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Purchasing Options in Patron-Driven Acquisitions

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people profile

Tony Ferguson and his lovely wife Cheryl attended the Fiesole Retreat and we had a great time tramping around St. Petersburg as well as listening to the wonderful papers. Tony did his usual wonderful wrap up of the Retreat and gives us a glimpse in his Back Talk, this issue, p.86. Tony has retired from HKU but is still very active in lots of library venues, including OCLC. Tony's personal email address is <anthony.ferguson185@gmail.com>. He has relocated to Sahuarita, Arizona. Talk about going around the world! Tony's mother is turning 90 during the Charleston Conference so he will not be coming unless we can persuade him. In the meantime, the super Scotsman Derek Law will be summing up for the 2011 Charleston Conference.

Oh! The new Librarian at HKU is Peter Sidorko: <peters@hkucc.hku.hk>. Look forward to having him in Charleston some day soon!

Xan Arch

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BORN AND LIVED: Born in Portland, OR, moved to the San Francisco Bay Area for college, then work, just moved back to Portland in 2010.

FAMILY: My husband **Mike** is a software designer, and we have a fluffy black cat named Cachaca.

IN MY SPARE TIME: Running, reading, cooking, agonizing over next *ATG* column.

HOW/WHERE DO I SEE THE INDUSTRY IN FIVE YEARS: I think the industry in five years will be dynamic, with more new types of electronic content, new ways to package content, and new ways to acquire content. I think we will be challenged by how to understand and incorporate end-user software and hardware into our business and service models. We will wonder if doing so will increase our relevance at the expense of our traditional mission and values.

Purchasing Options in Patron-Driven Acquisitions

by **Robert Johnson** (Clinical Services Librarian, USC Norris Medical Library) <robertej@usc.edu>

The Basics

Patron-Driven Acquisitions (PDA) is a model of purchasing in which the librarians set the parameters of purchase and patrons pull the trigger. The material selected by patrons is appropriate to the collection because of the parameters set in place by librarians, and it is important to the collection because patrons themselves select it. This method of collection development can be thought of in many different ways: as a cost saving measure, supplement to interlibrary loan, method to increase electronic content, an alternative to traditional collection development, etc. At **UCI**, we primarily wanted to know if we could achieve cost savings and still provide robust access to content. Though print PDA options exist, most discussion of PDA centers on delivery of electronic content, which I'll focus on here. I won't try to describe which is "best," mainly because these models are extremely flexible and customizable based on your institution's needs, and each institution has differing needs and goals that may be met differently by specific vendors. Also, these models are changing and evolving constantly and the options/customizations I mention here may be different tomorrow.

The **UCI Libraries** investigated PDA beginning in 2009 and implemented a limited PDA pilot in late 2010. We looked at four vendors and developed questions to compare them to one another. In order to create a list of questions to address as many aspects as possible, **UCI** assembled bibliographers from arts and humanities, social sciences, sciences, technical services, and acquisitions. Mak-ing sure to include both subject specialists, technical service specialists, and acquisitions specialists was important as we could tackle not only the collection development aspects of this project, but also technical aspects subject librarians would not have thought of (such as the level of cataloging, how easily we could integrate these records into our OPAC, how invoicing works, etc.). We reviewed the available literature and contacted authors to get some first-hand accounts of the process. Then we began examining two years of usage data (both circulation and internal use counts) for material from specific publishers. Armed with this knowledge, we came up with a list of questions to ask vendors (for the full list, see **Sue Polanka's** blog **No Shelf Required**: *http://www.libraries.wright.edu/noshelfrequired/?p=415*). I expected to see established packages from each vendor, but instead, we were presented with four companies very willing to customize based on our needs. The most important thing an organization can do prior to investigating these models is to determine what it wants out of PDA. Cost savings, ILL alternatives, beefing up electronic content, and/or altering responsibilities for collection development librarians are some reasons for interest in PDA, and each of those reasons will change the customization you seek.

Based on our investigations, here are some issues to consider when setting up a PDA program.

Access

Vendors are offering single-user (one user at a time), multiple-user (some predefined number of simultaneous users, up to unlimited), and even two-user options. Pricing for these models varies: some vendors are charging hardcover price for single-user and 1.5 times hardcover price for multiple/two-user options (depending on how many concurrent users your institution wants). Some pricing begins at 1.5 times hardcover with single-user and increases for multiple/two-user. For institutions trying to provide access to popular or high demand works, multiple-user makes the most sense (lots of patrons wanting access at the same time). For academic disciplines, single-user might make the most sense, as patrons are less likely to cluster at the same time.

Another access concern is the platform, whether that means a downloadable e-reader (which can be difficult to manage if you don't have a robust IT department) or a handheld device (for example a **Kindle**, **Nook**, **Kobo**, or **iPad**). A platform is the electronic framework in which the content lives, and some platforms require users to download programs or readers to allow the user to read the content. If the content requires a specific platform, this can cause difficulty when users attempt to access this content from different environments (if their computer doesn't support **Java** or **Flash**, for instance). There are also differences in what
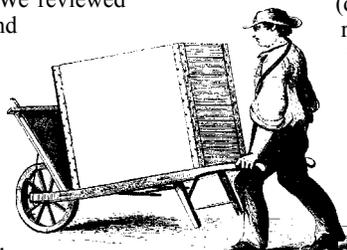
content can be provided on specific devices, or hardware. Not all vendors or publishers make their content compatible with all devices (for instance, one of the vendors made their content available on 19 specific devices, but not the **Kindle**). This again comes down to why your institution is supporting PDA. If it is primarily to cut costs on physical items that may or may not be purchased, perhaps ensuring access across all platforms isn't your primary concern, but if you're attempting to replace 50 copies of the newest bestseller with one eBook purchase, it seems reasonable to expect that content to be viewable on many different platforms.

Purchasing

How many clicks constitute a purchase? This number varies greatly between vendors, and it is one of the more important aspects of the contract. Remember, we're trying to delay purchase until we know patrons actually want this material, otherwise we would simply purchase backfiles of electronic content and be done with it. One vender initially told **UCI** that we could set the number of clicks to trigger a purchase (within reason). This differed from three clicks to ten "actions" (including printing or searching). Make sure your vendor clearly defines not only the number of clicks or actions that trigger a purchase, but also what constitutes a click. This almost seems rudimentary, but it can become confusing. Also, where the patrons clicked to trigger a use was initially varied based on vendor (some counted viewing the table of contents as a click or an action, others didn't count anything until actual content was viewed). Vendors I've spoken with directly are moving toward counting actual content as the initial click or action. I've also seen vendors use amount of time spent browsing content as an action that counts towards a purchase.

ILL

An important issue is ILL options. While a vendor may be willing and able to make accommodations for ILL, publishers may not. Be certain to ask vendors for specifics regarding ILL options, because as more and more libraries are increasing their spend on electronic titles, there will be fewer and fewer options for ILL if librarians don't push the issue. During this discussion, vendors will rightly tell you that a PDA model solves many ILL needs by providing access to items your institution may not necessarily purchase (remember, if one patron uses it, that patron may not necessarily trigger a purchase). For your patrons in your library, this is true. However when you consider the lending aspect of ILL (think of local hospitals that rely on a large academic health center for material to support their staff), things get trickier. Publishers have not been receptive to the concept of ILL for electronic materials, and materials provided through PDA are no exception. You will certainly want to consider this if there are expectations that your institution will provide certain types of material through ILL. There is no easy answer to this issue, but librarians must continue to raise it with vendors and publishers. Letting our vendors know "print it out and fax it" is not a good answer.

Content

Another important issue is the amount of content available from publishers for purchase as PDA. Some publishers are reluctant to make all of their electronic content available in a PDA model, while some publishers don't publish print and electronic simultaneously (or even close to simultaneously). If you divert funds away from purchasing print and one of your institution's heavily-used publishers releases only a smattering of online titles, or releases titles online three months after the print, you may not find patron-driven acquisitions to be the most efficient use of your funds. **UCI Libraries** was very interested in determining if we could achieve cost savings on our monograph purchases while maintaining options to add print, so we instituted a time-sensitive buffer to materials added into our profile. If the electronic version of the monograph isn't released within eight weeks of the print version, it isn't included as a patron-driven option and instead is handled as any other print monograph. This way, we hope to prevent titles from falling through the cracks when they're not released in a timely manner, and to prevent accidental duplication of materials in print and electronic format. This certainly adds a layer of complexity to the process, but since cost saving was one of our main goals, the added complexity wasn't a huge concern. However, this can have a huge impact on your collection development strategy, so be certain to check your policies for collections you don't feel you can alter. Press the vendors for real numbers of releases from key publishers, as this will help you decide whether or not to use PDA.

Setting up PDA at your institution comes with all the complexity of any other licensed product plus a few new twists and turns, but if you have a goal in mind, your decisions become clear rather quickly.

PDA models have, over the past few years, become very similar, and similarly flexible. Maximum costs, subject areas, concurrent users, purchase triggers, etc. are customizable based on your institution's needs. Electronic book content is becoming more ubiquitous with each passing day, and PDA is an interesting way of providing access to the content. Is PDA worthwhile? Ultimately it depends on your mission and your goals, but it is a fun and new way to look at your collections and collection development processes!

More information can be found in these resources:

Spitzform, P., **Wiley, L.**, & **Gibbs, N.** (March 9, 2011). NISO Webinar: Patrons, ILL, and Acquisitions. Retrieved from *http://www.niso. org/apps/group_public/download.php/5927/ NISOpdawebinar9mar2011PRINT.pdf*.

Polanka, S. (2009). Off the Shelf: Patron-Driven Acquisition. Booklist, 105(9/10), 121. Retrieved from *http://www.booklistonline. com/ProductInfo.aspx?pid=3226359*. 🐙

Patron-Driven Acquisition of Publisher-Hosted Content: Bypassing DRM

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The evidence is in: patron-driven acquisition promotes collection use. Patron-driven purchased eBooks were used three times more often and by more than twice as many people in a 2009 controlled retrospective study across five libraries on the **EBL** platform.[1] Once seen as a heretical approach, the patron-driven model has now been embraced by all of the major eBook aggregators. Library interest and participation in patron-driven acquisition has skyrocketed over the past two years, with more than a dozen PDA-related talks on at the **2010 Charleston Conference** alone. Furthermore, university administrators are keen to fund this purchasing model, given its implications for budget efficiency.

So how many books has my library purchased via patron-driven acquisition from our aggregators? Zero. Not a single one. Our recent eBook purchases have been either heavily discounted packages (from **Springer**) or via the PDA-like Evidence Based Selection (EBS) model from **Elsevier**. Neither model even begins to employ the sophisticated approach that makes aggregator (or at least **EBL**-based) patron-driven acquisition so attractive.

I find myself speaking at conferences extolling the virtues of aggregator-based PDA, while at the same time explaining to my local colleagues that we haven't bought a single full-price book from our aggregated sources. Accused of being a cheapskate by my aggregated colleagues, I do my best to defend myself. The upshot of my defense?