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E-Book Tune-Up: Maintaining, Sustaining, and Expanding Your Demand-Driven E-Book Program

Caroline Mills
Furman University Libraries

Janet A. Nazar
Furman University Libraries

Michelle R. Desilets
Metropolitan State University

Nathan Carlson
Metropolitan State University

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Caroline C. Mills, Assistant Director for Collection Development, Furman University Libraries

Janet A. Nazar, Content Management Coordinator, Furman University Libraries

Michelle R. Desilets, Reference & Instruction Librarian, Metropolitan State University

Nathan Carlson, Electronic Resources & Discovery Librarian, Metropolitan State University

Abstract

Just like a car, an e-book program needs continuous maintenance in order to run smoothly. What can we do to structure our e-book collections to better meet institutional need? Many factors come into play in building a successful demand-driven acquisition (DDA) program. Student preferences, actual use, collection development, and faculty/staff education and support are all important aspects of maintaining and sustaining a DDA program. This paper describes how the Furman University Library in South Carolina and the Metropolitan State University Library (Metro State) in Minnesota assessed and fine-tuned their respective DDA programs, and the results of these changes.

Introduction

The purpose of this paper is to present a case study of two libraries that take very different approaches to DDA program management and maintenance. It explains what each library has done to make their collection more viable for users, and the results of those changes.

Background of the Demand-Driven Acquisition Program at Furman University

Furman University, a small liberal arts university in Greenville, SC, began an EBL demand-driven acquisition (DDA) program in June 2009 with a deposit of $25,000. Furman's original profile included a few thousand titles published after 2007 in the areas of computer science and information technology, environmental studies, biology and natural history, and botany and zoology. In the first four years of the program there were fewer than 500 short-term loans (STL), only eight books were purchased (see Figure 1 in Appendix) and less than $5,000 was spent.

Assessment of the Program

Motivated by low use of the DDA program, a small task force, including representatives from acquisitions, content management, circulation, and interlibrary loan, was formed in the fall of 2014 to assess the program and propose changes. Based on recent studies ("Ebrary and EBL data study," 2014), the group decided to expand the DDA profile to include titles from the social sciences and arts and humanities in addition to titles from the natural sciences. Fiction and recently published popular titles in the areas of health and fitness, arts and crafts, cooking and wine, and self-help were added based on trends in circulation and book and ILL requests. Languages other than English were included to accommodate changes to the curriculum and in the makeup of the student body. Finally, it was decided to include only items published within the previous three years. Using these criteria, EBL generated a list of titles in their catalog that fit within those parameters. After looking through those titles, the task force chose to exclude several publishers

from the program. Additionally, they asked that titles be excluded based on copyright date, rather than date of publication, in order to avoid electronic reprints of older materials.

Changes to the Program

In November 2014 just over 6,000 DDA titles published prior to 2011 with no recorded STL were withdrawn from the collection, and approximately 65,000 new EBL DDA titles were added.

Six months later the library decided to reduce an existing print approval program and to depend upon the DDA for those titles. Publishers that offer their full catalog through EBL within three months of publication were identified and removed from the print approval plan, resulting in a 30% decrease in received monographs.

In the summer of 2014, because of the continued escalation in costs for short-term loans of e-books from publishers, an extensive cost benefit analysis of our existing demand-driven acquisition autopurchase point was performed. After determining historic institutional use of those publishers, projecting future expenditures based on increased STL pricing, and controlling for multiple use of single titles, it was determined that these increases would cost the institution approximately 10% more while autopurchase would cost approximately 60% more. It was decided at that time to retain our existing purchase point.

Purchase point was examined again in the summer of 2015. After a similar analysis it was determined that it would be most cost effective to autopurchase books from publishers charging 75% of the purchase price for a STL. This change was made in early July 2015.

Challenges

Use of our DDA collection increased immediately, but as use increased, technical problems arose. Users began reporting turnaways. Because we knew our DDA titles were multi-user, we started

by looking at our administrative settings. We found that every login from Furman was being authenticated by the same credentials, so EBL saw only one user for our account. Thus, users found that they were blocked from using titles because they "already had the title checked out." Previous low usage of the collection did not make this flaw apparent. Working with EBL Technical Support, Furman was able to establish a system in which individual accounts are generated for each user by identification and authentication through our proxy server (EZproxy). Every account is now recognized as a separate user, eliminating turnaways. An additional problem was the challenge of finding a print book in our Innovative Interfaces, Millennium catalog after loading almost 400,000 e-book titles. The default on our catalog was to display those titles most recently added first, and we found that often you would need to go through two or three pages of results before coming across a print book. This was solved by adding a "print book" limit for those users searching for print.

Results

Increased Use

Short term use of our DDA e-book collection rose after the number of titles available in the catalog was increased in the fall of 2014.

Though use increased dramatically, we found that we were using roughly the same percentage of available titles as we were prior to the expansion (see Figure 2 in Appendix).

Savings

Though our print approval plan reduction took place only three months prior to the end of FY 2014, 5% was saved on approval spending. The following year an additional 30% was saved. Overall, over a two year period we saved twice as much on our modified print approval plan as we spent on our expanded DDA program.

While use of our DDA program has steadily increased, the average costs of these uses has decreased (see Figure 3 in Appendix).

Perception of E-Books

Along with measured increase in use, student perceptions of e-books and their usefulness has shifted.

In both 2012 and 2014 the Furman University Libraries administered the MISO (Measuring Information Service Outcomes) survey to students. Three of the questions on this survey measured perceptions of use of e-books, the value of e-books, and satisfaction with e-books (see Figure 4 in Appendix).

Students were asked "Over the course of a semester, on average how often do you use the following services—library e-book collections?" In 2014 students reported more frequent use of e-books than they did in 2012. An independent-samples t-test identified a statistically significant difference between student-reported frequency of use of e-books in 2012 and 2014.

Additionally, students were asked "How important are these services to you—library e-book collections?" In 2014 students reported that e-books were more important to them than they did in 2012. Again, a statistically significant difference between student-reported importance of e-books in 2012 and 2014 was identified.

Finally, students were asked "How dissatisfied or satisfied are you with the following resources and services—Library e-book collections?" In 2014 students reported a greater satisfaction with e-books than they did in 2012. An independent-samples t-test established that a significant difference existed between student-reported satisfaction with e-books in 2012 and 2014.

Decrease in Circulation

Another trend noticed after the expansion of our DDA program was a substantial decrease in circulation and monograph ILL. Furman, like most academic libraries, has experienced a decrease in circulation of monographs. However, prior to 2014 that decrease had been miniscule. Between FY 2009 and FY 2010 a 2% decrease in circulation and a 15% increase in ILL was observed; between FY 2010 and FY 2011 there was no decrease in circulation and a 10% decrease in ILL. However,

between FY 2013 and FY 2014, after expanding our e-book collection, circulation dropped 15% and ILL dropped 10%. Circulation dropped an additional 15% between FY 2014 and FY 2015. Overall, as e-book STLs increased, use of print books decreased (see Figure 5 in Appendix).

Additional Factors

Furman is a member of the Partnership of South Carolina Academic Libraries (PASCAL). Only a few months after Furman's DDA expansion, PASCAL launched an e-book initiative making more than 250,000 e-books available to member libraries through subscriptions to ebrary's Academic Complete, EBSCO's Academic Collection and a small EBL DDA collection. These titles were added to Furman's Catalog, allowing students access to over 300,000 additional e-books (see Figure 6 in Appendix). Rather than causing a decline in DDA use, STLs of Furman's collection remained strong, while use of these additional collections was also substantial.

Continued Maintenance

Several challenges remain part of maintaining and fine-tuning the DDA e-book program. The first is the continuing maintenance of e-book records in our catalog. Updates, deletions, and additions happen continually. It is an ongoing challenge for our cataloging department to continuously maintain e-book records.

Another challenge is preparing for the eventual deselection of e-books when they are no longer relevant to the collection (Levine-Clark, 2011). In the interest of building a permanent library collection the Furman Library has committed to retaining e-book records with one or more STLs or those requested as firm orders by faculty in the catalog for at least ten years. Using the financial report data available on the EBL administrative site, local notes are made in EBL records for STLs, autopurchases, and firm orders or firm order request purchases, and those items will be retained in our DDA collection or purchased if they should become unavailable in DDA format.

As noted above we also changed our autopurchase parameters in late FY 2015. Though

only three months of data are available for FY 2016, they show a substantial increase in autopurchases stemming from our decision to autopurchase books from publishers charging 75% of the purchase price for a STL. If this trend remains consistent for the year, a 500% increase in autopurchase and a corresponding decrease in STL may be anticipated (see Figure 7 in Appendix). Depending on budget appropriations it may be necessary to adjust the parameters again at some point in the future.

We will also reassess our print approval plan. In FY 2016 we have found that almost one-third of books that come in through the approval plan are already available in the catalog through our DDA. In January 2016 we will reduce our approval plan further.

Background of the Demand-Driven Acquisition Program at Metropolitan State University

Metropolitan State University (Metro State) is a public state university with a primary, non-residential campus located in Saint Paul, MN. In addition to the main campus, there are three distributed campuses, select courses are offered at area community colleges, and there is a robust online course offering. Initial discussions about DDA began in early 2012 and revolved around how a demand driven approach would benefit our large number of distributed students. A pilot launch of the DDA program began in FY 2013 with a deposit of $20,000. Metro State's original profile included approximately 3,500 titles in the subjects of business, nursing/medicine, law enforcement, and social sciences. In the first seven months, Metro State spent $2,451 on 334 STLs and autopurchased nine titles. The initial autopurchase trigger was the fourth loan of a book. Of the 334 STLS, 57 titles were loaned at least twice and 21 were loaned at least three times. By the end of FY 2013, we had spent just over $17,000 of the initial $20,000 deposit.

Assessment and Changes to the Program

Given the distributed structure of our campuses and the expansion of online-only classes, Metro State librarians recognized the need for more

titles that could be accessed from anywhere and linked from our learning management system. After seven months, the librarians began to examine options for expanding the program. First, librarians identified a list of 24 publishers to add to the profile. Publishers included academic and specialty presses such as American Psychiatric Publishing, Brookings Institution, Euromonitor, Kluwer Academic, and McGraw-Hill. The addition of books from these publishers was limited to books within the subject areas identified in the DDA profile. Second, the librarians stopped recommending firm order purchasing unless specifically requested. The modest increase in short-term loans and decrease in purchasing that resulted led the librarians to reconsider how their EBL profile was constituted. Rather than starting with a few basic subjects and relying on the librarians to add what they felt was missing, the library decided to start with every title enabled by default and see what patrons would choose if completely unmediated (see Figure 8 in Appendix).

Challenges

A big challenge for Metropolitan State University was—and continues to be—the unpredictable nature of DDA in terms of budgeting. During the 2014–2015 academic year, funds available for the DDA program were spent down by February 2015. From August 28, 2014, through February 4, 2015, we spent over $21,000 on e-books via the DDA program. We didn't foresee the massive increase in popularity, which resulted in running out of funds before the end of the year. Obviously we needed to adjust our parameters and DDA profile, as this level of spending was not sustainable. In the meantime, we identified alternative funding to keep the DDA program running until the new fiscal year.

Another challenge involved cataloging decisions. Early on we cataloged all available DDA titles in our profile. This step was necessary in order to ensure they were available via our discovery service. This extremely time-consuming endeavor required constant maintenance and upkeep as the titles available changed. When we expanded our DDA profile to offer access to all EBL titles in the fall of 2014, cataloging the 450,000-some titles

proved impossible. Fortunately, improved communication between the discovery service and EBL has obviated the need to catalog DDA titles at all.

Results

Use and Expenditures

Metro State's most-used DDA subject areas reinforced the early decision to choose subject areas in support of our distributed programs. Figure 9 (see Appendix) identifies the top two subject areas as business/management and medicine. These subjects support two of our largest areas of study, both of which serve a high number of students from locations other than the main campus.

EBL usage increased each year since Metro State's DDA program launched in FY 2013, as shown in Figure 10 (see Appendix). FY 2015, which included the timeframe when all EBL titles were enabled, experienced the greatest increase.

From FY 2013 to date, Metro State has spent over $74,000 on EBL. Almost half of that amount (i.e., $35,480) was spent in FY 2015 alone (see Figure 11 in Appendix).

Perception of E-Books

Metropolitan State University does not currently administer the MISO survey or a comparable tool to measure perceptions, value, or satisfaction with e-books. However, Metro State librarians have closely monitored the literature on use and perception of e-books. When surveyed, students will express preference for a print-book format (Hoseth & McLure, 2012). When they want to use books for research, however, actual use suggests that students prefer books they can access now versus books they need to drive to campus to check out. The value of e-books to students became very apparent when we spent down our funding for DDA in early 2015. When the student

senate became aware of the crisis in DDA funding, they offered to provide the budget to maintain the DDA program through the remainder of the fiscal year. The student senate initiated this offer after they approached the library for background information and statistics. Members of the senate expressed their love of e-books, how they saw e-books as the way of the future, and as a way to remove barriers for students. They also indicated that they hope to see more faculty use e-books as a replacement for cumbersome printed textbooks.

Continued Maintenance

Similar to Furman, Metro State will continue to shift budget from supporting print collections to increasingly supporting electronic collections, including DDA e-books. In fact we modified our collection development policy to stipulate that we purchase e-formats over print formats as a default. Our print collection development is largely based on a demand-driven model as well, and we are also beginning to look at demand-driven options for other resources, such as streaming video.

Conclusion

There is no single solution for e-book DDA program management and maintenance. It is necessary to look at use patterns and user preferences and accommodate them in ways that work with your library budget and institutional priorities. The DDA administrative and acquisitions modules of today enable libraries to quickly and easily modify their e-book program to fit users' unique needs while also meeting the needs of the institution. Don't be afraid to experiment and adjust to see what works for your library. Most of all, don't overlook the management and maintenance of your DDA program, thinking that it will run itself—for optimal performance you must adjust and adapt as conditions and needs change.

References

Ebrary and EBL data study sheds light on ebook use. (2014, February 14). *Health & Medicine Week*, 3354. https://www.highbeam.com/doc/1G1-358920730.html

Hoseth, A., & McLure, M. (2012). Perspectives on e-books from instructors and students in the social sciences. *Reference & User Services Quarterly*, *51*(3), 278–288.

Levine-Clark, M. (2011). Developing a model for long-term management of demand-driven acquisitions. *Against the Grain, 23*(3).
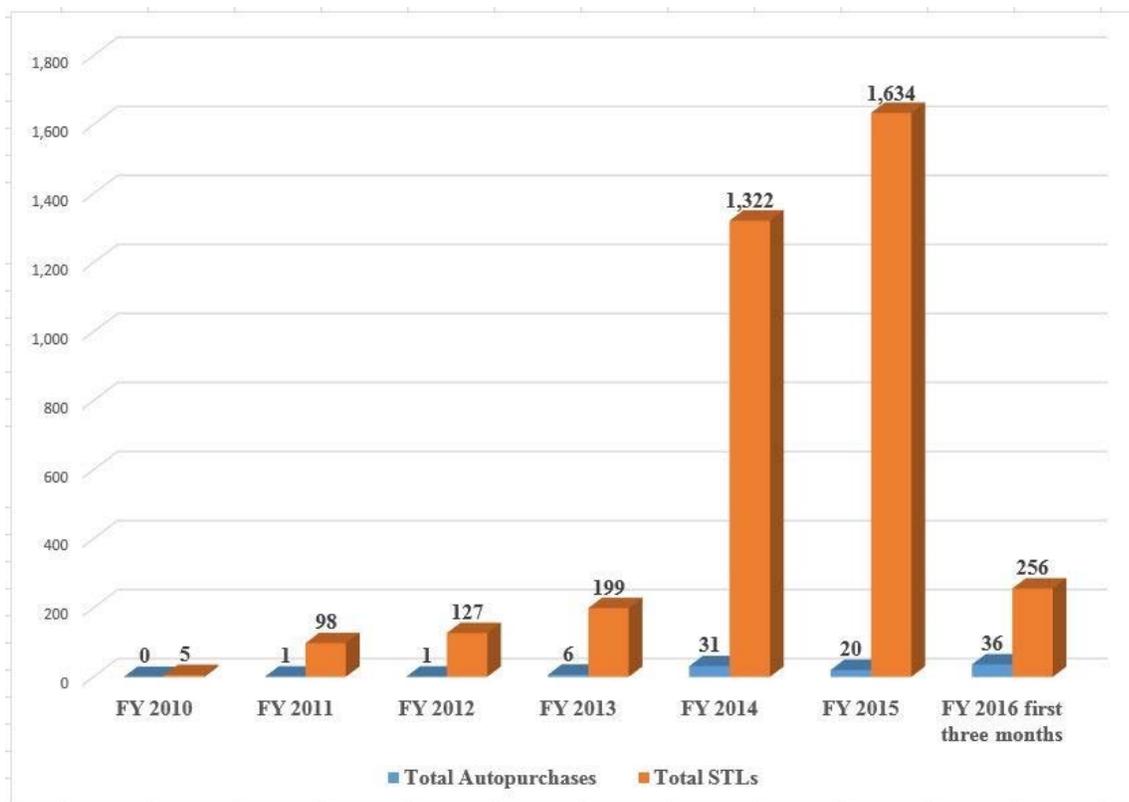
Appendix

Figure 1. DDA use over the last five fiscal years and for the first three months of FY 2016.

Year	STL	Holdings	% Use of Available Titles
2013	199	11,547	1.72%
2014	1,322	69,547	1.90%
2015	1,634	93,863	1.74%

Figure 2. Percentage use for available holdings over the last three years.
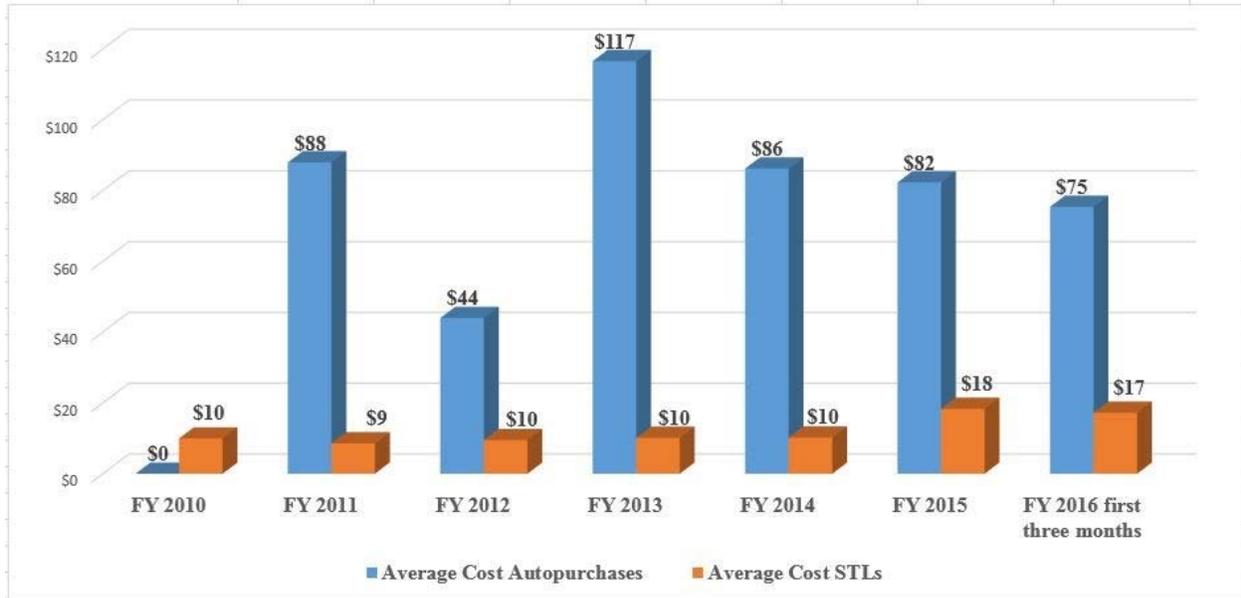
Figure 3. Average costs of both autopurchase and STL per fiscal year, 2010–2016.
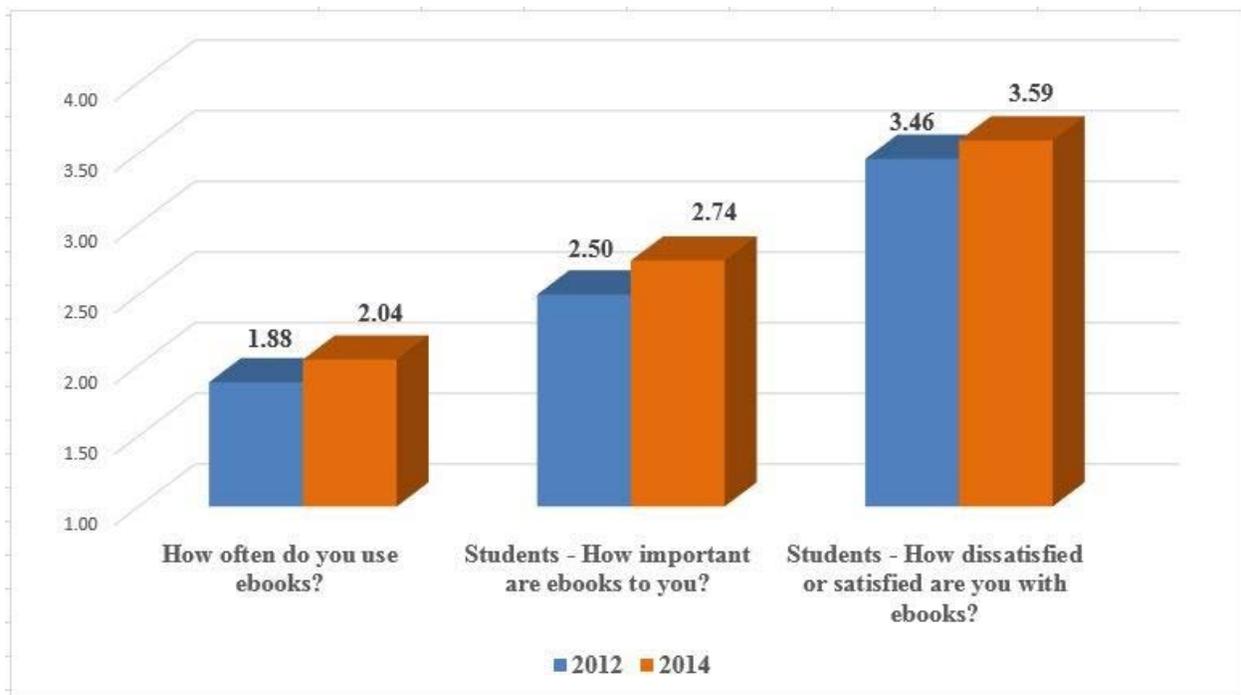

Figure 4. Changes in students' perception of use, importance, and satisfaction with e-books.
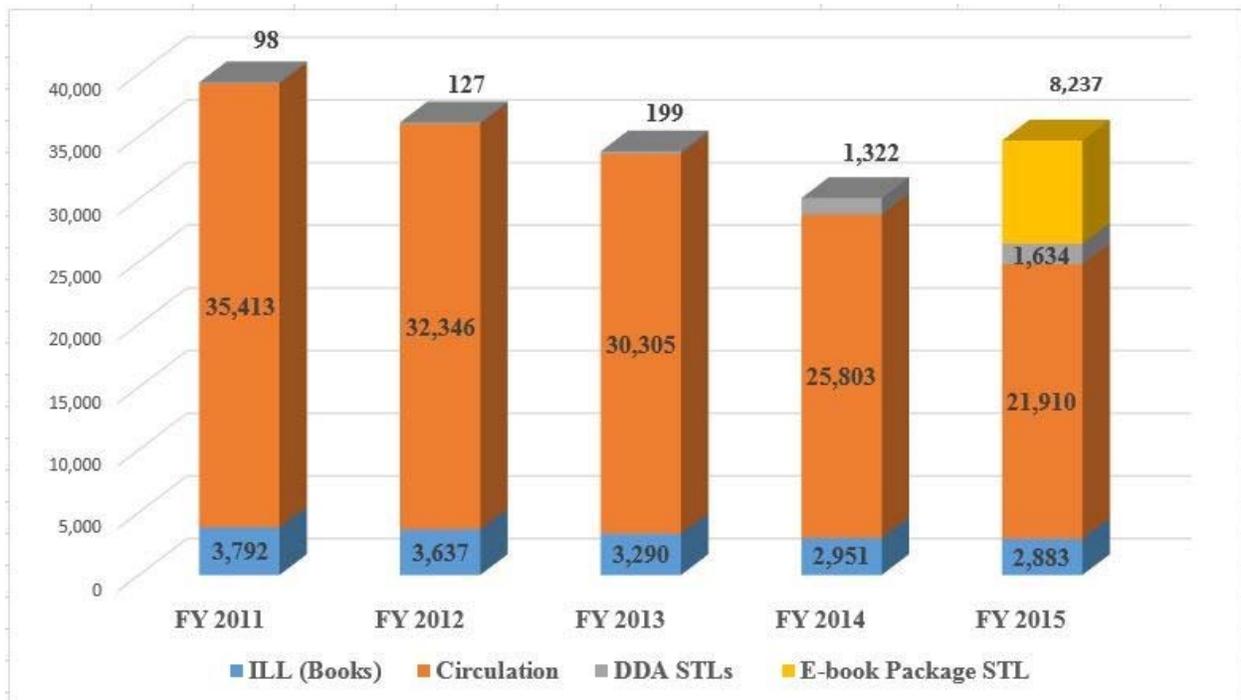
Figure 5. Changes in circulation and ILL transactions between FY 2011 and FY 2015.

Collection	Titles Held	STL
Furman EBL DDA	119,747	2,116
PASCAL ebrary Subscription	149,825	1,710
PASCAL EBSCO Subscription	142,846	1,036
PASCAL EBL DDA	5,534	86

Figure 6. Number of e-book titles available to Furman students in FY 2015 and resulting STLs.
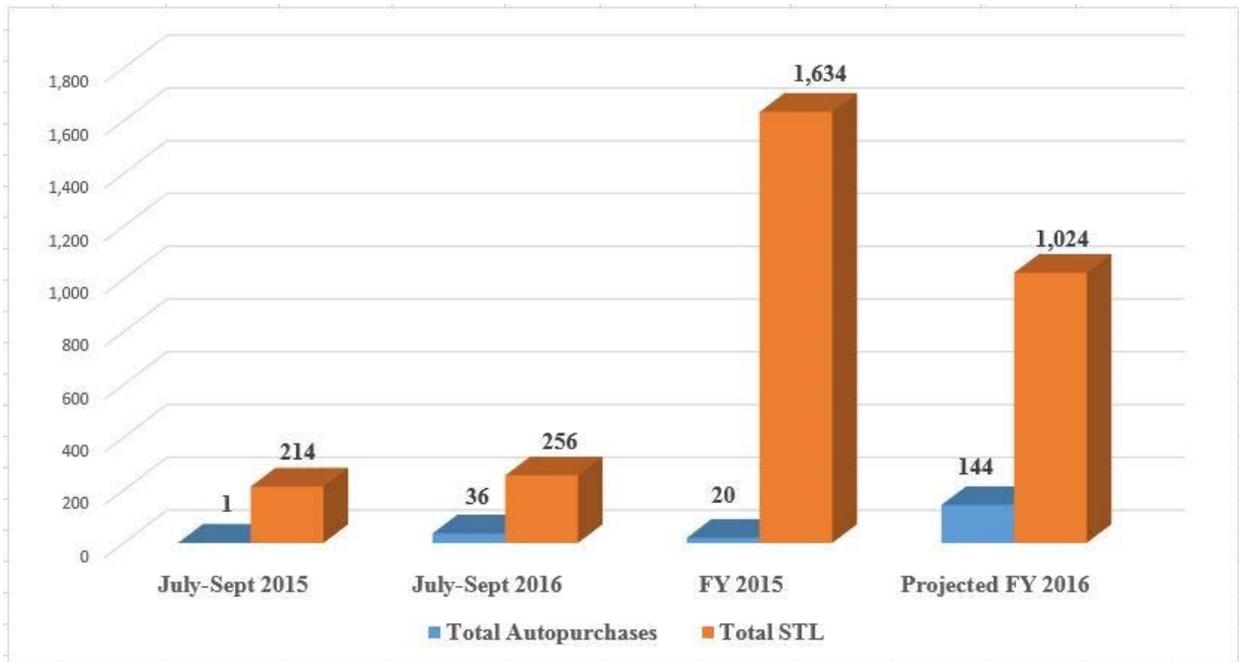
Figure 7. DDA use for the first three months of FY 2015 and FY 2016, total DDA use for FY 2015, and projected use for FY 2016.
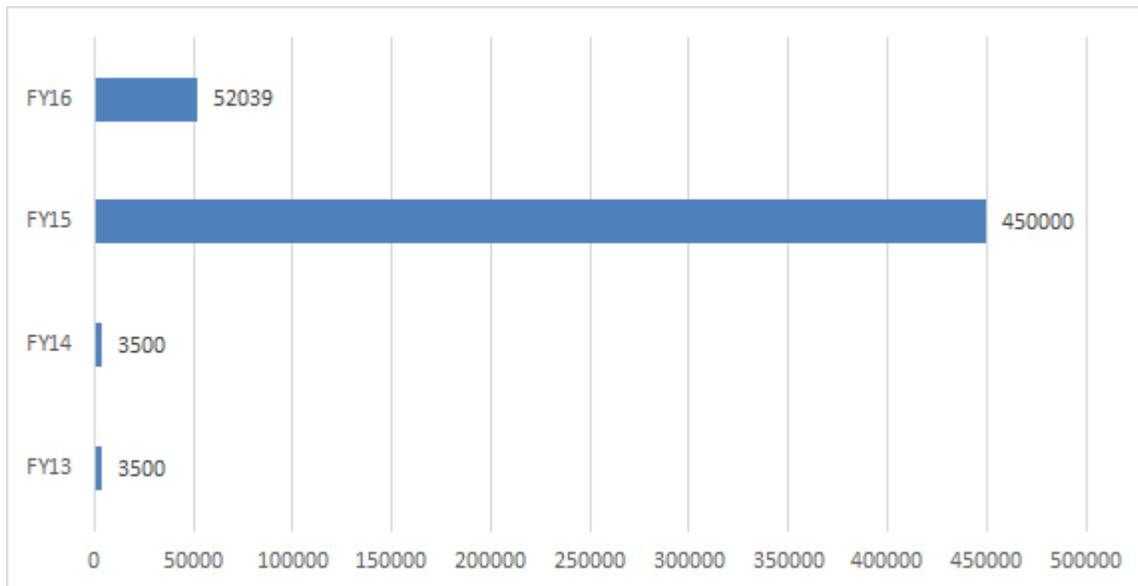
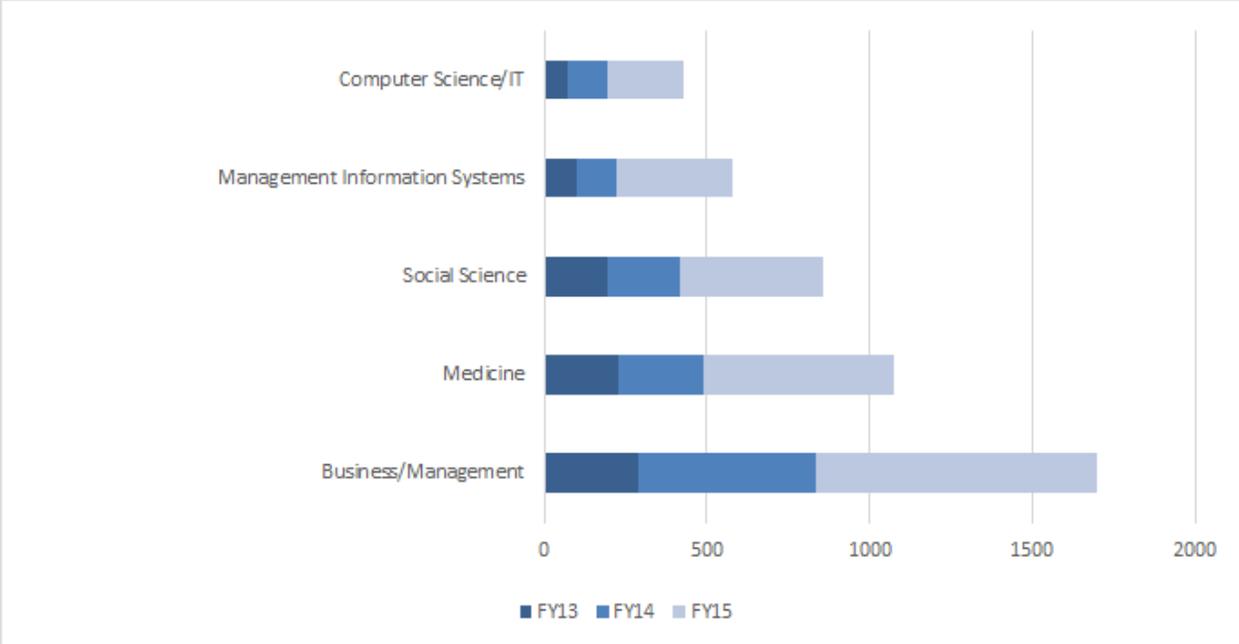**Figure 8. Number of DDA titles available at Metro State, by fiscal year.**

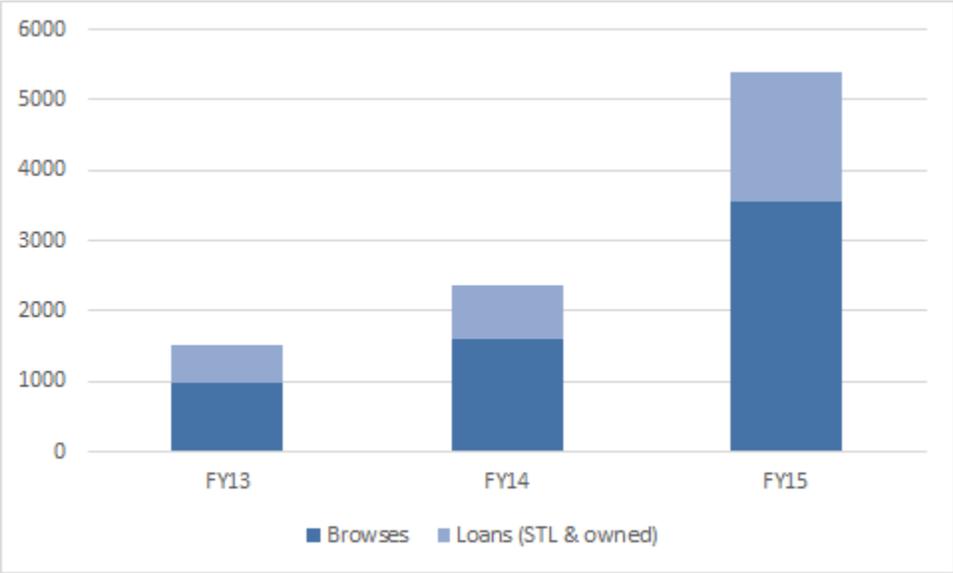**Figure 9. Metro State's most-used DDA subject areas.**
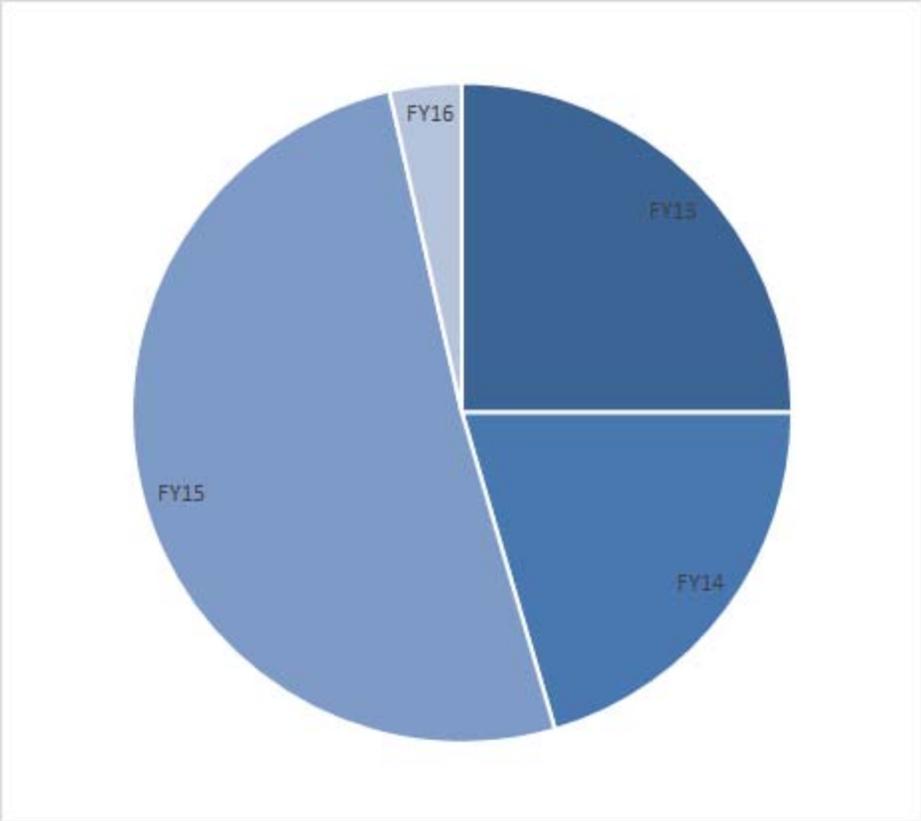

Figure 10. Metro State's EBL usage by fiscal year.

Figure 11. Metro State's EBL expenditures to date, by fiscal year.