

Table Talk: *Avoiding the Seven-Year Itch: Maintaining Sustainable and Transparent Relationships Between Librarians and Vendors*

Librarians, vendors, and publishers are vital in providing information to users, but like any partnership, these relationships can face challenges over time. A consistent changing of vendor representatives, combined with the sheer number of relationships librarians must manage, can make interactions feel like serial dating—exhausting and repetitive for both sides. Transparent, two-way communication and clear expectations can help mitigate these feelings. Librarians and vendors must be open about their needs and pressures. Librarians should communicate challenges (budget constraints, heavy workloads, tenure expectations). Vendors should share their own challenges (meeting sales targets or fulfilling company-imposed requirements). While some of these concerns may be proprietary, librarians are more likely to collaborate when they understand these pressures, rather than feeling like a pawn in the process. Vendors should take time to understand each institution's unique needs, while librarians should make relevant information easily accessible, such as through dedicated websites for vendors and publishers. Regular interactions are important for building trust and must be purposeful and beneficial for both parties. Successful vendor-librarian relationships thrive on mutual understanding, transparency, and collaboration. At this table talk, we will encourage discussion about how we all work to maintain productive partnerships.

- ◆ What should vendors expect from librarians? What are they commonly responsible for in this relationship? What are some common challenges that vendors encounter?
- ◆ Let's share what librarians expect from their vendor reps and common challenges they often face.
- ◆ How do you react to or handle the instability of the inevitable personnel changes?
- ◆ We know there are things happening outside of the library that are out of our control. What are things that librarians can do to “save their sanity,” or keep from getting frustrated when working with their vendor reps? What have you discovered that works?
- ◆ Do you know how your library colleagues (those not in CD/acquisitions) interact with vendors? Do vendors go directly to your faculty across campus? How do you feel about this? How do you manage this?
- ◆ What are the job expectations for vendors when it comes to contacting an academic institution? Are you expected to reach out to faculty outside of the library?

- ◆ What is something that surprised you about this aspect of the job when you began?
From either the librarian or vendor perspective?
- ◆ Can you share your experiences working with vendors that are not a “typical” academic library vendor? (*Examples we have in mind are Pitchbook; WRDS; LinkedIn Learning*)
- ◆ Share a a fun, positive, or funny vendor/librarian experience – but not the whole story – 20 words or less. For example: “Rachelle lost her shoe at ER&L during a vendor dinner.”
Curious? Come to our table talk and keep the post table talk discussion going!