem to reach common goals, improving the quality of services in an even more integrated environment. Outsourcing acquisition services, including bibliographic quality control, are presented by Stanford University Library as a means not only to cut costs but also to leverage librarian activities (30). Criteria to evaluate approval plans is the main subject of one of numerous articles regarding the evaluation of Blackwell approval plans (31). Articles written in collaboration, by librarians and vendors, show that the new collaboration is now a reality in the most advanced libraries, such as the Kent state Libraries (32) and Purdue University Libraries (33).

3.6 Circulation data - Customer suggestions

Circulation data have also been used for the purpose of evaluating collection development, in particular, acquisitions. This subject will not be considered in detail because they are more used to evaluate a collection rather than acquisitions. Therefore only a few studies will be mentioned in order to highlight different points of view.

A method, as reported in the article by Solimine (34), is based on an arithmetic sum, the number of documents consulted in the library and borrowed is divided by the number of documents acquired in a specific period of time. Therefore, a high value of the first indicator means that new acquisitions have a positive effect on circulation and consultation (increasing consultation and borrowing numbers) therefore, the result gives a positive evaluation of the acquisitions. This kind of data could also show whether collection development is balanced in the different sections. In the academic medical library (Ruth Lilly Medical Library of the School of Medicine of the Indiana University at Indianapolis) a complex approach is required to “determine whether the books considered highly useful... by core collection lists for small hospital libraries...would also be high circulation items in an academic library”(35). Therefore, circulation data have been crossed with data on books cited in authoritative reference sources for medicine (Hemalology). The results confirmed the effectiveness of the acquisition policy of the library to use lists of referenced books.

Variations in circulation data during the first three years of shelf life in an academic library (Health Sciences library of the University of Illinois at Chicago) provide an interesting picture of collection development in that sector and also some indications on the suitability of the titles purchased for library users and whether they were adequate in terms of quantity. (36). Innovative projects for book acquisition “on demand” started at the University of Wisconsin-Madison Memorial library in 2002 and in 2000 at the Purdue University libraries. Both libraries “ILL and acquisitions staff developed procedures and workflows that brought selected ILL requests into a rush acquisition workflow”. Both projects succeeded, even though there were differences in the level of funding (higher at Purdue), level of technicians involved (higher at Wisconsin) and choice of bookseller (Amazon by Purdue and Amazon with Barnes and Noble by Wisconsin) (37).

Libraries have introduced new ways of receiving customer suggestions, such as "book recommendation forms" on the web to be submitted by members of the faculty for book acquisitions at the King Fahad University of Petroleum and Minerals of Dhahran, Saudi Arabia as well as alert services and e-mails on new books to buy (38).

3.7 Book acquisitions on the web

Acquisitions from booksellers on the web are most suited to rush materials. In fact, Schleschy noticed (39) how the process of direct acquisition depends on the integration of the acquisitions workflow from publisher to library system. Therefore, a “local library system must be enhanced to accommodate online buying”. Moreover, if the majority of booksellers on the web do not accept institutional purchase orders and some only accept credit cards, on the other hand, libraries have not yet made the necessary arrangements for such procedures. The use of credit cards involves many aspects: authorizations, accounting, invoicing and auditing (40). Publishers are ever more present on the web with different strategies, some, just for marketing their products, prefer to charge aggregators for selling task. Others, who sell direct, are now in strong competition with booksellers and jobbers/aggregators. In this moment of rapid transformation it seems that every component of book production is trying to take advantage, moving from their original position and adding new services to cater for a larger piece of the book market. Just to mention a few, EBSCO and DEA have expanded their activity as jobbers to include that of web booksellers for private and libraries while commercial publishers as Elsevier and many Academic Press sell directly their books. A jump in a new dimension is tested by Casalini Libri with new on-line editorial products of repackaged book contents while Elsevier is now marketing databases of books (published by CRC Press) in which the chapters are searchable items. Selling the contents of books, as for other editorial products, such as newspapers and journals, is the new strategy that is attracting many publishers. This project will not treat these new editorial products that seem to pose a threat to what we have always identified as being a book stimulating a lively debate on the genuine nature of books (41).

3.8 Vendors/Libraries - cooperation in book acquisitions

Collaboration between vendors and libraries is viewed by both sides as obligatory so that vendors and librarians can reach the same goals: to improve library services and satisfy library users. In fact “faced by their administration’s continued budgetary pressures and demands for increased operational effectiveness, librarians were pushed to *consolidate book vendors* (sole source) and to look to their book vendor to perform functions long considered the sole domain of libraries. Outsourced functions were expected to be cheap and excellent...” Vendors from their side have allowed increasing discounts and ever more favourable contractual conditions to library Consortia and at the same time have taken part in the development of information technology and electronic *data interchange applications* with adjunctive costs. Therefore vendors have tried to fund their consistent and continuous investments out of book selling revenues. “They have tried to rationalize the compression of profits by thinking of competitive advantages. It should be possible to share the cost of development across many customers...” to invoice them to cover their fair share of the costs and the profit...”(42).

The purpose of this review presentation is not to provide an exhaustive description of the products and services and of their market but to indicate some examples and to report criteria, goals, problems and gaps and future scenarios. Leaving aside financial aspects that are not the object of the project, a great deal of studies focus on Blackwells Collection Manager and YBP’s GOBI technological services. The aim of integrating such systems, such as other bibliographic sources (OCLC), with the LS pushed such libraries into a process where they had to thoroughly review their procedures, starting from selection and acquisition. Librarians reviewed firm orders and approval plans, set up criteria and goals.

A detailed analysis of Blackwell's book services was carried out by the Technical Services Division and Acquisitions Division of Wichita State University Libraries with a Blackwell's Book Services consultant (43), using a financial approach and also providing a view of all the services connected

with cataloguing, such as purchasing MARC records and authority control records. From that experience comes the following General goals that guide the vendor/library partnership:

- "use vendor services for repetitive tasks to free staff for complex tasks
- sole-source materials generically to conserve financial resources through negotiated purchase agreements
- extend purchasing power through consortia partnerships
- redistribute staffing to accommodate new initiatives of the library
- maintain organizational cohesion in addressing technological change through diverse, close-ended information technology projects
- support new projects that benefit the entire library and the larger library community".

Librarians (44) suggest to take into consideration other factors *regarding vendors*:

“Does the vendor have tools to implement your proposed workflow?

Does the vendor have the resources to maintain and develop its electronic tools over time?

Do the vendor representatives have sufficient experience to support you through the transition?

In case it becomes necessary to change vendors, is there an alternative vendor who provides similar services?

and regarding systems:

Does the local ILS have the necessary loading capability?

Is the expertise to use it present in the acquisitions unit or readily available in another department, such as the Library System?”

Blackwell’s Collection Manager services implementation from a librarian’s view (45) seems to respond to specific needs, such as:

- “looking at tables of contents, book jackets
- *eNotes* gives us regular notification of new titles...set up by each librarian to fit his or her needs.
- we can search for specific books by author, title, publisher, series title, ISBD, date, words in the TOC, author affiliation and book jacket information
- titles appear in CM at least a month before they would appear on our approval shelves
- we can open our profiles to see more of the material being published in our areas, because we do not have to worry about returning books
- the system is immediately updated when we take any action...” (e.g. marked ordered book and date of the order added to title record).

By Rowsell (46), Blackwell' book services offer a high level of integration between ILS and the vendor's service providing:

- “online orders using the vendor selection and acquisition tool eliminating the order
- files generated by library system
- receive order record electronically for loading into the library system
- accession and invoice books electronically
- receive high quality bibliographic records
- receive shelf-ready items: fully end processed with bar codes already linked to bibliographic records
- user error/exception reporting to monitor processing rather than examine every order received".

Librarians are aware that they need expertise to cope with vendors as peers and to be able to evaluate products and services (content and technological aspects). The risk for librarians is to lose their professionalism that is not easily quantifiable but is more based on personal knowledge. The outsourcing of selection and the provision of ready-shelf books bar librarians from their exclusive duty of selection, as Dillon (47) suggests, in this way, book restitution is no longer possible.

3.8.1 Vendors/Library integrated systems

Reliability of bibliographic data is possible only in integrated systems where there is continuity in the workflow from bibliographic sources to (Information Library System) ILS, implemented in advanced libraries.

The confrontation of two experiences of integration of vendor databases in the University of Carolina at Chapel Hill and University of Chicago Libraries also with reference to other libraries in the U.S.A., provide a detailed feature of the issue. Both processes have been matched, taking into account: budget, vendor, number of orders, ILS, OPAC, selection practice, batch import and export, order transmission, electronic invoice, receipt of material, payment, cataloguing of books, shelf-ready processing, duplication queries, library/vendor relationship, level of bibliographic record provided and searching. (48) This article also seems very interesting for general considerations regarding tradeoffs, drawbacks, and improvements to be made to such collaboration. It focuses attention on problems arising from more types of records requiring quality control, possible critical mass of material processed by vendor, staff collaboration, working with an approach by goals "rather than replicating all the steps of a manual system" and identification of the mainstream of materials (having elements in common) in order to batch them, using automated processes to identify anomalies (duplicates, special handling, local classification needs, facilities in retrieval in different paths, reliable and easy to use vendor systems).

The services, such as Yankee Book Peddler's with the incorporation of GOBI (Global Online Bibliographic Information) (and now the new release GOBI2) into the LS, are the electronic management and transmission of orders and also bibliographic information from GOBI to the ILS Innovative Interface Inc., (III) in the Kenyon College library of Gambier, OH (49). This example of integration of a book vendor's online system with the library ILS is also found in the Kent State University Libraries, Kent OH for approval plans, in addition to the OCLCPromptCat. The selection/acquisition/cataloguing workflows go from the GOBI database interaction with the ILS (book selection and orders) through OCLC PromptCat to the ILS. "When YBP sends the books to the library they also send an electronic manifest to PromptCat. PromptCat matches the titles in the order in the WorldCat database and send a file to Kent that contains the data needed to create the records". (50)

Another example of integration of vendor systems and ILS is that of Blackwell's Book Services and OCLC's PromptCat with the ILS III of the University of Washington libraries for both approval plans and firm orders. (51). Blackwell's Book Services with Collection Manager chosen by the library of Griffith in Australia, provides a modified version of the Blackwell's Marc records (46). A less complex approach is found in the library at Saint Mary's College, Notre Dame IN, for selecting on-line bibliographic sources to incorporate in the acquisition workflow. Some of the sources taken into consideration are ChoseReviews Online, Baker & Taylor Title Source II, Jake, Scout Report, etc. The author notices that "searching and finding titles electronically and then cutting-and-pasting the ordering information found is significantly faster and easier than pouring over publishers catalogues...As systems improve and are integrated through such methods as Electronic Data Interchange (EDI)" (52).

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 IFLA (2001) Guidelines for a Collection Development Policy using the Conspectus Model, p.3 <http://www.ifla.org/VII/s14/nd1/gcdp-e.pdf> (visited in April 2004)
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4 METHODOLOGY

4.1 Introduction

The aim of the research is to explore and describe book selection and acquisition services in university and public research libraries in Italy. The focus of the investigation is on the way such procedures are run, changes and transformations regarding work performance and the attitude of librarians and vendors towards their activities. Moreover, the attention is put on their perceptions and expectations. “The qualitative approach to research [has been chosen because] it is uniquely suited to uncovering the unexpected and exploring new avenues” (1). As “qualitative studies are descriptive and exploratory: they build rich descriptions of complex circumstances that are unexplored in the literature” (2) In this research, the qualitative approach seemed to be the more suited to describe and explore a sector that is very complex and diversified and has not yet been studied in Italy. A survey of the entire Italian population would be impossible because the number of observations made would be too vast and it would require considerable time and costs. Therefore, a small-scale, sample-type survey was designed to collect data from two groups of samples: vendors and librarians. The purpose was to collect quantitative and qualitative data: quantitative data from a questionnaire, qualitative data mainly from interviews and to a lesser extent from a questionnaire. In fact, data collected using this technique provide also subjective information, such as habits, attitudes, perceptions and expectations. This explorative research has an inductive approach as that known as the “grounded theory” (3), in fact, it aims to let the various factors that come into play and the complexities and wealth of elements found to fully emerge. Data can also arise unexpectedly, providing more in-depth data, processed within a frame of reference, and highlighting the environment in which procedures are made. However, this research did not apply “grounded theory methodology” that requires a huge collection of data to be coded.

As has been described in the previous chapters, the investigation into the selection and acquisition practices and procedures of university and public research libraries, seems very complex with many variables to take into consideration. In order to carry out an in-depth investigation of the topic, in the most comprehensive way, two main techniques were combined: interviews and in-depth interviews and questionnaires.

4.2 Descriptive and explorative research methodological approach. Qualitative research Grounded theory

Survey on selection and acquisition:

- 1.1 Interviews of vendors, librarians
- 1.2 Questionnaire for Librarians
- 1.3 Interview of Key informant to compare both systems

<i>Research techniques</i>	<i>Data sources</i>
Interviews	Vendors, librarians
Questionnaire	Librarians
In-depth interview	Key informant

Attention has been put in data *confirmability* and *dependability* of the findings by piloting questionnaire and testing questions for interviews. It is common to find that unexpected issues emerge and variables are found that could be the object of further research.

4.2.1 Research techniques

This section regards data collection techniques taken into consideration for the following research: advantages, limitations, the design of the procedures and data analysis.

Research objectives	Research techniques
Explore practices of selection and acquisition of librarians	Questionnaire, interviews, literature review
Explore the procedures of vendors	Interviews, literature review
Identify librarians' perceptions	Questionnaire, interviews
Identify librarians' expectations	Questionnaire, interviews
Identify vendors' perceptions	Interviews
Identify vendors' expectations	Interviews
Make comparisons with the international environment	Literature review, KI in-depth interview

4.2.2 Interviews

4.2.2.1 Purpose

The objectives of the research also involved an investigation into *vendors*, an activity which the researcher was not familiar with and had very little insight and information. Therefore, the interview technique seemed more suited to investigate vendors in a comprehensive way: not only their services but also their attitudes toward and perceptions and expectations of libraries.

This technique was chosen to:

- understand the policies and approaches of vendors
- highlight trends, issues and problems of their business
- discover their perceptions and attitudes toward libraries
- understand their expectations of libraries.

Moreover, additional information and an understanding of libraries was obtained from the interviews with *two librarians* and an in-depth interview with the *key informant*, covering all the issues that had emerged from data analysis.

4.2.2.2 Advantages for the present research

Interviews are commonly used in research also in combination with questionnaires. Oppenheim asserts that “the purpose of the exploratory interview is essentially heuristic: to develop ideas and research hypotheses rather than to gather facts and statistics concerned with trying to understand how ordinary people think and feel about the topics concerning the research”(4).

During an interview, new ideas may emerge that can be used in the subsequent drawing up of the questionnaire. Many surveys adopt both techniques to assess services and information sources accessibility and quality and how they respond to user requests and needs. Interviews are very effective in providing qualitative data because of the additional information obtained that is unpredictable.(5)

4.2.2.3 Limitations

As has been asserted before, interviews are mostly suited to quality research, therefore data are very subjective and can also be affected by the interviewer. Therefore, this technique needs to be tested using other quantitative and qualitative techniques. The solution is provided by triangulation: questionnaires, interviews (vendors and librarians) and the key informant's in-depth interview.

4.2.2.4 Selection of respondents

Vendor Interviews

The respondents were not really selected, actually all the main vendors operating on the national market as suppliers of university and public research libraries were contacted. The representativeness of the sample group is significant since there is only a small number of such companies. Seven out of the nine vendors, that are well-known in Italy, some of which operating on the international market, were interviewed:

- BLACKWELL <http://www.blackwell.com>
- BURIONI <http://www.burioni.it>
- CASALINI <http://www.casalini.it>
- CELDES <http://www.celdes.it>
- DEA <http://www.deanet.it>
- ESIA <http://www.esia.it>

All the interviews took place in the period from October 2004 to January 2005.

Interviews with two librarians

The librarians were selected as sample of two different scientific environments:

- Library of the Istituto Superiore di Sanità, a public research institute in the biomedical field;
- Library “Guido Castelnuovo” of the Department of Mathematics of the University of Rome “La Sapienza”.

Key informant interview: an expert professional with extensive expertise in library management, technology and information services.

They were contacted by telephone and e-mail and were informed of the topic, duration and confidentiality of the interview.

4.2.2.5 Design and construction of questions

The identification and designation of the issues to be questioned was provided by the literature review. Moreover, many questions addressed to librarians through the questionnaire were mirrored in the questions put to vendors. In fact, in the present research both techniques (questionnaire and interviews) proceeded in parallel, because one was focused on aspects of the libraries, the other on the vendors. The aim of this procedure was to obtain a comparison of data regarding the same questions posed to both librarians and vendors. While the interviews with both librarians had a different function: to integrate and add more information and insight regarding what was emerging from the questionnaire.

All the interviews were non-structured, as in the technique for qualitative research, but with different gradation.

Vendor Interviews: in-depth interview

Nevertheless, the interviews followed a preview in-depth interview as an “informal conversation” with a vendor where the attention was focused on a list of topics mainly derived from

the questionnaire but also from some new topics that emerged unexpectedly and had not yet been considered. In this “informal” non-structured interview, the respondent had been put more in the condition of guiding than of receiving questions. Topics were introduced and the vendor was allowed to speak freely, with the least possible intervention from the interviewer.

The setting up of a **wording and sequence of questions** was avoided and were left to emerge spontaneously as the interviewee spoke. Obviously the researcher tried to limit excessive digressions from topics but without being too constraining.

Vendor Interviews: guided interviews

After the interview, the next step was to structure the outline (Appendix 1) of the following interviews, although, because of the explorative approach of the research, every time a lot of room was left for additional unexpected information.

The conversation lasted about 30 minutes. Every interview was recorded on a tape recorder, and, occasionally, some additional notes were made.

Interviews with the two librarians:

Standardised open-ended interview, following the wording and sequence of the questionnaire.

In-depth interview with the key informant:

This was a guided interview that followed the issues of the questionnaire but also took into consideration any issues that had emerged from data analysis and follow-ups from the prior informal conversation.

4.2.2.6 Analysis

The analysis of the recorded material immediately followed the transcription, categorizing and then recombining the information in order to use it to highlight new research issues, provide topic insight, evidence of previous statements, and to show different approaches and points of view.

4.2.3 Questionnaires

4.2.3.1 Purpose

The questionnaire (Appendix 2) was given to librarians of universities and publish research institutes nationwide in order to:

- Identify selection and acquisition procedures;
- Identify technological and administrative organization and management;
- Explore relationships with vendors, services provided, expectations.

4.2.3.2 Advantages

This technique was chosen because it is the tool designed to collect information on qualitative and quantitative variables, and also because it is considered a communication means apt to facilitate researcher-respondent interaction. It is a standardized tool, that is, questions and *wordings* are always the same for all respondents, so that comparable answers can be obtained. The questionnaire technique is commonly used as a more effective way of collecting quantitative data. In combination with the prior informal interviews, this technique provides further data to be drawn on for the results. As found in many cases in professional literature, this technique can produce a huge amount of quantitative data, easily and inexpensively.

However, parameters and research data in literature mostly apply to libraries in America and European countries, whereas very little information is available on Italy.

4.2.3.3 Limitations

Questionnaire limitations regard the stringent structure that does not allow for extensive answers. The point of view of the researcher, who set up the questionnaire, is restrictive, reducing all the perspectives that go to represent actual situations to a single structured outline. Low response rate is very common in the use of this technique, especially when questionnaires are mailed. Thus, inadequate design can be a threat to research, resulting in false and misleading results.

4.2.3.4 Selection of sample

The sample was created by random extraction, without repetition, from a list of institutes on the Internet divided into regions. The sample covered all the Italian territory and, when possible, the researcher tried to obtain an e-mail address for every library where the questionnaire could be sent.

4.2.3.5 Methods of data collection

The questionnaire was sent to the libraries of the main Italian universities and to some public research institutes via e-mail. The e-mail presented and described the project providing all essential information. (Appendix 3)

The e-mails were sent to the addresses found in the libraries' web pages on the Internet. This method of data collection was less expensive and less time-consuming than other options but the main drawback was the low response rate. Oppenheim was concerned about "finding ways of gaining the respondents' co-operation and of motivating them to respond to our question" (6) He suggested many ways to increase response rate.

4.2.3.6 Design

"A questionnaire is not some sort of official form, nor is it a set of questions which have been casually jotted down [...] [it is] an important instrument of research, a tool for data collection [...] its function is measurement [specific issues, as results] in the questionnaire specification:[...] a comprehensive listing of every variable to be measured and the way(s) in which this is to be accomplished. The priority and importance of each variable [...] Key variables that are central to research need a more elaborate approach [...] [...] the variables that need to be measured and of the types of instruments that will have to be built (scale, check-lists, open-ended questions)" (7).

Issues of interest were identified through literature review, then a list of variables to be measured was drawn up:

- Library acquisition and selections procedures
- Library acquisition and selections methods
- Technological environment
- Actors involved in both operations
- Actors involved in decision-making and fund allocation
- Vendors' policies, activities and trends
- Vendor-library interaction.

In writing the questionnaire, the researcher tried:

1. not to use words with double meanings, but to adopt simple words with precise meanings;
2. not to formulate direct questions on the object of the study;
3. not to take facts for granted that, instead could be non-existent;
4. not to formulate questions that were too long, because the longer the question the less valid the answers;
5. to intersperse demanding questions with simpler ones, to keep the attention of the interviewee;
6. to structure the questions carefully because layout could affect results.

Questions were structured as closed questions that “can be attitudinal as well as factual” (8). [...] “They are easier and quicker to answer; they require no writing and quantification is straightforward.[...] The disadvantages of closed questions are the loss of spontaneity and expressiveness [...] and perhaps the introduction of bias by “forcing” them to choose between given alternatives and by making them focus on alternatives that might not have occurred to them. Closed questions are often cruder and less subtle than open ones[...] (9) A list of multiple-choice answers have been set up, although “these can become subject of ordinal biases” (10).

When the pilot questionnaire was completed it was submitted to a librarian and a vendor at an interview to assess whether the structure of the questions was appropriate and that every aspect had been taken into consideration, and to exclude any repetitive questions and any not relevant to the research. Some adjustments and corrections were made, especially those suggested by the vendor.

The final layout consisted of 49 questions clustered by subject: standard demographic questions on the respondent, working skills, the library and on the selection and acquisition procedures and methods. Contract with vendors, use of service provided by vendors.

4.2.3.7 Response rate

The low response rate from libraries to the questionnaire (35 out of 200) did, in fact, prevent significant data for research objectives to be extracted from all the answers.

Responses came mostly from universities, in particular, 70% from central, 20% from northern and 10% from southern Italy. Nevertheless, in some cases, the data could be sufficiently significant to show trends that could be later explored in follow-up or future researches.

4.2.3.8 Characteristics of the sample population

The respondents totalled 35, of which 80% were women. The majority of respondents (85.7%) were librarians, the remainder were: a university teacher, two were from administration and two were Heads of Libraries. In 82.9 % of cases they worked in a University library and only 17.1% worked in a Public Research Institute. Although the questionnaire had been sent to all faculties, 60% of the replies came from scientific faculties, especially, Engineering, Medicine, Mathematics and Physics.

4.2.3.9 Analysis

After questionnaire data collecting, the results were processed on a PC. A data matrix was elaborated using the Windows version of the statistical analysis software SPSS.

The aim of the analysis was to briefly represent the object of the research by studying the variables distribution of the sample and the more significant links between them. This phase was undertaken with particular care because it would be indispensable to any further in-depth analysis. Data set transformation, management and cleaning operations were done to extrapolate as much information as possible and to carry out information quality control. The small amount of data available did not enable a multivariate analysis to be made that could add more information acceptable in terms of validity.

The study of the variables, mostly categorical data, was carried out as follows:

- absolute and relative frequencies distribution analysis;
- assessment of descriptive summary measure of variable imbalance (mode, median and mean);
- data plot.

The last phase was characterized by attention to accuracy, simplicity, clarity, aspect and structure.

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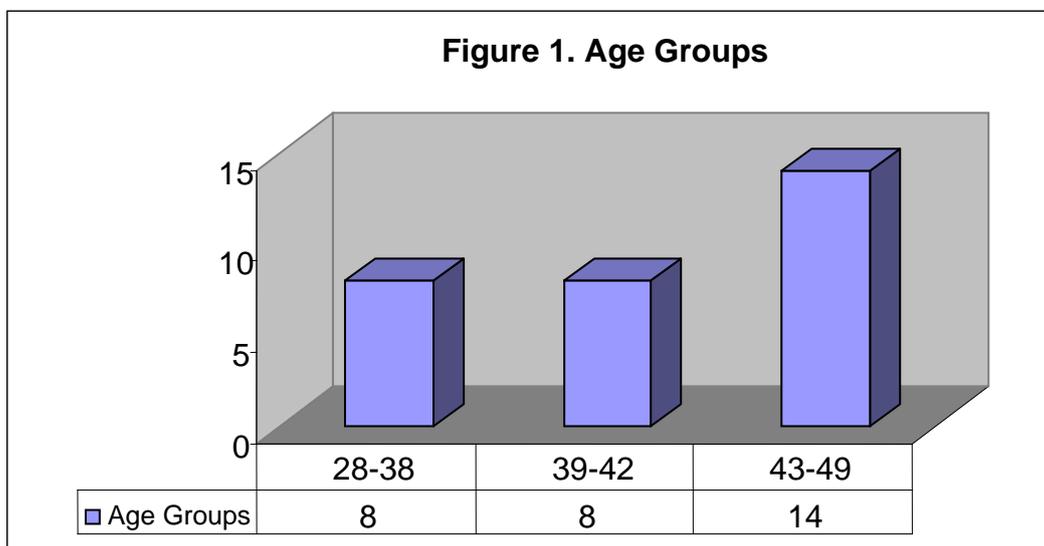
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- Grounded Theory” is a social sciences theory that is a result of empirical research che nasce dai dati della ricerca empirica. It is therefore a theory built by researcher during the investigation on the field and on the basis of issues emerged during analysis. The analysis that generates the condition of this kind of research is qualitative. It means that the formulation of this theory does not require the processing of the statistic data collected during the investigation. The Grounded Theory was devised/elaborated in the 70's from the /inside reflections and debates on qualitative analysis by Barney G. Glaser and Anselm Strauss. Moreover, it is important to distinguish the theory from the consequent descriptive analysis, that follows different paths in qualitative research. This diversity is evidenced by the production of software devoted to processing qualitative data collected in the research.
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- (9) Oppenheim, A.N. Op. it., p. 114.
- (10) Oppenheim, A.N. Op. it., p. 125..

5 FINDINGS

Descriptive analysis of the questionnaire and interviews with the vendors and the in-depth interview with the key informant

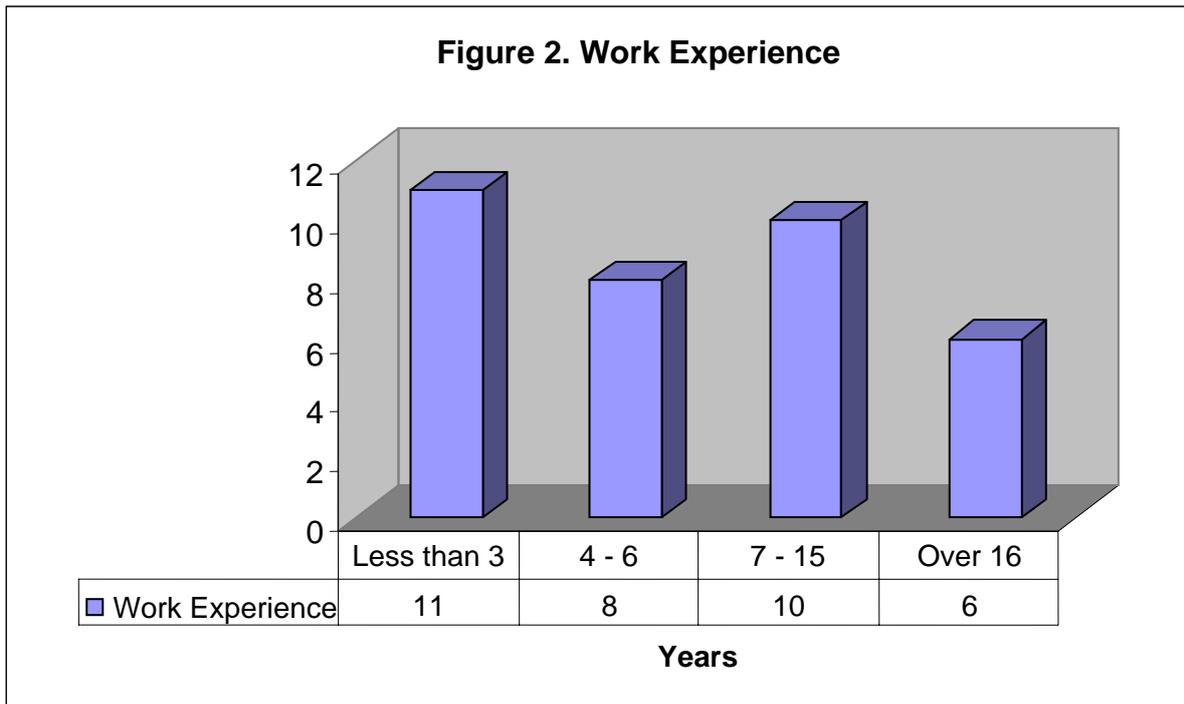
5.1 Demographic data: Age

The interviewees were divided into age groups on the basis of quartiles and the graph below illustrates that the majority of the sample belonged to the last group, that is, they were between 43 and 49 years old.



5.2 Working activity

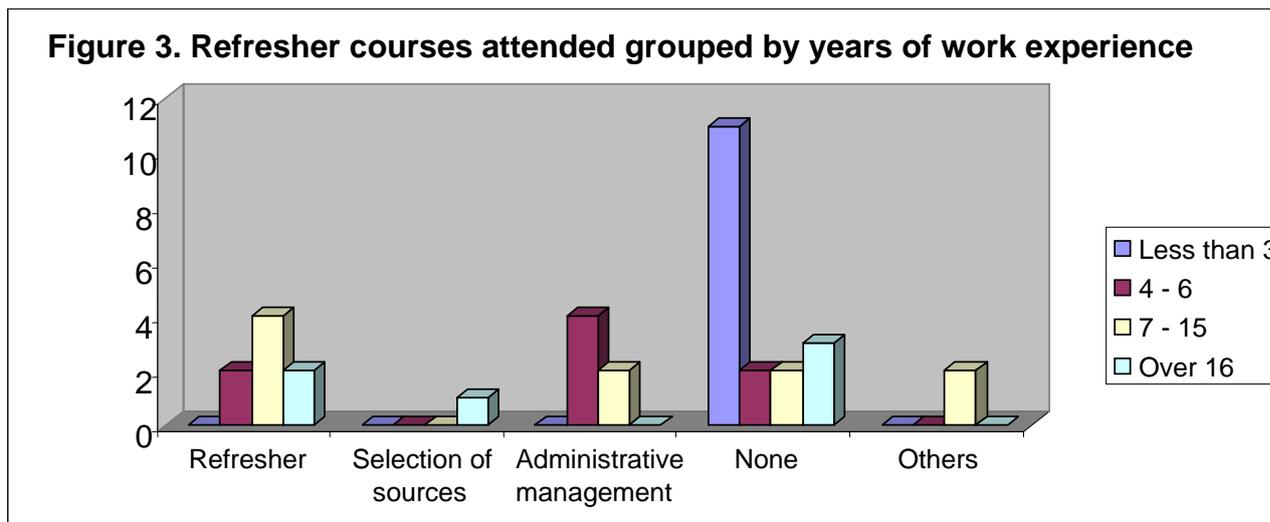
Even though the majority belonged to the last age group, their work experience is almost equally divided between the first (less than three years experience) and the penultimate class (between seven and fifteen years) therefore, the sample analysed had a fair amount of work experience.



5.2.1 Staff training: vocational training and refresher courses on acquisitions

It is interesting to note that despite having an appreciable amount of work experience, 51.4% of the librarians had not attended a refresher course on acquisitions, specifically, 100% of those with *less than 3 years* experience, 25% with *four to six years* experience and 20% with *seven to fifteen years* experience and 50% with *over sixteen years* experience had not been on a course. It is also interesting to see that seven people had been on a second refresher course and, in general, refresher courses were the ones most had attended (22.9%), followed by courses on administrative management (17.1%).

“In some cases the courses are good, but since being sent on mission depends on the funds available, it is understandable that librarians do not insist that much since they are aware of the limits of their budgets. It is nevertheless good to see that the vendors themselves are active in this. It is also certainly an opportunity for commercial promotion, but that does not bother me because it is obvious.”



Even though few attended refresher courses that were in some way relevant to their work, the sample had a good knowledge of informatics and only in 11.4% of cases *had basic knowledge* in informatics.

Table 5: Knowledge of informatics

:

	Frequency	Percentage
Basic	4	11.43
User	11	31.43
Advanced	18	51.43
Expert	2	5.71
Total	35	100.00

The lack of training in selection and acquisition activities unfortunately seems to correspond to the traditional image of the Italian librarian, in contrast with what has been previously specified, particularly in libraries in the United States of America (1). The lack of recognition of their expertise in the sector has also led to further confusion between the roles and competences of librarians and administrative staff.

5.2.2 Selection and acquisition requirements

The librarians considered *knowledge of bibliography and the publishing world* (38.2% of cases) as the primary requirement for book selection and acquisition activities. However, in answering, some of them pointed out that all of these skills were in fact essential and that it was impossible to make a selection. Moreover, the second option may have been misleading as it was interpreted as relative to general knowledge instead of relative to content.

Table 6: What is the main requirement for selection/acquisition activities?

	Frequency	Percentage
In-depth knowledge of a subject	7	20.59
Wide knowledge in various sectors	8	23.53
Experience in Internet searches	5	14.71
Knowledge of bibliography and the publishing world	13	38.24
Other	1	2.94
Total	34	100.00

5.3 Libraries

5.3.1 Number of acquisitions

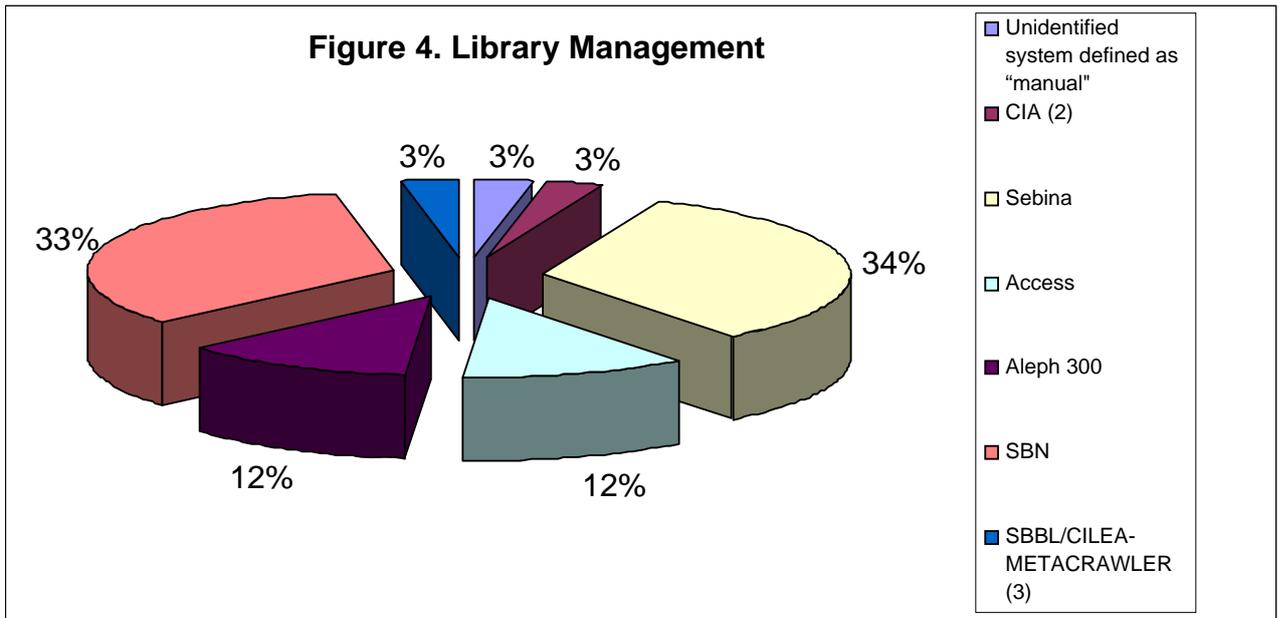
Many of the libraries considered, as shown in the table below, acquire *less than 400* titles of periodicals and books a year, this could suggest that the question was misunderstood, because it seems rather odd that university libraries have such a limited number of subscriptions to periodicals. One reason may be that they had only considered subscriptions exclusive to the library and not those made in consortia or, in any case, had not considered accesses to electronic periodicals managed by the university's library system. In fact, the question on subscriptions seems very generic. The answer on book acquisitions however, could be correct, although the number seems rather low.

Table 7: Titles library acquires and subscribes to

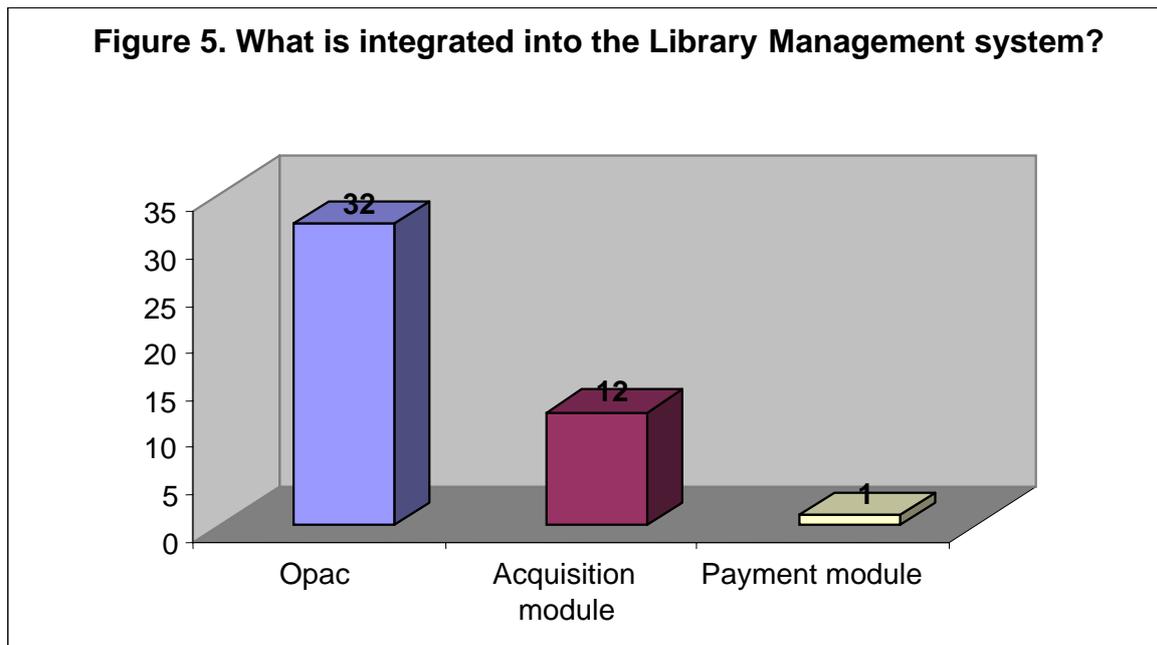
	Books	%	Periodicals	%
Less than 400	17	48.57	24	68.57
400 - 800	7	20.00	3	8.57
800 - 1200	6	17.14	1	2.86
2200 - 2600	2	5.71	2	5.71
2600 - 3000	2	5.71	1	2.86
Over 3000	1	2.86	4	11.43
Total	35	100.00	35	100.00

5.3.2 Library management system - Integration and interoperability

The library management system most used in the libraries under consideration were the **SBN** and **Sebina**. It integrates, for almost all of the libraries, the OPAC and, in many cases (34.3%), the acquisition module.



Because of the size of the sample, the answer was the object of consideration with key informants working in this field of technological applications in universities. We asked ourselves whether the question had been misinterpreted and if some of the answers had referred to the library's general management system (as the question had intended) whereas others had only referred to the acquisition procedure, as answers such as: *manual* and *Access* would seem to imply. However, it seems clear that most of the libraries do not fully use the management programmes for acquisition procedures, very often integrating them with non-automated procedures.



Other clarifications regarded the **CIA**, a management system of accounting and administrative procedures, developed in house by Italian Universities. Besides the other expenses items, it processes data regarding all the library's acquisitions and user licences.

The scenario that unfolds regards:

- **The management software of the libraries**, their modular structure and level of integration in carrying out all the operations the service requests, the research could not take into account all the products on the Italian market,
- **The management software of the administrative systems**
- **The management software of the services of the vendors** for: consulting the Database, requests, orders, checking the status of the order and reports.

and the possibility of them working under communication and interoperable conditions that enable information flows to circulate as if in one circuit so that operations are fully carried out.

Therefore the vendors are all, to some extent, moving in this direction, only the priorities and therefore the policies are different. Casalini, Blackwell and DEA have pushed forward integration processes with the library's system, although at different times and in different ways.

With regard to **Sebina** a management system, it is the one most used and includes an acquisitions management module, as confirmed by the librarians at the Institute of the Department of Health and the KI who have it installed.

The KI did not make use of its acquisition operations, but found that the other collateral services offered were useful.

“**Sebina** has an acquisition management module whose use however is not mandatory. We use it to inform teachers that the acquisition is being made and they see that their request is being processed on the OPAC which displays the wording “in acquisition”. From a strictly administrative point of view, it is absolutely of no use because Sebina is separate from the rest of the administrative management (inventory and accounting) of the University, for which other programmes are used. We are more interested in the bibliographic and catalographic item of the acquisition in progress rather than in executing the procedure, which can be done manually, as many have answered. Moreover, the KI clarified that the management of acquisitions is done, in part, by the library: the order forms, commitments and shipment orders, but the orders for payment on the University's accounts are done by the central accounting office.

Therefore, concerning the **integration of acquisitions into the management system**, with regard to **Sebina**, she says that there is not a link with the accounting procedures of the University, so the acquisition module of Sebina cannot be used to define payments. Therefore, the integration of the accounting system with the management of the library makes sense up to a certain point. Also because she considers that within the library there are many different balance sheet items (not only books, periodicals and databases, but also stationery, telephony, staff missions, computers, maintenance contracts) all having to do with the budget of the library and the university, but nothing to do with the OPAC and library management. In fact she doesn't think that it will be easy to reach an integration and interoperability of different systems to manage acquisitions although it seems a very attractive goal. Instead she relies on separate programmes used in the best way for their specific purpose. Regarding Sebina, another collateral function she suggests to take into account, is that of knowing what you have spent on books and journals, simply by adding the “price” on every title purchased.

Are there products on the market that not only have a module for orders and requests for the suppliers, that not only enable the management of the library's budget but can also be set up for electronic requesting, invoicing and payment? Systems that can interface with banks and establish payment procedures?

“A typical vendor e-commerce scenario might involve searching a vendor's database by ISBD or other search keys for a record to download, creating the order record on the library's automated library system, transmitting the order directly to the vendor's fulfilment system, sending an electronic claim if nothing has been received after a library-specified period of time, receiving an electronic report, and finally receiving an electronic invoice. **EDIFACT** is the current and international standard for online ordering, claiming, reporting and invoicing”.(4) Although this assertion, R.W. Boss complains about library system vendors that offer on-line procedures for selection and acquisition that continue to use the current standards, such as BISAC (in US and Canada) and EDIx.12. In fact, EDIFACT, the last evolution of the EDI standard (Electronic Data Interchange), allows the direct exchange of commercial messages between information systems. “Key elements are the application software at both ends of the interchange connected to a software that manages EDI messages which is, in turn, connected to a communications network.[...] The advantages of using EDI are the speed and accuracy of the transactions that prohibit transcriptions onto paper ”(5). Although this standard could facilitate transactions, unifying information workflow of the library and vendor systems, its application still seems very limited in Italian libraries.

However, the KI noted with scepticism that integration, “[...] involves a whole series of significant problems, including the security of transactions, that has not been solved neither by libraries nor at a more wide-ranging level. Attempts have been made since the end of the 1980's beginning of the 1990's, for example, by Casalini, that participated in a European experimentation on electronic invoicing, resulting in European standards being drawn up but, in general, from a costs-benefits point of view, this type of research and applications were too expensive and burdensome to gain widespread use”.

The situation is extremely fluid, the general trend is to integrate the various procedures of the library's management system and to make it increasingly more interoperative with the supplier's system. In the United States, as seen in the literature review, considerable progress has been made in this direction. Acquisitions of academic libraries run through the integrated systems of both the vendor and the library, also in connection with OCLC to import catalogographic records. As well as other similar products on the U.S. market, Blackwell's Collection Manager has been studied and tested in many academic libraries. (6)

The **Collection Manager database of Blackwell** (7) for selection, acquisition and collection development works on the basis of the interoperability and integration of their system's procedures with those of various library systems, just to mention some of the more well-known in Italy: Aleph, Millennium, Amicus, Voyager, etc. Besides Casalini, DEA is also directly involved in an experimentation with Aleph and Sebina.

Casalini uses the EDI standard and operates in an integrated way with the more used Library management systems.

“Today, there are many possibilities of integration between library systems and suppliers to speed up the acquisition of books in print or in electronic format, and, in general, facilitate information and data exchange. Among the most widely used library management systems at international level are Aleph (of the 'ExLibris company), Millennium (Innovative Interfaces, Inc.) and Voyager (Endeavor Information Systems Inc.). In Italy, besides those mentioned, systems such

as Sebina and SBN are widely used by libraries.” Some of these library management systems, for example, Millennium and Voyager, have implemented the EDI standard (Electronic Data Interchange) for the automated transmission of orders and invoices.

Once system compatibility is tested, a library uses EDI standard to send and download their orders straight onto the vendor’s management system. This system, in turn, sends the invoices in EDI standard once the order is cleared and invoiced.

In Italy, the only vendor who implements this standard (in the European version EDifact) is Casalini libri, that receives and sends orders and invoices via EDI with, for example, the Princeton University Library and the Library of Congress.

If required, data transmission may only regard one procedure: either orders or invoices.

In Italy, although under experimentation in some universities, the EDI standard has not yet been adopted.”

EDI standard application with Aleph 500 for the automatic management of acquisitions between library and vendor systems was implemented in 2003 at the University of Milan “Bicocca”(8). The library management system, with modified versions of the Aleph 500 (version .16.02) system, processes message sending operations, such as: orders, invoices and requests for payment.

The main characteristic of Deastore is that of integrating the Internet bookshop for private clients with an acquisition management service for libraries and businesses.

An experimentation made on Deastore was set up in 2003 by a group of 15 Universities to evaluate the administrative and managerial aspects of the service (9). Now, “it’s possible to configure Deastore in such a way that an order sent to it, can be put automatically, at the same time, inside the customer’s system, with no need to type all data again. It’s also possible for deastore.com to receive the orders, put them into the customer’s system, but not to process them until an authorization is sent (manually or automatically) from the system to deastore.com.(10)

The research on this platform is continuing, dealing with the integration of web pages and standards as Z3950 and standards to reach interoperability between Client – Deastore – Publisher systems for running ordering, invoicing and payment procedures. Although the procedure is not yet fully implemented by EDI format:

Order sending :

- from the library via Deastore and e-mail.
- then through Deastore to the Library System, (Aleph and Sebina) via e-mail with the MARC file attached for cataloguing and automatic order opening in the OPAC. Optionally, the order is sent to DEA also in EDI standard (if OPAC references or an order confirmation by the OPAC are needed)
- from Deastore to the publisher after electronic confirmation from the Library system.

2. Invoice sending from Deastore to a library

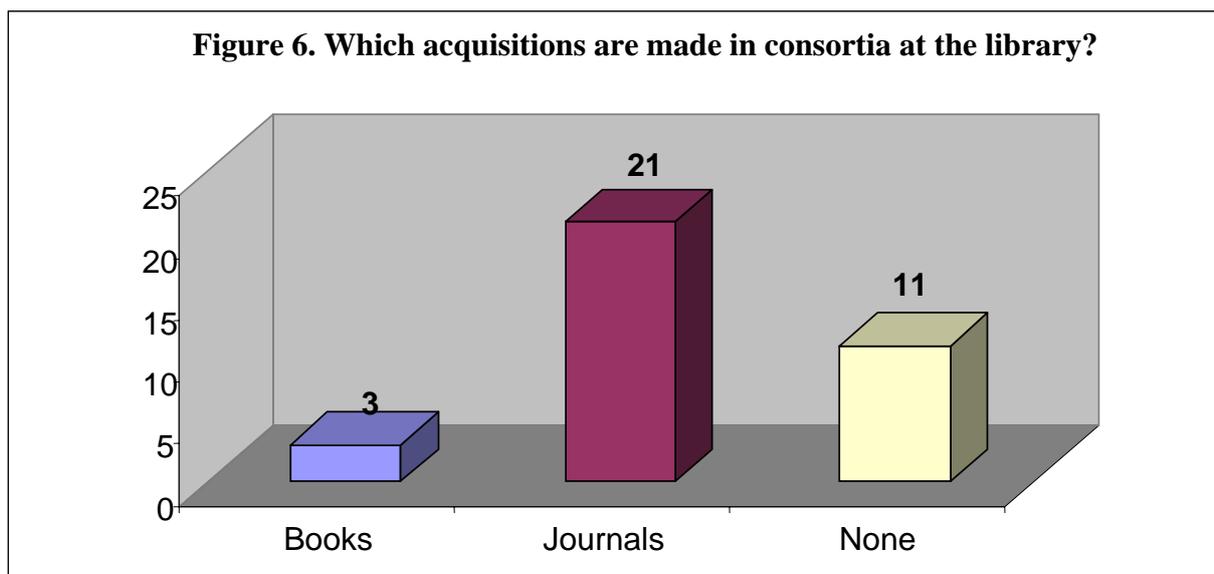
Dea clearly asserts that: “At present, it is not yet possible to import an order or an order proposal into LS from an e-commerce site, in the EDI standard, “EDIFACT”. (11)

A further integration is that of Deastore with the CIA software to provide a DEASTORE link with the accounting system of the University through the LS. The MARC record has been modified for administrative and accounting operations. These operations require specific tags (990 and 991) of the MARC record, that are used to add information for administrative transactions. The CIA record is also generated in Deastore linked with the MARC record, to achieve interoperability of DEASTORE with the administrative and accounting system. (12)

5.3.3 Consortia

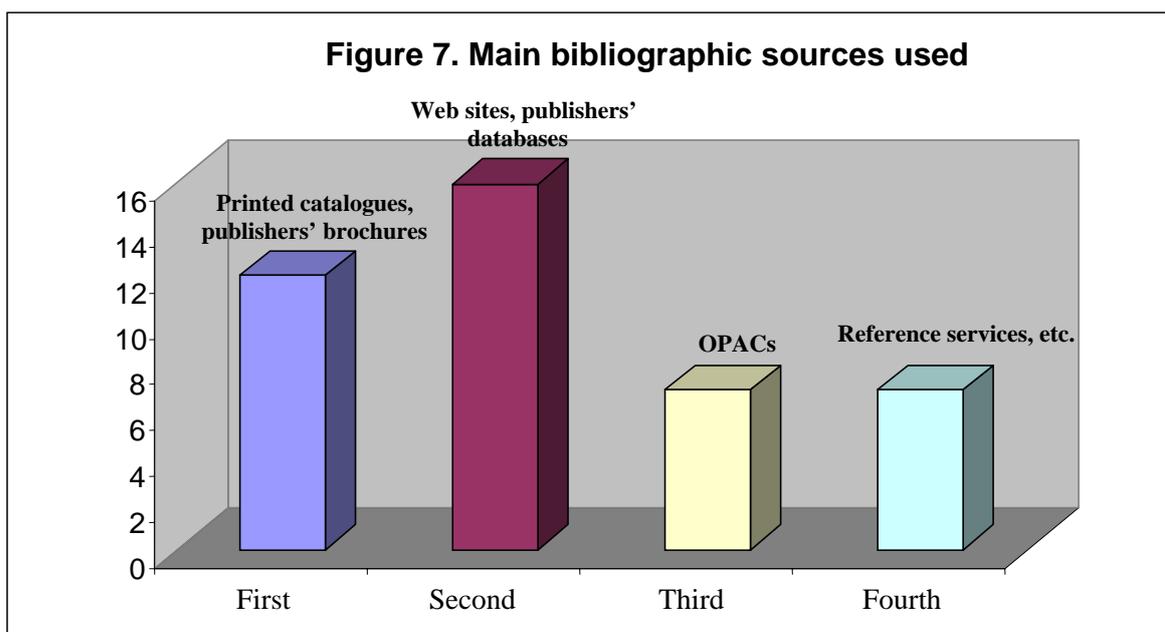
In 68.7% of the cases, the libraries are in a consortium, above all for the use of *electronic journals* (60%) but, for quite a significant percentage (31.43%) this is not at all the case. In a situation of autonomy and of managerial and, at times, administrative decentralisation, in university libraries, the acquisition of certain categories of books such as: reference, serials, etc. as a consortium would require considerable effort, as well as the realisation of the need to establish an Acquisition Policy. Even when it is the CSB (University's library system) that decides on acquisitions, the co-partnership of each library, experts in their own fields, is required. Therefore, it is not a question of centralising acquisitions but of creating complex systems that combine specific capacities with more general ones and local with general resources.

This topic will be dealt with further in the discussion on "Approval Plans". While the KI draws an accurate picture of reality: "there are consortia for journals and databases but there are none for books, primarily because books are acquired as single items" the publishers Blackwell were of a different opinion which, even if for the time being, in Italy, there have been no cases of centralised or consortia acquisitions of books, some libraries are moving in that direction. It should also be pointed out that the acquisition of electronic publishing packages is done through consortia acquisitions and centrally managed by the universities (e.g. the BIDS of the University "La Sapienza" of Rome) (13).



5.4 Selection: bibliographic sources

The classification of the main bibliographic sources provided by the librarians is given in the graph below.



It should not be seen as surprising that *printed catalogues and brochures* are still widely used. In fact, as one librarian working in the biological and medical sector stated in her answer, all possible sources are used that can be helpful case by case, in order to meet the most diverse requests. The ability of the selector lies precisely in such versatility in making demand meet supply, getting the two pieces of the puzzle to fit.

The KI is of the same opinion. “printed catalogues and brochures [...] is material that is forwarded and therefore turns up without you having to look for it, as in a publisher’s web site. It is a bit like “previewing books” procedure (14), what you are sent you see, what is not sent you do not see. Yes, it all depends on a high dose of chance, sometimes a teacher wants to acquire a book that a colleague had, but if he had not come across it, he would never have thought of buying it [...]”.

She considers that a considerable amount of flexibility is needed with regard to acquisitions, teachers who have not said a word in years, can turn up with enormously long lists of acquisitions they absolutely need and that too much planning is never a good policy, because it makes the system less flexible. On the other hand, she points out how librarians are bombarded by masses of possibilities, there is also a lot of other things to do, because acquisitions are only one of the activities of a library.

It is certain that, when you have to work with a clear acquisition policy and you have a considerable expenses budget available, as in the case of the library of the Istituto Superiore di Sanità-ISS (Institute of the Department of Health), should tend to be thoroughly comprehensive and enable a balanced development of collections. The librarians at the ISS, that have a tradition of great professionalism, recognise the importance of the role played by vendors in selecting and suggesting books to acquire at certain moments in the history of their library and the importance they still have in determined activities. In their selection of bibliographic sources procedure, they start by looking at the publisher’s web site, as well as consulting bibliographic databases such as: **Withaker’s Bookbank**, **Bowker’s Booksinprint** and **Bowker-Withaker’s cumulative edition** of both **Global Books in print** (comprises all the books published in the English language in the world) in CD-Rom are essential bibliographic sources. However, from the data supplied by the publishers, they often appear to be incorrect and not updated. They are the same sources the vendors use, integrated into their system, and they have such a level of knowledge and experience in using them that a librarian could rarely achieve.

“We use Bookbank for practical reasons... because I have (devised) a programme that pulls out a file from Whitaker, this file is taken by our system and the book is automatically entered with all the data, if I show you our bibliographical records, you will see that they are, to all intents and purposes, library records. [...] [There is also] the cumulative edition of them both [*Global Booksinprint*] but the drawback is that when you look for a title, you find two or four entries; this means that there is the American one on paper, the patented European one and the European one on paper; so the operator has to make a choice and [...] therefore we make a first selection on Whitaker which is a European database, so that we are sure that the royalties and copyrights are correct, if it cannot be found, we obviously look in the other one”.

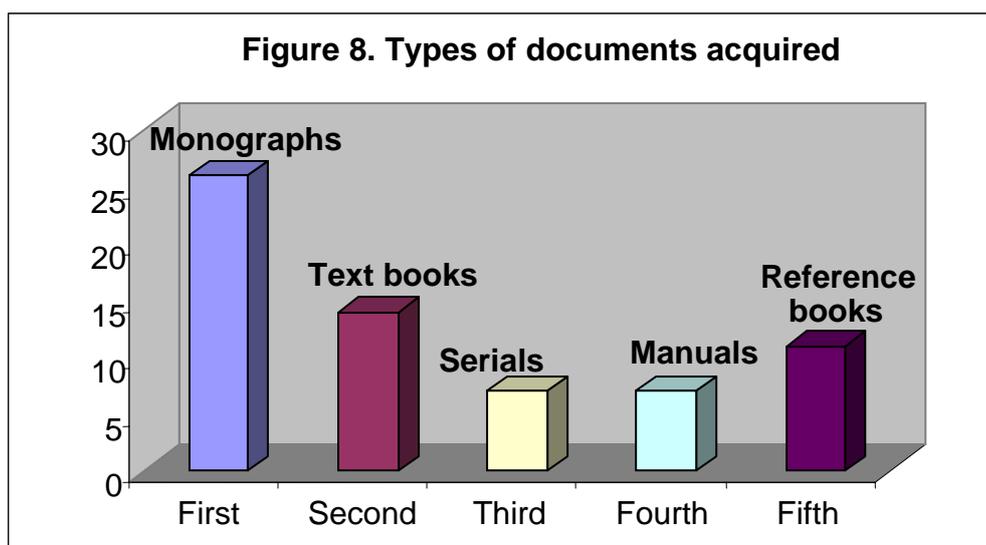
Both librarians and vendors are unanimous in recognising the limitations and the unreliability of these bibliographic sources “ [...] the publishers are much at fault, that is they set up warehouses, I have seen one and [was able to see] that the people operating there are.....[unreliable] . I try to give the publisher everything already prepared, that is, in such a way that the operator in the warehouse, who is usually a part-time [worker], is unable to make any mistakes. In fact, the margin of error between the supply and the arrival of the books is irrelevant... Because every book that I order has been researched, it has its own ISBN, has the ISBN for the European area, therefore an error on the part of the publisher is virtually impossible.”

Without going into detail about the specialistic bibliographic sources for different subject areas, we can see that the biological and medical sources (Biological Abstracts, EMBASE, Medline, etc.) (15) refer mostly to articles of journals. In Mathematics, the most renowned bibliographic databases are: MathSciNet and [Zentralblatt MATH Databases](#) (16) MathSciNet is a database covering the world's mathematical literature since 1940, such as monographs, series, proceedings, journals, etc. while [Zentralblatt MATH Database](#) contains citations of [serials and journals](#) from 1868 with the Jahrbuch database (JFM).

The Internet has certainly completely revolutionized the sector: both vendors and librarians in charge of selection, just as the library user, use the same instrument to find even the most obscure publisher. What role do they play? Are there still recognisable functions that justify cooperation between librarians and vendors with regard to selection?

5.4.1 Types of documents acquired

The classification of the document typologies provided by the librarians may correspond to reality, but may also contain an ambiguity: if *monographs* are treated as *serials*. In fact, some libraries acquire them as if they were periodicals, with a standing order, others order the individual monographs (firm order). As I have mentioned in the literature, there are some publications that specifically regard whether or not it is advisable to treat serials as subscriptions or as a series of monographs. In any case, both monographs (whether or not they belong to a series) and text books, constitute the main typology of library acquisitions in the academic field and this precisely corresponds to the primary requirement of university libraries to supply documents for research and teaching.



5.4.2 Book format: printed, e-books and electronic products

The answers to the question on whether books in electronic format are acquired did not seem particularly significant since the sample was almost equally divided into 2, with a slight leaning towards the affirmative, but a larger sample could confirm whether or not this tendency is correct.

Table 8: Acquisitions in electronic format

	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	16	45.71
No	19	54.29
Total	35	100

The difficulty electronic books are having in becoming established, as previously mentioned, is currently a matter of great interest but also of numerous speculations on the nature of books, standards, software and technological products. It was not possible to include this subject in the study, but only to mention some of the products used by the libraries under consideration.

KI is not the only one to express perplexities (17) on the functionality of books in electronic format, because of their very structure they do not work with the “full-text availability” system. She says:

“An article, no matter how long, would never be comparable to a volume, especially a text book that can amount to 250-300 pages. In my opinion, it is a structure that does not work in this way. In fact, e-books are having great difficulty in taking off. The producers have been trying, in vain, for 15 years to establish them on the market, since the beginning of the 90’s.

Despite the KI’s radical opinion, her library has subscribed to CRC manuals accessed in full-text. Although they are not often consulted, she asserts that this choice falls within a more general strategy of the library that “supply generates demand”.

On the other hand, she recognizes that e-books are better suited to be updated than printed books:

“the classic manual on metal properties, in several volumes,[for example] would need years to reprint, whereas the electronic version is virtually updated in real time”.

. She also admits that “It is true that they are not consulted that much, but that is typical of our users who, at times, are difficult to point in the right direction.”

With regard to the electronic format of books, some vendors said that “there has not been a lot of excitement [...] But what is still being very widely used is the CD-Rom, because there are works in CD-Rom... above all reference works, as well as bibliographic archives, works for consultation [...]”

Other vendors, although they offer quite a range of products in electronic format, e-books, note that “the Italian market is not mature yet, but an interest is starting to be shown ... especially in the scientific sector also because the products on the market are mainly in the scientific sector [more specifically] in engineering. Usually, collections are more requested, then there is also the possibility of buying single volumes, both are possible. However, in the cases we deal with, they are mainly subscriptions, user licences and there is on-line access to packages [...] or to the publisher’s collections the customers want to have available on their platform. Then there is also the possibility of purchasing a single book but that does not seem to be catching on [...]”

A unique case in Italy in electronic publishing is **Casalini**.

“As well as the bibliographic database, Casalini libri, using Adobe technology and a research engine developed ad hoc, has implemented the first Italian e-content package in full-text format, **Editoria Italiana Online. EIO** provides access to about 1000 full-text titles, such as monographs, proceedings, and periodicals fully searchable both by private users that just want to buy only sections or articles (on-line purchase by credit card) and by libraries and library systems that, through subscription and IP address identification, want to offer their users Italian texts. It is a type of small-medium publisher that through a shared interface where its contents can be viewed and accessed on a wider scale, exploiting the possibilities that technology offers. The texts are fully searchable, a preview display is available and they can be downloaded in PDF format.”

5.4.3 User attitudes toward books

With regard to the attitudes of users towards books, certain similarities were found between the library of the *Engineering and Architecture Faculty of the University of Parma* and the library of the *Department of Mathematics “Guido Castelnuovo” of the University, “La Sapienza”, of Rome (18)*, In both cases, books continue to play an important role.

However, whereas the attitude of mathematicians are clear and coherent in the use of sources, the users of the Inter-faculty library, engineers and architects, seem to be highly unpredictable.

“Our users are rather odd, they fall in love with certain types of resource and use only those... others, on the other hand, snub them a little. The relationship engineers have with books is very variable. There are still those of the old school who do not want to hear about electronic formats, others, on the other hand, only use full-text and web sources and, in fact, we never see them in the library, there are those that are intermediate...it is a relationship that is very variable”.

The library of the department of Mathematics has also been the object of interest, because mathematics has such unique characteristics, says the Head of the library:

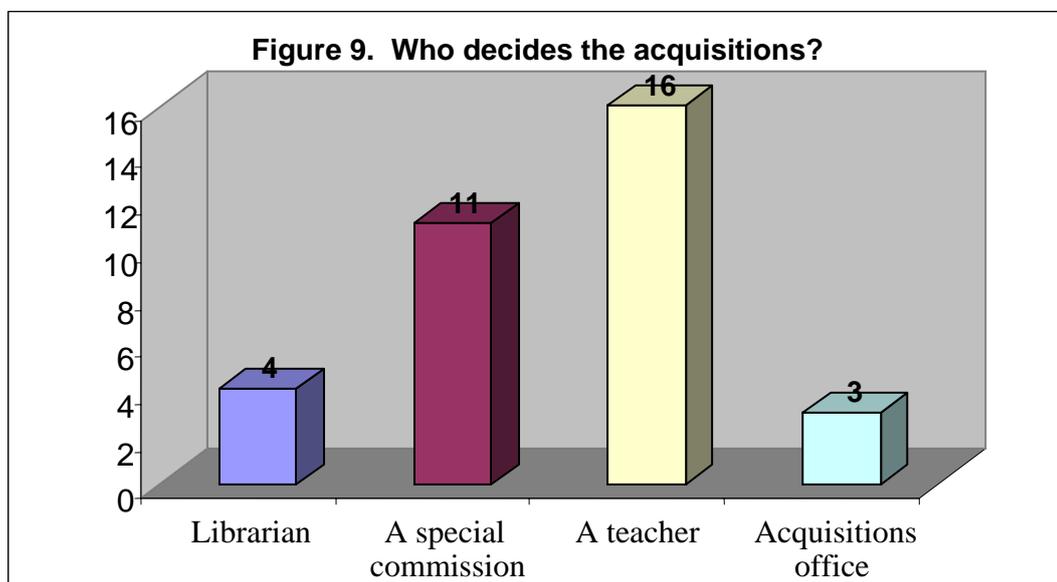
”It is half way between being a purely scientific library, that is, a library that requires material on the latest research, the latest results, therefore it needs periodicals, databases, texts in electronic format, which makes it almost like a library of medicine, [...] but it is also a library for the conservation of books. Because mathematics is the only field, also diverse from Physics which is the most similar, where a library for the conservation of books is needed”.

Moreover she observed that :

“A real mathematician looks on the shelves and takes a book published in the 1800’s even. Because that book contains theories, axioms, hypotheses, etc. which suggest other lines of research, he takes them up again and develops them, it is typical of mathematics.[...]. For example, the libraries of humanities are only for conservation, whereas in libraries of medicine, a 1930 text on physics can only be of interest to a historian in physics, things develop so fast... they are more concentrated on being up-to-date. For example, [for mathematics] a text by Cauchy is incredibly important here!” (19)

5.4.4 Selector, target and purpose of acquisitions

Since the sample essentially consisted of university libraries, it was found that the books were mainly acquired for *teachers*, secondly for *students* and *researchers* and lastly for *graduate students*. It was also apparent that in 45.7% of cases, book selection was made by a *teacher* whereas in 31.4% of cases, acquisitions were decided by a *special commission* usually made up of a librarian, a teacher and a member of administration.



The role of the *teacher* in making selection and acquisition proposals is unquestionable because their competence in the subject is undeniable. However, the decision-making power regarding acquisitions is questionable if, as sometimes happens, the acquisition is not confirmed by a commission or librarian. In short, as the literature taken into consideration also shows, the teacher and researcher that decides on book acquisitions (or any resource concerning their field of study)

plays an important role if, precisely, a consistent development of collections is to be guaranteed that covers all sectors or at least a management policy on collections is followed that justifies the choice of acquisitions.

The KI is of a different opinion:

“ It is the library that decides on the acquisition. We have our budget and the way it is spent depends exclusively on us, that is, the librarians and above all the teachers, as has already been pointed out. We have a library commission with a teacher who represents the various research areas: they suggest and approve courses of action which the librarians propose”.

The way the commission is composed and the eminent role the teacher plays is very effective in the view of the KI:

“There have never been any particular problems, nor disputes, neither of competence nor regarding the acquisition of databases or other things, so it is a form of management that at present seems to work rather well. As regards books, we have even more freedom, whereas databanks are very expensive, because of the price of volumes, acquisitions can be made without objections being raised.”

The classification of the following question on book acquisition objectives resulted from both these comments, where *research* obviously came first, *teaching* second and *dissemination* third. On this subject, it should be specified that the work of university libraries involves research and teaching, whereas *dissemination* is part of the institutional duties of certain public bodies and Public Administration. In fact, in the last few years, the importance of serious and reliable scientific dissemination has been recognised and it would be interesting to know to what extent and how the libraries are involved.

By combining the “objective of book acquisitions” with “the target”, it showed that *teachers* and *researchers* used books more than anything for their own research and the *students* more out of didactic necessity. In addition, it was found that books play a rather significant role in teaching, which is easily understandable. It is obvious that a good text is a great help in teaching, because of the concision, contextualization and criticisms it provides on a subject.

Table 9: Book acquisition objective and target (absolut frequencies).

		What are the objectives of book acquisition		
		Didactic	Research	Total
Target	University teachers	7	12	19
	Researchers	1	4	5
	Students	7	3	10
Total		15	19	34

5.5 Acquisitions

5.5.1 Supply: Time and price

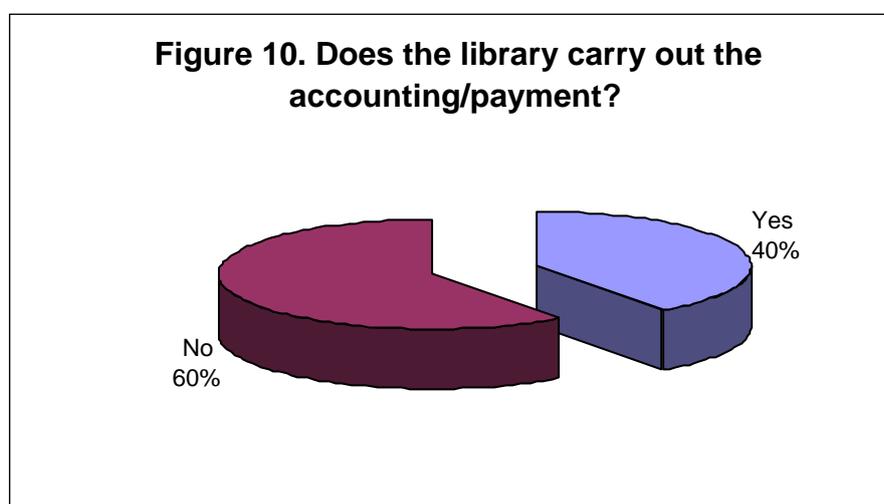
With regard to the characteristics of a supply, it seems that the primary one is the *price*, followed by *time*. Ranking last are the forwarding charges which, depending on the vendor's policy are borne by the customer or absorbed by the vendor, except for requests for special forwarding arrangements. As a rule, it is an essential requirement, all suppliers try, even if in different capacities, to meet this commitment which has the following variables: geographic location of the publisher in or outside Europe, typology of the publisher (large publishers, multinational publishers and small national or local publishers).

Table 10: Is promptness in delivery important?

	Frequency	Percentage
Quite	1	2.86
Very	8	22.86
Extremely	24	68.57
Absolutely	2	5.71
<i>Total</i>	<i>35</i>	<i>100</i>

5.5.2 Accounting – payments

The question concerning *if libraries are in charge of accounting*, was implicitly intended to refer to *payments*, that is, *the issuing of payment orders*. This imprecision, which a librarian pointed out, may have caused some confusion, since all the libraries without doubt check the accounts against the initial budget and also after every invoice and payment is made. However, the results demonstrated that the librarians interviewed did not do any accounting (it is therefore presumed that they do not make out payment orders) in 60% of cases.



All libraries are *expense centres*, that is they have their own budget, therefore books are acquired with the funds they are assigned. In 51.43% of cases, they do not have any additional funds; in the others (specifically, 15 out of 35 libraries), besides their own funds, funds allocated to teachers for research and, in a few cases (4 out of 35), funds for specific teaching programmes were used.

It is obvious that the decision-making power on acquisitions is closely correlated to fund management. For example, some books are acquired by the library (as the librarian at the ISS stated, and this is of common practice everywhere) with project funds that do not belong to the library but to the Institute, represented by the researcher who uses them for certain projects.

Identifying the expense centre structures in universities and those that carry out the administrative procedures for acquisitions is not an easy task.

A clarification of the issue is provided by the KI that asserts that

“With regard to **accounting** and therefore **making payments**, there are two different structures in universities: the Department and the Department’s library or, as in our case, a Faculty with a Faculty Library which has its own funds (in the sense that it has its own balance-sheet item) and a manager who is in charge.

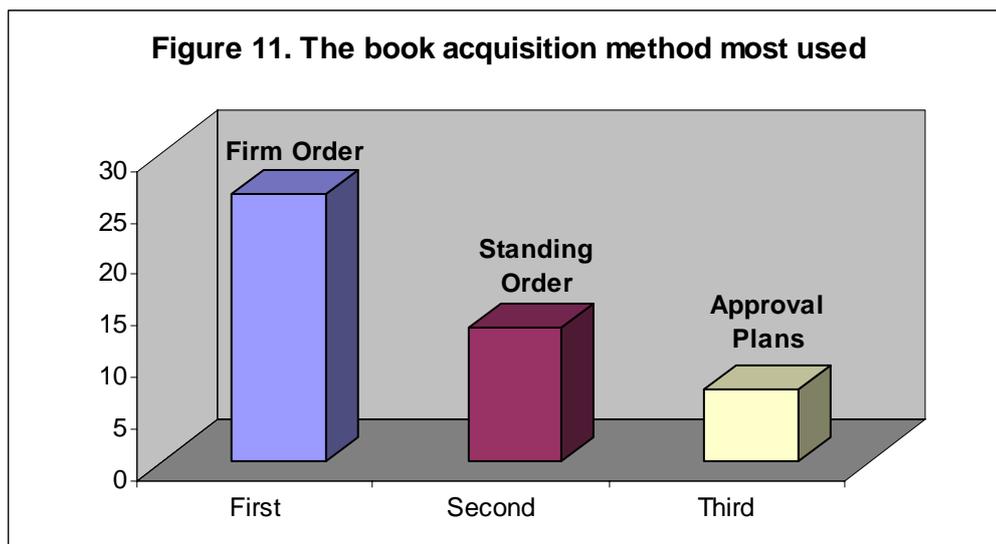
The Department is a complex structure that regards the teachers and the non-teaching staff and a certain number of funds, also including the library funds. [Therefore there is a Department’s budget ...] under which comes library expenses [...] [managed] by their own administrative-accounting officer, the Department’s Secretary, who materially does the accounting, payments, balance sheets and so on. In this sense, the Department’s library does not carry out any form of accounting, because the invoices are processed by the Department’s Secretary. However, as the Faculty library and cost centre, we have to carry out many operations, for example, passing on invoices in triple copy to the central Accounting Office which then materially carries out the payments to current accounts through the bank”.

However, the KI considers that this is not a clear and absolute distinction and there could be many exceptions, for example, a department library could, in turn, be an *expenses centre*...

Without going into detail in the problems regarding the different structural typologies of various universities: Faculties, Departments, Inter-departments and Inter-faculties, it appears clear that “the situation is very variable and very different ... and cannot be generalized...”

5.5.3 Acquisition methods

The method of acquisition most used is the *firm order* in 74.3% of cases, in second place is the *standing order* in 46.4%, such as for subscriptions and lastly, the third method in 53.8% of cases, is the *approval plan method*.



The data correspond to those on the typology of documents acquired, where monographs are ranked first and text books second. With regard to book acquisitions via *approval plans*, in 70% of cases, a profile was not made with the supplier. In actual fact, also in those cases where a profile was defined, it was not possible to ascertain how it was formulated and if, after identifying the parameters in the initial phase, any revision and updating activities were made to a profile by a library, in collaboration with the supplier.

In fact, the tradition of *previewing books* in Italian libraries, is very often based on generic requests or on requests for examining specific volumes rather than on a detailed construction of a profile that is to be later verified. This datum, in part, seems to be in contradiction with the specificity and accuracy of the service which some vendors are able to offer in preparing APs, whereas in other cases, (as will be seen from the interviews) the service requires, on behalf of the supplier, a workload and additional costs which it cannot or does not intend to take on. With regard to APs, the difference between the Italian and the Anglo-Saxon traditions is evident in both libraries (particularly in the USA), and foreign suppliers, such as **Blackwell** (that also operates on the Italian market), with the exception of **Casalini**.

As Casalini asserts:

“The AP is a service that improves supply effectiveness, capitalizing on the supplier’s professionalism and experience. Approval Plans are acquisition plans arranged between a library and a vendor, based on a bibliographic profile defined in great detail so that the supplier is in a position to select books on behalf of a library. Once the profile is drawn up, and after a first phase of fine tuning, there are uncountable advantages: the library receives volumes as soon as they are published and can make them available to users immediately. The library consults volumes rather than bibliographic lists and can nevertheless decide to return any volumes if they do not fit its profile.

Italian libraries have recently started using APs with Blackwell and Casalini. In North America this has, for many years, been the most if not the main, then one of the supply tools most commonly used. The range of the acquisition plan and types of cover (selective, specialist or comprehensive) varies a great deal depending on whether a library has specialists on the subjects or relies on the selection skills of specialized vendors.”

In the cases where a **profile** was made, the *librarian, teacher* and, in only one of the libraries, a member of the *administrative staff*, contributed to drawing up the profile. It should be noted that, even though they were among the possible answers to select from, the vendors were not taken into consideration when making a profile. Consequently, we are faced with the following questions: Had

they not established a form of collaboration with them? Was their professionalism not considered adequate?

For some suppliers, “there are two differences [more substantial when making acquisitions] : there are those that order books[...], that is **monographs (firm orders)** and that is all, and those that [...] order the individual monographs [as] **serials**, because in some tenders or specifications, serials are handled like subscriptions (**standing orders**), so they are not part of the supply of books”[...]

One supplier stated that the highest percentage of acquisitions “is always made up of orders for specific requests, following the usual procedures, that is, the professors or a commission make the request [...], the order is directly approved and then we come in. Usually, and increasingly more commonly, **subject to an estimate on our behalf**. Let us say that the order is carried out like an order but it is a first contact to have an estimate... At present, we do not have an “on-line library” [for book orders] [...] we have, and you will find it described in our brochure, an on-line customer service, where customers can check the status and progress of their orders using a direct connection to our web site via username and password.

Suppliers are very often perplexed and unwilling to offer an AP service. “With regard to the **approval plan service** for branches of learning, that is a completely different matter that requires agreements to be made with publishers ... we only do it for some of our customers that we have known for a long time. It requires a great deal of work and often all in vain, because if the approval plans are not well targeted, there is a risk of moving masses of books that are not purchased, they are blocked for a really long time, the publishers also [can be a problem]...the fact is that, if you tend to do that kind of work, it is natural that publishers tend to send you as much as possible of what they produce...”. Another vendor comments “ we are doing APs, but it is not something we do intensely, it is not so much done by choice but because customers request it, [they amount to about] 5-10%, therefore a minor percentage...”

In **Blackwell's** opinion APs require considerable economic resources to enable the direct consultation of a large number of books mainly from foreign publishers, which Blackwell also makes available on the Italian market. In addition, it requires staff that are highly qualified in academic subjects and in the international publishing sector Blackwell insists on implementing book selection on the basis of a profile established together with the library, from the direct examination of each single book and not simply by reading the citations, tables of content, reviews, abstracts, etc..

It seems clear from what has been said so far, that the national vendors find setting up an AP very complex and onerous, also because they **have to agree upon it with a number of publishers**. “The scientific publishers, more open to implementing an AP are certainly the most organised, they are the larger ones. Because... for example, when the books are examined, a representative of the publisher needs to be on site who comes and shows the new titles. I act as go-between... and tell the publisher that a library is interested in receiving new titles in certain fields, and I inform those publishers I believe may have the material that is published in those sectors... These are publishers we have consolidated relations with [...] they are publishers that come here with a representative once a year or every six months... or that I have met at the book fair in Franckfurt... afterwards, the publishers send me a series of books that I can examine before sending them to the customer. We often do this, because may be in the meantime a new client has come so we send the books to both and they can examine the books for thirty to sixty days and then they are invoiced on the basis of what they keep.”

This case does not refer to an AP but simply to the practice, that is very common in Italian libraries, of *previewing books*. These requests do not imply the preceding work of defining a

profile but only provide the indication of some subject or even a specific title. Still AP projects are increasing Italy, as confirms Blackwell and Casalini who is supplying with AP 10 libraires among them the Libraries of the Università Cattolica di Milano and of the Kunsthistorisches Institute of Florence

Given the small number of libraries that use Approval Plans, it is not possible to generalize on the following questions on this subject, however the advantages that can be drawn from their usage were noted and are the following: subjects' coverage, improved work organisation, discounts and updates.

The profile is built up using various parameters that can be ranked in the following order: the main one being the type of customer, secondly the type of publication, thirdly the type of format and the fourth parameter regards the publisher and linguistic aspects.

In the library at the Engineering and Architecture Faculty of the University of Parma, as the KI states, "the one we most use is the **firm order** (acquisitions made on specific request), we do not use *standing orders* and *approval plans* even less, because there are costs attached that the vendors themselves have difficulty bearing. Deliveries via courier, sending and returning packages, it takes rather a long time to have the material examined and evaluated, all this translates into heavy costs for the Vendor. They therefore tend to eliminate it as a service: we ourselves are not interested because our *teachers* always have a lot to do and therefore to "oblige" them to check the material would be difficult and arduous."

The library of the Istituto Superiore di Santà – ISS (Institute of the Department of Health)(18) is of the same opinion, even though they have a considerable budget allocated for book acquisitions, they prefer, also for *serials*, the *firm order* to the *standing order* method, so as not to be tied to certain choices in the future. This choice is also determined by the firm belief that managing the acquisition of serials directly is more convenient and practical than making recourse to a standing order with a vendor.

This decision, common to both the libraries mentioned, would deserve further investigation, if you consider the amount of work and continuous updating and checks involved. The attitudes of the two libraries seem to be different, however, the library of the ISS intends to continue the serials and therefore follow-up the volumes as they come out, whereas the interests of the Engineering and Architecture Faculty of Parma seem to lie more in the individual monograph, without being over-concerned about maintaining the integrity of serials over time. A change in trends in the acquisition of series is also confirmed by the DEA that has observed a reduction in standing orders over the last three years. The APs are also limited to their "old customers" due to the additional costs that the ad hoc work requires, without considering the inconvenience of keeping large numbers of books blocked, including any unsold or damaged books.

On comparing the literature on American libraries and the opinion of multinational suppliers such as Blackwell and the interviews concerning the situation in Italy, a very clear divergence was found in the motivations that justified the choice of the "Approval Plans" method and its applicability.

In fact, the approval plan requires a Collection Development policy that, in Italian libraries has, for various reasons, not achieved an effective and extensive application. This issue implies several considerations. In some cases, this is due to the current acquisition practices that are not based on decisions, strategies and policies but only on habits and empirical work. In others, as in the case of the KI, the criticisms voiced on APs regard, however, more the library's policy than problems concerning their application.

"Here, Approval Plans do not work because we follow more the individual researcher, a precise moment in research, than building up an all inclusive collection. [...]"

She defends her opinions also when confronted with objections such as, that it could lead to the risk of not being able to guarantee a uniform development throughout the sectors, the risk that teachers make choices that reflect only very sectorial interests. She answers that “ It is a choice made earlier in the process... if it is decided that the mission is Research and Didactics, you have to follow Research and Didactics as they change over time...With regard to the second objection raised on the problem that if one teacher is more energetic and proactive and another is less, this would result in certain sectors being penalized. She answers that it is normal that it is the teacher that determines the development of collections, “because it the teacher who determines the topics of research, the presence of his department within the Library, the Faculty and the University”

She shows in the following citation that her library has developed a policy on this issue that seems also very attractive in a time of providing access more than of preserving collections.

“However, one can focus on an objective that seems, but is not, minimal: to follow the requests of our teaching body. For that matter, many things have changed in the last sixteen years (the faculty was founded in 1988/1989), the general aspect of the faculty has changed. Most of the teachers that were here at the start have retired, new ones have come, new branches of research have been established. Management Engineering has been set up, which was not originally envisaged in the field of engineering when the faculty was founded. It is a situation in continuous transformation and that is what the library has to force itself to follow. The acquisition policy is derived from this which has to keep pace with current research and didactics.”

The acquisition policy and methods of the *Library of the Department of Mathematics of the University “La Sapienza” of Rome* , is based on the aim of balancing adequate collection purchasing with that of following teacher and resercher requests.

The library has had a contract with a vendor for the last two years and buys serials and proceedings that contain the more prestigious publications in the sector. The acquisitions of the rest of the monographs result from the teachers’ choices. The librarian admits that, in fact, it is possible to see differences in the development of various sectors, which also depends on the initiatives of teachers, but she recognizes that they correspond to the natural development of a given sector [...] However, during their assessment of collections they have never witnessed abnormal developments in marginal sectors [...] Therefore, we can consider that standing orders for serials are the right policy to follow to guarantee a wide coverage of the areas of interest, in addition to the acquisition of monographs suggested by teachers”. [On the other hand] “we do not propose to build a comprehensive and consistent collection in every sector of mathematics [...]

These comments represent different positions that would need more in-depth investigation. The opinion would seem to be shared by many with regard to the support the library gives to the requirements of the teaching staff, there are however objections that should be taken into consideration. Besides the utopia of having comprehensive collections, which I do not believe can be proposed in reality, whether the driving role of the teachers leads to an actual development of the collections in their sector or a fragmentation of the collections into thematic islands that are abandoned when the teacher’s interests in the subject has diminished or because the teacher has left the university, would need to be ascertained. You sometimes meet students that are desperate because they have to find material for their theses on a subject that has not yet been treated, that sometimes concern sectors under development and, other times, they come to dead-ends. ... That is what research is like, it’s true, and it is normal that it is like this, but it is also important that the librarian or the commission contextualizes the acquisitions, proposes guidelines and maintains an overall view.

The contribution of Paola Bottecchia (2003) of the **Catholic University of Milan**, is the first publication that is an example of an AP case in Italy. Stipulated in 1998 with Blackwell, for the production in English of a number of subjects regarding business economics. The reservations expressed concerned the “management costs and autonomy in document selection, even though they did not envisage any additional costs, the suppliers [...] did not offer any discounts on the cover price. [...] The problem of the library’s autonomy in increasing their collections was more complex ... which has always been the responsibility of the teachers specialised in the various subjects and, to a lesser yet significant extent, of the librarians. The AP was therefore seen as weakening the library’s proactive role.” With time, this was proved wrong. “The library’s autonomy and identity was expressed firstly in the definition of the profile and then in the evaluation of the amount of unrelated material returned and anything not yet systematically dealt with in the quality controls”. (20)

What are the *opinions of the teachers* at the Catholic University? Do they feel they are in some way restricted in making acquisitions, are they sufficiently at liberty to propose acquisitions in new sectors, as mentioned in the case of Parma University?

5.5.3.1 Updating and the retrospective in books

In 91.7% of cases, the time that passes between publication and acquisition is the *same year*, in the remaining 8.3% of cases it was the *previous year*. One has to consider that *how recent* the publication of a book is, is a parameter that carries different values, depending on subject area. It was from the conversation and explanations preliminary to the questionnaire rather than from the questionnaire itself that the following emerged in the case of two libraries, the Institute of the Department of Health and at the Department of Mathematics, University “La Sapienza” of Rome. It was found that, particularly in the **field of mathematics** and secondly in physics and chemistry, books of historic value and also books that, although not recent, continue to be of scientific value were purchased and conserved for study purposes. This is in sharp contrast with the situation in the bio-medicine field.

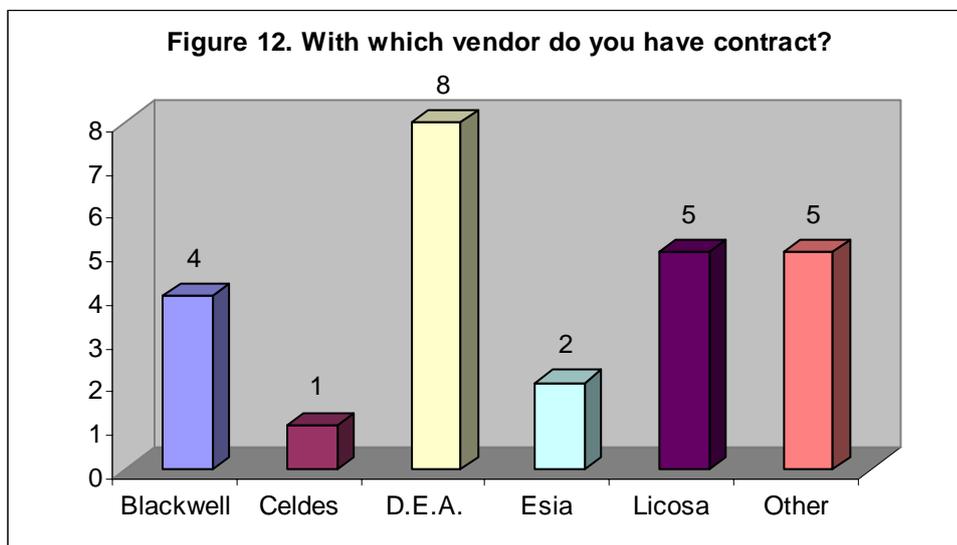
According to the KI “There are some branches in Engineering that have retrospective interests and others less, clear-cut answers cannot be given, such as, electronic engineers never consult anything published over 5 years ago. That would be wrong. I have had to find information on television transmission standards of the 70’s and 80’s, just as I have had to ask other libraries (much older than ours) for articles on thermo-mechanical problems and applications for combustion engines of the 40’s. Retrospective research concerns all areas to a certain extent [...].

“Engineering is also interested in retrospective digitalization and some of the major publishers are going ahead with retrospective digitalization, especially of journals”. On the other hand, especially for Mathematics “it is vital to have a library that testifies the developments made throughout the centuries in this science, and at the same time, journals, monographs, preprints, etc.”[...] In the last years, there have been some interesting projects regarding the retrieval of historic literature on mathematics, such as *The Jahrbuch Project Electronic Research Archive for Mathematics* [...]“ As Lucilla Vespucci, Head of the above mentioned library at the University of Rome states in her article on the “Digital Library of Mathematics” project, presented at the Conference held in San Diego in 2002 the objective is to ”make available on digital supports... accessible to all, the totality of documents on mathematics...” (21)

Therefore, with the Digital library the past and present are reunified without controversies on the priorities and choices to be made to the advantage of the present and disadvantage of the past or on the conservation of assets to the detriment of access to new resources.

5.5.4 Contracts with vendors

A good percentage of the libraries seem to have stipulated a contract (the type of contract was not considered) with vendors, except in 20.59% of cases. Despite conspicuous **cuts in financing for universities and public research institutes**, libraries continue to use the services of vendors who, in turn, feel the effects of the lack of flexibility in the market and the smaller profit margins.



More generally-speaking, the difficulty some of the national vendors had in operating in a fast-changing scenario was apparent in some of the interviews. They have to *compete with multinational vendors*; Blackwell, EBSCO, etc. that have all the top publishing production, organisational structures and infrastructures at global level, at their disposal.

In addition, the market is becoming more and more competitive, also because *publishers* are increasingly more pushy and aggressive, as confirmed in the literature mentioned. On the one hand, they are widening their sphere of activities so as to also include direct sales and, on the other, they are reducing discounts to vendors, diminishing their profit margins.

Lastly, the *considerable budget cuts of libraries* are obliging vendors to apply a policy of reductions which both the vendors and libraries complain of.

“The current Chief Executive of the National Research Council has blocked acquisitions [among other things] of serials... And just think, we are talking of the NRC ... the present situation is stopping many initiatives, such as new book lists from vendors [...] You have to work on quantity, and, in any case, it becomes expensive for the company. If the competitors work on price, on paying staff minimum wages and the like, unfortunately, in order to continue to stay in the market, you have to cut costs. You cannot make investments on portals like the multinationals are doing, because they obviously have such a large investment capacity” [...]

Taking into consideration the reduction in funds of libraries and the consequent concern of librarians and institutions to find discounts and reduce costs, the vendor adds:

“Of course it is in the interests of a public body to look at **the price** to limit expenses but, in actual fact, all the work you do is suddenly ruined because you propose 100 books and they take 50 out of your proposal simply because they do not have enough funds[...]they cut it down by half without warning, after you have completed the research and proposed a certain price precisely for that

number of items and as a result your offer is invalidated because half of the books have been removed. You are forced to let it drop[...]”

It is odd that even if requests for discounts and bottom prices seem to be the dominant practice, some librarians complain that booksellers “have become purely dealers and also offer excessive discounts[...]”.

The sample is not representative of all vendors that operate on the territory, nor does this study intend to give a complete description of the Italian market. Nevertheless, from the small amount of data collected, it is possible to state that there are **4 typologies of vendors with regard to their territorial presence on the market:**

- local
- national
- national and projected towards the international market
- multinational.

This categorization is very limited because it only takes into consideration one parameter that does not necessarily have to do with quality and the final effectiveness of the services provided. The KI pointed out the difficulty of sharing the national market with European counterparts.

“[...] In Italy, there are established traditions and legislation is very different from, for example, France, where the market situation is completely different. I wonder how an Italian Vendor can compete with English and French companies on their territory. A particular case in point is Casalini that supplies Italian niche publications, above all to the United States. DEA, with Deastore, has opened itself to the international market and now also offers books in Italian.

5.5.4.1 Products and services of the vendors

Services and products are not the only aspects to take into account. The approach of the vendor, his/her capacity to understand and cope with the complex needs of customers in a proactive and cooperative manner seems to be increasingly important. The KI considers that “among the Italian suppliers, Burioni seems to be the most eclectic because they manage to work at different levels simultaneously: acting as consultants for consortia contracts concerning periodicals, but having a well-established base of national customers.”

It should be reasserted that the objective of the interviews with the vendors was not so much to describe the state-of-the-art of the sector in Italy, as to highlight aspects, trends and problems in relation to libraries. In actual fact, an issue of primary importance clearly emerged: the subjects under examination are per se not comparable, because of their size as well as supply content, services offered and also because of determined products. This deserves some attention and justifies the qualitative approach of the methodology adopted for this study. The interviews represent very different situations, each having their own well-defined physiognomy and, at the same time, dynamic and that in some cases are going through a transformation or redefinition phase. It even seems difficult to find a way of representing a situation that is undergoing such profound and rapid transformation, but what has emerged are the trends, feelings, processes, problems and expectations.

Some of the vendors that have been on the market longer and developed over decades of activity considerable competence in the foreign publishing sector, have gone from a state of monopoly to one of internal competition and have had to face the consequences of the national market opening up to foreign suppliers, the radical changes caused by the widespread use of electronic resources and lastly, the Internet. Their ability to compete with new as well as international vendors has required and still requires continuous redefinition which is not a simple process nor effortless. The interviews reveal that these are people with an uncommon level of professionalism, pioneers in Italy

in the development of software devices and in the knowledge and selection of sources, but are finding it hard to integrate in the continuous flow of innovations that the market demands and which nevertheless lead to a certain levelling out and standardization, when one is unable to be innovative.

The younger companies, however, are showing considerable ability in adapting to market needs with flexibility and versatility and have the additional ability of understanding the Italian market which is difficult for foreign companies, that are not sufficiently established in the territory. The predominant interest, for some, has shifted from books to journals “lately, we have been concentrating resources on **aspects connected with journals**, not because we prefer them to books, but because we are strictly a commercial business [...] so, since journals hold the biggest slice of the market, our efforts are concentrated on them. What was initially a strictly supply job, that is, receiving orders, transmitting orders to publishers, receiving and delivering material, it has, over time, evolved into a whole series of services, let us say that, in most cases, they are tied to the resources available and services that can be used via the Internet.[...] so that users can make searches [...] simultaneously, in all the electronic resources available[...] in databases and subscribed journals .”

“We also do an entire **bibliographic service**, with catalogues, offers, brochures, we also do this ... also via e-mail, we also provide a **previewing books** service on request, when a client wants to see certain books “

Some suppliers do not have the possibility of verifying the efficacy of their services, such as bibliographic citations, SDI, Alerting.

“The problem of citations is that the librarians are already submerged by citations that come directly from publishers, other suppliers, from old suppliers that keep sending them and I do not know who else, so they may come to nothing. Therefore, I do not know if they are ordering books because I mentioned them or because they found out about them some other way [...] Then, there is the Internet... I know perfectly well that all the publishers have all the libraries in their mailing-list, so what is sent to me, is also sent to them. When we find something particularly suitable etc, we make a special point of bringing their attention to that particular work, but in the great mass of input they receive, I do not know if they are taken into account”.

Another vendor, of a different opinion, sends “bibliographic citations by mailing attachments, electronic mailing, then by reporting new items and special offers currently on the web site. They are quite well received[...] They are customized, by thematic area, using different mailing lists, divided into subjects and so, in this way, we try to do things in quite a targeted manner. Then, there is also the electronic distribution of our **newsletter on new books and special offers**, thus we present various topics and various subjects which we aim to send to several libraries”.

5.5.4.1.1 Bibliographic databases on a web platform

The bibliographic databases provided by vendors’ that can be searched on the web are very attractive, since there is the prospect of managing all data processing (searches, requests, orders, payment, checks, etc.) as a unique workflow.

The KI emphasized the importance of such tools:

“In order to assess the services of vendors, an analysis of the **platforms** offered is essential: the platform is the choice of the entrepreneur, both at image level and the service offered. Visual impact, choice of colours, number of functions and usability, are factors that should not be

underestimated when establishing and maintaining relations between Vendors and Libraries. The principle examples currently available in Italy are “I Libri” (Casalini), Collection Manager and Deastore”.

In fact, the present research does not aim to analyse the bibliographic database searching platforms, with its additional multi-functional utilities. Therefore, the following considerations regarding services and typologies of products are a general overview of the possibilities and opportunities available on the market for libraries. Up to now, the approach of vendors in dealing with client libraries is also a factor whose importance has not been sufficiently recognised.

The present research doesn't consider the platform for serial searches and full-text access provided by CELDES, although it seems a remarkable example of innovation, because it is out of the focus of the investigation.

Casalini has a very particular slice of the market, both in Italy and abroad, which regards the Italian publishing production they have catalogued.. Its customers are mainly libraries in America and northern Europe that use Approval plans in order to obtain a supply that is as comprehensive as possible, which includes supplementary products such as **bibliographic records** and services, such as the **delivery of books** that are stamped and **labelled**.

“The bibliographic database, “**I libri**” is a very important bibliographic resource for academic and specialist libraries. It is updated daily and includes CIP cards (Cataloguing In Progress) and announces titles coming into publication to provide fuller information. The library can have access by user identification and password or by IP access. It is also possible to make orders on-line, check the state of orders and shipments. “I libri” is accessible on the Internet for consultation and selection, and provides the possibility of direct purchases: on-line orders and payments (for private individuals, libraries and companies). The platform is set up for individual clients as well as for libraries and companies”

Since 2003, the DEA has developed the web platform, **Deastore**, for the consultation, selection and acquisition of foreign books by both private individuals and business clients (libraries and companies) it is now also possible to purchase Italian books, recently, this service has added facilities and new products: bibliographic records, checking duplications, links to Deastore from library OPAC, etc.

Blackwell provides a bibliographic database, **Collection Manager**, which has many options for research devised for the development of collections, for instance the use of approval plans integrated with firm orders and standing orders. It is particularly appropriate for checking the different purchasing activities to avoid duplications. Some additional products and services to the supply (bibliographic record, stamping, labelling, etc.) are provided for large libraries or libraries going through a particular phase of development of acquisitions and collections which can save librarians from doing a sizeable volume of banal tasks, which are therefore very useful. The same cannot be said for their use in small and medium-sized libraries, even if it should be taken into account that, as there is less staff there is more work. In the literature review, this aspect is also dealt with, that is, the risk that outsourcing means that librarians are delegating the complete management of acquisitions to vendors, without the possibility of taking any measures and, when the case arises, to turn down an acquisition.

The vendors offering to libraries is very varied and diversified. It includes an ever increasing range of services that are no longer just the management of subscriptions to journals and serials but the access to single platforms of full-text electronic resources such as journals and various electronic

publishing products, e-books, bibliographic databases with additional services for making requests, orders, on-line payments, forums, electronic bulletins, alerts, etc...

Summary of the services and typologies of the products offered for book acquisitions by the vendors interviewed

Type of supply

- Geographic-linguistic areas:
 - Anglo-Saxon
 - other areas
 - Italian.
- Type of documents: monographs, dictionaries, encyclopaedias, manuals; text books, serials, proceedings,
- Special documents: Reports, technical regulations, conference proceedings, official government publications, etc.
- Out of print
- Formats: printed, electronic on CD-Rom, on-line, microfilm, microfiche, etc.

Services

Reference. Bibliographic searches
Tables of Content (TOC)
New titles list

Selection and acquisition: On-line bibliographic database:

- requests
- ordering
- invoicing
- payments
- reporting.

Technical requirements: interoperability with ILS: Aleph...
CIA interoperability
use of the EDI standard

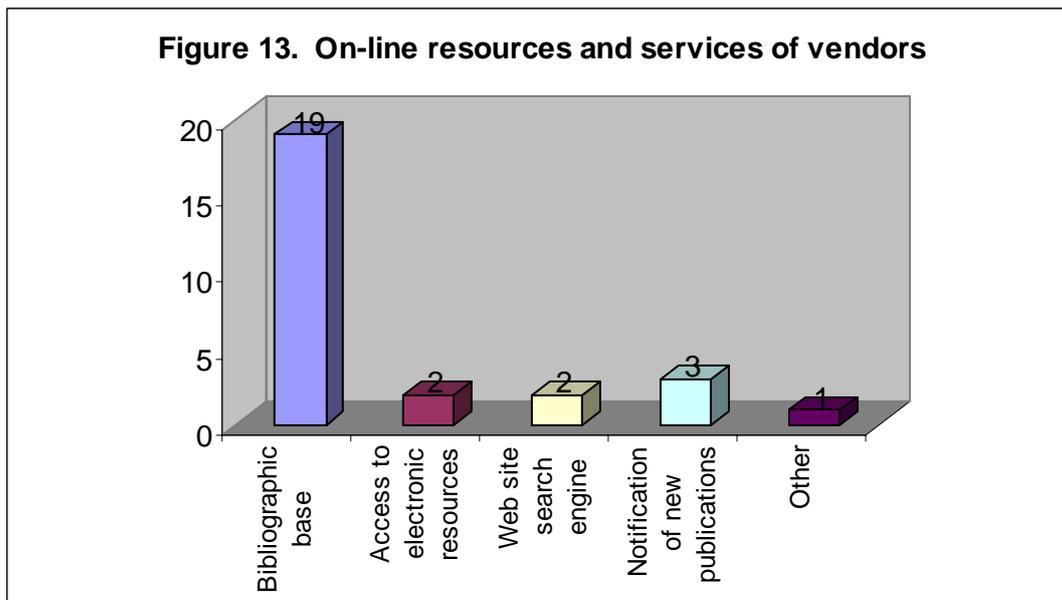
Acquisition method: Firm Orders, Standing Orders, Approval Plans.

Additional services to the supply: bibliographic records: UNIMARC, MARC, etc.
Books shelf-ready : Stamping and labelling of books

Customer Assistance: Service card

Catalogue of products

Services for updating, tutorial, consultancy for librarians.



5.5.4.1.2 Customer assistance - Relations with the supplier

Interpersonal communications with the supplier were found to be very important (76.5%). The vendor's electronic system is mainly used for *communications* and *handling orders* (74.1%). Orders are mainly sent via *e-mail*, then *fax* and only in 20% of cases via the vendor's web site. The latter answers seem to be inconsistent with the first one, where it was affirmed that it was the vendor's electronic system which was the most used, except in the procedure for acquisition orders which were sent, not via the web site, but via email and fax. Could the question have been misunderstood? Almost all of the libraries were concordant on the reception of invoices which, in 91.4% of cases were received in paper format.

Customers are particularly closely followed by *local vendors* that have had their customers for many years and know them very well. In their database they have the archives of the materials supplied and the user profiles so they can personally answer and give out information immediately "[...] It is a choice, besides, you have to be competitive and if you are not competitive from the point of view of company size, you have to provide a service that others do not offer". Our staff [...] is made up of people who have been with us for years and have a lot of experience that rightly cannot be paid by short-term contracts, the choice is to have less personnel, that have a respectable salary and therefore have different capabilities. This is the type of service we offer, providing customers as much experience and skills as possible. It does not mean that it is always profitable, in the sense that, in some cases, where only the price of a certain service is considered, it may not be the best policy.

Another vendor comments, "In this work, the secret is flexibility, knowing how to adapt to the strict bureaucratic mechanisms of customers. They never change, it is what they require[...] so there is nothing to be done, we have worked out a special software so that we can accomodate all types of bureaucratic details [...] In our company, which is young, streamlined, flexible and personal [the relations with the customers] are very close, we aim to establish a contact that is as personal as possible so as to solve problems in a more informal way and more rapidly. Therefore, contacts are made over the telephone, through the exchange of e-mails, or also directly about orders... We have

contacts specialized in subjects, such as, experts in the management of electronic and telecommunication resources, experts in subscriptions and bibliographic management, that is, everything relative to modifications, updates; or relative to the arrival of material, every department has specific contacts and the customer is directed to them, apart from the supervision I do, or by whoever is in charge.”

Many vendors also have **private individuals as clients** which they have personally followed for years, updating the user profile.

For both private and libraries/companies they offer a request mask (ESIA), or provide customers with the chance to check the status and progress of their orders using a direct connection to their web site (Burioni), or, as in the example of booksellers on the Internet... they offer a web platform for bibliographic searches and on-line acquisitions also by credit card (Deastore, Casalini).

The credit card is especially used for private individuals that are above all, old clients and professors... a typology retained by the ancient tradition (Casalini, Esia) ... Sales to private individuals do not constitute a big business neither for Casalini nor for DEA, whose customers are mainly libraries.

Librarians do not use **credit cards** in 91.1% of cases, the remaining 8.9% do, but most probably, in the latter case, the question was misunderstood and in the answer they referred to their own credit card and not the library’s.

Regarding this issue, the KI seemed very categorical:

”With regard to **credit card** payments, we do not have one in our structure and we will not have one in the near future, because there are implications of responsibility which the library manager cannot take on.”

5.5.4.1.3 Acquisitions at other suppliers

Besides contracts with vendors, the libraries who were given the questionnaire also acquire books from one or several suppliers. In particular, 77.14% also purchase from other traditional bookshops and 34.29% from traditional publishers and on-line bookshops. Lastly, 14.29% make purchases from on-line publishers. It would have been interesting to gather data on acquisitions made at particular suppliers and publishers, such as University Press. Direct sales on the Internet by publishers is expanding, even though their policies on marketing products vary a great deal.

Table 11: Acquisitions at other suppliers.

	Frequency	%
Traditional publishers	12	34.29
On-line publishers	5	14.29
Traditional bookshops	27	77.14
On-line bookshops	12	34.29

5.5.4.1.4 The expectations of librarians and vendors: how vendors see libraries

Their mutual expectations are affected by the way both professional categories reciprocate. Sometimes they have known each other for years, if not decades, and have set into a routine, in other cases, they have established very dynamic and profitable relations.

The various problems of a library, such as undefined rules and policies, could negatively effect relations with vendors. A vendor commented, “It seems to me that, at times, the problems are more on the side of the library [...] that is, the librarian and the rapport they have with the people they refer to, in this case, the teachers, rather than with us ...[At times, there is a certain confusion between who is actually interested in the acquisition and who has the decision-making power ...] whereas relations with the librarian have developed, in short, have become better defined [...] .”

With regard to libraries, vendors not only have to cope with different situations but also with in-house changes, as one vendor states:

“Moreover, the way a library operates changes a lot according to who it is managed by [...] in that, over the years, the library service may have been highly efficient but then changes and becomes very inadequate.”

How to approach Universities is not always clear to vendors:

“There are other problems [due to the number of players involved in the universities], for instance if, on the other hand, there is a good rapport and a chain that works, it is simpler for us to communicate, but if, on the other hand, there are problems[...] we obviously are also affected.

In addition, the decision-making powers regarding acquisitions is very diversified, for instance, in some universities the faculties have more power than the individual structures, such as the departments...in other cases, everything goes through consortia or various CSB centres.”

Another vendor did not consider the libraries ready for new supply arrangements such as Approval Plans.

“the libraries do not fully appreciate this issue ...partly due to funds, partly because they are not sufficiently well-organised to be receptive to innovations... “

In answering the interviewer’s question on the “variety and diversity of the levels of competence of the staff in charge of selections and acquisitions, and how selections and acquisitions are made ... one vendor replied:

“You will have noticed that it is often the administrators (University) that have the faculty to decide on acquisitions ... [and bureaucracy has increased, instead of streamlining of procedures ...]. Because, from our position, librarians are increasingly more isolated, their job is to be *book curators*. This type of work [selection], I am speaking from my own recent experience, is becoming more difficult to propose because librarians that are really capable of directing acquisitions do not exist anymore. They are becoming more and more limited and the librarians that are left, who are also good at their work, are put aside. In actual fact, it is the price libraries are essentially concerned about. For example, ENEA (Italian National Agency for New Technologies Energy and the Environment) has a library, quite a big one too, in actual fact the librarians who are rather competent, are not in charge of orders, they are done by the general purchase office instead, that treats books like [...] “

Others have a more positive view of librarians but still do not consider them the main speakers.

On the other hand, another vendor stated that “the level of communication on the part of our contact, that is, the librarian has, over the years, developed, improved and is certainly well-defined. We, like I think everyone else in our position, prefer to have relations with librarians or administrative staff, sometimes also with professors, with teachers and therefore, at times, with and, at other times, without the librarian acting as mediator.”

5.5.4.1.5 The expectations of librarians and vendors: how libraries see the services of vendors

With regard to the services offered by the vendors, the librarians' answers were rather disappointing, with regard to greater *integration and interoperability* between vendors and libraries (40.6%). In addition, they did not comment – that is the answers were divided between “not at all” (37.5%) and *quite* (34.4%) - on the development of updating services such as *newsletters*; they did not want to be supplied with *bibliographic records* (40.6%), even less to have the *books labelled* (87.5%) they were not interested in the *professional refresher courses* organised by vendors (65.6%); but answered in the affirmative to the question on *customer assistance* where they were divided between those who wanted the service to be developed, (45%), and those who were satisfied with the assistance currently provided (40.6%). Lastly, most of them (72%) wanted a medium-high development of *electronic updating services for specific profiles, e-mails and alerts*.

The librarians would like to see vendors come forward with proposals and have a *proactive attitude* in 60.7% of cases, rather than having the approach of being *supportive* to the user's current research (31.4%).

In conclusion, news obtained from the consultation of *on-line bibliographic database* were considered *quite satisfactory* (59.4%), even if a good number of them (25%) were *not very satisfied* and thought that the extent to which on-line catalogues (43.8%) would replace the direct examination of volumes would be *minimal*.

It seems that the resulting data do not reflect the actual situation which, on the contrary, is complex and open to new experimentations and experiences in the acquisitions sector. In the previously mentioned conference of the IFLA and AIB, held in Bologna on 18 February 2005, collection development projects were presented by a number of Italian university and public libraries where books will be supplied by vendors through Approval Plans. The Italian libraries are showing growing interest in APs as illustrated by the activities currently underway at the municipal library, ‘Sala Borsa’ of Bologna, the Vimercatense Library System (in the Province of Milan) and at the Bibliographic and Documentation Services at the IUAV University of Venezia.

5.5.4.1.6 Contradictory relations between vendors and libraries: discounts, tenders, payments

The primary request that libraries make is for a **discount**. The subject of discounts is rather a delicate one, it depends on the vendor's policy and numerous other factors (size of the vendor and the library's volume of acquisitions, etc.).

With regard to supplies in American libraries, evaluations have been made on acquisition methods: approval plans, firm orders and standing orders (as illustrated in the literature review) also from an economic point of view, as well as the efficiency of the supply, unfortunately, similar studies have not been made for Italian libraries.

For a vendor that operates exclusively on the national territory, “discounts are established on the basis of tenders for contract and bids that are made beforehand, and these are fixed and not discounts that can be varied according to the firm order or standing order...” It is clear that the vendor’s discounts policy depends on the publishers’ policy, but in different measures, depending on the company’s size and whether it is a multinational.

The **publishers** have also reduced their discounts for *special offers* and new products “If you buy and sell new products [...] if you make an agreement for an approval plan with a publisher, such as, send me everything you publish and you sell this package of “new products”, you can have a percentage bonus, but we are talking in really minimal terms[...] It is the publishers that establish the size of the discounts for vendors, but a discount can only be based on turnover.”

On the other hand, both the supplier and the customer complain, in some cases, of the relation being purely based on discounts: **private contracts** are taking hold now, in most cases, everyone is asked for an estimate. So I receive a request for an estimate, as do other vendors... because three or five estimates are needed, depending on how the law is interpreted the law. In other cases, they tell you: this year, we would like to have a single supplier, what sort of commission will you be charging us this year? And most of the time they do not even give us an idea of how much they are willing to spend ...”

In some cases, the library complains that it has to check all the prices of the books requested because it does not trust the vendor’s discount policy.

Instead some vendors, such as Burioni, rather than adopting a policy of discounts, aim more at supplying services based on precise user profiles and providing guarantees on the quality of such services “We generally set certain conditions, but most of all, we try to draw up a customer profile (we and the customer) and therefore, on this basis we give a determined service, we apply certain conditions, which include various periods when special offers and promotions are made [...] the customer will either approve of it or not.

There are economic conditions but also those specific to the service, [structured] in several parts, that the customer, in time, understands and appreciates. Relations with our customers must not only be based on discounts, otherwise I would become broke[...] In our particular sector it would not make sense ... we are not talking of best-sellers which the bookshop, Feltrinelli, would buy, that you can buy at the supermarket ... basically, we are talking of other things, for which it is true that the individual price, the individual title, are important, but the services that are offered are also important.”

Both librarians and vendors complain of the procedures for **tenders for contract**, which lack adequate specifications on the technical requirements of the services required. Some vendors complain that, at present, in tenders “the quality of the service we provide libraries is not acknowledged [...] we hope that this search, at all costs, to have the services offered by foreign multinationals ceases, because lately, they have been assessed in tenders and given much higher points than Italian companies, like ours[...] Concerning the services [which we are able to offer] we definitely have strong competitive potential that should not be ignored. This is our greatest expectation [...] rather than that payments are made quicker.”

A more general evaluation is that “in tenders for contract [...] when the *criteria adopted* are *discounts*, they go very badly [...] in fact, we have been insisting, for some time, that they should be dealt with differently [...] In this sense there should be a convergence between vendors and librarians ...because very often the administrative staff tend to underestimate library services] [...] in fact, the point we have been insisting on for so long in our relations, also at consortium level, is that they should be carried out differently, and the points assigned differently[...] and another

problem is who is in charge of what[...] in the sense that, we have to provide estimates that have determined criteria, drawn up by administrative staff who, however, are not familiar with publication problems, [...] it is specifically a problem of competence and knowledge, therefore, first of all, [the players involved in acquisitions] need to clarify things between themselves. ”

The library of ENEA has recently taken steps in this direction. They have detailed in their new Specifications for tenders that, besides the economic aspects, the technical requirements are also to be included. European tenders in which also multinational companies, such as EBSCO (regarding journals and databases) participate, and Blackwell, are looked upon with suspicion by national vendors that feel they are not sufficiently held in consideration for the services they offer and the characteristics of their activities.

“Another problem, typical of the Italian market, is **delays in payment**. “The main problem with libraries is that public bodies do not pay [...] I mean it is not that they do not pay, but years have to pass by [...] we have really important customers, immense, but which do not have the cash ...In these cases, the supply still has to be made, until [...] the contract expires so I cancel it, I would like to see the publishers when they find themselves faced with “x number” of such cases!”

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- (4)Alice EDI Electronic Data Interchange <http://www.librialice.it/publish/law.pub/edi.htm> (visited in December 2004)
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(9) An experimentation of DEASTORE was set up in 2003 by a group of 15 Universities to evaluate the administrative and managerial aspects of the service. The group was coordinated by Antonio Scolari of the University of Genova. After a training and assessment period, some of the findings were presented at X. DEA Workshop of the 27th of January in Turin.

<http://www.deanet.it>

(10) Deastore www.deastore.com

(11) Ligi, Fabrizio Deastore.com. Il grande progetto DEA per l'e-commerce. Ricerca, acquisizione e catalogazione elettronica di libri per biblioteche e aziende: l'integrazione con OPAC, cataloghi nazionali, servizi di linkung e sistemi contabili. Presented at X. DEA Workshop of the 27th of January in Turin. (<http://www.deanet.it>)

(12) D'Aguzzo, Vincenzo e Papa, Carla Acquisizioni in biblioteca e procedure on-line:l'integrazione possibile. Presented at X. DEA Workshop of the 27th of January in Turin. (All the documentation will be available in the DEA site <http://www.deanet.it>)

(13) BIDS Biblioteca Digitale della Sapienza <http://bids.citicord.uniroma1.it/> (Digital Library of the University of Rome "La Sapienza")

(14) Previewing books is a very common practice in Italian libraries. It can sometimes be assimilated to approval plans, see 5.5.3

(15) Biological Abstracts database <http://www.biosis.org/products/ba/>

EMBASE database <http://www.embase.com>

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Bibliographic databases: *MathSciNet*, [Zentralblatt MATH Database](http://www.emis.de/ZMATH/) with *Jahrbuch database (JFM)*. The entries are classified according to the [Mathematics Subject Classification Scheme](http://www.emis.de/ZMATH/) (MSC 2000). These databases are accessible to the university staff and students thanks to the collaboration of the library of the *Department of Mathematics* "Guido Castelnuovo" inside the BIDS of the University. <http://library.mat.uniroma1.it/>

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6 CONCLUSION

Several trends can be delineated from this study. The study can be defined as a brief overview of the situation in Italian university libraries and public research institutes with regard to book acquisitions and relations with vendors. It is an extremely complex, differentiated and dynamic situation.

The trends that emerged from the research, which were also confirmed by both surveys on Italian Universities, are given below (1) :

A process of rationalization and integration of systems that manage individual libraries is being put into operation in a number of universities, for acquisition management and collection development purposes, an issue not covered in the questionnaire.

The Library Management Systems most used are:

Sebina and Aleph and they are used at various levels of integration and interoperability with SBN.

Various individuals are involved in selection and decision-making, the role of university teachers is prevalent, the role of librarians is variable, ranging from central to peripheral. The role of administrative staff is controversial.

Diversity of expenses centres, particularities of departments compared to faculties.

Acquisitions are predominantly monographs and text books for research and didactics for which Firm Orders tend to be preferred to Standing Orders. Approval Plans do not seem to be in common use.

Disparities and a lack of rationality are clearly perceptible in the management of operations that would require greater coordination between structures, maintaining, however, the diversification of the specific competences. Coordination ability, to avoid both fragmentation and centralization:

- Identification of expenses centres and accounting structures
- Definition of protocols for operations to be carried out
- Individuals involved and their competences and decision-making powers.

Further investigation into the correlation of possession/access and printed/electronic of collections would be required. Policy choice between dynamism, to follow research, and inertia, to maintain the physiognomy of collections should be considered and analysed. The function of approval plans: when and where to use them. Integration of physical collections through DD and ILL services.

Integration processes are being started up, some are been implemented while some other are under experimentation between Library Management Systems and Vendor Systems for on-line selection and acquisition.

The necessity, expressed by librarians and suppliers, to find assessment criteria for vendors and common work protocols: identification of service requirements and therefore stipulation of these requirements in contracts and tenders for contract.

The development of collaboration between libraries and vendors for the supply of services at reasonable costs and with added value services in order to: create, manage and make electronic products available for usage as open access archives, provide search tools, engines and facilities.

Develop the contractual capacity with publishers, develop technological, legal and administrative competences in order to face increasingly tough competition from bookstores, booksellers and publishers in the Internet.

The *strong points of libraries* are:

- availability and use of bibliographic sources for selection
- diversity of procedures and systems
- decentralized decision-making
- dynamism and experimentation of new systems, programmes and services
- collaboration with other libraries, software suppliers and vendors
- open-mindedness towards the international scene, participation in conferences, courses, training
- interest in new approaches to collection development
- open archives
- electronic publishing.

Many of the above points were not even mentioned in the study, such as the setting up of digital archives free of charge, since they were not pertinent to the subject of research. Nevertheless, the production, conservation and accessibility of open-access publishing is a factor that will increasingly be the object of interest of libraries and of research.

One of the strong points of the relationship between vendors and librarians is the consideration some have shown towards **training and keeping librarians up to date**. For example, *ESB news* and *ESB Forum* (Burioni) independently managed by Riccardo Ridi and other periodical training initiatives, such as the DEA Workshops, etc.

It seems that a “strong” professional relation between vendors and library staff is now an unavoidable necessity if vendors want to promote more advanced services for libraries. In fact, on the one hand, librarians find it an effort to keep up-to-date on the publishing world, on the “transformations and developments of the international publishing market, mergers, commercial agreements ..., main events” (Burioni) on new products and standards, languages, etc.. The role of vendors is certainly irreplaceable, as regards the assistance and consultancy they could provide in these sectors and this is the added value which the librarians are asking for, other than the quality of the services supplied.

The *weak points of libraries* are:

- lack of coordination between selection and acquisition services
- inconsistency in work organisation; having diverse individuals involved, resulting in the confusion of roles
- difficulties in planning acquisitions when Approval Plans are adopted in libraries that aim to cover an area of interest
- different library management systems
- different levels of informatization and information literacy
- administrative bureaucracy
- delays in payment
- cuts in acquisitions.

In conclusion, one can observe that the diversity of products and services, as well as the decentralization of the structures with regard to acquisitions do not constitute, per se, a problem. What is needed is coordination, information and cooperation between structures. In addition, a market that offers a diversity of products and services is a guarantee not only for prices but also for their quality. Moreover, the presence of very different vendors is also a guarantee, in that they are able to reach any type of customer operating in the country in the most diverse situations.

One evident change in the Internet era is the huge impact that this powerful means has on selection and acquisition enabling the librarian, like everybody else, to search, find and buy everything. If some transactions are facilitated by the Internet, the imbalance between the large amount of uncontrolled information on the net and the modest proposal of a single library collection, not yet visible, because not yet digitalized, seems like the fight between David and Goliath. However, electronic environment also puts into question the nature of documents and books. There is no escaping this supposed threat which should in fact be seen as a challenge.

Libraries have to develop strategies to implement services and improve their quality not just to survive but to continue their traditional function that is becoming more and more important: firstly, to provide correct and reliable information, then contents that have value in terms of knowledge and long-term fruition. Moreover, they must guarantee the respect of cultural, ideological approaches and the defence of such free spaces from the incursion of the market.

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7 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

All the subjects of the research need to be analysed. The recent survey of the universities(1) provides interesting data and the opportunity to develop the subjects to be investigated in the future. A more in-depth study would require the use of a library management system, and deal with the sources consulted on line for selection and acquisition procedures, as well as the use of printed and electronic collections: e-books and e-publishing production and open archives.

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8 LIMITATIONS

Survey limitations

The main limitation is the scant effectiveness of the survey on librarians due to poor resources in terms of funding and time. The researcher required greater knowledge of University structures and administration and management that results very complicate also from the report on the mentioned survey of the university libraries in 2003. (1)

Due to the low number of respondents, not all the data could be processed using comparative analysis.

Content limitations

Many important issues related to book acquisition have just been mentioned in the investigation but they would require a further project with a large ad hoc survey, contractual documentation, vendor-library transaction logs, administrative and accounting data, etc.

In fact, the project does not take into account:

- gifts and exchanges
- cooperative work in book selection and acquisition and consortia between libraries (cooperation in acquisition is only considered as general data and is not analysed in detail)
- e-books (the results will be limited to the percentage of e-book acquired/licensed)
- book selection sources (sources will be treated in relation to their use)
- vendor services (will not be evaluated and benchmarked)
- collection development is considered strictly with regard to selection and acquisition.
- administrative procedures of acquisitions have been avoided due to differences between structures inside Universities and the differences between public research Institutes.
- financial matters concerning book acquisitions: such as fund allocations, costs, discounts, contracts, tenders

Questions regarding Collection Development policies were omitted in the questionnaire, because they could have generated confusion and misleading answers. Therefore, the questionnaire was focused only on selection and acquisition practices. However, all the issues that emerged from the interviews have been taken into consideration and discussed with the KI.

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9 REFLECTIVE REVIEW

This section regards reflections made while the research was in progress.

Dissertation proposal

The dissertation proposal submitted in December 2003 presented the research as it had actually been carried out. The more predominant differences with the initial proposal are:

The initial idea of comparing libraries in humanities and in the STM areas was abandoned. In fact, this could not be achieved because of the lack of respondents. Another change regarded the issue of vendors that while the proposal's aim was more focused on the evaluation of their services, the aim of the research was to describe and explore the beliefs, perceptions and expectations of vendors. Because the purpose of the survey was to achieve in-depth knowledge and understanding of their activity and their attitudes toward libraries.

Many new ideas and suggestions emerged from the interviews for elaboration and discussion with the KI and further researches.

Literature review

The analysis of the literature review is not that complete due to the range of subjects that deal with collection development, selection, sources of selection, acquisition methods and procedures, library management system, vendor services, e-book and e-publishing. Although the aim of the research was limited, the subjects were found to be interconnected with so many others that it was not easy to

define the field. Many articles have been published in recent years on the integration and interoperability of library systems with vendor systems, but there is ample literature concerning collection development, selection and acquisition that could have been consulted.

Interviews

The vendor interviews were very difficult to manage although everyone seemed very cooperative and interested in talking on subjects that interested them a great deal. In the first place, the intention was to gain knowledge and information in an unfamiliar sector, on the other hand, the researcher did not want to give the impression of carrying out market research, therefore there was the overriding concern of making the conversation as free as possible.

Cues were provided and then the discussion flowed naturally, covering almost all the subjects. The questions were not given in an ordered fashion which therefore meant that not all the subjects were discussed by all the interviewees and, in any case, the researcher decided not to insist on subjects they did not want to discuss.

Questionnaire

A pilot questionnaire was tested by a librarian of a public research institute and by a vendor that suggested modifications and adjustments. The sample for the test was too small and did not include a librarian from a university. After data analysis and discussion with the KI, some bias emerged from the questionnaire that could have been avoided if the pilot questionnaire had been tested by more subjects.

The topics of research were found to be too wide-ranging, with the risk of it being superficially dealt with and some librarians commented that the questionnaire was too long.

Selection of the sample

The sample was created by random extraction, without repetition, from a list of institutes on the Internet divided into regions. The sample was not always consistent, because most of the sample regarded people working in libraries but not specifically in charge of selection and acquisition. The sample should have been selected in advance, contacting university libraries by phone and providing also an explanation of the project. Moreover, the following were ascertained:

- difficulty in finding the right persons to speak to in libraries, not all the libraries indicate in their web site those in charge of the acquisitions service and even less their e-mail;
- difficulty in identifying the level of coordination between libraries in acquisition procedures: coordination at the level of University library system, interfaculty, faculty, interdepartmental, department.

Method of data collection

The questionnaire was sent to the libraries of the main Italian universities and to some public research institutes via e-mail. The e-mail presented and described the project, providing all essential information. The questionnaire was sent to around 200 librarians of universities and the main public research institutes and received a very low response rate. Unfortunately, for a single person, it was difficult to dedicate all the time and effort that such a wide-ranging research would require. To obviate this problem, the same e-mail was sent to the mailing list of the Italian Library Association (AIB-CUR) specifically requesting to be put into contact with people working in acquisitions service of their library. Moreover, the Survey was presented in an informal conversation on the occasion of a professional meeting.

Response rate

The low response rate to the questionnaire from libraries (35 out of 200) did, in fact, prevent significant data for research objectives to be extracted from all the answers.

Analysis

After questionnaire data collecting, the results were processed on a PC. A data matrix was elaborated using the Windows version of the statistical analysis software SPSS.

The small amount of data available did not enable a multivariate analysis to be made that could have added more information, acceptable in terms of validity. The premise of the *proposal* was to find information from the data collected concerning :

- Direct acquisitions and acquisitions via suppliers
- Use of electronic tools and processing
- Data regarding selection and acquisition criteria
- Comparisons between the aptitudes of librarians in using electronic services and tools
- Comparisons between the different ways of searching and buying via Internet: bookshops and publishers
- Comparison of some services provided by book vendors in Italy
- Vendor and librarian evaluations of service performances.

These are the variables that would have been analysed and processed if there had been sufficient data collected

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APPENDIX 1

Dear Colleague,

I am a librarian at a public research institute and am currently completing a Masters in Information Studies (University of Northumbria, Newcastle, UK, and the University of Parma). For my thesis, I am carrying out a research on book acquisitions in libraries at universities and public research institutes in Italy. The questionnaire attached has been drawn up for this purpose.

The objective of the research is to identify acquisition models and procedures, as well as to identify the individuals involved, their attitudes and expectations. A similar research was made on vendors in order to compare the attitudes of both players. The research is made more as a survey than for assessment purposes and the results will be forwarded to you once the data is processed.

You may select either the PDF or the EXCEL version to enter your answers and please check that:

If you select the PDF version, you have the Standard or Professional version of Adobe Acrobat in order to save changes (answers) in PDF format;

If you select the EXCEL version, you just have to substitute the answer box with an “X” or a number, when requested, and save the changes.

I would appreciate if you could return the questionnaire as soon as possible and thank you in advance for your cooperation.

In the event that you are not the direct recipient of this message, I would be most grateful if you could forward it to the person concerned. Please accept my apologies for any inconvenience caused.

Yours faithfully,

Maria Agnese Giraudo

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APPENDIX 2

VENDORS INTERVIEWS OUTLINE

Question: Could you please describe your firm and your activity?

Answer:

Question: Who are your clients? (Which type of libraries do you work with? Publish, Local, University, Public Institutes?)

Answer:

Question: What types of documents do you supply? Monographs, textbooks, reference books, serials? Which publishers, coverage (linguistic, geographic), small publishers?

Answer:

Question: Which services do you provide for your clients?

Answer:

Question: Which *additional services* do you provide for your clients?

Answer:

Question: Can your clients access to bibliographic database on-line for selection?

Answer:

Question: In which way book is ordered? Automated, semi-automated, not-automated?

Answer:

Question: Can clients check order status and get transaction reports?

Answer:

Question: Do you enable clients to obtain references and bibliographic searches, New titles lists and Alerting services?

Answer:

Question: How these services are considered by your clients?

Answer

Question: Do you enable clients to use facilities for selection? Web site, search engine, browsing indexes?

Answer

Question: Which methods are used for acquisitions: Firm order, standing order, approval plans? What of them is more used?

Answer

Question: Is there a different discount policy regarding them?

Answer

Question: How about publisher discounts?

Answer

Question: If you use approval plans, did your client define a profile? In which way?

Answer

Question: What are advantages and disadvantages of approval plans?

Answer

Question: What is your opinion of e-books? Do you sell e-books? Are clients interested in e-published products?

Answer:

Question: Do you organize training courses for clients? Courses regarding sources selection? Other courses?

Answer:

Question: What is your policy of communication with clients? How is technical assistance managed? Are contacts with clients very formal and standardized or more informal and personal?

Answer

Question: What is your opinion regarding librarians dealing with acquisition services? What is their attitude toward work, what are their skills?

Answer:

Question: What is libraries attitude toward vendors?

Answer:

Question: What are your expectations regarding libraries and their services?

Answer:

Question: What are your objectives and plans for the future? Do you intend to work in more integrated way with the LS, developing services and integrating your system with that of the library?

Answer:

:
:

APPENDIX 3

INVESTIGATION ON BOOK SELECTION AND ACQUISITION IN LIBRARIES OF UNIVERSITIES AND PUBLIC RESEARCH INSTITUTES

1. Gender

[M] [F]

2. Year of birth

3. What is your role in the Faculty?

- | | | |
|-----|-----------------------------|--------------------------|
| 3.1 | Teacher | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 3.2 | Graduate student | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 3.3 | Researcher | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 3.4 | Librarian | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 3.5 | Scholarship holder | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 3.6 | Administrative | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 3.7 | Other (please specify.....) | <input type="checkbox"/> |

THE LIBRARY

4. Type of library

- | | | |
|-----|----------------------------|--------------------------|
| 4.1 | University | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 4.2 | Public research institutes | <input type="checkbox"/> |

5. Which faculty does the library belong to?

- | | | |
|------|---------------------------------------|--------------------------|
| 5.1 | Economics | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 5.2 | Foreign languages and literature | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 5.3 | Law | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 5.4 | Literature and Philosophy | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 5.5 | Political Sciences | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 5.6 | Communications science | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 5.7 | Sociology | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 5.8 | Oriental studies | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 5.9 | Psychology | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 5.10 | Statistics | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 5.11 | Architecture | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 5.12 | Pharmacy | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 5.13 | Chemistry | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 5.14 | Medicine | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 5.15 | Mathematics, physics, natural science | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 5.16 | Other (please specify.....) | <input type="checkbox"/> |

6. How many books does the library purchase annually?

- | | | |
|-----|-----------------------|--------------------------|
| 6.1 | Less than 400 | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 6.2 | Between 400 and 800 | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 6.3 | Between 800 and 1,200 | <input type="checkbox"/> |

6.4 More than 1,200

7. How many periodicals in paper and/or electronic format does the library subscribe to?

7.1 Less than 400

7.2 Between 400 and 800

7.3 Between 800 and 1,200

7.4 More than 1,200

7.5 Between 1,200 and 2,200

7.6 Between 2,200 and 2,600

7.7 Between 2,600 and 3,000

7.8 More than 3,000

8. Which library acquisitions are made in consortium?

8.1 Books

8.2 Series

8.3 Journals

9. Which management system is used in the library?

9.1 Please specify.....

10. What has been integrated in the management system?

10.1 OPAC

10.2 Acquisition module

10.3 Payment module

10.4 Other (please specify.....)

11. If not integrated in the system, could you specify which OPAC?

.....

BOOK SELECTION/ACQUISITION

12. How long have you been involved in book selection/acquisition for the library?

19....

13. Have you ever been on a professional course on acquisitions?

13.1 Training in the use of the selling agent's services and databases

13.2 Selection of sources on the Internet

13.3 Administrative management

13.4 Other (please specify.....)

14. How would you define your knowledge of computers?

14.1 Basic

14.2 User

14.3 Advanced

14.4 Expert

15. Which, in your opinion, is the main requisite for the selection/acquisition work you do?

- 15.1 In-depth knowledge of a given subject
- 15.2 Wide knowledge in various sectors
- 15.3 Knowledge of foreign languages
- 15.4 Experience in searching the Internet
- 15.5 Knowledge of bibliographies and of the publishing world
- 15.6 Other (please specify.....)

16. Which types of bibliographic source do you most often use (please place in order of importance: 1 being the most used)

- 16.1 Printed catalogues and depliants of publishers
- 16.2 Web sites, databases of publishers
- 16.3 OPAC
- 16.4 Web sites, databases of selling agents
- 16.5 Web sites, databases of booksellers on the Internet
- 16.6 Reference/SDI/Alerting services of publishers/booksellers/selling agents and aggregators
- 16.7 Specialized and selective research engines
- 16.8 Reviews in specialised journals
- 16.9 Other (please specify.....)

17. Which document typology is most often purchased? (Please place in the order of purchase: 1 being the type most purchased)

- 17.1 Monographs
- 17.2 Reference: dictionaries, encyclopaedias, etc.
- 17.3 Text books
- 17.4 Series
- 17.5 Proceedings
- 17.6 Handbooks
- 17.7 Other (please specify.....)

18. Does the library also acquire books in electronic format?

Yes No

If Yes:

19. Compared to the printed format, what is the percentage of books acquired in electronic format?

- 19.1 CD-Rom
- 19.2 DVD
- 19.3 E-books downloaded from the Internet
- 19.4 Other (please specify.....)

20. Does the library have the equipment necessary for consulting books in electronic format?

Yes No

If Yes:

21. Which and how many are there?

..... []
 []

22. Who decides what to acquire?

- 22.1 Librarian
- 22.2 A special commission
- 22.3 Teacher
- 22.4 Purchasing office
- 22.5 Other (please specify.....)

23. Who are they acquired for? (please place in order of frequency of acquisition)

- 23.1 University teachers
- 23.2 Graduate students
- 23.3 Researchers
- 23.4 Post-graduate students
- 23.5 Assistants
- 23.6 Students
- 23.7 Other (please specify.....)

24. For which objectives are new books acquired? (please place in order)

- 24.1 Teaching
- 24.2 Research
- 24.3 Public usage
- 24.4 Personal interests
- 24.5 Other (please specify.....)

Which are the most important issues, regarding supplies, when deciding to acquire a book for the library (please place in order of importance)?

- 25.1 Price
- 25.2 Delivery time
- 25.3 Mailing expenses
- 25.4 Other (please specify.....)

26. Is promptness in delivery important?

[1] [2] [3] [4] [5]
 Not at all Slightly Quite Very Extremely

27. Does the library carry out accounting/payments?

Yes No

28. Which funds are used to acquire books (please indicate the percentage of the total fund allocated)?

- 28.1 The library's budget ... %
- 28.2 Funds assigned to teachers for research ... %
- 28.3 Funds for specific teaching programmes ... %
- 28.4 Other (please specify.....) ... %

29. Which acquisition method is most frequently used in the library? (Please place in the order of usage: 1 being the most used)

- | | | | |
|------|-----------------------------|--------------------------|----------|
| 29.1 | Approval Plan | <input type="checkbox"/> | Modifica |
| 29.2 | Firm order | <input type="checkbox"/> | |
| 29.3 | Standing order | <input type="checkbox"/> | |
| 29.4 | Other (please specify.....) | <input type="checkbox"/> | |

If the Approval Plan is used:

30. Has a profile been made with the supplier?

Yes No

31. Which figure has contributed to making up the profile?

- | | | |
|------|-----------------------------|--------------------------|
| 31.1 | Librarian | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 31.2 | Teacher | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 31.3 | Administrative | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 31.4 | Vendor | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 31.5 | Other (please specify.....) | <input type="checkbox"/> |

32. What are the advantages, with regard to other methods of acquisition?

- | | | |
|------|-----------------------------|--------------------------|
| 32.1 | Coverage of subjects | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 32.2 | Work organization | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 32.3 | Control of copies | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 32.4 | Discounts | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 32.5 | Updates | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 32.6 | Bibliographic records | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 32.7 | Labelling | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 32.8 | Other (please specify.....) | <input type="checkbox"/> |

33. Which parameters, not relative to content, do you consider priorities? (Please place in order of importance:1 being the most important)

- | | | |
|------|-----------------------------|--------------------------|
| 33.1 | Type of publication | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 33.2 | Type of support | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 33.3 | Geographic | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 33.4 | Linguistic | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 33.5 | Type of end user | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 33.6 | Publisher | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 33.7 | Other (please specify.....) | <input type="checkbox"/> |

34. How much time elapses between publication and acquisition?

- | | | |
|------|---------------------|--------------------------|
| 34.1 | Less than one year | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 34.2 | One year | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 34.3 | Two years | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 34.4 | More than two years | <input type="checkbox"/> |

35. Does the library have contracts with one or more vendors?

Yes No

36. With which vendors?

- 36.1 Blackwell
- 36.2 Burioni
- 36.3 Casalini
- 36.4 Celdes
- 36.5 Cenfor
- 36.6 D.E.A.
- 36.7 Esia
- 36.8 Licosa
- 36.9 Other (please specify.....)
37. How important is interpersonal communications, in your opinion, in your relations with suppliers?
- [1] [2] [3] [4] [5]
 Not at all Slightly Quite Very Extremely
38. Which of the below do you most frequently use for the management of orders, complaints and reports?
- 38.1 Vendor's electronic system
- 38.2 Customer assistance service
- 38.3 Other (please specify.....)
39. How are acquisition orders made? (please place in order of frequency of use)
- 39.1 E-mail
- 39.2 Vendor's Web Site
- 39.3 Fax
- 39.4 Other (please specify.....)
40. When do you receive the invoices?
- 40.1 When the order is made
- 40.2 On delivery
- 40.3 After delivery
- 40.4 Other (please specify.....)
41. In which format do you receive the invoices?
- 41.1 Paper
- 41.2 EDI
- 41.3 Other (please specify.....)
42. Which on-line services and resources of the vendor do you use?
- 42.1 Bibliographic database
- 42.2 Access to electronic resources
- 42.3 Web site's research engines
- 42.4 Notification of new publications-previews: newsletters; alerting; SDI; e-mail notifications
- 42.5 Calendar of events
- 42.6 Other (please specify.....)
43. Which services and resources of a vendor would you use if it were implemented?
- 43.1 Bibliographic database
- 43.2 Access to electronic resources

- 43.3 Web site's research engines []
- Notification of new publications-previews via newsletters, alerting, SDI, e-mail []
- 43.4 []
- 43.5 Calendar of events []
- 43.6 Other (please specify.....) []

44. Are acquisition orders made to other suppliers?

- 44.1 On-line book shops []
- 44.2 Book shops (via fax, telephone, etc.) []
- 44.3 On-line publishers []
- 44.4 Publishers (via fax, telephone, etc.) []
- 44.5 Other (please specify.....) []

45. Does the librarian have the library's credit card to use?

- Yes No

Expectations regarding the vendor

46. With regard to the following statements, to what extent would you want them to be developed by a vendor?

	Not at all					Fully				
	1	2	3	4	5					
46.1 Greater integration and interoperability between the vendor and the library	[]	[]	[]	[]	[]					
46.2 Electronic updating services for specific profiles with e-mails or alerting	[]	[]	[]	[]	[]					
46.3 Continuous updating services: newsletters	[]	[]	[]	[]	[]					
46.4 Supply of bibliographic records	[]	[]	[]	[]	[]					
46.5 Labelling of books	[]	[]	[]	[]	[]					
46.6 Professional refresher courses	[]	[]	[]	[]	[]					
46.7 Professional customer assistance	[]	[]	[]	[]	[]					

47. Which attitude of the vendor most meets your needs?

- 47.1 Proactive and propositive: alerting, SDI, etc. []
- Active support of the user's research: indexes, catalogues, research engines, []
- 47.2 thesauri, classifications, etc.

48. Do you consider the information you can find in on-line catalogues, such as Deastore/Amazon, satisfactory?

- [1] Not at all [2] Slightly [3] Quite [4] Very [5] Extremely

49. Do you believe that these catalogues will replace the direct consultation of books?

- [1] Not at all [2] Slightly [3] Quite [4] A lot [5] Completely

APPENDIX 4

KEY INFORMANT Mrs. Serena Sangiorgi

Head of the technical service at Library of the Engineering and Architecture Faculty of the University of Parma

Sebina has an acquisition management module whose use however is not mandatory. We use it to inform teachers that the acquisition is being made and they see that their request is being processed on the OPAC which displays the wording “in acquisition”. From a strictly administrative point of view, it is absolutely of no use because Sabina is separate from the rest of the administrative management (inventory and accounting) of the University, for which other programmes are used. We are more interested in the bibliographic and catalographic datum of the acquisition in progress rather than in executing the procedure, which can be done manually, as many have answered. The management of acquisitions is done, in part, by the library: the order forms, commitments and shipment orders, but it is the accounting office that deals with the bank. The orders for payment on the University’s accounts are done by the central accounting office, not us.

Selection

It is the library that decides on the acquisition. We have our budget and the way it is spent depends exclusively on us, that is, the librarians and above all the teachers, as has already been pointed out. We have a library commission with a teacher who represents the various research areas: they suggest and approve courses of action which the librarians propose. There have never been any particular problems, nor disputes, neither of competence nor regarding the acquisition of databases or other things, so it is a form of management that at present seems to work rather well. As regards books, we have even more freedom, whereas databanks are very expensive, because of the price of volumes, acquisitions can be made without objections being raised.

Management system and what is incorporated

With regard to **Sebina** there is not a link with the accounting procedures of the University. The acquisition module of Sebina can be useful for giving bibliographic information and the procedure in progress, but it cannot be used to define payments. Not only can it not be done using Sebina, with regard to our structure, but none of the programmes, neither Aleph nor any of the other National Library Systems can deal with payments, above all because the banks do not have their procedures. The ideal solution (but we are very far from such a solution) would be electronic invoicing . This, however, involves a whole series of significant problems, including the security of transactions, that has not been solved neither by libraries nor at a more wide-ranging level. Attempts have been made since the end of the 1980’s beginning of the 1990’s, for example, by Casalini, that participated in a European experimentation on **electronic invoicing**, resulting in European standards being drawn up but, in general, from a costs-benefits point of view, this type of research and applications were too expensive and burdensome to gain widespread use. With regard to **credit card** payments, we do not have one in our structure and we will not have one in the near future, because there are implications of responsibility which the library manager cannot take on

Integration of the accounting system with library management. Since within the library there are many different balance sheet items (not only books, periodicals and databases, but also stationery, telephony, staff missions, computers, maintenance contracts), many different categories of assets are entailed: everything that has to do with the budget of the library and the university, but has nothing to do with the OPAC and library management. Therefore, it is more useful to have a

separate programme for managing accounts, such as the CIA, used by all the University, than to try and integrate it with the OPAC or, viceversa, to try and adapt Sebina so that it manages operations which it was not devised for.

[Statement of the administrative officer of the library, Mrs. Patrizia Fornari]

[In the case of structures] that are independent, such as the departments where all types of invoices are entered in the CIA, not only for journal and book acquisitions, and a total balance sheet is obtained, but we are decentralised structures and dependent on the University's central accounting office, that makes out payments.

[the interview with the KI continues]

Besides this (whether or not we depend on the main office for accounts), to know what you have spent on books and journals can be done easily with Sebina, by adding the cost to the printed copy. This gives "indications on expenses" but it is not accounting. For example, our volumes are divided into a number of sections (corresponding to shelf arrangement), if, at the end of the year, the cost was added to the printed copy, the cost can be extracted from Sebina, "for mechanical engineering we spent so much..." but this is not a balance sheet. It is interesting with regard to internal statistics, such as: "we have spent more for mechanical engineering this year, next year, we will see about balancing things out a little and to spend more for civil engineering." It is useful, but balance sheets are different. I do not think it is important to make efforts to be able to have Sebina fully integrated with the CIA, however I think it is important that Sebina is used to its best within the University. For example, not all of us add this minor thing of the "price" on our acquisitions and therefore this type of evaluation cannot be made. They probably do it in another way, with an Access database or Excel where they register the acquisitions made so that, at the end of the year, they can draw their conclusions. I would not spend that much for this type of integration because many items of current expenses for running the structure would be left out".

Consortia acquisitions

There are consortia for the acquisition of foreign journals and databases but there are none for books, primarily because books are acquired as single items and not by editor: whereas for periodicals, package contracts for the entire catalogue are made. It seems difficult to contemplate using the same procedure for books, also because many libraries have, over time, found far more convenient discounts and conditions than for journals.

E-books are still not attractive because the structure of the book as such, in my opinion, does not work with the "full-text availability" system. An article, no matter how long, would never be comparable to a volume, especially a text book that can amount to 250-300 pages. In my opinion, it is a structure that does not work in this way. In fact, e-books are having great difficulty in taking off. The producers have been trying, in vain, for 15 years to establish them on the market, since the beginning of the 90's.

In this library, we have subscribed to CRC manuals accessed in full-text, which as mentioned, are not often consulted, but fall within a more general strategy of our library that "supply generates demand". It is certainly much easier to update electronic than printed versions: the classic manual on metal properties that comes in several volumes, would need years to reprint, whereas the electronic version is virtually updated in real time. It is true that they are not consulted that much, but that is typical of our users who, at times, are difficult to point in the right direction."

The relationship engineers have with books is very variable. There are still those of the old school who do not want to hear about electronic formats, others, on the other hand, only use full-text and web sources and, in fact, we never see them in the library, there are those that are intermediate...it is a relationship that is very variable

Retrospective Interests

There are some branches in Engineering that have retrospective interests and others less, clear-cut answers cannot be given, such as, electronic engineers never consult anything published over 5 years ago. That would be wrong. I have had to find information on television transmission standards of the 70's and 80's, just as I have had to ask other libraries (much older than ours) for articles on thermo-mechanical problems and applications for combustion engines of the 40's. Retrospective research concerns all areas to a certain extent.

However, it is true that if a teacher, researcher or a student doing a thesis, starts a line of research, you do not know where it will lead and therefore you need to have the instruments ready to be able to arrive at where the user is going. It is the requests from the researcher, the person doing the research, that leads you to activating Document Deliveries, interlibrary loans, web searches, setting aside the material in the library.

Engineering is also interested in retrospective digitalization, some of the major publishers are going ahead with retrospective digitalization, especially of journals. With regard to books for example, the former UMI, which recently changed its company name, is a company that has always been involved with archiving various material (including theses) and that are, in any case, not listed in catalogues... they have archives that could be used to the full because they are cross-sectional, they do not refer to just one publisher.

Selection sources

The use of printed catalogues and brochures should not surprise people because it is material that is forwarded and therefore turns up without you having to look for it, as in a publisher's web site. It is a bit like an approval plan procedure, what you are sent you see, what is not sent you do not see. Yes, it all depends on a high dose of chance, sometimes a teacher wants to acquire a book that a colleague had, but if he had not come across it, he would never have thought of buying it...

You need to take into consideration a considerable amount of flexibility with regard to acquisitions, teachers who have not said a word for years, can turn up with enormously long lists of acquisitions they absolutely need... In my opinion, too much planning is never a good policy, because it makes the system less flexible. You need to be in a position where you can meet requests immediately.

You are bombarded by masses of possibilities, there is also a lot of other things to do, because acquisitions are only one of the activities of a library. Some flexibility in working is also necessary in this case, it is vital that there be such a level of specialisation in libraries, that there is one person exclusively in charge of acquisitions. Also in the United States some structures can have specific acquisition staff, but from what I have seen, a real librarian is one who does millions of things, which is precisely what happens here. Libraries, such as the Harvard and Stanford libraries, are considerably different from public libraries.

Development of collections – Approval plans

Here, Approval Plans do not work because we follow more the individual researcher, a precise moment in research, than building up an all inclusive collection. I do not know of any library, in any subject, that has the job of collecting everything that is published.

Question: But there is the risk of not being able to guarantee a uniform development throughout the sectors, the risk that teachers make choices that reflect only very sectorial interests.

Answer: It is a choice made earlier in the process... if it is decided that the mission is Research and Didactics, you have to follow Research and Didactics as they change over time...

Question: Supposing there is one teacher who is more energetic and proactive and one who is less, certain sectors would be penalized.

Answer: That's normal.

Question: So you are saying that it is automatically the teacher that determines the development of collections.

Answer: Yes, absolutely, ... because it is the teacher who determines the topics of research, the presence of his department within the Library, the Faculty and the University.

Question: Could a teacher also have interests that do not correspond to the real interests of the research?"

Answer: There are branches of research that fade away but that too is physiological... teachers are transferred, for example.

Question: The library is therefore bias...

Answer: The library is part of the Faculty which it follows, like in a marriage, it follows its teachers, certain didactic investigations instead of others. It would be fairer to have a wider view for collections and acquisitions, at least at regional and national level and that is what we see happening every day with Document Delivery and Interlibrary loans, if it not found here then it can be found somewhere else, as long as it is in Italy, so that it can be requested.

Question: Could this be the librarian's role?

Answer: Theoretically yes, but in practice how can you follow the acquisition policies of the Faculty of Ancona?

Question: Is that the direction being taken?

Answer: No, in my opinion no, libraries have to above all follow local needs, and if they also have the human and economic resources and the space they can decide to aim to have a universal collection of everything that is printed on ... but we, at the Engineering Faculty, we have Building, Hydraulic, Civil, Mechanical and Electronic Engineering, Telecommunications, Solid-state Physics, ... it is simply not possible. However, one can focus on an objective that seems, but is not, minimal: to follow the requests of our teaching body. For that matter, many things have changed in the last sixteen years (the faculty was founded in 1988/1989), the general aspect of the faculty has changed. Most of the teachers that were here at the start have retired, new ones have come, new branches of research have been established. Management Engineering has been set up, which was not originally envisaged in the field of engineering when the faculty was founded. It is a situation in continuous transformation and that is what the library has to force itself to follow.

The acquisition policy is derived from this which has to keep pace with current research and didactics.

With regard to **accounting** and therefore **making payments**, there are two different structures in universities: the Department and the Department's library or, as in our case, a Faculty with a Faculty Library which has its own funds (in the sense that it has its own balance-sheet item) and a Manager who is in charge.

The Department is a complex structure that regards the Teachers and the non-teaching staff and a certain number of funds, also including the library funds. The Department's budget is a single item under which comes library expenses. The Department has its own administrative-accounting officer, the Department's Secretary, who materially does the accounting, payments, balance sheets and so on. In this sense, the Department's library does not carry out any form of accounting, because the invoices are processed by the Department's Secretary. However, as the Faculty library and cost centre, we have to carry out many operations, for example, passing on invoices in triple copy to the central Accounting Office which then materially carries out the payments to current accounts through the bank.

D: So a Department library is not an expense centre, it is not autonomous ...

R: Generally, no, but it could also be.

D: Often, I have not been able to work out who looks after acquisitions and to identify the expenses centres...

R: Because the situation varies a great deal from structure to structure. If, however, it is a Department, it is the Secretary of the Department who has the “power of signature” for accounting matters, even though it is Director of the Department who has the final responsibility: if any claims are made, it is the Department’s Director that is held responsible and secondly the Secretary.

D. What is the relation between Faculty and Department? Do you have nothing to do with the Department?

R: No, we have nothing to do with the Department. The Faculty is hierarchically above the department, theoretically, but the Department has its own autonomy and can also be larger than a Faculty....it depends.

D: So a Department could be an expenses centre in the case of a Department library, whereas a Faculty library could directly be one?

R: It could be...but not necessarily...we are an inter-faculty library, we do not have inter-departmental libraries. In short, the main difference in this University, lies in the fact that we depend on the central accounting office for payments and accounting, whereas the Departments do not.

Acquisition methods

The one we most use is the **firm order** (acquisitions made on specific request), we do not use standing orders and Approval plans (previewing books) even less, because there are costs attached that the vendors themselves have difficulty bearing. Deliveries via courier, sending and returning packages, it takes rather a long time to have the material examined and evaluated, all this translates into heavy costs for the Vendor. They therefore tend to eliminate it as a service: we ourselves are not interested because our Teachers always have a lot to do and therefore to “oblige” them to check the material would be difficult and arduous.

Courses

In some cases the courses are good, but since being sent on mission depends on the funds available, it is understandable that librarians do not insist that much since they are aware of the limits of their budgets. It is nevertheless good to see that the vendors themselves are active in this. It is also certainly an opportunity for commercial promotion, but that does not bother me because it is obvious.

A difference needs to be made between “local”, “national” , “**national and projected towards the .international market**” and “international” suppliers.

Among the Italian suppliers, Burioni seems to be the most eclectic because they manage to work at different levels simultaneously: acting as consultants for consortia contracts concerning periodicals, but having a well-established base of national customers.

“Local” suppliers can offer highly customized services: they know their customers well and have followed them closely for a long time.

The markets of “national” suppliers and those that are “national and projected towards the international market” (there are less of the latter) differ from those of “local” suppliers. In general, they are more wide-ranging geographically. But, in Italy, there are established traditions and legislation is very different from, for example, France, where the market situation is completely different. I wonder how an Italian Vendor can compete with English and French companies on their territory. A particular case in point is Casalini that supplies Italian niche publications, above all to the United States. DEA, with Deastore, has opened itself to the international market and now also offers books in Italian.

In order to assess the services of Vendors, an analysis of the platforms offered is essential: the platform is the choice of the entrepreneur, both at image level and the service offered. Visual impact, choice of colours, number of functions and usability, are factors that should not be

underestimated when establishing and maintaining relations between Vendors and Libraries. The principle examples currently available in Italy are “I Libri” (Casalini), Collection Manager and Deastore.