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Going Above and Beyond: Building an Interdisciplinary Undergraduate Research Collection via an ILL POD Program

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Purchase-on-demand (POD) via Interlibrary Loan (ILL) is a hybrid model of collection building and borrowing that can serve library users on at least two levels: providing just-in-time resources to a single patron, and (if the items are added to the library's holdings) growing the collections for use by future researchers in similar subject areas. Each library must evaluate its own population to develop an approach to POD, if one is warranted at all, but speedy turnaround times and relevant acquisitions would seem to be two reasonable goals of such a program.

At **Schaffer Library**, we performed a case study in POD collection development and an exploration of whether these goals were met by this experimental project. This study investigated turnaround time and undergraduate interdisciplinary research applicability of print monographs purchased during a two-year pilot POD project.

POD programs generally cite speed of delivery as an important, if not essential, element. **Perdue** and **Van Fleet's** (1999) 1990 POD study, the first on the topic, involved rush ordering of in-print titles. "Shipment within one week from an online bookseller" was a criterion of **Purdue University Libraries'** landmark Books on Demand program (**Anderson** 2002), and one they maintained through a decade of POD ordering (**Anderson** 2010). **Bracke** (2010) also set a one-week shipping cap, and a publication date requirement, the latter being a parameter other institutions have used to target recently published (i.e., immediately shippable) materials (**Anderson** et al 2002, 2010; **Ward** et al 2003; **Comer** and **Lorenzen** 2005; **Campbell** 2006; **Coopey** and **Snowman** 2006; **Gibson** and **Kirkwood** 2009; **Fountain** and **Frederiksen** 2012; **Herrera** and **Greenwood** 2012; **Schmidt** 2012).

Recorded turnaround times, vendor selections, and the extent to which they are

described in the POD literature vary. Before the availability of online ordering, **Bucknell's** average delivery of in-print and in-stock rushed items in 1990 was 2.5 weeks (**Perdue** and **Van Fleet** 1990). **Amazon** was the preferred vendor for several individual projects (**Ward** et al 2003; **Comer** and **Lorenzen** et al 2005; **Coopey** and **Snowman** 2006); average delivery times ranged from 3.88 to eight days. **Amazon** was also the top bookseller for POD programs in the **Pacific Northwest's Orbis Cascade Alliance**, with **Alibris** and "Other" tied for second (**Fountain** and **Frederiksen** 2012). The **University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign** rush-ordered available YBP items in an average of three days (**Wiley** and **Clarage** 2012). **Anderson** et al (2010) and **Hussong-Christian** and **Goergen-Doll** (2010) employed patron satisfaction surveys to assess turnaround times; the majority of responders agreed that their items arrived in a timely fashion.

Borrower type and disciplinary use are other ways of evaluating POD programs. **Ward** et al (2003) and **Anderson** et al (2002) found that the overall distribution of POD user statuses was comparable to patterns seen for traditional ILL at their institutions. **Bracke** (2010) discovered that many POD volumes at **Purdue** were interdisciplinary between two subject areas, applied to a wide range of disciplines, or addressed an emerging area of study. POD patrons were also unexpectedly borrowing outside of their designated disciplines with greater frequency than they were within them, suggesting an interdisciplinary component to research and highlighting the way POD can uniquely address cross-departmental studies (**Anderson** et al 2002). **Bracke** (2010) and **Tyler** et al (2010) observed that the majority of POD borrowers were graduate students in the liberal arts; for the latter, "interdisciplinary studies" was a category of disciplinary affiliation recorded in their purchase statistics.

Anderson et al (2010) hypothesized that graduate students may be exploring more cutting-edge research than their faculty counterparts and are fueling the trend in interdisciplinary book requesting.

Background

Union College is a small, private, liberal arts college in Schenectady, N.Y., specializing in undergraduate research and interdisciplinary programming. **Union** serves 2,133 full-time undergraduates on a ten-week trimester system. With strengths including "close faculty-student interaction; emphasis on student scholarship ...; strong departments in liberal arts and engineering; [and] interdisciplinary programs and majors" (**Union College** 2008), **Union** promotes original undergraduate research via its mandatory Sophomore Research Seminar (SRS) and cross-curricular senior theses and capstone projects.

At **Schaffer Library**, our service goals are centered on meeting the information needs of undergraduates. As a curricular support center at a fast-paced trimester institution, we are always looking for fast and reliable ways to connect our patrons to valued resources. While for borrowing through the ConnectNY Consortium we have a dedicated courier that promises delivery of print materials within three days, the majority of our print ILL requests are filled via UPS or USPS. Over the period from 1 June 2008 to 1 June 2010, the average turnaround time for loans through ILL was 10.78 calendar days, or around a tenth of our trimester length. Premium acquisitions services offering rush shipping are becoming more common and at more affordable price points. We suspected that we could reduce the turnaround time on certain ILL print titles by purchasing them in this manner, and we were willing to spend more for the added-value service. Thus began our POD pilot project.

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into Chinese: the *Encyclopedia Britannica* and *Cambridge University Press's Science and Civilization in China*, the life project of **Joseph Needham**. The next will be the *Berkshire Encyclopedia of World History*, 2nd edition, edited by **William H. McNeill**, **Jerry H. Bentley**, **David Christian**, et al., published by **Berkshire Publishing Group** in Great Barrington, Massachusetts. The translation

is being undertaken by **SDX Joint Publishing (Shanghai) Co. Ltd.** and will take three years. Like Wow!!! Congratulations, **Karen** and **Berkshire**!

Y'all know what is so great about editing **ATG** and running the **Charleston Conference**? It's people like y'all! I am always getting notes from old friends and new friends. It makes life fun and worthwhile! Anyway, today I heard from **Roger Press** <roger@academicrightspress.com>. Remember him? He was one of the driving forces behind **Classical Music Library** one of the earliest databases of streaming media for

libraries, in an academic format. **Classical Music Library** is now owned by **Stephen Rhind-Tutt's Alexander Street Press**. Anyway, I remember vividly like it was yesterday when I was on the **ALA exhibit** floor ten years ago, and I heard this wonderful classical music wafting through the crowd. I followed it and ran into **Roger** and **CML**! Continuing, I just got an email today from **Roger** who is developing a new type of database which was launched in June 2012. It is called **Academic Charts Online: International Popular Music** and provides

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From a collection development perspective, we had modest hopes of adding titles to the collection that would support particular undergraduate initiatives: the original, often interdisciplinary, research being conducted by students at **Union**, predominantly in our Sophomore Research Seminar (SRS) and senior thesis programs. We, therefore, anticipated trends in requesting that would be reflective of these initiatives: for example, more borrowers in their sophomore and senior years of study or of materials on SRS or other research subjects not anticipated by our Collection Development Office. We didn't foresee a large number of titles coming to our shelves through POD (the number of print monographs borrowed via traditional ILL in the year of the first pilot was 553, compared to the 6,944 we added to the collections via traditional acquisition streams), but we wanted to build the collections collaboratively to address the unexpected needs of our researchers in a timely fashion.

Methodology

We settled on the parameters (Table 1) and workflow (Figure 1) of the one-year pilot. After our experience with this first year, referred to as phase 1, there were several areas that we felt needed to be tweaked. One was the turnaround time, which was not as fast as we had hoped. Another was more regulated processes and data so we could retrieve statistics about these transactions after the fact. The total number of POD books ordered was even smaller than predicted, so we decided to be more flexible about criteria for inclusion in the project. Revised parameters (Table 2) and workflow (Figure 2) were established for the second pilot (phase 2).

Results

During the two-year pilot, 104 titles were ordered according to POD parameters. The mean turnaround time for phase 1 was 23 calendar days, with a median of 13 days. The phase 2 mean was 2.68; the median was three days. The total cost of purchasing 44 titles in phase 1 was \$3056.11, before shipping. The pre-shipping cost of the 60 phase 2 titles was \$2316.36. All titles were checked out at least once, with several titles being checked out up to five times.

Of the total requesters of these items, around 45 percent were faculty (Figure 3). The remaining requests were initiated almost entirely by students, with sophomores and seniors requesting in larger numbers than freshmen and juniors. In each of the phases, there were more senior borrowers than sophomores.

Each book was matched to at least one, and up to six, disciplines offered at **Union**. The majority of titles in each phase were associated with two or more disciplines (Figure 4). Requested materials represented a range of 33 departments and programs from across the curriculum (Figure 5).

In phase 1, turnaround time exceeded that of traditional ILL (10.78 days) by 12 days. This

Table 1: Parameters for one-year pilot (Phase 1)

Not available in Schaffer Library or ConnectNY
Request initiated by Union College faculty, staff, or student
Published within last 10 years
No price cap
Available from regular book vendor as rush item within 24 hours
All subject areas
Print books only

Figure 1: Workflow for one-year pilot (Phase 1)

Table 2: Parameters for phase 2

Not available in Schaffer Library or ConnectNY
Request initiated by Union College faculty, staff, or student
Available from Amazon with one-day shipping
No price cap
Print books, CDs, DVDs acceptable
All subject areas

number was in part inflated by books ordered before publication. The median for phase 1 was 13 days. By altering the workflow to focus on **Amazon** one-day shipping, we were able to reduce the turnaround time in phase 2 to an average of 2.68 days, which is a 75% improvement over traditional ILL.

As suspected, the cost of the project was not prohibitive. In each phase we spent around 1% of our total budget for circulating monographs; the percentage of books acquired in each phase was also around 1% of total books acquired.

From a circulation perspective we were pleased to see that all of the items were checked out at least once, and, in some cases, multiple times. This would seem to indicate that we were able to deliver these items "just in time" for patron use and that they were relevant to the studies of one or more researchers.

Unlike some large research universities whose POD patrons are mainly graduate students, we saw a roughly 50-50 split between faculty and undergraduate borrowers, which

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demonstrates our contribution to undergraduate research initiatives. We hypothesized that there would be a greater number of senior and sophomore borrowers than freshman and juniors, as the former are the intensive research years at **Union**, which was found to be the case. Some requests could be directly attributed to research courses offered at **Union**, such as a title on **Malcolm X** that was ordered during the term when the African American Protest Movements SRS was offered. We saw other titles that match submitted honors theses; an example is *In Pursuit of Cultural Immersion*, written by the student who requested *The Handbook of Practice and Research in Study Abroad*. This title, in particular, is indicative of the kinds of materials POD is best suited to acquire; while **Union** has a strong terms abroad program, the perspective on cultural immersion is something the student developed by combining her curricular interests. The Collection Development Office did not predict this need, but POD filled it quickly.

The interdisciplinary emphasis at **Union** is reflected in the nature of the titles requested. Not only did the majority of titles apply to more than one subject area, but most subject areas were addressed by more than one book. While we cannot be certain of the precise need each title was filling, we did see some trends: a high match rate (26 books out of 104) on American studies, an inherently interdisciplinary program at **Union**; and an array of Asian studies program matches on books also about history, music, performing arts, sociology, visual arts, or women's and gender studies, all requested by senior students in phase 2. Faculty requests add another five subject areas to the Asian studies match list in the second phase, reinforcing the projects' interdisciplinary connections. It also suggests that future undergraduate researchers will be supported in these fields of study, and that these POD materials will have applicability beyond their original requester's work.

Future Considerations

As we discovered, one of the major areas of utility of our POD program is with interdisciplinary research projects at **Union**. Perhaps in addition to this just-in-time model of acquisition we could partner with students or supervising faculty to build these collections proactively. We should also question whether we should continue to consider faculty requests for POD. Our primary mission is to support the undergraduate curriculum, after all. Future investigations could assess whether faculty-requested titles are useful for students.

One of the motivators for this project was to improve turnaround time and therefore user satisfaction. While we drastically cut average delivery time, we are unsure if this has completely met user needs. We should survey recipients of both POD and traditional ILL requests to determine if our users value the expedience of the POD program. We could also ask about formats, to determine whether eBooks should be included.

against the grain people profile

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BORN AND LIVED: Born in Brunswick, ME; lived in Burlington, VT (2000-2005); Boston, MA (2005-2006); Walla Walla, WA (2006-2008); Niskayuna, NY (2008-present).

EARLY LIFE: Maine by birth, books by choice.

PROFESSIONAL CAREER AND ACTIVITIES: **Union College**, Schaffer Library as Shared Resources Librarian, 2008-present; **Whitman College**, Penrose Library as Reference and Information Literacy Librarian, 2006-2008.

FAMILY: Husband, one-year-old son.

PETS: Two orange cats.

IN MY SPARE TIME I LIKE TO: Read, play with my child, cook, and work on our house.

FAVORITE BOOKS: *Wind-Up Bird Chronicle* (Haruki Murakami); *The Great Gatsby* (F. Scott Fitzgerald); *The Ramen King and I* (Andy Raskin).

PET PEEVES/WHAT MAKES ME MAD: Laziness, refusal to use turn signals.

PHILOSOPHY: Teach a man to fish; and you have fed him for a lifetime.

MOST MEMORABLE CAREER ACHIEVEMENT: Collaborating with my fantastic colleagues to plan some well-attended library events.

GOAL I HOPE TO ACHIEVE FIVE YEARS FROM NOW: Finding a flexible, functional, interesting, and effective method for information literacy.

HOW/WHERE DO I SEE THE INDUSTRY IN FIVE YEARS: Hopefully we will realize that no matter the format, our core goals of supporting education (whether formal or informal) remain the same. 🐾

Figure 2: Parameters for phase 2

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We should continue standardizing statistics-keeping between our ILL system (ILLiad) and our ILS (Millennium). This will allow us to look at longitudinal data to inform the direction of the project. Accessing student information from our WebAdvisor system would also allow us to track requests from SRS and other coursework.

The rapid turnaround time that we achieved with Amazon's one-day shipping was ideal, and the cost was not prohibitive, but we should look carefully at any vendors who may provide rush shipping at a reasonable price. We have recently implemented an Amazon Prime membership, where two-day shipping is free and one-day delivery is \$3.99 per item. This should allow us the flexibility to choose the best delivery option for each researcher at Union. With these revisions and consistent assessment, we hope to develop a sustainable and thriving purchase-on-demand program.

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Figure 3: Percentage of POD purchase by patron type

Figure 4: Total disciplinary matches per POD title

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against the grain people profile

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EARLY LIFE: 1984 Pleasant Valley Library Read-a-thon Winner.

PROFESSIONAL CAREER AND ACTIVITIES: **Union College**, Schaffer Library as Head of Collection Development 2005-July 2012; Reference Librarian 2001-2004; Soon-to-be "Outreach Librarian" (official title to come), August 2012.

RECENT ARTICLE: **Jefts, Kara, and Courtney Seymour.** "Partnering with Multicultural Groups to Mount a Juried Art Exhibition." *College & Research Libraries News* 73, no. 4 (April 2012): 218-222.

RECENT AWARD: **Union College**, UNITAS Community-Building Award, Co-recipient, 2011.

FAMILY: Husband, two-year-old son.

PETS: Two dogs (boxers).

IN MY SPARE TIME I LIKE TO: Run, read, play with my kid and dogs. It's not spare in the sense of "optional," though. Those are life commitments, requirements.

FAVORITE BOOKS: *Little Dorrit*, *Our Mutual Friend* (**Charles Dickens**); *The Great Gatsby* (**F. Scott Fitzgerald**); *Cathedral* (**Raymond Carver**).

PET PEEVES/WHAT MAKES ME MAD: Sense of entitlement, procrastination. Those are two that come to mind right now.

PHILOSOPHY: I'm here to support student learning and development.

MOST MEMORABLE CAREER ACHIEVEMENT: Co-curating an annual LGBTQ art exhibition at **Union** (building cross-campus partnerships with other campus units, both student and staff-run).

GOAL I HOPE TO ACHIEVE FIVE YEARS FROM NOW: Planning the ultimate, well-attended library outreach event (that can be replicated).

HOW/WHERE DO I SEE THE INDUSTRY IN FIVE YEARS: We'll be accessing more archives online but still struggling to strike the eBook/print book balance. 🐾

Figure 5: Disciplinary matches by individual POD title

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popular music chart data from around the world. I was talking to my music librarian about this and he was very interested. Hopefully **Roger** will be in **Charleston** at the **Conference** this year! www.academiccharts.com

Still on the subject of the **Charleston Conference**, the dashing **Jack Montgomery** (what a voice! he is a fabulous singer and once was a radio announcer and hopefully he is going to play at the **Charleston Conference Gala Reception** Thursday night). Anyway, **Anne Meyers** (Librarian for Acquisitions & Continuing Resources, Yale Law Library <Anne.meyers@Yale.edu> who was our online **Star of the Week** recently, tells me she used to work with **Jack** at the

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