

# Patron-Driven Acquisition Practices of U.S. Research Libraries: East vs. West

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## Patron-Driven Acquisition Practices of U.S. Research Libraries: East vs. West

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### Abstract:

During the past few years, Patron Driven Acquisition, or PDA, has become the catchword at library conferences, increasingly promoted by some as the answer to shrinking budgets and the new normal for developing library collections. On one level, the debate over PDA is just an extension of the old question of just in time versus just in case collecting; however, technological developments have facilitated taking the just in time model toward the logical extreme as vendors have seen the rewards of implementing the immediate delivery of e-books and profiled record sets directly to end users with only minimal library mediation. But what does PDA mean for research libraries, which we generally continue to acknowledge, have a mandate to build collections of record. In the research library environment, can PDA really be the driver of the collection, or is it just another method that merely supplements the traditional approach to building the collection? As increasing numbers of libraries seem to embrace this acquisition mechanism, the question arises—who is doing PDA, how are they implementing PDA, and why (or why not)? The presenters will report results from a survey administered to collection development librarians representing the Greater Western Library Alliance (GWLA, 32 members) and the Northeast Research Libraries (NERL, 28 members) consortia. The survey attempts to gauge the extent to which these 60 research libraries have embraced or rejected PDA—for both print and electronic collections—considering factors such as Carnegie Class/ARL status, materials budget, recent budget reductions, existing collection size, geographical location, and bibliographer/subject librarian support. The survey was also administered to the more than 70 NERL affiliates, and results from these institutions will be incorporated into the presentation as well. Ample time will remain to engage the audience in the extent to which PDA may or may not be appropriate for the research library.

### Introduction

In July 2011, the authors created a survey, using Google Forms, designed to capture data on the extent to which libraries in the Greater Western Library Alliance (GWLA) and the Northeast Research Libraries (NERL) have embraced Patron Driven Acquisitions (PDA.) The survey questioned these libraries about PDA plans for electronic as well as print formats.

Institutions in the two consortia received the survey in early October and were given a deadline of October 19<sup>th</sup>, 2011 to respond. There were 24 GWLA respondents, 13 NERL member respondents and 8 NERL affiliate respondents (five NERL affiliates that responded were medical libraries. The data from these five institutions was removed from the analysis due to their relatively small size and specificity of focus.)

The data reflected a 75% response rate for GWLA schools and a 46% response rate for NERL member (i.e., excluding NERL affiliates) schools. Due to unequal response rates, the data should be viewed as an environmental scan rather than as a direct comparison. Responding institutions were widely dispersed geographically, representing locations throughout the Northwest, Southwest, Midwest, South, Southeast, Northeast and Hawaii. The data pointed to a disparity in budgets, with the average monographs budget (print and electronic) for GWLA members coming in at \$2,254,790, while the average monographs budget for NERL members was \$4,793,694.88. On average, both consortia reported monographic expenditures rising between 2007 and 2012, with the NERL schools demonstrating a larger increase.

### Survey Results Trends

Although there were two down years (2006 and 2009), results from the survey indicate a general increasing trend in the number of PDA pilots im-

plemented. This is true of the results for both consortia, although the number for NERL seems to lag that for GWLA by about three years. This can be seen in Table 1.

**Table 1.**

<b>Year</b>	<b>Number of Pilots</b>	<b>GWLA</b>	<b>NERL</b>
<b>2005</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>2006</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>2007</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>2008</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>2009</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>2010</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>2011</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>6</b>

Overall, the average start date for print PDA pilots was mid 2009, whereas the average start for e-book pilots was early 2009. As for the implementation of PDA initiatives, a full 36 out of the 45 survey respondents have implemented or are in the process of piloting PDA initiatives. 25 libraries have implemented PDA as a part of their standard workflow for print books. 19 libraries have implemented PDA as a part of their standard workflow for e-books. 16 libraries have implemented PDA as a part of their standard workflow for both print and electronic books. Twenty-two (out of 24) GWLA schools responded yes to having implemented some type of PDA as a part of their standard workflow and 7 (out of 21) NERL schools responded yes. Of the 16 schools that have implemented both, 3 are NERL schools and 13 are GWLA schools. Heavy PDA schools from NERL seem to be Cornell and Johns Hopkins University.

### Print PDA

For print PDA, the survey indicated that 25 schools are doing some kind of print book PDA as a part of their standard work process. Of those, 18 indicate relying on ILL requests to generate book orders, and 7 indicate loading MARC Records for discovery and request. Additionally, two institutions indicate running an in-house, print-on-demand service as part of their overall PDA program.

### Print Book PDA: ILL Requests

For institutions that use ILL to generate acquisitions requests as a standard work process, “price cap” was cited (by 14 institutions) as the most frequently used criterion for determining whether a requested item would be acquired. “Subject parameters” was cited as the least used criterion. No institution reported using bibliographer approval as a criterion in choosing whether or not to acquire an ILL-driven PDA request. The full distribution of criteria is shown in Table 2.

**Table 2.**

<b>Criteria</b>	<b>Required By</b>
Price Caps	14
Popular Materials Excluded	13
Textbooks Excluded	11
Language Restrictions	10
Publication Year Range	9
Rush Availability	9
Status of Requestor	7
Subject Parameters	6
Bibliographer Approval	0

Other restrictions specifically mentioned were: subject specialists are consulted for particularly expensive titles; ILL follows approval plan price limits; if there is no known lender then ILL will purchase; foreign language material is preferred for purchase due to long turn-around times for borrowing; media purchases are considered only selectively; genre fiction is excluded; self-help/hobbyist books are excluded; audio books are excluded; later editions are excluded; if e-book is available, a print copy will be borrowed (through ILL) but not purchased; 'popular' excluded by policy but not by practice.

Those using ILL to generate acquisitions requests were asked to rank how satisfied they were with several factors. In general, these institutions were satisfied to very satisfied with use/circulation, satisfied with the quality and appropriateness of the material acquired, satisfied to very satisfied with workflow, and satisfied with the speed of arrival of the material.

#### **Print Book PDA: Catalog Records Displayed in the OPAC**

Institutions loading MARC records were also asked to rank the same types of restrictions on the PDA process as those using ILL. All except two schools had used the same criteria (price caps, language restrictions, subject parameters, publishers, publication year range, and other non-subject parameters). Those two schools did not use subject or date limits.

Asked to rank how satisfied they were with the same factors as those using ILL-driven PDA, these institutions reported being satisfied to very satisfied with use/circulation, very satisfied with the quality and appropriateness of the material acquired, satisfied to very satisfied with workflow, very satisfied with the patron process; and satisfied with the speed of arrival of the material. Interestingly, almost no one had decided how long to leave the records in their catalogs.

Most schools expected patron delivery in less than a week; one school noted that they had a rush/non-rush option (non-rush delivered in 3.5 weeks).

No-one reported putting titles through librarian review for purchase although about half of respondents have the titles in a queue that would allow them to preview before purchase if they so chose.

#### **Media PDA**

With regard to patron driven media purchases, survey respondents report very little activity. Only three respondents indicate that they currently had patron driven media acquisitions and one additional school has a pilot in process.

#### **PDA As Implemented: E-Books**

Nineteen schools reported doing some kind of e-book PDA as a part of standard work process. Of these, sixteen report loading MARC records into their OPAC from an e-book vendor, nine report

loading MARC records from a standard print vendor, and four report loading MARC records from a publisher. Of the 19 schools, 5 are NERL schools and 15 are GWLA schools. The average start date for those loading MARC records from e-book vendors was mid to late 2009 (2009.75), the average start date for those loading records from print vendors was early 2010, and the average start date for those loading records from publishers was 2011, indicating that the latter has been a much more recent phenomenon than the former methods. As for willingness to accept duplications, results indicate a general willingness to duplicate, with only six respondents reporting that they would not do so.

Those loading MARC records from an e-book vendor for patron request reported being satisfied with use of materials, satisfied to very satisfied with quality of materials, somewhat satisfied to satisfied with workflow, satisfied to very satisfied with ease of patron requests.

In general, institutions report placing tight profile parameters on their record loads, generally employing almost every category that might typically be used for an approval plan, including price, language, subjects, publishers, and publication years. They are slightly less likely to use non-subject parameters. Only three schools had a defined lifespan for leaving the records in the catalog; 11 schools said that they don't know how long they will leave the records in and only 2 schools said that the records would be left in indefinitely.

Nine libraries, all GWLA members, reported loading e-book records from a print book vendor. On average these libraries report being satisfied to very satisfied in use of material, satisfied to very satisfied in quality of the materials purchased, satisfied with the workflow, and satisfied to very satisfied with ease of pa-

tron requests. Once again, with regard to profile parameters, these libraries are tightly profiling record loads, generally employing almost every category that you might typically use for an approval plan: price, language, subjects, publishers, publication years. They are slightly less likely to use non-subject parameters. Only two of these libraries reported having defined the length that records would remain in the catalog. Most had no idea, and two reported that they did not plan to delete records.

There are 4 schools (1 NERL and 3 GWLA) currently experimenting with evidence-based PDA with a single publisher; some have classified this as a trial and some as a permanent work process. There was insufficient data collected by the survey to report anything further in this area.

Table 3 provides a summary of the data collected by the survey, showing the types of PDA programs implemented, by year, from 2000 to 2011 with the average satisfaction level reported for each type of program.

The table shows that, of the institutions reporting, there are currently twenty-five print book PDA plans and nineteen e-book plans in implementation.

The survey asked each library to rank their preferred method for paying for patron selected e-books, from 1 to 5, with 1 being the most preferred and 5 being the least. The average score for each method was calculated, and the results are displayed in Table 4. Although Table 4 provides a relative ranking from most preferred to least, based on the average scores, there does not appear to be a heavy preference for any single method. A value of just 1.44 separates the most preferred method (Set Number of Click-Throughs Triggers Purchase) from the least preferred (Short-Term Loans).

**Table 3.**

**SUMMARY DATA & TIMELINE**

<b>Implementation Year</b>	<b>ILL (print)</b>	<b>Vendor Records(print)</b>	<b>E-Book Vendor Records(e-book)</b>	<b>Print Vendor Records(e-book)</b>	<b>Published Records (e-book)</b>
2000	1	0	0	0	0
2005	0	0	0	0	0
2006	1	0	0	0	0
2007	3	0	2	1	0
2008	1	0	1	0	0
2009	4	1	1	1	0
2010	4	4	7	2	0
2011	4	2	5	4	4
Total to 2011	18	7	16	8	4
Avg. Satisfaction	4.3	4.82	4.15	4.45	N/A

**Table 4.**

**E-BOOK PURCHASE MECHANISM PREFERENCE**

<b>Ranked Payment Preferences</b>	<b>1=Most Preferred, 5=Least Preferred</b>
Set Number of Click Throughs Trigger Purchase	2.24
Short Term Loans Become Purchases After Trigger	2.71
Purchases Triggered by Cumulative Time Used	2.95
Unlimited Access (Deposit Account/Librarians Select)	3.35
Short Term Loans	3.68

**Bibliographer Attitudes**

The average number of bibliographers reported for GWLA institutions participating in the survey was 20.2, and the average number for NERL was 24.4.

For schools that have implemented print book PDA, five institutions reported that subject bibliographers in their organization were generally enthu-

siastic supporters of PDA initiatives for print books four institutions reported that they had few vocal opponents, but that most of their subject bibliographers approve of their PDA initiatives for print books. Three institutions reported that their subject bibliographers were about evenly split on whether or not PDA initiatives for print books were a good idea. Two institutions reported having only a few

supporters of PDA for print books, but that most of their subject bibliographers disapproved of PDA for print. One institution reported that its subject bibliographers were quite opposed to existing PDA initiatives for print books and do not want their organization to move further down this path.

NOTE: We did not ask schools that have not implemented PDA for their impressions of bibliographer attitudes toward acquiring print books via PDA. 2 schools reported that they don't have a strong bibliographer system.

For schools that have implemented e-book PDA, 15 institutions reported on their bibliographer attitudes toward this acquisitions method. Five of these institutions reported that their subject bibliographers were generally enthusiastic supporters of PDA initiatives for electronic books; four reported having a few vocal opponents, but that most of their subject bibliographers approved of their PDA initiatives for electronic books; three indicated that their subject bibliographers were about evenly split on whether or not PDA initiatives for electronic books were a good idea; two said that, in general, implementing PDA initiatives for electronic books has been difficult for most of their subject bibliographers to accept, and one reported that subject bibliographers were quite opposed to existing PDA initiatives for electronic books and do not want their organization to move further down this path.

#### **Survey Participants Not Currently Doing PDA**

Nine schools answered *no* to the question, *Is your library currently involved in any patron driven print or e-book acquisition initiatives, either as a pilot or as a standard method of acquisition?* The data for these nine schools was not included when thinking about print or e-book pilots or standard acquisition procedures for PDA. Five of these schools have plans in the works to run a pilot or implement a workflow. Only one of these schools reports not having any plans at all to consider PDA in some way going forward. The others are still in the active consideration stage.

Of these nine schools, two are from GWLA: Rice University and, the University of Missouri-Columbia. Seven are from NERL: Columbia University, Princeton University, Syracuse University, Tufts University

(AF), UNC-Chapel Hill (AF), University of Miami, and University of Rhode Island (AF).

The most common plan being considered by these libraries is to load OPAC records from the primary book vendor. They appear to be about equally divided between planning or considering doing print versus electronic PDA. The one thing that a plurality of schools seems to have ruled out is the print-on-demand option, although a fair number of schools are still considering it.

It is important to note that several schools that either have not committed to PDA or are not deeply invested in PDA reiterated that most libraries have all been doing PDA all along. As one respondent stated, schools having been doing PDA for "...as long as we have been taking our user's comments and requests into consideration...."

#### **Budgets**

As was mentioned in the introduction, the data pointed to a disparity in budgets, with the average monographs budget (print and electronic) for GWLA members coming in at \$2,254,790, while the average monographs budget for NERL members was \$4,793,694.88. On average, both consortia reported monographic expenditures rising between 2007 and 2012, with the NERL schools demonstrating a larger increase.

Further, the average change in budget for schools not doing PDA was +\$970,772.00, and their average 2012 monographs budget was \$5.36 million. The average change in budget for schools doing PDA was just +\$84,812.00, with an average monographs budget for 2012 of \$2.33M. The schools that are currently doing some kind of PDA report average budget increases that are a full 91% lower than that reported by schools not doing PDA. Furthermore, the average 2012 monographs budget for schools doing PDA is 56% lower than the average 2012 monographs budget for those not doing PDA.

#### **Attitudes Toward PDA**

As a final component of the survey, respondents were given the opportunity to provide free text answers to the following statement: *We are particularly interested to hear from libraries about what compels individual organizations to implement or*

*not implement patron driven acquisition methods.* The most frequently mentioned reasons for pursuing a PDA initiative were (with 11 mentions each) cost savings and increasing collection usage (incorporating the idea of moving away from 'just-in-case' to 'just-in-time' collecting strategy). Other reasons mentioned included a need to conserve collection space, participating in consortial arrangements, and increasing responsiveness toward patrons.

Conversely, specific concerns with PDA included the following: vocal opposition by humanists; librarian morale (although more than one respondent mentioned that subject librarians were crucial for establishing a profile for materials appropriate for PDA, others believe that that PDA "reduces the value of their work to an thoughtless algorithm); the impact on scholarly communication, specifically university presses; difficulties in managing record loads in shared catalogs; the ability to manage a sustainable budget; and questions about the perpetual access rights for e-books. Of course, an overarching question was whether or not PDA is causing libraries to lose control of the collection? In one lengthy response, a NERL collections officer firmly stated:

PDA cannot function as the primary collection-shaping device for any research library that hopes to fulfill research needs of the future. That is because only subject specialist bibliographers know enough to select and acquire the research-important but rarely used (or not in

demand RIGHT NOW) materials without which research now and in the future cannot be conducted. Collections built solely or primarily via PDA (as some have suggested) will reflect the need of the moment, not the long-term needs of fields of research.

### **Summary**

To reiterate, since the response rates from the GWLA and NERL consortia were unequal, these results should be viewed as more of an environmental scan than for purposes of direct comparison. Nevertheless, the results do point to some interesting differences between the two consortia. A crucial difference is the disparity in the size the budgets reported by members of each consortia. Does the fact that the libraries *not* doing PDA, on average, have budgets for monographs that are significantly higher than for libraries currently doing PDA (and that they are seeing, on average, much higher budget increases overall) indicate that budget pressures have been a driving factor behind a library's willingness to embrace PDA initiatives? Will PDA eventually be embraced by the libraries with larger budgets too? And what is the view from the vendor and publisher side? It might be helpful to administer this survey again a few years from now and, in the meantime, conduct a survey to gather data on what vendors are doing and how they view PDA, both in its current manifestations and how it may or may not evolve over the coming years.