Collections Budget

The state budget crisis caused severe cuts in the university and library budgets in the year under review. Coping with the significant reduction in funds posed the greatest challenge for the New Brunswick Collections Group and occupied a significant proportion of our meeting time. I have attached a spreadsheet (divided into five separate worksheets, indicated by tabs at the bottom) detailing the budget picture for FY 2006-2007 and also setting that budget within the context of the previous eight years. The comments here refer to the data contained in those spreadsheets, and I shall identify the particular worksheet within the text of this report to facilitate reference.

The New Brunswick Libraries spent a total of $2,993,307.43 in state funds, with a carryover encumbrance of $173,288.43 (“NB State & Non-State FY 2007”). Ironically, in the light of the major cuts the university faced during the year, this actually represents an increase of almost $21,000 over FY 2006, and the largest New Brunswick state expenditure since FY 2003 (“NB Total Trends”). The increase in state expenditures was, however, entirely the result of additional state money contributed to the approval plan. State funds expended on the approval plan increased from $187,397 in 2006 to $446,794 in 2007, an increase of nearly $260,000, reflecting several major infusions of money (from the New Brunswick below-the-line budget and from central funds) to keep the approval plan going (“Approval Plan Trends”). If we were to exclude these contributions, NB state expenditures would have declined significantly. I want to express the appreciation of NBCG for the support given to the approval plan by AUL Robert Sewell and Acting AUL Francoise Puniello.

New Brunswick also spent $1,138,812.83 of an available $1,320,904.93 in non-state money, with a carryover encumbrance of just over $81,000. The expenditures include more than $591,000 on firm orders (monographs, scores, sound recordings, films), nearly $282,000 on current subscriptions, and just under $240,500 for support of the approval plan (with $66,281 coming from the Van Wagoner principal) (“NB State & Non-State FY 2007”). Overall, non-state expenditures decreased by $212,071 from 2006 (“NB Total Trends”), but this decrease can be seen as good news, since non-state spending on the approval plan in 2006 had grown enormously, resulting in non-state spending exceeding the funds available by nearly $150,000 (“NB Total Trends”).

The three worksheets detailing trends over the last nine years in the approval plan, monographs or firm orders, and overall state and non-state spending are perhaps striking for the absence of clear patterns. The budget varies with the fortunes of the state and with the decisions of the university administration: up for a couple of years, then down, and then up again. Overall New Brunswick expenditures, state and non-state, have declined nearly $300,000 since 1999, and while a good deal of this surely reflects the migration of print subscriptions funded by campus to electronic subscriptions funded
centrally, the overall cut, magnified as it is by inflation, suggests the constraints under which the libraries and the selectors are operating. Notably, New Brunswick state expenditures on monographs fell from $331,516 in 1999 to $30,297 in 2007—well below the nine year mean of nearly $240,000 and the nine year median of nearly $263,000 (“NB Monograph Trends”). The loss of state support for firm orders has to some extent been mitigated by an expanded approval plan and by a heavier reliance on non-state funds, but even so, the total expenditure for firm orders (state and non-state) in 2007 was below both the mean and median for the period 1999-2007 (“NB Monograph Trends”). At best we are keeping up, but factoring in inflation and the 2007 cuts in the approval plan, it is more likely that we are losing ground in the acquisition of books, scores, sound recordings, and films. Coping with the challenges faced by this shortfall will be a key task for NBCG and all selectors.

While the database and journal cancellation project carried out in the summer and early fall of 2006 was directed by the Collection Development Council, I would like to commend the contributions of several NBCG members, notably Sara Harrington, Karen Hartman, and Laura B. Mullen. As elected representatives to CDC for the Arts & Humanities, Social Sciences, and Sciences, they faced the unenviable task of coordinating system-wide consolidation and cancellations of databases and journals, an unenviable task that they carried out with great diligence, tact, and effectiveness. Their efforts certainly limited the impact of the cuts on our faculty and students.

Approval Plan Refinements

Analysis of Approval expenditure patterns in FY 2006 indicated that the YBP approval plan was expending money at an unsustainable rate. During the late summer and early fall, NBCG, in cooperation with Mary Page, head of Acquisitions, and our account representatives at YBP, undertook a major refinement of the YBP plan. In addition to individual selectors modifying their own profiles, NBCG as a whole endorsed lowering the maximum price per book across all profiles, and moved, with a few exceptions, to establishing paperback preferred as our default. While NBCG was disappointed at the relatively slow speed with which these changes were implemented by YBP, the changes did, by the final six months of the fiscal year, result in significant savings, reducing our approval expenditures from $417,296 in the final six months of FY 2006 to $184,374 in the equivalent months of 2007, a savings of nearly $233,000. This projects to an annual YBP approval expenditure in the range of $375,000 to $400,000, and a total expenditure for all approval plans in the range of $425,000 to $470,000 (see worksheet “Results of Approval Refinement”).

While analyzing the approval plan, we discovered that a number of science standing orders had been inadvertently paid out of approval funds, thus further stressing the approval budget and also giving inaccurate data on collection expenditures. When apprised of the problem, Mary Page and her staff were able to correct the problem, and Bob Sewell was able to transfer central money to “repay” the approval fund code.
Working with RUL Administration

Concerns regarding inadequate funding for the approval plan and regarding the processing of books and digital subscriptions were expressed at the February 23, 2007 NBCG meeting. The membership authorized the chair to draft two letters addressing these concerns to the libraries administration. The first letter called attention to the crisis in the approval plan, which several times during the year was on the verge of running out of money and being shut down, thus depriving faculty and students of one of the major sources of new book acquisitions. As a follow-up, NBCG invited the University Librarian and the AUL for Collection Development & Management to our next meeting, where we explored the approval plan and other budgetary concerns in greater detail. We have yet to identify a stable solution to what appears now to be a perennial problem in funding the approval plan, but the letter helped NBCG make the case for the additional money that kept the approval plan running during the entire fiscal year. We also agreed on some general strategies by which NBCG can assist the library administration in making the case for appropriate funding to the university administration—including documenting the databases, journals, and other resources needed by faculty and students. We discussed taking the message about collection needs to academic departments in order to inform them of our situation and enlist their support. Nonetheless, uncertainty about the collections budget remains the single most critical issue facing us.

The second letter called attention to the resources committed to processing, suggesting that insufficient staffing resulted in delays in the processing of orders and thus affected selectors ability to expend limited funds in a timely way. In a similar way, insufficient staffing devoted to the maintenance of digital subscriptions is seen as delaying the correction of database access problems. While NBCG received no direct response to this letter, we were gratified to see that the Acquisitions Department did receive extra funding that allowed for the hiring of additional staff during the ordering crunch at the end of the fiscal year.

NBCG invited a number of colleagues to our meetings to facilitate the sharing of information and to address common concerns. In addition to the University Librarian and the AUL for Collection Development & Management (who has indicated his desire to attend NBCG meetings whenever possible), guests included Mary Page, Head of Acquisitions and senior staff member Janet Howard; Sharon Favaro, Head of the Gift Cataloging Team; and Bob Warwick, who offered a Director’s Station demonstration.

Elections

We conducted elections for three positions: NBCG Chair, Science Team Leader, and Social Sciences Team Leader. The three incumbents agreed to run for an additional two-year term, and all three were re-elected. It is a matter of concern that two of the candidates ran unopposed, and while this is, regrettably, typical of faculty elections, NBCG might need to explore ways of increasing selector involvement in this area of governance if we are to remain a viable organization.
The Chair through 2009 is Kevin Mulcahy. Team leaders for the Sciences and Social Sciences, with terms through 2009, are Rebecca Gardner and Ryan Womack. Team leaders for the Arts & Humanities and Reference, with terms through 2008, are Lourdes Vazquez and Jeris Cassel.

**Searches**

While searches are of course system-wide endeavors, NBCG members served as chairs of two successful searches for new selectors based in New Brunswick—a Humanities librarian with specific responsibilities for Classics, Philosophy, and Religion, Thomas Izbicki, and a new East Asian Librarian, Tao Yang. Having permanent selectors in these positions will enhance our service to these programs. Our new colleagues will join Rutgers during FY 2008, and we look forward to welcoming them to NBCG. We also express our appreciation for the many NBCG members who served in acting capacities, adding these responsibilities to their normal duties, in some cases for years, in order to carry out the selection, liaison, and instructional duties associated with these positions while searches were conducted.

**Selectors’ Toolkit**

Work continued on developing the toolkit, a resource intended to gather policies, procedures, and received wisdom regarding collection development issues into a single site, and a demonstration page has been created: (http://www.libraries.rutgers.edu/rul/demo/selectors_toolkit/toolkit.shtml). While development is now under the auspices of the Collection Development Council, the Toolkit was originally proposed in NBCG.

**Promotions**

NBCG was pleased that three of its active members, Sara Harrington, Triveni Kuchi, and James Niessen, were promoted to Librarians II with tenure and that another active member, Jane Sloan, was promoted to Librarian I. We congratulate these fine librarians and colleagues.

**Team Activities**

The Social Sciences Subgroup held a meeting in December to discuss future directions. The group also created a Sakai site to facilitate document sharing. Discussion about desirable collections additions continued via e-mail in the spring.

The Arts & Humanities team continues to advocate for adequate support for the purchase and processing of foreign language materials. The team has also expanded collections in the performing arts and Latino Studies despite budget cuts. The hiring of a new East
Asian librarian and the designation, for the first time, of a Middle Eastern Studies librarian should improve those collections, but financial support will be a challenge.

**Goals for 2007-2008**

1. Finding additional money is essential. Possible approaches include continuing and enhancing our collaboration with departments on grant requests, persuading departments to be advocates for the collections they need, tapping into additional departmental and university sources (e.g. packages for new hires), more effectively documenting the need for collections, and supporting lobbying and fundraising efforts by the library administration and the university administration.

2. Preservation of the collections—both existing collections and possible gift collections—must be addressed. We need policies and procedures at a greater level of detail than currently available, and we will certainly need to identify ways of funding the needed preservation activities. Consideration of the preservation potential of the Rutgers Institutional Repository should be a priority.

3. Enhancing—and explaining—the role of the liaison appears necessary in the light of current initiatives, including the rollout of the Rutgers Institutional Repository and the current marketing plan. Consider training/continuing education needs of selectors, and look for ways to share our expertise across NBCG.

4. Exploring e-books, including both reference and general titles, with particular regard to funding issues (how to handle recurring costs); considering whether the technology and distribution have matured; and assessing the level of demand on the part of our users.

5. Assist in completion of Selector Toolkit and identify other tools and resources needed (including new subject research guides and updates of existing ones).

Respectfully submitted,

Kevin P. Mulcahy
Chair, New Brunswick Collections Group

9/5/07