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A Publisher's Perspective on PDA

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By now it has become clear that patron-driven acquisition (PDA), or demand-driven acquisition, has evolved as a concept into a full-fledged viable option for book acquisition in academic libraries. The notion of paying only for books that get real, demonstrated use, makes sense in today's climate and the forces driving it, enumerated previously in the pages of this very journal, at session upon session at every library conference, and by many of the thought leaders in the library world, are simply too sound for PDA not to be a wholly logical solution to some of the issues currently plaguing the academic library: budget cuts, an ever-larger share of these smaller budgets being allocated to serials, stark statistics demonstrating the low use of print monographs acquired via traditional approval plans, and perhaps a greater accountability on the part of the library to show return on investment (ROI). All of these and more have positioned the PDA model as leading the vanguard of a revolution in the way in which scholarly content is both perceived and acquired by librarians.

But most of what we've read and heard to date has much to do with libraries and with the aggregators' models and very little to do with publishers, or, for that matter, with the Academy. Libraries, publishers, and the Academy, like it or not, are deeply enmeshed in a symbiotic relationship, and abiding change for any one of us will naturally result in abiding changes for all. If the acquisition model is radically different five years from now then we are bound to see radical differences in both Publishing and the Academy. As with all radical market shifts, there are going to be gains and losses and, quite possibly, winners and losers. It goes without saying that PDA will have an impact on how academic publishers conduct business and there is potential, too, for a domino effect with regard to both academic libraries and the scholars they serve.

How Might PDA Affect our Business as Publishers of Scholarly Content?

At this point, it is irrelevant at this point to be "for" or "against" PDA. The more important issue is how to adjust our business as this model gains broader acceptance in the marketplace. We are now all quite used to the canard, oft perpetuated by the media, that Publishers live in abject fear of the changes taking place, and certainly there is a great deal of uncertainty in the market right now. But the pace of change has accelerated as well recently so we're not talking about major technological breakthroughs in the same way we used to when, for example, it was discovered that trains were a significant advance over the stagecoach. Change is happening monthly, weekly, almost daily, and that's a disorienting concept, at both the individual and the organizational level.

Should we, as publishers, be worried about what PDA might mean for future sales of academic content? We'd be foolish not to be, as our business model has been in place for decades with relatively little

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RA: And even if those other constituencies did not need to be satisfied, the requirements of genuine scholarship will almost always outstrip the resources available, leaving university administrators with extremely difficult decisions to make when allocating those resources among various deserving constituencies. 🌣

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*Do you have something to add? Join the debate on the Multigrain forum on the **Against the Grain Website** (http://www.against-the-grain. com/2011/02/multigrain-pda-stewardship/).*

change. "Just in case" acquisition of scholarly content has formed the bedrock of both university press (UP) and commercial academic press sales and has allowed for experimentation and risk-taking in other areas of our businesses. At **OUP**, as the publisher of well over 1,000 academic monographs annually, it's vital that we constantly examine the implications of this model to our business to ensure that we are able to survive, and indeed thrive, in a PDA world.

We understand why patron-driven acquisition as a model is attractive to libraries — only pay for what gets used, yet offer up to your user the same selection of titles, and more than likely an expanded list. Almost all of the librarians we've spoken with say they are perfectly happy to pay for what gets used but are tired of paying for what doesn't. So PDA is effectively turning our existing monograph sales model right on its head. Publishers have long relied on the fact that many libraries would purchase some to most of what we published, and the end result of that is a stable base of sales on which we could continue to seek out, edit, and publish important scholarly works for the global scholarly community. So where do we go from here, what are the right questions to be asking, and are there potentially positive outcomes?

PDA and Scholarship

As a university press, we essentially have two distinct constituents: libraries and academics. Within the Academy the credentialization process has been effectively outsourced to presses like **OUP**. Tenure, promotion, and other forms of advancement within the academy are predicated on what scholars publish, and real change to this system has yet to appear. But could PDA mean that fewer monographs are bought? If that turns out to be the case, it is inevitable that fewer monographs will be published. How would scholars compensate for what may be a smaller pool of publishing options as publishers become less willing to invest in the truly scholarly monograph?

Usage statistics on e-monographs will provide another interesting new means by which publishers may shape future acquisitions and thus influence the state of scholarship across disciplines. What chapters and content do they access? What search queries are not being met with good results, therefore showing a demand for new areas? Which disciplines demonstrate the greatest growth? Where are users going after they find their search results? How much are journal articles used in conjunction with print books, and how can we use that information to build new content connections? We need to know about the end user and what they are interested in, as the answers to these questions will provide publishers with more information about how their content is being used than was ever before imaginable in the old print environment. But publishers, librarians, and academics, need to be aware of the risks as well as the rewards and be aware of the potential for publishers to steer programs toward disciplines that are more heavily accessed.

The Role of Discoverability in Purchasing and a Shift to End-User Marketing

In a demand-driven world, the publishers who will have a more successful transition are the ones who do their utmost to ensure their content is being "driven to" at all points of the research spectrum. Discoverability through enhanced metadata is of key importance and it is truly up to publishers to drive the discoverability of their books.

One of the most obvious limitations of the monograph in print form, and certainly a contributor to low use, is the limitation of the printed book as a format for discoverability and the few options the end user has for finding information on the content. Before the advent of eBooks, users relied on the OPAC's limited tools for discoverability: subject coding, book title, author, and to a certain extent where available, the TOC. But how good is a book title at describing everything a book contains?

Publishers and authors don't come up with titles with the purposes of discoverability in mind. It's more about having a hook and being somewhat descriptive. But we now have a tremendous opportunity to help end users discover what is inside the pages of the books and help generate greater use of monographs than was ever before possible. In an informal study[1] conducted by the **University of Chicago** Libraries comparing the use of print monographs that also had e-versions available in **Oxford Scholarship Online**, the results showed that the eBooks had, on average, a circulation (or use) basis of 16 times their print counterpart. That kind of statistic should be heartening to monograph publishers and help them realize that if they can better harness the variety of ways book content is discovered, they have the potential for real growth in usage.

As a critical adjunct to discoverability, we need to work more closely with librarians than we ever have before, and we need to understand, at a fundamental level and in a truly nuts-and-bolts way, how libraries function and fulfill their mission. At a recent annual gathering of academic publishing industry professionals, it was surprising to find many attendees were not familiar with an OPAC or MARC records. The time for having a vague understanding of our market is over. Those who don't learn risk becoming irrelevant to the very market they serve.

There is also potential upside for the print-on-demand (POD) model as an adjunct to discoverability of e-monographs. Programs like the **Springer MyCopy** print-on-demand service offer the end user who prefers to read long-form scholarship in printed form with a low-cost POD version. Even with **Springer** being an STM publisher, where scholars and researchers have more widely embraced e-content as a primary delivery mechanism, there still is a demand for printed works. In the humanities and social sciences, the shift to "e" has been, and continues to be, a much more gradual process. As recently as November 2010, the *New York Times* profiled the slow shift and emerging trends in an article, "Digital Keys for Unlocking Humanities Riches."[2]

In the end, broad adoption of patron-driven acquisition has great potential to alter how scholarly content is acquired and published. How exactly this is to be done, to what extent, and over what timeframe, still remains to be seen.

PDA and Aggregators — The Challenges for a Publisher

It is also worth noting that discoverability and the central role it plays for publishers in a demand-driven world raises a multitude of questions about how to spur use and drive sales in a disaggregated market place. How can we, as publishers, do a good job driving users to our content if that content is located in a variety of different platforms? Each of those aggregators' platforms has its own URL for the book, meaning multiple points where the book is located. How can a publisher drive users to all those locations? How do we know which library has which platform(s) and has chosen to offer our particular books via PDA? While it is clear that there are benefits to choosing a single platform and having the additional services and publisher selection, even this simple outlining of issues makes it apparent that it's more complex from the publisher side when coupled with PDA.

On publishers' proprietary platforms, and particularly on those with rich metadata, we have the means by which we can drive users directly to the content in a single home and connect the user with other relevant content, often editorially curated, whether from the publishers' platforms, or to other publishers' content that the editors feel merit the connection. This isn't intended as a means of self-promotion. We know that libraries would like the ease of acquisition that a single platform can provide, but we also feel that it's important to explain the differences and spur discussion so that all sides enter the picture with a fuller understanding of what the issues are for the others in a patron-driven world. With all the movement in **University Press** eBook publishing in the last several months, the differences between publisher platforms, publisher initiatives like **JSTOR** and **MUSE**, and the eBook aggregator offerings will become more pronounced. There are advantages to each, and it will be a time of interesting developments.

Conclusion

From the publisher's perspective, to survive in a patron-driven world, we have to excel in driving users to our content, and there is ample opportunity to do that. But there remain a host of questions. Challenges to the finances of monograph publishers as they adapt to a post-approval plan world will shape the future publishing programs as more and more scholarly programs accept e as their primary format for monographs. The next year will be the first one that sees wide-scale university press e-publishing as well as wide-scale adoption of PDA as a component of acquisition. A year from now, we look forward to reviewing the landscape again and seeing where PDA has taken publishers, libraries, and academics. 🌳
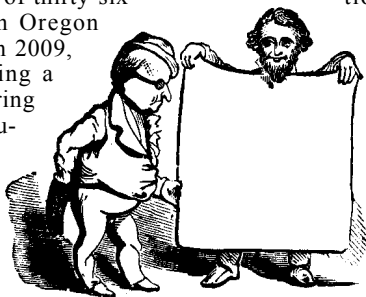
Endnotes

1. **Mouw, James**, "Comparison of **OUP Oxford Scholarship Online** monograph use in print and online at the **University of Chicago**," 23 September 2009.

2. **Cohen, Patricia**, "Digital Keys for Unlocking Humanities Riches" *New York Times*, *http://www.nytimes.com/2010/11/17/arts/17digital.html*.

Pioneering Partnerships: Building a Demand-Driven Consortium eBook Collection

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The Orbis Cascade Alliance (The Alliance) is a consortium of thirty-six academic libraries in Oregon and Washington. Starting in 2009, the Alliance began exploring a consortium program for sharing eBooks across member institutions. The Alliance Council, consisting of library deans and directors, charged two different groups to investigate and design a shared eBook program. A third group, the Demand-Driven Acquisitions Pilot Implementation Team (DDAPIT), is currently working on the implementation. This article will describe the charges assigned to the groups, the models that were investigated, final recommendations for a purchase model and a vendor, and issues encountered in implementing a consortium program.

In 2009, the Alliance Council created an eBook task force and gave it a charge to: "Consider and provide recommendations to implement a consortial approach to purchasing eBooks, with the goal of sharing titles purchased by individual members. Examine the idea of centrally funding an eBook collection to which all Alliance members have access."[1] This eBook Team submitted its final recommendations to the Alliance Council