

# Current Dilemmas How I Cope — The Industrial Library.

## Financial and Management Implications of the Volume of Published Material on an Industrial Library.

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### Introduction

In recent years I have attended several UKSG Annual Conferences and have always found them interesting and enjoyable. As a librarian it is particularly useful for me to hear both the publisher's and agent's perspective on problems that affect us all. It was therefore with some pleasure that I was able to accept the invitation to speak to you this morning.

A library in an industrial company exists to serve the goals and business objectives of that company. Within SmithKline Beecham Pharmaceuticals, the Company objective is to discover new ethical pharmaceuticals, and bring them onto the market for doctors to prescribe to treat a wide range of diseases, and of course at the end of the day to make a profit, otherwise tomorrow there will be no research and no Company.

Whilst the library and information service cannot contribute directly to Company profits, we do make a positive contribution for the Company by offering to our customers a range of information services that help them to do their jobs more effectively.

Our continued funding very much depends on senior management's view of how successful we are at doing this. The two million pounds and over that SmithKline Beecham invests in Information Services each year is a considerable commitment, and is not one that we take for granted. We make regular efforts to monitor, assess, review and cost-justify our services wherever this is possible.

SmithKline Beecham was only formed in the middle of last year from two separate companies, SmithKline Beckman and Beecham, and as you can probably imagine, merging two companies the size of ours is a lengthy process, and this is not yet complete. Every operation within the Company has been reviewed by teams of managers from both the

old companies. The Information and Library service has also been reviewed as part of this process. You will understand that, because of the changes that are taking place, I cannot describe the current position in SmithKline Beecham and therefore from this point I shall be referring only to my past experiences with Beecham Pharmaceuticals.

### Information Services

The Information Services in Beecham are coordinated across the five research sites in South-East England and comprise of:

- Library
- Translations
- Current awareness
- Literature searching
- Internal Company reports
- Photographic and visual aids
- Compound registration and supply

I will just briefly give you a few facts and figures about the library service, so that you have an idea of the scale of the operation.

### Library

1,100 subscriptions are maintained to 880 different journal titles.

The publications budget for journals, books, microform and inter-library loan costs is £380,000/year. Around 120,000 requests for documents are received each year from our customers. Nearly 80% of these are satisfied from our own stock, but we still need to obtain over 14,500 items from the British Library Document Supply Centre each year, making us one of their largest industrial customers.

### The Dilemma

One of the major challenges we face is how to cope with the volume of scientific publishing. For an

Industrial Library such as ourselves this raises all kinds of questions.

For example...

- how can we meet the demand from our customers for relevant publications when we are faced with selecting from the 10,000 or so scientific journals that are published, any one of which just might have that key paper that we cannot afford to miss?
- what services can we provide that will meet this need?
- how can we subscribe to all the journals that our customers request we take without overspending our budget?
- how do we find room for the flow of materials into the library without throwing away anything that is still in demand?

### **Demand**

There is an increasing demand from our customers for published papers, and these are from an ever increasing range of journal titles. The greater use of online searching of bibliographic databases has probably generated much of this demand. So not only are there more journal titles being published, they get greater exposure through these databases than would have been the case only 10 years ago.

### **Services**

Services are needed to respond to this demand. They must be of good quality, timely and cost-effective. But a good service will stimulate yet more demand.

Then there are two limiting factors - space and money.

### **Space**

Space is limited in all our libraries and is expensive to provide. Some services cannot be provided without sufficient space. We have partly overcome this space problem through the use of microform, which I will describe in more detail later.

### **Money**

Money is of course a major limiting factor, as services and space both cost money, and there is never enough to satisfy both completely.

Pharmaceutical industry libraries are often referred to as being the rich relation of the library world with money being no object. Whilst we may not have suffered the cut-backs that some publically-funded libraries have in recent years, we are still required to estimate, budget, justify and control expenditure, just as other libraries do.

In recent years our budget increase has just about matched the general inflation rate, but has not kept pace with the increase in subscription rates of the journals we take. 1987 was a particularly difficult year when there was a 6% differential between the two rates. 1990 also looks as though it is going to be a problem. In order to protect our journals budget we have raided other parts of the budget. For example our expenditure on books has not increased in actual terms for the last 5 years.

The worry is that we cannot go on doing this. If journal price increases do not begin to come down to a figure closer to the inflation rate, then there will be only two alternatives.

- We could request a larger budget to compensate for this increase. Whilst this might be accepted for reasons of currency fluctuations affecting our purchasing power, it is unlikely that management would sanction a regular increase in our budget simply because publishers rates had increased.
- The other, and most likely alternative, would be to cancel subscriptions. As I will show later, there are a number of titles we take that are non-essential but nonetheless useful, in complementing the main core journals. These would be the prime candidates for cancellation. But this would diminish the overall value of our research collections. It has been shown that serendipity, that unexpected chance discovery, is an important factor in the research process, and browsing amongst a good range of journals is important in this respect. Any reduction in the number of journals would hinder this process.

Whether it is coincidence or not I would not like to say, but it does appear that it is our core journals that regularly have the largest percentage increases in price. These increases directly endanger the future subscriptions of other titles. But even the core journals are not totally immune from cancellation. We are constantly looking at the value derived from individual journals, particularly looking at a cost-per-use figure. If this cost-per-use figure became very high we would certainly consider cancellation.

I would now like to return to two items I have already mentioned, and describe in more detail how these actions have enabled us to respond to this publishing dilemma.

### **1. "To have and to hold.." or borrow?**

One of the main methods we use to assess which

titles to hold and which to borrow, is by means of a comprehensive journal survey that each of our sites carries out at least every 4 years. A complete list of the current titles taken at that site is given to each group of customers. A group usually consists of a research project or a service department. They are asked to go through the list indicating:

1. Titles essential to their work and what length backrun we should keep.
2. Titles that are useful but not essential.
3. Titles of no interest at all.
4. New title suggestions. Essential or useful.
5. Other comments on the journal collection.

To give you an idea of the response we get, the last survey at one of our sites taking 275 titles involved 16 groups of customers. On average each group listed 48 titles as essential, 60 titles as useful, and suggested a further 4 new titles.

51 titles failed to obtain an "essential" rating by any group, and 14 of these were not even rated as "useful" by any group.

These 51 titles were then investigated to see if there were any other reasons for taking them. The library usage was set against the subscription cost to give a rough cost-per-use figure for each title. If this cost-per-use was more than the cost of getting the copies from the BLDSC, then the subscription was cancelled, if less than the BL cost then the title was kept, but reviewed in the following years to ensure that the usage level did not drop off.

All the new titles suggested were investigated. Any new title ranked as essential was taken if at all possible. However, as we operate on several sites, we also have to ensure that duplication of titles is kept to a minimum, so it is not always possible to meet every new title request.

As a result of the survey at this site 12 new subscriptions were taken out and 15 titles cancelled.

These surveys are invaluable for the following reasons.

They help us

- To maintain accurate lists of which journals are important to which staff.
- To rank the journals in order of relevance to the Company.
- To establish a holdings policy for essential titles based on the length of backfile suggested by customers.

- To highlight which journals are not highly valued by customers, and investigate those further.
- To show to management that every journal purchase is fully justified.

We also routinely monitor the requests that we send to the BLDSC. The ARTTel files we compile are sorted to give a list of titles that are regularly obtained from the BL. If the subscription rates of any of these are less than the annual cost of buying copies from the BL, then these titles are purchased.

## 2. Microform

In common with most libraries, the growth of the collections and the subsequent pressure on space has always been a problem.

The main area of growth is in the journal collection, both primary journals and secondary publications such as Chemical Abstracts. Chemical Abstracts is in fact a good indicator of the growth in the chemistry literature over the years.

Chemical abstracts took 64 years to publish the first 5 million abstracts, but just another 13 years to publish the second 5 million.

The library response to this space problem, was to throw away old journals to make room for the new journals coming in. Unfortunately this often led to material being disposed of that was still relevant to our customers' research interests. The costs of building or acquiring extra storage space meant that this was not a possibility; an alternative solution had to be found.

### The Microform Policy

In 1980 we introduced a microform policy into our libraries. Journals were categorised as follows:

- Ephemeral journals with little long-term interest such as New Scientist or Chemical Engineering News. These are held for up to 5 years as paper copy then disposed of.
- Journals of long-term interest that would previously have been bound. Microfiche versions are bought concurrently with the paper copy or as soon as it becomes available, but is not put out in the library until the paper copy has been in use for between 3 and 5 years.

Microfiche was bought concurrently with the paper copy as the current year is generally cheaper than a back-file year, and the 3-5 year delay was chosen since it was clear from our own figures, that the most frequent use of a journal is in the first 2-3 years, and after 5

years the use drops considerably. Thus the maximum benefit is obtained from the paper copy journals for current awareness purposes before being replaced with microfiche.

- Secondary publications such as Chemical Abstracts.

These are excluded from the policy for the following reasons.

- legibility of indexes on microform is thought to be a potential problem.
- multiple use of indexes is common and would cause a problem if held on microform.
- automated microform search machines themselves take up a considerable amount of space and are noisy and expensive.

Secondary publications are still bound when necessary.

#### Experience of the last 10 years

How has the policy worked in practice looking back over 10 years of experience? Would we have made the same decisions in retrospect?

##### - Title availability

In 1980 59% of titles that we wanted to take on microfiche were available from publishers, today that figure is 55%. Apparently there has been a slight reduction in the number of journal titles available on microfiche. Of course over this period the titles we subscribe to has also changed, and this alone could be the reason for this apparent reduction in availability. In recent discussions with our suppliers it does appear that the market has in fact expanded slightly over this period. But I think it is true to say that in 1980 we envisaged the microfiche market as being a growth area for publishers, and that by 1990 most of the titles we might want to hold on microfiche would be available, this has clearly not been the case.

##### - Space saving

This was the main reason the policy was introduced - how successful has it been?

The microfiche are loaded into storage panels, which hold 15 fiche on each side. 6 panels fill one binder. The binders are shelved with the unbound parts of the same journal title.

The first journals on microfiche were put out in our libraries in 1983, and then every year since then. I estimate that the rate of growth of the

journal collections has been reduced by 30%. This may not seem to be a particularly impressive figure, but don't forget that over half of the titles that we would like to take on fiche are not available. Put another way, we would have had to have thrown away 300 feet of shelved journals (journals still being used) if the microfiche policy had not been introduced.

##### - Costs

It was agreed at the outset that a 10% increase in the primary journals budget would be an acceptable price to pay for the expected benefits of the microfiche policy.

- The cost of microfiche binders is included in the microfiche costs, but the cost of readers and reader/printers is excluded.

- When a title is taken on microfiche it is not necessary to then bind those issues, so the cost of binding is set against the microfiche cost.

- Reduced inter-library loan costs, since back-runs are held on microfiche that would otherwise have been disposed of.

##### - Customer reaction

Throughout the introduction of the microfiche policy, customers were consulted and kept informed at each decision stage. This involvement, I am sure, led to the early acceptance of the policy by the majority of customers. The microfiche is used by customers daily and has become an accepted part of the library stock.

#### Is there a future for journal microfiche?

The recent developments in facsimile and optical discs both have implications for document storage requirements. For example, facsimile now enables us to obtain copies from other libraries within minutes if urgently required. Can we now let the material go that we are replacing with fiche and rely on another library supplying us with a facsimile? Whilst we do rely on other Beecham libraries for this purpose, I believe it would be irresponsible of us to deliberately remove from our customers, material that we know to be in demand.

Whilst we are enthusiastic users of CD-ROM for database searching, the day when we will be able to buy or compile discs of only those journals that we want to hold long-term still seems some years away. Until then, microfiche will continue to have a place in our libraries. □