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**Liberal Arts Books on Demand:
A Decade of Patron-Initiated Collection Development,
Part 1**

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*The Purdue University Libraries was an early implementer of purchasing
rather than borrowing books requested through interlibrary loan. This*

pioneering user-initiated acquisitions program, started in January 2000 and called Books on Demand, is managed by the interlibrary loan unit. Now that the program has reached its tenth year, the authors revisit their initial 2002 study to analyze books purchased in the six top subject areas across the whole decade. Subject librarians in their review of the liberal arts titles selected found that the books were appropriate additions and that these titles expanded the cross-disciplinary nature of the collection. The Books on Demand service offers a seamless method for all users, especially graduate students, to provide input into the collection building process.

KEYWORDS patron-driven acquisitions (PDA), collection development, acquisitions, interlibrary loan, user-initiated acquisitions, patron-initiated collection development, Books on Demand

INTRODUCTION

The Purdue University Libraries implemented the Books on Demand service in January 2000, buying – instead of borrowing – recently published English language scholarly books submitted by users as interlibrary loan (ILL) requests (Ward 2002). In 2002, the authors analyzed requests from the departments that were major users of the service requesting about half the books purchased during the program’s first two years and published the results (Anderson et al. 2002). At that time, the five bibliographers agreed

that most of the purchased books were quality additions to the collection and that the service provided a path for graduate students' research needs to play a role in selection. A more surprising finding was the high number of books requested by scholars outside their subject fields. The librarians concluded that these cross-disciplinary requests were a significant enhancement to their collection development efforts.

This widely cited article (Anderson et al. 2002) was instrumental, at least in part, in convincing many other libraries to try this new approach of filling patrons' immediate needs while simultaneously building the collection with titles that would have a good chance of subsequent use. Similar programs were started at libraries such as Colorado State University (Brug and MacWaters 2004), Brigham Young University (Alder 2007), State University of New York-Buffalo (Bertuca et al. 2009), the University of Hong Kong (Chan 2004), and many other universities. The program was regarded as innovative and revolutionary in 2002; by 2009, many libraries of various sizes and types had incorporated some variation of the concept in their ILL operations or, convinced by the benefits of the concept behind user-initiated selection, pioneered other programs like patron selection of e-books.

In 2009, Purdue's Books on Demand program reached its tenth year. Nearly ten thousand books had been added to the collection based on ILL patron requests during the decade. The authors of the 2002 study were especially interested in digging deeper into the cross-disciplinary research trends that the first article uncovered. They decided to review the entire range of titles to date and to take a second look at these questions:

1. Who uses the service? Are the primary users students or faculty? What departmental affiliates make the heaviest use of the service?
2. Do the affiliates of the top user departments order books that are *in-scope* for the collection?
3. Does a comparison of the departmental affiliations and the call numbers indicate an increase in the cross-disciplinary research seen in the two-year study? What subjects are the most in demand?
4. Are the books purchased for Books on Demand *appropriate* for the collection? Are the books from university or scholarly publishers?
5. Why are far fewer books in science/technology being added than in the liberal arts?
6. Once they are on the shelves, are the books purchased for Books on Demand more heavily used than books acquired through regular collection development activities?

This article answers the first four of these questions; the other two will be addressed in separate articles in this issue. The purpose of this ten-year review is to determine if the program is still as effective now as it was judged in its early stages, and to see if a decade of data reveals any important or interesting trends that had not been evident with only two years of data in 2002.

Books on Demand Criteria:

In 2002, interlibrary loan book requests would be purchased if they met these criteria:

- in English

- non-fiction

- scholarly

- published within the past five years

- maximum cost of \$150

- shipment within one week from an online bookseller

By 2009, the criteria had changed only slightly; the publication range was changed to the past three years and DVDs that meet the criteria were also purchased. The English language requirement was relaxed so that on rare occasions some very recent non-English titles could be purchased from amazon.de or amazon.fr if there was no other way to obtain a copy quickly through normal interlibrary loan channels. Determining when a book meets the criteria is the responsibility of an ILL borrowing assistant. From the outset there has been no librarian review of titles before purchase. This decision was an important factor in the initial proposal; the program did not require librarians' time nor was it slowed down by waiting for librarian approval of purchases. The same employee has made almost all the purchase decisions for the program's entire duration. This staff mediation is an important element in the selection process as it provides a quick filter to eliminate titles such as textbooks and popular or hobby-related books. While the definition of "scholarly" may differ from one person to another, the same person has

applied the same definition for ten years. She has taken into consideration such factors as whether it would sometimes be appropriate to buy slightly less scholarly titles to meet undergraduate requestors' needs. She also has decided which campus library eventually receives each cataloged book following the ILL patron's initial use.

METHODOLOGY

To compile ten years of the data for this research, the Books on Demand records were downloaded from the interlibrary loan databases and imported into a Microsoft Access database. During the past ten years, Purdue's ILL unit has used two management systems, Clio and then ILLiad;¹ the first step required integrating records from both ILL systems into one list. Besides compiling bibliographic information, it was important to capture users' status and departmental affiliations and the dates the requests were filled. This information was then enhanced by matching it with data from Purdue's ILS, the Voyager Library System, to add call numbers and first subject headings. Of all the steps in the process, the match of ILL data and Voyager data was the most problematic as most of the titles in the ILL systems varied slightly from the titles in Voyager. If even a slight variation existed the records did not merge. The final solution was to match on the first few letters of the titles, an ingenious and successful solution, but one that required considerable manual review. Also a few books had been lost by patrons and therefore did not have call numbers. Since they represent books requested as part of the Books on

¹ Clio from Clio Software (www.cliosoftware.com) and ILLiad from OCLC/Atlas Systems (www.oclc.org/illiad).

Demand program, they remained in the database, but were not used in the call number analysis.

Analysis of Users: Who Uses the Service?

Graduate Liberal Arts Students Are the Primary Users. A total of 9,572 books were purchased through Books on Demand during the ten years from 2000-2009.² The original study reviewed the books requested by users in the six subject departments that had most heavily benefited from the service: English, Foreign Languages & Literatures, History, Management, Philosophy, and Political Science. It reviewed all the titles in the call number ranges that corresponded with these six departments. This current study analyzes the books requested by patrons with the same six departmental affiliations between 2000 and 2009, thus including the ones purchased during the time period of the first study. During the original study, patrons from these six departments requested 45% of the books purchased. The percentage increased from 45% to 49% of the total purchases between 2000 and 2009. The authors had anticipated that as the service became better known, patrons from other departments would make heavier use of it, but this has not been the case (Table 1).

[Insert TABLE 1 here.]

These six departments are all in the liberal arts, a somewhat surprising result since Purdue University has a strong science/technology focus with 58% of its students

² Note: The data for the study were gathered in mid-2009, so although this article often mentions a decade, the actual data examined covers nine years and seven months.

enrolled in a science/technology field such as agriculture, engineering, or one of the pure sciences; only 37% of the students are in the liberal arts (Research and University). Yet users in these six liberal arts fields requested 6,212 books or 65% of the total. And even more surprising is the fact that 82% of the Books on Demand titles fall into liberal arts call number ranges; only 13% fall into the science/technology ranges. One explanation might be that the science/technology users are more journal focused than book focused; the fact that they are frequently seeking solutions to specific problems makes them less "big picture" focused and therefore less interested in reading books. Another possible explanation is that books in the science and technology areas are higher priced, but with the Books on Demand maximum price set at \$150 this does not seem likely. One other idea brought forward, although difficult to prove, is that users of the science and technology book collections find them more adequate than do users of the liberal arts collection. This imbalance between the size of the science/technology user base and number of Books on Demand science/technology titles prompted Marianne Stowell Bracke, a Purdue science librarian, to investigate this trend more fully. Her study is the subject of a separate article in this issue.

Table 2 shows that graduate students constitute the major user category from these six departments. Undergraduates are a very small percentage of the users. This result was true of the two-year study, and the ten-year data show little difference. These statistics are consistent with Purdue's overall interlibrary loan service with approximately 70% of the use from graduate and undergraduate students. Graduate students affiliated with the English Department requested a greater percentage than the average, and

Foreign Languages & Literatures (FLL) graduate students less than the average. So the investigation of user status reveals consistency with interlibrary loan use.

[INSERT TABLE 2 here]

Bibliographers' Analysis:

To dig deeper into the data, the same bibliographers who conducted the 2002 study analyzed the titles in their subject areas using two approaches:

- books requested by their departments' affiliates
- books with call numbers corresponding to the departments' subject focus

ARE BOOKS REQUESTED BY THESE SIX DEPARTMENTAL AFFILIATES IN-SCOPE FOR THE COLLECTION?

Yes 79-93% are. Each bibliographer determined if the books requested by his or her departmental affiliates were *in-scope* for that subject area. Books were considered out-of-scope if the librarian would not have used department allocations to purchase the book. The call number assigned the book had no bearing on this review. Rather, the librarian looked at the title, publisher, and subject heading to identify out-of-scope titles. 79%-93% of the titles were identified as in-scope. Table 3 summarizes these results.

[Insert TABLE 3 here.]

DOES A COMPARISON OF THE DEPARTMENTAL AFFILIATIONS AND THE CALL NUMBERS INDICATE AN INCREASE IN THE CROSS-DISCIPLINARY RESEARCH SEEN IN THE TWO-YEAR STUDY?

Yes, cross disciplinary research has increased. An analysis of the *call numbers of the books requested by departmental affiliates* in table 4 indicates that, although most books requested were judged by the librarian as in-scope or in disciplinary alignment, only about half or fewer fell within the call number ranges associated with the subject. Table 4 lists the primary call number ranges for each subject.³ This observation prompted the bibliographers to take a closer look at the titles, subject headings, and publishers of these books, to see if this phenomenon could be explained by requests for personal development or recreational reading. Based on this title-by-title examination, all the bibliographers saw subject interests in related or tangential fields that indicated strong cross-disciplinary interests. These following examples help to illustrate the types of apparently out-of-scope subjects which actually indicate that researchers are delving into research in related fields: a Philosophy patron interested in issues in women's studies; a Management patron interested in database structure; a Political Scientist interested in environmental studies; an English scholar requesting books on film studies. For most of these out-of-call number range books, the scholarly need for the title was obvious, either because it provided background material or was part of an interdisciplinary research area

³ In 2009, the Purdue Libraries changed from Dewey Decimal classification to Library of Congress classification, so there were 98 books with LC call numbers. These were added to the subject call number lists for each bibliographer and are included in the statistics.

such as women's studies or American studies. Although it was impossible to show by quantifiable data that the cause was cross-disciplinary research, the bibliographers agreed that this was the most logical explanation. Only occasionally did an idiosyncratic interest surface, such as books on personal medical concerns or hobby-related titles.

[Insert TABLE 4 here.]

Another way to see cross-disciplinary research trends is to look at the total number of books within a call number range and see how many were requested by departmental affiliates. Table 5 indicates a wide variation in these six subject areas, with English and Philosophy affiliates requesting a greater percentage of the books bought in their field. The most noticeable fact in table 5 is that the Management affiliates requested only 18% of the books in the management call numbers. Over 80% of the management books were requested by non-Management faculty and students. This heavy use of the management literature caused a spike in the number of books acquired on this subject for a total of 770 books, or 8% of the all the Books on Demand titles. This is the figure even when defining the Dewey call number range narrowly as 330, 332, or 338 or any of the 650's. This result prompted a more careful look at these books and the home departments of these requestors. There are several departments on campus that have a strong management component, so the librarian expected heavy use from non-Management patrons from the departments such as Consumer Science & Retailing, Hospitality & Tourism Management, and Organizational Leadership & Supervision. However, the top departments were actually Communication, Agricultural Economics, Consumer Science & Retailing, Library Science, English, Industrial Engineering,

Political Science, and History. The only department in this list that the bibliographer had anticipated was Consumer Science & Retailing. These results demonstrate strong cross-disciplinary use of the management literature by faculty and students in the liberal arts and in the engineering/technology colleges. One of the high user groups is librarians, a group that does not include any students since Purdue does not have a Library Science program. Just like the Purdue librarians, many Purdue users are interested in management topics. Areas of high interest are advertising and brand names, business intelligence and logistics, presentations and meetings, consumers and customers, electronic commerce and games, economic topics, employment and leadership, organizational change, finance, industry, and marketing.

A similar trend is evident in books requested in the sociology and religion call numbers. Only 12% of the books in sociology call numbers were requested by faculty or students from the Sociology or Anthropology departments. And, likewise, only 12% of the books in religion were requested by Philosophy users.⁴ Both these areas, like management, are heavily used by the non-primary users. This presents a challenge for normal collection development procedures. The librarians building the management, sociology and religion collections need to be aware that those areas are of high interest to many on campus. This finding also indicates that the Books on Demand project can be of significant importance in building the collection in these areas.

[Insert TABLE 5 here.]

⁴ Religious Studies was part of the Philosophy department during most of the time covered by this study.

ARE THE BOOKS PURCHASED FOR BOOKS ON DEMAND APPROPRIATE FOR THE COLLECTION?

ARE THE BOOKS FROM UNIVERSITY OR SCHOLARLY PUBLISHERS?

Yes, the books fit well into Purdue's collection development scope. In the analysis by call number, the librarians found that very few books were added to the collection that were too popular or in other ways *inappropriate* for a university library collection (Table 6). Even in the management area, where a few "get rich quick" books and a few popular-style management books slipped into the collection, only about 5% of the books were deemed inappropriate. This is an extremely small percentage of the total number of books acquired.

[Insert TABLE 6 here.]

Another way to determine if users are requesting appropriate books is to look at the publishers by categories (university, academic or trade/popular presses) of the books requested. Table 7 indicates that approximately half of the books were published by university presses and another 37% by academic presses, so nearly 90% of the requested books were from scholarly presses. Only 12% were from trade or popular presses. Based on the publisher analysis, users are asking for books that are appropriate for the collection. The publishers most requested by these six departments were Cambridge University Press, Routledge, and Oxford University Press. Table 8 lists the top 25 publishers and the number of books purchased from them; 18 of the 25 are university presses. Taken together these twenty-five publishers supplied over 40% of the requested titles.

[Insert TABLE 7 here.]

[Insert TABLE 8 here.]

USER RESPONSE TO THE BOOKS ON DEMAND PROGRAM

As each book was received and processed, ILL staff slipped a paper flag between the pages. The flag briefly explained that the book had been purchased in response to the ILL request and that the book would be added to the library collection after the initial loan for two weeks. The flag asked patrons to answer two questions: (1) had the book arrived on time to meet their need; and (2) in the users' opinion, was the book very useful, moderately useful, or marginally useful as an addition to the collection?

Table 9 summarizes patron responses to these two questions in the spring 2002 and spring 2008 semesters. Not all books were returned with the paper flags filled out. Table 9 shows results only from those flags with completed questionnaires, but responding patrons reported overwhelmingly that the books arrived quickly. They also agreed that most of the books were very useful additions to the collection (90% in spring 2008). Some patrons also wrote comments on the flags, many of them remarking about the books' speedy arrival. Several said that they would check the books out again after they were cataloged to enjoy the longer loan period and unlimited renewals for cataloged books. Others pointed out that a particular book filled a gap in the collection. Occasionally users noted that a book had not turned out to be as helpful as anticipated for their immediate needs, but that it was still a good addition to the collection. The appendix lists selected patron comments about the Books on Demand program.

[Insert TABLE 9 here.]

CONCLUSIONS

This study looked at four questions about books ordered based on ILL requests: Who uses the service? Do the users from the heaviest user departments request books that are in-scope for their respective subjects? Has there been an increase in the cross-disciplinary research seen in the first study in 2002? And are the books appropriate for the collection?

Patrons from the same six liberal arts departments--English, Foreign Languages & Literatures, History, Management, Philosophy and Political Science--who were the heavy users in 2002 continued to be heavy users. As a group they requested nearly 50% of the Books on Demand titles. Graduate students are the predominant users; they requested over 60% of the titles. The analysis of the titles by these six departmental affiliates shows that 79-93% of the books are in scope and would have been purchased with departmental funds by the librarian. However, every librarian saw high demand for in books in divergent or tangential fields. This confirmed the strong cross-disciplinary research trends seen in the first study. The call number analysis revealed an even stronger confirmation of the cross-disciplinary research. A range of 40-80% of the books within subject call numbers was requested by users outside the subject field. Although this trend is evident in all the liberal arts areas, management, religion, and sociology show the heaviest use from patrons across campus. Despite the fact that users across campus request a large number of ILL books that are outside their subject fields, the

librarians found that 98% of the books were appropriate to a research library. Reviewing books' publishers indicated the same appropriateness. Users found the service timely and judged that the vast majority of the books that were purchased based on their ILL requests were appropriate for the collection.

Past collection development policies and procedures have given librarians and faculty members the major responsibility for shaping and developing the collection. Bibliographers in the liberal arts, especially in the humanities areas at Purdue, have relied heavily on faculty recommendations when selecting books. Graduate students, who are the major users of our book collection and the most avant-garde researchers, have had little opportunity to contribute in the selection of books. This study shows that users do request books through the interlibrary loan service that are very appropriate for the collection. Regardless of which way the purchases were analyzed -- by requester status, requester departmental affiliation, by call number, or by publisher type -- almost all the books complement the librarians' collection. Since the major users are graduate students, this service provides a very convenient path for their input. In some ways the results of this study call into question the traditional practice of relying heavily on faculty advice, which may ignore the most current topics of research that graduate students are embracing. It suggests that subject selectors should find or add to the ways of soliciting suggestions from graduate students.

However, the bibliographers involved in this study also argue against the idea that collection development be left *completely* up to users. They think it imperative that Books on Demand should not be the only approach — it is simply an advantageous tool,

one of several avenues for developing collections. Relying on users alone could lead to a misshapen collection; as in the past when departmental faculty members had the responsibility for developing the collection and one or two faculty members spent all the departmental allocation on their narrow research area. Librarians need to accept the responsibility of developing the collection and, as subject experts with the knowledge provided by reference experience, provide the critical balance to the collection, insuring that both current research and pedagogical needs are represented. Making new purchases from the interlibrary loan requests has proven to be a very effective method for Purdue to involve users at all levels in the development of the collection. The beauty of Books on Demand is that it addresses actual research needs, especially of graduate students, without imposing any particular ideology of collection development or placing demands on the users' time. In conclusion, the liberal arts librarians support increasing the percentage of funding allocated to Books on Demand, even doubling the funds.

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