

No-Growth Budgets and North Carolina Academic Libraries: A Survey

Norma C. Womack

For nearly two decades, beginning with the early 1950s and peaking about 1970, academic libraries sustained the greatest growth and affluence in their history. Through unprecedented fundings, expansion was the keyword of the period. After 1974 the effects of less funds were accentuated by decreasing enrollments, inflation, and the energy crisis. Population forecasts point to further declines in the 18-23 year old college group in the 1980s.¹ Pre-1950 austere times are again upon academic libraries.

There is a changing climate in higher education governance which emphasizes management and accountability. In the past, the success of the library director was measured by the increase of the library's resources. Today the focus is on performance measurement and efficiency of operation.² Pressures for improved fiscal management (and at the same time, improved services) are appearing from all directions: declining resources, continued inflation, rapid technological development, the information explosion and the constantly changing demands within higher education. Therefore,

university administrators pressed from without and from within on the issue of accountability, and struggling to maintain program quality in the face of reduced budgets, possibly expect a level of leadership from library directors which often has not been forthcoming. . . . There is every reason to believe that a dynamic, successful effort to find and document more effective ways to utilize present resources is the surest way to re-establish the managerial credibility and status of library directors.³

To be successful in this era of retrenchment, library managers must be knowledgeable in budget development and maintenance. They must understand and aggressively support the unique role of the library in higher education and the intellectual world.⁴ They must recognize that the need for program planning and evaluation is real. And, "it is clearly in the interest of the profession . . . that the motivation for change be internal."⁵

What are the alternatives to "use it up, wear it out; make it do, or do without"⁶ while we wait for technology or a national network of sharing to rescue our academic libraries? First and foremost, in this age of accountability, the library community must join together to establish a new national image which reflects the primary purpose of its being—a client-service-centered institution. There must be a "shift in emphasis away from holdings and size to access and service."⁷

In order to ascertain the main areas of common concern of North Carolina academic librarians, and what efforts they are making to cope with the financial squeeze, a survey was made of selected academic libraries in the state. (Table I) The results of the survey indicate that North Carolina academic librarians are experiencing the same levels and areas of disquietude from no-growth budgets as the rest of the nation's libraries.⁸ Following is a summary of the replies received from forty-two academic libraries.

TABLE I
Questionnaire Response

Type of Library	Sent	Returned	Percent Returned
Two-Year Colleges	8	6	75
Four-Year Colleges	25	21	84
College/University	19	15	79
Total	52	42	81

As could be expected, the greatest concern is in that area which has experienced the largest price increases—periodicals. An increase in domestic subscriptions of 92 per cent from 1970 to 1975 was reported by Research Libraries Group.⁹ (*Annual Report*, 1976-1977, page 10.) Dropping titles and augmenting the periodicals budget with book funds were the methods chosen most often to cope with the rising costs. The third option selected was that of using microform. In many cases all three options were used in order to combat ever-increasing periodicals prices. Several librarians indicated they had established a ceiling on the periodicals budget of anywhere from 50% to 60% of the combined book and periodicals budgets. Cooperative buying among area libraries and use of union lists were reported by one librarian. Some of the other coping methods listed were: discontinuation of binding whenever possible and substituting microform for permanent collections; not adding new periodicals unless periodicals of equal value could be dropped; electing not to purchase back issues of new subscriptions; reviewing periodical titles every year; and, eliminating duplicate copies. In addition, one librarian stated that a personal letter was written to publishers when subscription prices were raised, asking for justification. In many cases, librarians said they sought and received faculty involvement and support in curtailing subscription costs.

To increase purchasing power of book funds, most librarians stated they were always looking for better discounts. Some indicated they were making more use of remainder and discount houses. The establishment of collection development policies ranked next. Several librarians reported that such a policy had been in effect for some years and that they observed it carefully. Three librarians indicated that they had a book collection/acquisition committee made up of members of the faculty, administration, and in one case, students, and that the concept was working well for them. The committee

works closely with the library staff in the collection building process. One hoped-for result is better communication and cooperation regarding library needs.

The elimination of duplicate copies was also a high priority item for saving on book costs. Automation and centralization of the acquisition process was credited with decreasing the likelihood of duplicate orders and with providing better control over the book budget.

There are some indications that library patrons may see more paperbacks on the shelves. The Interlibrary Loan Program is also being used to ease the strain on the book budget in some libraries. One librarian simply stated that fewer books were being purchased.

With regard to the increasing costs of continuations, sixty-two percent of the survey respondents indicated they were reviewing continuations for possible cancellations. Others stated that they were canceling, and reviewing each item before ordering.

Equipment and software appear to be the "fat" in the budget for most libraries. Purchase of new equipment is limited. Bargains or bids are made for new items and some libraries reported they were buying used machines. The substitution of non-library equipment for library equipment was reported by one librarian. An example given was the use of steel canceled-check cases for microfilm storage, purchased at approximately one third the cost of standard microfilm cabinets. Another coping technique which was of interest was requesting other departments to share in the cost of equipment which was being purchased for the department's use. The securing of grant money to purchase needed equipment and software appeared to be the only hope for some libraries. The use of free films and other kinds of free or loan-type software was mentioned as a way to obtain some items which the libraries would otherwise have to do without.

To stop book loss and replacement, all but five of the respondents indicated they have some type of surveillance system to try to cut down on loss of library materials. Three of the respondents without surveillance systems indicated that plans were underway for such a program. Although use of a manual system ranked three to two over an electronic system, some librarians with manual systems stated that electronic systems would be installed when funds would permit.

Concerning personnel costs, many librarians reported that all the cutting had been done in previous years and the problem now is how to live with the cuts in the face of increased demands for service. Most of the respondents indicated they were using more Work Study assistants to fill the gaps in staffing. There have also been some conversions of positions from professional to clerical. Some of the librarians said they had placed a freeze on new hiring.

As for acquisitions and book processing, most of the librarians reported that they were making efforts to reorganize the acquisitions and cataloging work flow in order to maximize efficiency. One librarian reported that studying and changing the mechanical methods involved in the acquisitions process had resulted in considerable savings. One fourth of the respondents use the on-line system for cataloging while another fourth use LC or vendor supplied cataloging. Several others indicated they had recently joined or had firm plans to join OCLC or SOLINET. Automated acquisitions or plans for such a system have been instituted by several of the libraries surveyed.

According to responses, the word "innovation" appears to be synonymous with "computerization." For those who replied to this part of the survey,

membership in OCLC or SOLINET was listed as being the most innovative step they had taken. The next item mentioned most often as being innovative was the implementation of budget and collection control systems. These systems included budget hearings and justification with the administration, more library control over purchase of materials, and more input from faculty and students as to the importance and level of satisfaction of library services and collections.

In an effort to compensate partially for reduced purchasing power, library instruction on the maximum use of existing materials is being upgraded at many institutions. It was also reported that although staff time in processing new materials has been reduced, more time is spent with more thorough arrangement of existing materials—re-cataloging of materials using more analytics and generally improving access.

In response to the question "Do you feel that you are coping without adversely affecting services?" sixty-three per cent checked 'yes.' However, some of the yes answers were qualified with such statements as, "at the moment," "I hope so," "for the present time," etc.

The results of this survey indicate that both publicly and privately supported North Carolina academic libraries are definitely feeling the effects of retrenchment. There was no area of library service left untouched by the money squeeze. All reported they have not reduced operating hours. As one librarian put it, "we are just stretching ourselves a little farther."

Norma G. Womack is Periodicals Librarian, Davis Memorial Library, Methodist College.

¹Richard DeGennaro, "Austerity, Technology, and Resource Sharing: Research Libraries Face the Future," *Library Journal*, 100 (May 15, 1975): 917.

²George J. Michel, "The Library Committee—Its Role in Library and University Governance," *Catholic Library World*, 49 (September, 1977): 56.

³H. William Axford, "The Interrelations of Structure, Governance and Effective Resource Utilization in Academic Libraries," *Library Trends*, 23 (April, 1975): 559-60.

⁴Robin N. Downes, "Critical Challenges in Steady-State Financing: A Perspective," in *Library Budgeting: Critical Challenge for the Future*, ed. Sul H. Lee (Ann Arbor: Pierian Press, 1977), pp. 5-9.

⁵Marion T. Reid, "Coping with Budget Adversity: The Impact of the Financial Squeeze on Acquisitions," *College and Research Libraries*, 37 (May, 1976): 266.

⁶Tyrus G. Harmsen, "The Budget Pinch: Coping at College Libraries," in *Managing Under Austerity: Summary Proceedings*, ed. John C. Heyeck (Stanford, 1976), p. 36.

⁷DeGennaro, p. 923.

⁸For comparative accounts, see Sul H. Lee, ed., *Library Budgeting: Critical Challenges for the Future*, (Ann Arbor: Pierian Press, 1977) which consists of papers from a conference on no-growth budgets held at Indiana State University. See also John C. Heyeck, ed., *Managing Under Austerity: A Conference for Privately Supported Academic Libraries* (Stanford, 1976); John Brewster Smith and Harold B. Schleifer, "Research Libraries in Transition: What Faculty Members Should Know About Changing Patterns of Library Service," *AAUP*, 64 (May, 1978): 78-81; and William J. Baumol and Matityahu Marcus, *Economics of Academic Libraries*. (Washington, D. C.: American Council on Education, 1973).

⁹*Annual Report*, 1976-77, p. 10.

Table II
ACTUAL TABULATIONS

COPING UNDER AUSTERITY — SURVEY OF NORTH CAROLINA ACADEMIC LIBRARIES

1. Please rank the main concerns of your library regarding budgeting. The most important factor would be ranked (1), second most important (2), etc. Only rank those that are important to your library.

Response Rank

- | | | |
|----|-----|--|
| 37 | (1) | Increasing costs of periodicals. |
| 30 | (3) | Increasing costs of continuations. |
| 35 | (2) | Decreasing purchasing power of book funds. |
| 23 | (6) | Personnel costs. |
| 21 | (7) | Acquisitions and book processing costs. |
| 25 | (4) | Increasing cost of equipment and software. |
| 24 | (5) | Book loss and replacement. |
| 2 | () | Other _____ |

2. How are you now coping? Check appropriate box.

Periodicals

- | | | |
|----|-----|--|
| 22 | (1) | Dropping titles. |
| 21 | (2) | Augmenting periodicals budget from book fund. |
| 5 | (4) | Limiting periodical purchases to set percentage of total books and periodicals budget. |
| 13 | (3) | Substituting microform for paper issues. |
| | () | Other _____ |

Continuations

- | | | |
|----|-----|---|
| 26 | (1) | Reviewing standing orders for possible cancellations. |
| 9 | (2) | Cancelling standing orders and re-evaluating before purchase. |
| 3 | (3) | Other _____ |

Book Purchasing. (Some use more than one method.)

- | | | |
|----|-----|---|
| 20 | (2) | Establishment of Collection Development Policy. |
| 13 | (4) | Purchase of good paperbacks whenever possible. |
| 17 | (3) | Elimination of duplicate copies. |
| 12 | (5) | Increased use of Interlibrary Loan. |
| 23 | (1) | Seeking better discounts. |
| 5 | (6) | Other _____ |

Personnel

- 7 (2) Conversion of positions from professional to clerical where possible.
- 5 (3) Reduction in personnel.
- 0 () Reduction of operating hours.
- 17 (1) Use of more Work Study assistants and other federally funded programs.
- () Other (9 other very different ideas) _____

Acquisitions and book processing.

- 6 (3) Use of automated acquisitions.
- 11 (2) Use of LC or vendor-supplied cataloging.
- 11 (2) Use of on-line system.
- 17 (1) Streamlining of existing system.
- 5 (4) Other _____

Increasing cost of equipment and software.

Briefly explain your coping methods _____

(use back if necessary)

Book loss and replacement.

- 12 (2) Electric surveillance system.
- 18 (1) Manual surveillance system.
- 3 (3) Cost analysis and adjustments for lost book replacement charges.
- 3 (4) Other (3 different ideas) _____

What do you consider to be the most INNOVATIVE step your library has instituted in coping with budgetary problems which you would be willing to share via this survey? Please explain.

Do you feel that you are coping without adversely affecting service?

Yes (22) No (14) (6 no indication)

Would you like a summary of the results of this survey? Yes (42) No _____

Name _____

Library _____

Address _____

City _____

State _____ Zip _____