

# **Economics of Approval Plans**

# Economics of Approval Plans

*Proceedings of the Third International Seminar on  
Approval and Gathering Plans in Large and  
Medium Size Academic Libraries, Held in the Ramada Inn,  
West Palm Beach, Florida,  
February 17-19, 1971*

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*Editors*



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# Preface

Current budget strains on college and university libraries require a stepped-up search for operating economies. The timely topic of economics of approval plans of the Third International Conference on Approval and Gathering Plans for Large and Medium Size Academic Libraries, held at the Ramada Inn, West Palm Beach, Florida, February 17-19, 1971, has thus generated considerable interest.

The papers published here constitute, by and large, original research in this area. The importance of these contributions can hardly be overestimated, since they will no doubt mold and influence collection development practices in the current imprint area.

David O. Lane searches in his paper for an answer to the question of the effects approval plans have on the nation's academic libraries. While he concludes that approval plans will continue to be somewhat controversial as a collection development tool, the practice is here to stay and is gaining momentum.

Mark Gormley's paper suggests that approval plans can fail

in libraries if the conditions of the plan are not carefully administered and monitored. He places particular emphasis on the need for a good collection development profile and effective, open communications between the jobber and the library.

Bill Axford meticulously depicts actual savings in a state university system using approval plans rather than the traditional item-by-item method of purchasing current imprints.

As the audience expected, Daniel Gore delivered a unique paper full of practical suggestions. His paper contradicts the popular conception that approval plans are only for the wealthier institutions. As the Macalester College experience illustrates, approval plans can be adapted to the modest book budgets of liberal arts colleges.

LeMoyne Anderson and Harriet Rebuldela do an excellent job reviewing efficient systems that libraries could employ to increase the economies that approval plans offer. The summary statement by Richard Chapin is sharp, witty, and analytical. We are most grateful for Dick's performance, crediting him with one of the most difficult tasks of "bringing it all together" at the close of the conference.

The proceedings of the First and Second International Conferences on Approval Plans carry detailed descriptions of the variety of approval plans offered by jobbers here and abroad. Rather than repeat this information, we refer the reader to the appropriate volumes.<sup>1</sup>

The dealers' panel discussion, chaired by Hugh Atkinson, brings out some fine details of improvements, as well as the

1. Peter Spyers-Duran, ed., *Approval and Gathering Plans in Academic Libraries* (Littleton, Col.: Libraries Unlimited, Inc., 1969); Peter Spyers-Duran and Daniel Gore, eds., *Advances in Understanding Approval and Gathering Plans in Academic Libraries* (Kalamazoo: Western Michigan University, 1970).

future plans and hopes of leading book experts. This portion of the text will help the reader keep abreast of current developments.

In attendance at the seminar were 103 persons, representing universities and colleges in 31 states, Canada, Germany, France, and England. It was rewarding to note that there were several participants who also attended the first and second conferences in 1968 and 1969, held at Western Michigan University. Seventeen jobbers were represented at this meeting, while just two years ago, only five dealers had enough interest in approval plans to attend the first conference.

We are indebted to the speakers for the preparation and delivery of their papers. These people were chosen because of their knowledge and skill in collection development and, particularly, in approval plans. We are also indebted to the members of the panel and its moderator, Hugh Atkinson, for their willingness to share their experiences and knowledge with us.

I am personally grateful to the Florida Atlantic University Library staff for their assistance in every detail of the conference. The conference ran smoothly throughout because of their dedication to the success of that operation.

The conference chairman also wishes to express his appreciation to Dan Gore, co-editor of the proceedings.

Cordial thanks are extended to the Richard Abel Company, The Baker & Taylor Company, Blackwell's, Bro-Dart Industries, Alexander Broude, Inc., and Otto Harrassowitz for supporting the hospitality arrangements enjoyed by the entire group.

Special thanks are due to Mr. Robert Kizlik, representing FAU's Division of Continuing Education, for his aid in the

conference arrangements and to Mr. Eugene A. Robinson, Special Assistant to the President, FAU, for his welcoming address.

*Peter Spyers-Duran*

# **Economics of Approval Plans**

# 1

## Economics of Approval Plans

*H. William Axford*

Looking back over the past two decades, one can see that three major issues seem to have dominated discussions among academic librarians: (1) the relative merits of the Library of Congress classification system compared to Dewey decimal; (2) the role of the computer in library operations; and (3) blanket-approval plans as a means for systematic collection development. All three have generated considerable amounts of impassioned rhetoric at professional gatherings, a corpus of polemical writing, but only a relatively small amount of research aimed at evaluating how the Library of Congress classification system, the computer, or approval plans have advanced or retarded the academic library's progress toward its stated educational objectives. Nevertheless, the trend toward the Library of Congress classification system continues to accelerate, the use and abuse of the computer is increasingly evident, and the number of academic libraries utilizing approval plans grows with each passing year, as does the number of firms offering them.

This situation suggests at least two possibilities: academic

# 2

## **Adopting an Approval Plan for a College Library: The Macalester College Experience**

*Daniel Gore*

University libraries moving into approval-plan buying have often done so at a time when large amounts of new money were added to the book budget, permitting approval purchases to be added on top of the customary acquisitions program. Old habits were thus left largely undisturbed: retrospective collection development continued at the usual pace, and departmental allocation of book funds was modified only slightly, if at all. And even under such favorable conditions as these, as speakers at the first two of these seminars have testified, transition to approval buying may arouse fierce resentments among professors and librarians who cleave to the old myth that only they are truly qualified to select books for their library.

If the transition is made, as we had to make it, at a time when virtually the entire book budget must be committed to approval buying—leaving nothing for retrospective purchases or departmental allocations—one may expect to deal with passions of epic magnitude, unless one can offer some satis-

# 3

## Total Effect of Approval Plans on the Nation's Academic Libraries

*David O. Lane*

This paper is based on a questionnaire mailed last spring to the seventy-seven academic library members of the Association of Research Libraries. In some ways, this questionnaire was a repeat of one Carl White and I circulated to a similar group of libraries in 1969. That questionnaire was a preliminary to a presentation at a HEW sponsored institute at University of California at San Diego in September 1969.

The questionnaire on which this paper is based consisted of fifteen questions, many of a simple "yes/no" nature. As several respondents commented, some of the questions could not be completely answered by a yes or no; I was aware of this, but felt a rather simple questionnaire built in this way and emphasizing such qualifying words as "estimate," "approximate," "in general," etc., had a greater chance of being answered by more libraries. It is my experience that too detailed a questionnaire is likely not to be answered at all. Most libraries responded to the questions in the proper light, and I believe the resulting data, though no doubt not specific to the third decimal point, give us a good picture of the

# 4

## Why Approval Plans Fail

*Mark M. Gormley*

The approval plan has evolved as a cooperative effort between librarians and booksellers to help librarians acquire those books which are needed to support the curriculum and research programs of academic institutions. While most plans cover scholarly works primarily, plans can be developed to cover other types of literature as well. The main object is to acquire all materials in a given field as they are published, at the best possible price, and with maximum resultant savings in library staff time. Put another way, the idea is to enable the librarian to heed Dewey's admonishment to "get the right book to the right person at the right time"—the fastest possible time.

The main criticism of this automatic gathering of everything in a given area is that much "junk" is added along with the good books. I think we must accept the premise that no university library has to apologize for its collection, but it can be castigated for what it does not have. Who here today can prophesy what book is going to be good or bad ten years from now? If the book is good, the library will have it and

# 5

## Internal Systems for Handling Approval Plans: A Case Study

*LeMoyne W. Anderson*

### THE PROBLEM

A number of developments in higher education today bear directly upon a critical problem which academic librarians face. Students in the 1970s are probably more advanced academically than they were in the past; they are more physically mature; they are often married; an increasing number attend college; and a far larger percentage continue into graduate school— all of which leads to greater numbers making greater use of library resources. As the numbers increase, the demands for more materials rise correspondingly.

A collection must be assembled to meet these needs within the fiscal limitation of a particular institution's book budget. To accomplish this monumental task, furthermore, adequate numbers of staff must be on hand to select, acquire, organize, and prepare the material for the shelves. Experience has shown repeatedly, moreover, that while book funds may be readily available, the commensurate numbers of staff to handle the selection and processing may not be forthcoming.

# 6

## Review of Approval Plan Methods

*Harriet K. Rebuldela*

This paper is not concerned with the pros and cons of approval plans, but rather with the review and selection of an appropriate plan from those available. The discussion will be limited to the examination of the three major plans that offer broad coverage of domestic English-language titles of interest to academic libraries. They are Baker and Taylor's University and College New Books Service, Bro-Dart's Books Coming Into Print Program, and Richard Abel's Approval Plan. Similarities and differences will be pointed out, but qualitative evaluation will not be made. This paper will also discuss some of the factors that must be considered in the selection of a plan.

The initiation of an approval program is not to be taken lightly. It will be a new way of life which will bring forth changes in library operations, and possibly reassignments of positions, restructuring of departments and responsibilities, and restructuring of files and their maintenance. From the outset, the plan must be accepted. Any program, no matter

# 7

## European Discounts

*Knut Dorn*

The topic of discount has long been taboo in the case of every European bookdealer—and to relate it to an approval plan only makes matters worse. It is quite inconceivable when applied to books supplied on approval from European countries.

First, a word in general regarding discount practice in Germany. As everyone in the audience knows, Harrassowitz does not grant discounts and, as a matter of course, one should not expect to obtain discount from any German or European dealer, if that dealer is to maintain an established level of service in traditional book supply, let alone in serving an approval order. This is strictly in accord with the legal setup in Germany today, which stipulates that we, as bookdealers, supply to individual readers and libraries alike any book published in Germany at the publisher's catalog price. This is exactly the policy at Harrassowitz: supply at the publisher's price with no handling, no insurance, and no postage charges. When a book is ordered, the library is charged at the catalog price, which can easily be verified from

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## Dealers' Panel<sup>1</sup>

*Moderator: Hugh C. Atkinson*

ATKINSON: We have with us this morning Dean Spain, chairman of the board of Baker and Taylor; Jack Walsdorf, library services adviser to Blackwell's; Knut Dorn, head of the export division of Harrassowitz; Tom Martin, vice president of East Coast operations of Richard Abel Company; Nelson Bennion, sales manager of Books Coming into Print division of Bro-Dart. We have a substitution, Douglas McCleary, who is in charge of blanket order plans for music for Alexander Broude, and Mr. Broude is also here; and we have Ralph Lessing, vice president of Stechert-Hafner.

I have asked each of the panelists to speak for three to eight minutes, and Mr. Walsdorf will begin.

WALSDORF: Thank you very much, Mr. Atkinson. As Robert Wedgewood reported in the spring 1970 issue of *Library Resources and Technical Services*, writing about foreign-book dealers, some dealers responded to him that they thought the blanket order had but a meager advantage be-

1. The panel discussion has been edited.

# 9

## Summary Statement

*Richard E. Chapin*

I confess that I wrote the summary of this meeting last Thursday, and I haven't had to change a word! Seriously, however, I thought that this would be a simple process of gathering notes and telling you what you heard. It doesn't work out quite that simply, but let me try to review with you some impressions I have of what has been discussed.

First, we don't know what we're talking about. No one has been able to define the difference between a gathering plan, an approval plan, blanket order, or other such projects that are designed to sell us more books. Gormley took a shot at it yesterday; I hope that when he gets around to final editing of his speech, he will define some of the words that we throw around so very casually. If you ask if MSU is involved in gathering plans, my answer is no. We have no standard English-language approval plan, but we do have a plan for university presses, for selected medical publishers, and for about fifty other publishers. So, do we have an English-language gathering plan? I don't know! But I do know that we need definitions so that we all are talking about the same thing.

# Appendixes

# The Program

## WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 17, 1971

P.M.

3:00- 4:00 Registration

4:00- 4:15 Welcome - Mr. Eugene A. Robinson, Special Assistant to  
the President, Florida Atlantic University

4:15- 5:15 Mr. David O. Lane

*Research into a Total Effect of Approval Plans on the  
Nation's Academic Libraries*

5:15- 7:30 Dinner Hour

8:30- 11:00 Hospitality Hour - Reception

## THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 18, 1971

A.M.

8:30- 9:30 Mr. Mark Gormley

*Why Approval Plans Fail*

9:30- 10:30 Dr. H. William Axford

*Economics of Approval Plans*

10:30- 11:00 Coffee Break

11:00- 12:30 Dealers' Panel:

*Book Sellers Look at the Effect of Approval Plans: Their Point of View*

Moderator: Mr. Hugh C. Atkinson

PANEL MEMBERS:

Mr. B. Dean Spain  
Mr. Jack Walsdorf  
Dr. Knut Dorn  
Mr. Ralph Lessing

Mr. Tom Martin  
Mr. Nelson Bennion  
Mr. Alexander Broude

P.M.

12:30- 2:00 Luncheon

2:00- 3:00 Mr. Daniel Gore

*Adopting An Approval Plan for a College Library: The Macalester College Experience*

3:00- 3:15 Break

3:15- 4:45 Approval Plan Workshop in Sections

*Participant has opportunity of attending two sections. Content will be repeated.*

WORKSHOP IN SECTIONS a THROUGH g

- a. Mr. James L. Thompson
- b. Mr. Jack Walsdorf
- c. Dr. Knut Dorn
- d. Mr. Tom Martin
- e. Mr. Nelson Bennion
- f. Mr. Alexander Broude
- g. Mr. Ralph Lessing

*Workshop will be repeated at 4:45 P.M.*

7:30 - 9:00 Dealers by Appointment

**FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 19, 1971**

A.M.

8:30- 9:00 Coffee

9:00- 10:00 Dr. LeMoyne W. Anderson

*Review of Efficient Internal Systems for Handling Approval Plans in Technical Services*

10:00- 11:00 Miss Harriet K. Rebuldela

*Review of Approval Plan Methods*

11:15- 11:30 Dr. Richard Chapin

*Summary Statement*

11:30 Luncheon

#### **ABOUT THE SPEAKERS & PANELISTS . . .**

Dr. Lemoyne W. Anderson is Director of Libraries, Colorado State University.

Mr. Hugh C. Atkinson is Director of Libraries, Ohio State University.

Dr. H. William Axford is Director of Libraries, Arizona State University.

Mr. Nelson Bennion is Sales Manager, Bro-Dart.

Mr. Alexander Broude is President, Alexander Broude, Inc.

Dr. Richard Chapin is Director of Libraries, Michigan State University.

Dr. Knut Dorn is Head of Export Division, Otto Harrassowitz.

Mr. Daniel Gore is Director of Libraries, Macalester College.

Mr. Mark Gormley is Director of Libraries, Wayne State University.

Mr. David O. Lane is Chief Librarian, Hunter College, City University of New York.

Mr. Ralph Lessing is Vice President, Stechert-Hafner, Inc.

Mr. Tom Martin is Vice President, Richard Abel & Co.

Miss Harriet K. Rebuldela is Head of Bibliographic Searching Unit, University of Colorado

Mr. B. Dean Spain is Chairman of the Board, Baker & Taylor Co.

Mr. Peter Spyers-Duran is Director of Libraries, Florida Atlantic University.

Mr. James L. Thompson is Director of Marketing and Sales, Baker & Taylor Co.

Mr. Jack Walsdorf is Libraries Service Adviser, Blackwell's.

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*(Florida Atlantic University Library)*

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