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People Profile: Alberta Davis Comer

Editor

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traditional ILL approach. A brief literature search revealed that few libraries had actually made a book-by-book time comparison between books obtained through interlibrary loan and those purchased. Much of the literature stated the comparison between the two methods of acquisition as a composite time. At this point, discussions favored trying something different and it was agreed to try a two-pronged approach: ILL would order requested books through the traditional means and would also place an order through Acquisitions. Then, the methodologies could be compared simultaneously, by item, in order to judge the efficacy of each approach. Once this methodology had been confirmed and administrative approval for the project was received, discussion turned to what criteria to use for the selection of the materials and how to handle them once they were received.

Literature Search: What Are Other Institutions Doing with Purchase-On-Demand?

The literature revealed that books-on-demand projects have been overwhelmingly successful. **Bombeld** and **Hanerfeld** discussed their project conducted at the **University of North Carolina** at Wilmington "using ILL book requests as the 'trigger' for acquiring materials for the library's collections" (Bombeld and Hanerfeld, 18). They stated that "ILL requests should be considered as one of several collection development methods" (Bombeld and Hanerfeld, 24).

Anderson, et al, writing about **Purdue University Libraries'** books-on-demand program, stated five subject bibliographers, analyzing 800 titles acquired through the program, concluded that, "...the patron-driven 'Books on Demand' program is a valuable complementary collection tool. It consistently adds a very high percentage of relevant scholarly titles to the collection which provides input from patrons who do not ordinarily have a voice in collection development decisions and fills in gaps in interdisciplinary areas" (Anderson, 2).

Public libraries are also using books-on-demand. **Hulsey** writes about such a project at **Willard Public Library** in Michigan. This library took the novel approach of purchasing out-of-print books from dealers if they could be obtained for a reasonable price and delivered promptly. **Hulsey** noted that these books were sometimes added to the collection but were often sold or discarded (Hulsey, 77).

Ward, **Wray**, and **Debus-López** wrote about books-on-demand projects at **Purdue University** and at **University of Wisconsin-Madison**. They found that, "over two years' experience with each of these programs confirms that on-demand book acquisitions is a viable model that meets the dual goal of filling a patron's immediate need for a recently published book and of adding a potentially high-use title to the collection" (Ward, Wray and Debus-López 212).

Allen, **Ward**, **Wray**, and **Debus-López** looked at a collaborative purchasing model

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I grew up in eastern Oklahoma and am of Choctaw and Cherokee descent. My small town did not have a library but the book mobile made a stop there. My dad would drive me (over 6 miles of unpaved dirt roads) to visit the book mobile and I was in paradise; books took me to the most exciting places and times! I have worked in different types of libraries (public, military, academic, and private) and in different places (Germany, Texas, Oklahoma, and Indiana) over a number of years and I find that libraries still take me to the most exciting places and times.

at **Thomas Crane Public Library (TCPL)** in Quincy, Massachusetts, **Purdue University**, and the **University of Wisconsin-Madison**. At **TCPL**, 79 % of purchased items were received in 14 days or less which was comparable to the ILL Department's 73 %. In her article "Books on Demand: Just-in-Time Acquisitions," **Suzanne Ward** concluded that titles whose purchase was initiated through ILL patron requests were "used more frequently than similar books purchased through routine collection development" (Ward, 103). **Ward** stated that 28.7% of the books purchased because of ILL requests had circulated after cataloging and after being used by the ILL patron, while 18 % of books chosen through regular means and cataloged in the same period had circulated.

Criteria Used

The purchase-on-demand pilot project was scheduled for calendar year 2004. After deciding that books would be the only type of material ordered, the date of publication played the primary role in deciding whether to order the book. Only trade publications published in 2000 or later would be ordered. Also, the price of the book was important, with \$100 being the limit on any one title. Acquisitions determined that **amazon.com** would be the vendor used for the project, but only books that **amazon.com** had categorized as being available in 3 days or less would be ordered. When ILL received a request, the staff checked **amazon.com** for price and ship date. If these met the set criteria, the ILL staff copied the request order and gave it to Acquisitions. At the same time, the ILL staff ordered the book through **OCLC**. ILL tracked the date when the item was ordered and when the information was given to Acquisitions (these were usually done on the same day). If the **amazon.com** book arrived first, ILL did not cancel the traditional ILL request, and if the ILL request arrived first, Acquisitions did not cancel the purchase order.

Why Choose Amazon.com as the Project Vendor?

Amazon.com was chosen as vendor for this pilot project for several reasons. One of the goals of the project was to see if we could add a bookstore-like feature to our array of library services, and our main objective was to obtain copies quickly. **Amazon.com's** suppliers are **Ingram** and **Baker & Taylor**, distributors that have warehouses strategically placed across the country. Quick turnaround times are guaranteed for newly available trade publications. According to **Spector** in *Amazon.com: Get Big Fast*, the two distributors have between them at least 400,000 titles stocked in their warehouses on any given day. Since **Indiana State University**, which is located in Terre Haute, IN, is near **Baker and Taylor's** Momece, IL warehouse, staff of the Monographic Acquisitions Unit knew that books would be delivered quickly, especially if ordered within a certain time frame. They found that if items with an "available in 24 hours" designation were ordered by 3:00 P.M., with second day shipping requested, the books would often arrive in the next morning's mail. By tapping into this "online bookstore," a library would be able to add a service feature that is immediate, for a cost-effective result that allows the patron's participation in the collection development process.

Procedures for the Project: Using the Project as an Analysis of Current Workflow

Once Acquisitions received a request from ILL that met the established criteria, the order unit supervisor placed an order through **amazon.com** immediately, using a university procurement card and asking for next day shipping. The staff person responsible for monographic receiving was notified of the title so she would know the processing queue to assign as soon as the book arrived. After receiving the item, this staff person forwarded it to the mono-

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