

Demand-Driven Success: Designing Your PDA Experiment

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Demand-Driven Success: Designing Your PDA Experiment

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Abstract:

Initiating demand-driven acquisition is daunting. Implications for developing a sustainable budget model, choosing a vendor, controlling metadata, monitoring purchases and developing invoice workflows are significant areas of concern that require determinative planning. From mid-February through August 2011, Loyola Marymount University conducted a pilot using demand-driven acquisition; the result of this successful experiment was the library's decision to fully integrate this purchasing model into its operations. In this session, we will share our process and qualifying decision criteria for configuring the experiment, monitoring its progress and assessing the results. Using an already established vendor, we assessed the purchase trigger model, controlled the number of titles in disciplines profiled, created a process for identifying and suppressing bibliographic records, developed a workflow for payment, and created a reporting format to monitor expenditures and content purchased. We will demonstrate how careful planning allowed us to safeguard against over expenditure and confidently expand or curtail use of the budget in a highly responsive fashion. The presentation will also examine other factors that influenced the experiment, such as the research environment and support from administration, and explain our marketing perspective and desirable outcomes for collection building.

Background

Located in Los Angeles, Loyola Marymount University is a private institution that combines the Jesuit and the Marymount educational traditions. The student enrollment consists of about 5800 undergraduates and nearly 2000 graduate students, with undergraduate education particularly strong in the liberal arts and pre-professional programs and the largest graduate programs are in Education and Business Administration.

The library at LMU was historically poorly funded, resulting in a relatively small print collection. Starting in the late 1980s the budget began to grow and there was continued strong growth until the last couple of years; our current monograph collections is approximately 650,000 volumes. However, even with stronger collections built in the last fifteen years, there are still embarrassing lacunae from the "bad old days."

Several factors aligned to make a demand-driven acquisition (DDA) project propitious. First, Library Administration strongly supported the DDA trial; for example, the Dean included an e-book pilot project among the library's strategic priorities for 2010-11. This was at least partly to overcome the feeling that our e-book efforts had stalled from 2007 until 2009, a period in which we planned and opened a new library. A second factor was the hiring in 2010 of a

new Head of Acquisitions & Serials, with the clear understanding that demand-driven acquisitions would be a priority for his first year. Finally, a separate and very well managed e-conversion project laid the groundwork for the DDA project. Over the previous two years, we migrated nearly half of the periodicals collection to e-only format. This represented a major change for the campus community that, by proving that it could be successful and non-disruptive, built trust with our constituencies.

Planning the Project

We met with the Dean regularly throughout our planning process, even inviting her and the Associate Dean to meetings with our pilot project vendors, which provided interesting perspectives in our planning discussions. Direct involvement provided our Dean with a fuller view and more easily allowed her to keep the Chief Academic Officer and the President informed. It helped that the project was "easy to sell" in that the idea of purchasing e-books based upon patron use in real time made intuitive sense to non-librarians and it, along with our e-only journals project, showed the library as careful stewards of University resources.

As we began to weigh and consider the desired outcomes from a demand-driven model, we developed positive rationale that reaffirmed our commitment to the experiment. There are many obvi-

ous advantages to having more “just-in-time” content accessible to patrons. The demand-driven model is a conservative way to profile what we might traditionally view as either too-deep or too-superficial content: it both compensates for collection weaknesses on the scholarly side for esoteric titles that are not obvious components of the curriculum and it also promotes discovery of titles in academic blind spots, i.e., pure expressions of patron need on the more popular end of the spectrum. It also provides an important backstop for patron needs not met by LMU’s traditional models of collection building via approval plans and firm orders from faculty and from librarian liaisons, many of whom do not have deep subject area expertise. Finally, looking to the future, examples of patron selections, plus data on “turn-aways” as well as high and no-use titles areas, will allow us to improve collection development policy design.

Although the library had no specific funds allocated for the experiment, we leveraged existing funds successfully, knowing that our model allowed us to quickly curtail spending if necessary. We committed to two weeks’ worth of patron purchases, regardless of the amount spent, based on our confidence in the profiling process (i.e., selected representative high-use subject areas).

Choosing ebrary as our vendor was the simplest solution because the library had an existing subscription to their Academic Complete product. Although we also had well established relationships with NetLibrary, Gale, Oxford, Alexander Street Press, and others, of all our e-book platforms, ebrary’s was the best regarded by librarians on staff. We considered other factors as well, such as ebrary’s purchase trigger model, which was perceived as conservative and generous by the Dean and the library’s Management Council. The ebrary license was already in place and only required an addendum in order to initiate profiling.

Title Selection

When selecting academic disciplines for our pilot, we wanted large, active programs across the institution. We selected:

- Biology
- Business

- Communication Studies
- Philosophy
- Political Science
- Sociology
- Theological Studies

These are departments with broad course offerings and large numbers of students. They include disciplines with both current and historical research interests and they tend to be interdisciplinary in nature. They also include humanities, social science, science, and professional programs. Together they form a representative subset of our departments and curriculum.

The profiling process began with ebrary’s loading available titles into their e-book Ordering Platform (eBOP) from our chosen academic disciplines. Titles were selected by matching LC classification and subject terms and then filtering the results to include only DDA-eligible titles. Some obvious areas for additional filtering became clear, so we removed reference works, works from the extreme popular end of the spectrum, and certain publishers (e.g., SparkNotes). We also set a price cap of \$150 per title (with \$200 per title in Biology) and removed titles above those limits. The goal was never to achieve perfection where no titles of questionable merit could possibly be purchased, but to remove the major areas of concern. Once we reached that point, we stopped, with about ten to twelve hours or review time invested. The resulting list was approximately 26,500 titles in the seven disciplines.

Technical Considerations

Because of the existing vendor relationship with ebrary, staff loaded the bibliographic records according to established procedures. A separate file was available for each discipline profiled. We configured the profile so that each subject area had its own fund code assigned. We also wanted to add control data to each record so we would have the capability to quickly aggregate the records for bulk suppression or other actions. A utility MARC field was added to each record using our integrated library system’s global update function:

```
941 \\$aebrary$bDDA$dyyyyymmdd$ffund
code$ntest
```

Subfield 'd' refers to the record load date while subfield 'f' contained the assigned fund code for that subject area. After a title was purchased, we changed the subfield 'n' "test" string to "purchased" in order to exclude such records from deletion at the end of the experiment, as these books would now be part of our collection.

Monitoring the expenditures as titles were purchased was a very high priority. Although real-time reporting is available on the ebrary site, we opted to review weekly reports that were distributed to us in Excel via e-mail attachment. This turned out to be an acceptable time frame for budget review, since we had already determined to let the pilot run for a minimum of two weeks, come what may. Ebrary's reports are thorough and met all of our needs for assessing progress. The reports also enabled us to address missed concerns as the experiment proceeded (e.g., weak titles, non-scholarly, etc.). We were pleased to note modest, steady and consistent purchasing each week for over six months—approximately twelve titles per week with \$77.00 as the average price per title. We were also pleasantly surprised to learn that patrons often purchased retrospective titles and were indeed gravitating toward sound scholarly content.

One concern that we did not anticipate centered on our library's already-established routines for outsourcing record enrichment. Our Cataloging Department exports new records for the addition of table-of-contents and other summary data, and questioned the test records during routine processing. The library's Management Council discussed the advantages of having the records enriched during the experiment in order to enhance discoverability, but decided against spending funds on records that would likely be deleted when the experiment ended.

Establishing the invoicing and payment workflows required minimal effort. The Electronic Resources Assistant was assigned to the process. We chose to have invoices arrive weekly, attached to an e-mail. For each invoice, post-processing in the library database was required. The order record had to be configured and a suppressed item record was attached in order to link the title to the ERMS license record. As mentioned earlier, the bibliographic record con-

trol data field was edited to mark the record as purchased. During the experiment, the department head paid the invoices with a VISA purchasing card.

Reporting on the progress of the experiment was greatly facilitated by using the weekly ebrary reports. Within the report, fund code, price, status and other information is easy to collapse using Excel's subtotal function or by creating a pivot table. Library Administration was very interested in receiving updates on how much had been spent at any given time and was also interested in publication date, publisher, title and other information about the purchases. It was easy to see and tally accesses, triggers, and "turn-aways" as well. By reviewing the reports as a group, we gained new perspective on users, their needs, and desirable research content because the reports show an immediacy of use that cannot be obtained by historical analysis of circulation.

Success...and Why

The pilot project was a success for a number of reasons. Most importantly, the budget survived. We were cautiously optimistic at the start and pleased that the weeks passed without having to stop the project. We were also generally pleased with the content purchased by our patrons, since the content was mostly academic in nature. We learned that, even though ebrary's Academic Complete is a rich resource, our patrons wanted a fuller range of e-book content than it provides. Not only were the purchased titles not in Academic Complete, they were also titles that would not have been selected by way of our traditional print collecting methods. As has long been argued in the favor of e-books, we believe that discovery of content through full-text searching increases chances of meeting users' needs. Finally, one measure of success was that, without a doubt, we know that our Dean was happy that the project quickly transformed our e-book program.

Philosophically and financially, we are comfortable with duplicating certain titles in print and electronic. Our primary next steps will involve taking the time to research where duplication occurs between print and DDA, trying to detect trends in use, and determining where the e-preferred "tipping point" will be. Finding the tipping point requires a wholesale reappraisal of how we collect, including the

traditional review of materials from metadata done by selectors and faculty versus the full text review by users for DDA titles.

We can already see from our review of purchases during the pilot project examples of titles that we did and did not purchase in print.

Examples:

History of Chinese Philosophy (Routledge)

We own it in print; it was purchased via a firm order from a faculty request. Our print copy was checked out at the time of DDA purchase. This is core subject material for the collection and it is fine to duplicate formats.

Mr. & Mrs. Grassroots: How Barack Obama, Two Bookstore Owners, and 300 Volunteers Did It

This is a non-scholarly, journalistic treatment. Owing to the minimal metadata in YBP's GOBI system and the academic level, it makes sense that was not purchased by approval or firm order. Yet, it was desired by a library user. And it was cheaper to buy through DDA than to borrow through ILL.

Advances in Parasitology, Volume 67 : Reflections on a Century of Malaria Biochemistry

This is highly scholarly, but more esoteric than would normally be selected in the approval plan process. It was also expensive (\$203.00), so it would have been low priority at best. This might have seemed a questionable patron purchase. However, on the same day *Advances in Parasitology, Volume 69* was used but did not reach the trigger threshold, which demonstrates that use of the purchased volume was not casual.

Future Considerations

In the upcoming months, we will begin to integrate ebrary DDA-eligible titles into their own profile, which will be modeled after our YBP print approval plan profile. This is a major undertaking, both for our library and for ebrary and YBP. Some aspects of our approval plan profile review are a direct result of issues that arose in the DDA pilot. One of these issues centers on the need for better control of subsequent editions (so that our patrons do not purchase a second edition when a third edition is available). Since we are excluding reference titles from the DDA pool, we will be creating a Reference approval slip profile to make sure that those titles are centralized with our Reference department. Yet another issue that we are wrestling with is that of single- versus multiple-user access. We have chosen ebrary's Single User Purchase Option (SUPO) for all purchased titles and are depending upon ebrary to develop solutions for "turn-away" situations. The challenges associated with a new way of managing selection are not just our own. YBP hesitated to profile both current and retrospective titles, as we proposed. Approval plans profile current publications, but we requested the ability to apply our profile against all ebrary titles. YBP was able to accomplish it, although it made the project larger and more complex.

Lastly, this project has been managed by the Acquisitions & Serials and Collection Development departments, but we need to integrate our librarian liaisons into the process. Our liaisons need to both work with DDA titles at the practical level, such as how to determine item status in YBP's GOBI system and in our library catalog, and at a more strategic level for their individual departmental collection development responsibilities. We will begin with the mechanics of adding titles to our catalog as DDA-eligible, but our longer term discussions will center on the larger issue of when and how to determine if electronic is preferred for specific parts of the collection.