

THE COLORADO SCHOOL OF MINES

The Colorado School of Mines is a specialized university with an FTE enrollment of approximately 3,500 students; it is part of the Colorado State University System. We spoke with Mr. Stephen Katz, Head of Serials, The Colorado School of Mines.

USE OF SUBSCRIPTION AGENTS

The Library now uses three subscription agents, says Katz, “The large majority through EBSCO. We used WH Everett & Sons for our British titles but almost all of those titles were transferred to EBSCO in 2003.” We asked how the transition had gone, and Katz said that EBSCO had “handled easily the transfer – it was maybe anywhere from 50-100 titles.”

Although the Library still uses three agents, Katz says “We basically get almost everything through EBSCO. Some of the Everett titles were transferred to Swetts, very few. They were automatically transferred from Everett to Swetts and it was just easier to keep them with Swetts. And for some of our standing orders we use Blackwell. Blackwell is effective in handling the difficult ones and they do a good job with those, things like The Symposium Series of the American Chemical Society. They do well with these standing orders and their discounts are competitive and billing is basically done fairly efficiently.”

TWO TIERED SUBSCRIPTION AGENT RATE STRUCTURE

Katz recently negotiated a two tiered rate structure with EBSCO. He explains the arrangement. “We have a two tiered arrangement with EBSCO; for titles over \$1000 the charge is a certain amount and the rate is slightly higher for titles under \$1000. We renegotiated that a few years ago since we have a high percentage of titles that are very expensive. So we felt that we should not be paying the same service rate as a public library (that has mostly inexpensive titles). We should be paying a lot less (on a per title basis since their titles tended to be so expensive). 5% of \$10,000 is a lot more than 5% of 75.00.” Service fees are sometimes a fixed percentage of the overall cost of the subscription.

“We renegotiated the amount for the more expensive titles down to less than the amount we pay for titles that are under \$1000. We have basically 2 accounts with them; one rate for titles for more than \$1000 and one for titles for less than \$1000.”

Katz appreciates the subscription agents and uses them for electronic publications as well as for print. “Even in big libraries there are not enough people to deal directly with the publishers,” says Katz, “They (the subscription agents) earn their percent, no doubt about it.”

Katz also gets a lot of help from consortiums. Although a lot of the college’s electronic subscriptions are through EBSCO, many are through consortiums such as the Colorado Alliance of Research Libraries (CARL).

TROUBLESHOOTING ELECTRONIC ACCESS

Katz says he is largely satisfied with the service on electronic access issues provided by the library’s subscription agents and consortiums. He points out that the entire library has only about 20 full time employees, “So we are more dependent on the vendors and agents than some other,” he explains. However, the library nonetheless spends a considerable amount of time on access issues. “I deal with serials from both ends – acquisitions and cataloging so I do spend a lot of time on that type of problem,” he says, “and there is a one of our reference librarians has a large chunk of her time and her responsibility in dealing with these access problems. Problems such as changing the URLs, titles that disappear or that are dropped from a package. There would be no way that I would have enough time to deal with that. There are at present 3 full time reference librarians and one spends much of her time dealing with these access issues.”

We asked Katz is student labor could be used to help with the access issues.

“We definitely make heavy use of students but for these things it has to be dealt with on a full time employee basis.”

SERIALS BUDGET

The total materials budget was slightly over \$1.1 million and the serials budget, including electronic serials, was about \$800,000.

BINDING

The Library sends periodicals out to a local firm, Denver Book Binding. “Our budget is in the range of \$50,000 per year. I think (the cost) it is the range of \$8 or \$9 per volume. “We do not have the facilities to do in-house binding and we have used the same binder for a very long time. We had an experiment with another binder about 10 years ago but it was a failed experiment – quality was not what we expected.”

ALLOCATION OF THE SERIALS BUDGET

According to Katz, simplicity has its virtues when it comes to the allocation of the serials budget among the various academic departments. He describes his experience with allocation formulas.