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# The System of Allocations from the Book Budget at UNC-G

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## The Criteria

Roughly 25 per cent of the book budget at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro was designated in 1984-85 for allocation to the academic departments for their use in ordering books and new serials subscriptions for the library (\$260,430 of a total book budget of \$1,045,201); the remaining 75 per cent was retained for allocation within the library. Eleven criteria have been accepted by the university's Faculty/Student Library Committee as factors to be used in these departmental allocations. These criteria are as follows:

1. The strengths and weaknesses of the collection in the different disciplines as defined by the library's Collection Development Committee.

2. Consideration of an annual statement of library needs described in general terms by each department head or dean and submitted to the library director each spring. In this statement of needs, the department head or dean describes new research emphases, new faculty with differing research needs, the adequacy or inadequacy of past allocations, and the like, which he or she wishes to be considered in the coming year's allocation.

3. Spending patterns in the recent past in the various disciplines as reported by the Acquisition Department. From this report it is determined whether departments and schools have encumbered all of their allocation in previous years and whether they have shown the need for more book funds or less.

4. The number and level of degrees offered in the various disciplines and the number of degrees awarded.

5. New degree programs and areas of study being planned or recently adopted.

6. Increase or decrease in the number of credit hours offered by each school/department at both the undergraduate and graduate levels based on studies received from the Office of Institutional Research.

7. Degree of reliance of the school/department on library materials.

8. The effect of joint-ordering, which often supplements cross-disciplinary programs.

9. The supplementing of subject areas by library ordering from the library general and standing order funds.

10. Attention to excessive costs of library materials using average per-volume prices of hardcover books from *Publishers Weekly*, the Library of Congress, and vendors.

11. Amount of continuing library funds realized by schools/departments for ongoing serials in their disciplines from the built-in serials budget of the library.

## The System

The library fiscal year extends from July 1 to June 30 of each year, but the book ordering or encumbrance year begins on March 1 of each year and continues to the end of February of the next year. The reason the encumbrance year ends on February 28 is that in a world-wide book ordering program, it takes the remainder of the fiscal year to receive all books and invoices and pay all bills by June 30, as required by the state. A department may begin ordering from its allocation on March 1 of each year (the encumbrance year's accounts having been closed for the preceding year the day before) even though the exact amount of one's allocation is not known until budget figures for the next fiscal year are released the next July. It is a reasonable assumption to conclude by March of each year that the book funds available for the next fiscal year will not be substantially less than in the present year. On the other hand, to be certain that there are not excessive encumbrances in the spring and early summer, no department is allowed to encumber more than 65 per cent of the amount represented by the present year's allocation before September of the following summer, at which time a second allocation is made. This second allocation completes the commitments from a book budget that by that time (September 1) is known in detail. In July of each year, at the beginning of or shortly

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after the start of the new fiscal year, exact budget figures are announced for the new fiscal year. These figures are usually quite close to the projected figures estimated in February and March of the previous year (the beginning of the book ordering year), because in the first year of a biennium the budget recommendations of the Governor and the Advisory Budget Commission have been published by February and in the second year of the biennium the biennial budget has already been tentatively approved by the previous session of the General Assembly. With these firm figures in hand, the library director is then in a position to allocate the remaining book funds at the beginning of the fall semester.

These two allocations guarantee balanced book ordering over the course of the entire year since funds are made available in the spring and in the fall. Moreover, there is the stipulation that a substantial portion of a department's allocation must be encumbered in a given book ordering year (March 1-February 28) by December. If that is not the case, a department may lose funds, which will then be transferred to other needs. Funds not encumbered fully by February 28 revert automatically for immediate reassignments. The allocated funds may be used by the departments for the ordering of new books or new serials subscriptions. The initial one, two, or three year subscription for serials is taken from the department allocation; the continuing costs are absorbed in the Serials Fund, a part of the ongoing built-in funds retained by the library.

### **The Procedures**

The university's Faculty/Student Library Committee, on recommendation from the library director and the Collection Development Committee of the library, allocates to each academic department 65 per cent of its previous allocation at its meeting in late February of each year. This amount is intended to satisfy the needs of the departments until the next September 1 at which time the second allocation will be made, exact budget figures then being known. Before the end of the spring semester, each academic department head submits to the library director a statement of book/serials needs for the next year expressed in general terms. In this statement of needs, a number of issues are addressed (new programs, adequacy of last year's allocation, new faculty and new specialties, the changing nature of the discipline). The library director also requests a study of credit hours (undergraduate and graduate) offered that year by each depart-

ment compared to the previous year from the Office of Institutional Research. Shortly after the beginning of the fiscal year, July 1, the Collection Development Committee of the library meets to examine these documents, in addition to internal statistics and reports and its own perceptions, and to recommend to the library director the second and final allocations for the year. The Collection Development Committee applies the eleven criteria cited above. The library director, after his examination of these recommendations,

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passes them on to an Allocations Subcommittee of the university's Faculty/Student Library Committee. Very early in the fall semester, around September 1, these recommendations are taken to the full library committee at its first meeting of the year for approval.

Each academic department appoints a library representative who coordinates book and serial ordering in that department and countersigns each order card. Some departments have library committees that meet and regularly discuss library matters, but the formal contact between the library and the academic departments is the department's library representative. Monographic orders are sent directly to the acquisitions department; serial orders are sent to the Serials Department and ordered only after full justification for need has been examined along with sample copies by the Collection Development Committee.

There are built-in commitments retained by the library that are, in effect, library allocations. These funds are the serials fund for ongoing subscriptions, roughly 50 per cent of the total book budget; the library general fund for the ordering of current monographic publications in all disciplines to assure that the major output of the leading publishers is acquired each year; the collection development fund for the purchase of retrospective material used mainly in filling in gaps in the collection; the reference fund for the purchase of reference books; the documents fund for the purchase of currently published non-depository documents and retrospective sets; the replacements fund; the library director's contin-

gency fund for the acquiring of high priority items that become available unexpectedly for a limited period of time; and the standing order fund for purchasing of books from the major university presses and other publishers with whom the library has standing orders. As stated above, these built-in commitments consume roughly 75 per cent of the total library book budget.

Each departmental library representative and each librarian responsible for one of the internal allocations receives a monthly accounting record from the head acquisition librarian reporting his department's encumbrances and expenditures to date.

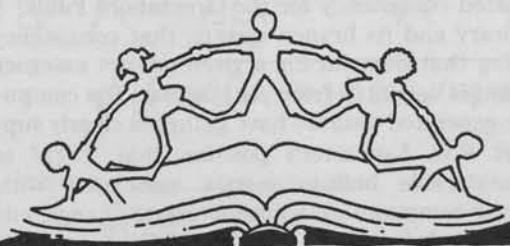
### An Assessment

The criteria and procedures described above may seem complex, but actually they fall into place very easily over the course of the year. The allocations system takes time because it is subjective in that neither an automatic formula nor traditional allocated amounts are used. On the other hand, the system is fair in its subjectivity, and it has the flexibility of changing from year to year as the programs and priorities of the university change. Some universities have passed in recent years from a shared faculty-library ordering system to one which relies entirely on library bibliographers. It is the feeling on both sides at UNC-G that faculty participation in collection building is a healthy sign of faculty interest in the library and is something to be encouraged. The interchange between faculty library representatives and library staff is an important part of the collegiality evident at this university between the teaching faculty and the library, and it provides to a very important group of faculty an insight into the work of the library staff. This close feeling and understanding has resulted, in part, in such benefits as meaningful faculty status for professional librarians, the election of librarians to important positions in faculty government, and the very supportive role of the university's Library Committee for the program of the library rather than an adversarial role as is the case on some campuses. Some may say that this conclusion overstates the importance of this shared librarian/faculty responsibility, but I would argue, having watched the system develop over the last fifteen years, that collaborative efforts such as this do indeed engender a sense of equality and respect from the teaching faculty for the librarians.

Other benefits of the system include the commencement of the book ordering year from March 1 instead of September 1 ensuring that

book ordering over the course of the year is balanced and consistent, with several checkpoints (September 1, December 1, February 28) to verify that all funds are equitably and fully encumbered and spent on time. Theoretically the Library Committee of the university has the authority to allocate the book budget, but in practice it has never questioned to any significant degree the recommendations brought to it by the Collection Development Committee of the library and the library director. In effect, therefore, the system is controlled by the library staff and director.

In conclusion, the allocations system at UNC-G, which developed experimentally over the early and mid 1970s, has reached a level of fine tuning which now meets the needs of a medium-sized research university.



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