Charleston Library Conference

The User-Driven Collection 4.0: The Next Phase in User-Driven Monographic Acquisition

Darby Orcutt
North Carolina State University Libraries, dcorcutt@ncsu.edu

Darby Orcutt, "The User-Driven Collection 4.0: The Next Phase in User-Driven Monographic Acquisition" (2015). *Proceedings of the Charleston Library Conference.*
http://dx.doi.org/10.5703/1288284316286

The User-Driven Collection 4.0: The Next Phase in User-Driven Monographic Acquisition

Darby Orcutt, Assistant Head of Collection Management, North Carolina State University Libraries

Abstract

For more than a decade, the North Carolina State University (NCSU) Libraries has had some level of user-driven collecting. Periodically building upon the success of these programs, which has often entailed pushing vendor and library systems beyond their current capacities, the Libraries is now poised to move most of our monographic selection into user-driven pools.

Context

The "4.0" in my title refers to the fact that I realized I've now led or co-led at least four major stages of our user-driven book collecting—an approach to selection that was barely conceivable when I began my career.

In 2003 at the North Carolina State University Libraries, we modestly began our first user-driven acquisitions program, "Books on Demand." Frankly, it was not much of a stretch. When newer books that we did not own were requested via Interlibrary Loan (ILL)—and they fit certain cost and publisher criteria that mirrored those of our book approval plan—ILL staff purchased books for the collection rather than borrowing them. The overwhelming majority were titles selectors would have purchased anyhow if requested, so why not save the extra steps?

By 2009 or 2010, vendors finally offered somewhat robust "purchase on demand" models for e-book acquisition (what is known today as "demand-driven acquisition," or DDA). With increasing e-book availability, we soon also made the move with YBP, our primary monograph vendor, to "e-preferred" status, seeking to maximize our online holdings.

The size of our DDA program grew and grew, as did our proportion of e-book acquisition. A key factor in making these programs work was that we always *curated* the collection of potentially triggered titles—not on a title basis, but using various automated criteria available via YBP's profiling structure.

We were always a little ahead of the pack, however. Our first request to YBP to move to "e-preferred" came before they had a system for handling that. And our subsequent desires to push the envelope similarly were not—and in fact, *still* are not—directly available via YBP's current profiling capacities. This is not to say that YBP is behind their competitors, nor to say that they haven't been excellent partners in helping us figure out when and how to use their current system in ways that it was not intended to accomplish what we hope to do. And I know from my conversations with YBP that our approach to collection development is helping inform the next version of their GOBI database.

Books by Request (BBR)

In 2012, I conceived of and we implemented a new "Books By Request" (BBR) program, populating our catalog with titles not yet owned, indicating to users that these titles will be rush-ordered upon request (and there's a button right there with which they can do so). BBR is managed in-house, although requires the type of backend work that perhaps YBP could provide in the future. A user request results in an e-book purchase (if available), or a print purchase and patron hold if not.

A number of things had been bothering me about the ways in which our traditional book and slip approval plans didn't fully enable our preferences for e-books and DDA:

1. We were still acquiring a fair amount of print, despite rapid availability of many

http://dx.doi.org/10.5703/1288284316286

titles in e-book or even DDA versions shortly thereafter.

2. By purchasing print on a "just in case" basis, we were rewarding the very publishers who were not acting in the ways that we wanted (in other words, I wanted to encourage timely electronic and DDA availability, not fund their absence).

The benefits of this BBR program are many:

1. Every book purchased is a wanted (and likely used) book.
2. By waiting until time of need rather than time of publication, there is a greatly increased chance of e-book (or even DDA) availability.
3. Even if no e-book is available, there is a greatly increased chance of a more cost-effective paperbound edition having become available.

I will note that I do not necessarily regard BBR as a means of reducing costs. What it definitely does do is shift costs into the future (in other words, when the book is needed rather than when it is published). I first proposed implementing it in a particularly poor budget year, so that it would and did actually become part of our strategy for riding out a temporary drought—but time will tell if it reduces costs regularly or simply just better aligns collections expenditures with actual, expressed user needs. (If all it does is that, I'll be very happy!)

Prior to this approach, we were not taking advantage of changes in the marketplace. When I started at NC State in 2001, or even for many years after that, delaying purchase would not have made sense at all. In those times, academic books routinely went out of print and became unavailable. In today's world, delaying purchase generally lowers costs—and very little becomes unavailable (and almost nothing unpredictably so).

The Next Phase

Our current phase of BBR implementation essentially means a complete overhaul and replacement of our approval plan—and has required our working with YBP to engineer pools of potential titles using systems never intended for such complex criteria. What we are currently doing is thrusting virtually our entire approval plan (books and slips) into user-driven models, with DDA our preferred model, and automatically populating BBR records in our catalog. We have completed extensive analysis of the criteria by which we generate pools of possible monographic content from which users may select.

We found that publisher was the greatest predictor of future e-book availability—fortunately, because that is the highest-level filter that YBP offers for approval plans, and we had to essentially create extra, parallel approval plans to move from the excluded, book, slip outcomes of traditional approval plans to instead add an extra layer: excluded, book, auto-BBR slip, slip.

This may not (at least immediately) mean the end of title-by-title selection by our collection managers, although for many it will greatly reduce that burden, freeing their time for other significant activities. More importantly, this approach means that we are better aligning our actual approval expenditures with our goals: (1) addressing user needs, and (2) making sure our money flows most freely to those publishers who are offering not just the best content, but also our preferred format (electronic) and preferred model (DDA).