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Out of the Shadows: A Public Face for Acquisitions in Academic Libraries

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A Study of the DDA of E-Book ...
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is in print books. The limitation of this study is the short course of the trials — only 37 days for each test. A longer trial period would have resulted in more data to analyze and would perhaps offer more reliable conclusions.

Method

The source of data collected was a large university library located in the Southeastern United States. This particular library was known to have run a pilot DDA program, and the head of the acquisitions department was willing to share the information that would permit this study to take place. This study primarily used existing documents as data — the purchasing data held in existing spreadsheets and in the integrated library system (ILS) and the circulation data captured by eBook content providers. This type of data collection, also known as a content analysis, is described by Wildemuth as "nonreactive measure or as data collected through unobtrusive methods." (2009). That is, the collection of the data itself does not constitute an intervention. This is advantageous because the data collection does not affect the data itself. This method is disadvantageous, however, in that it was impossible to collect any data that were not already collected by the ILS or the content provider.

First, a spreadsheet was obtained listing all the eBooks purchased as a part of the demand-driven acquisitions pilot program. This spreadsheet contained title, classification, and cost data for 347 books. A spreadsheet was also obtained listing all the 1,722 eBooks purchased on the library's e-approval plan over the lifetime of the program. In order to compare a similar number of titles, an online random number generator was used to pick the first title, number 1,111 on the list. Thereafter every fourth title on the list was selected, resulting in a list of 437 e-approval titles to compare with the demand-driven acquisitions titles.

eBooks were compared to eBooks rather than eBooks to print books because, as **van Dyk** noted, there are many overhead costs in the acquisition of print books. Comparing print books to eBooks would make it difficult to control for differences in overhead costs. The overhead costs of acquiring eBooks is beyond the scope of this study, however. Thus, as in much of the existing literature, the raw cost to purchase the book was compared, rather than the entire cost to acquire. This is potentially disadvantageous if the cost to acquire a DDA title is significantly different from the cost to acquire an approval plan book, but even then, the study has validity as a study of the cost of DDA and approval plan eBooks.

While the spreadsheets of DDA titles contained cost information for each title, the spreadsheets of e-approval plan books did not. So it was necessary to look up each e-approval title in the university's integrated library system to find cost data and add them to the spreadsheet. A snapshot of circulation data for three months of the study period was obtained from the content providers. This information was then added to the spreadsheets where it could be manipulated to find an aggregate cost per circulation for e-approvals and for demand-driven acquisitions titles. Essentially, the cost of a specific title, divided by the number of circulations during the study period, is the cost per circulation during the study period. These figures can be averaged to find aggregate figures for DDA or e-approval titles.

Results

The average cost of e-approval plan books in the sample was $89, while the average cost of a DDA title was $71.10. E-approval plan titles saw an average of 5.2 circulations per title over the study period of January-March 2012. This gives an average cost per use of $17.12 for e-approval plan titles during the study period. The DDA titles saw an average of 38.7 circulations per title, giving an average cost per use of $1.84 over the study period. This same theme of high circulation of DDA titles and low cost per use can be seen in **Carrico** and **Leonard** (2011).

In both cases, the titles did not see even usage. Many titles were not used at all, while a few had very high circulation numbers. (**Nixon** and **Saunders** discuss the theme of higher circulation of books-on-demand in their 2010 article.) In any case, the DDA titles had a greater number of average circulations per title and a lower average cost per use over the study period, suggesting that they are a better bargain than e-approval plans.

Conclusion

Just-in-time collection development offers an excellent bargain — higher circulations than e-approval plans at a lower cost. Interestingly, as with e-approvals, usage is uneven, with many books receiving little or no usage in a given period while others receive extensive usage. Future work would include examining the pertinence to the collection of books collected through the DDA pilot program and the DDA books' contribution to the long-term health of the collection.

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Out of the Shadows: A Public Face for Acquisitions in Academic Libraries

by **Lindsey Reno** (Acquisitions Librarian/Subject Specialist, University of New Orleans, Earl K. Long Library) <lreno@uno.edu>

After seven years working as an Acquisitions Librarian, I have come to the disturbing realization that I am, in fact, in the wrong department. Nothing thrills me more than hunting down obscure materials and putting them into the hands of patrons, figuratively speaking. Acquisitions is all about the patrons — getting them what they need, when they need it, while not necessarily interacting with said patrons. With the advent of patron-driven acquisitions (PDA), this has become even more apparent. We've only just dipped our toes into the proverbial PDA pool, often pre-choosing titles based on an approval profile that is based upon a careful consideration of what materials a given library *should* have. This implies the presumption that patrons cannot *really* be trusted to choose materials for the library, and it gives the patron only the illusion of choice.

I suggest that we join forces with reference and interlibrary loan departments, working *with* patrons, using reference interviews, to collaborate on collection decisions. At many libraries, where collection development and reference are done by librarians from various departments, this would not be too much of a stretch. I am proposing a new type of reference interview where librarians would have the ability to use every option at their disposal — in-library resources, interlibrary loan, and purchasing — to get patrons what they need, while working at the desk. This option would also extend to virtual reference interactions via telephone, SMS, instant messenger, Skype, and out-of-library interactions, such as roving reference and embedded librarianship. This could be

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accomplished either by reorganizing and combining departments or through interdepartmental collaboration.

There seems to be agreement among librarians that PDA is a good thing. Current models of patron-driven acquisitions have patrons choosing from a group of pre-loaded records, which either generate a print book order, or give the patron access to an eBook, after a predetermined number of clicks. The records that are loaded into the catalog are often based upon the library's approval profile with their monograph vendor. To patrons, this may seem as if they have been given a choice, when in fact, they are only choosing among titles that have already been selected for them.

So why have PDA programs grown into such wide use? One reason is that circulation statistics for PDA titles are higher than those chosen by librarians.[1, 2, 3] Why are librarians choosing to use this type of PDA program? It is easy and safe. It allows us to hold onto our preconceived notions of what an academic library collection is supposed to be and to maintain control of its development. It allows us to boost circulation statistics and feel good about letting users have a little input on the collection.

The new PDA model that I am proposing is designed with academic libraries in mind. The basic idea is as follows: when working with library users, during a reference interview or a research consultation, the librarian or staff member, would work with the user to identify the materials that would most help them with their research needs, using all of the tools available to them, including the library catalog, databases, and vendor Websites. If an item is not available in the library, and depending on availability and time constraints, the item could be purchased or requested via ILL for the patron, while he or she is still sitting in front of the librarian. This new PDA model could also be built into a unified service point within the library.

What would the workflow look like? This workflow would take a bit of refocusing in the Acquisitions Department. The department would have to be less focused on efficiency and more focused on patrons. There would be less batching of repetitive tasks and more on-the-fly purchasing, which would effectively increase workload. Considering dwindling book budgets and declining reference statistics, this does not necessarily sound like a bad thing. In 2006, the Library Administration at **Texas A&M University** made the decision to put a Public Services Librarian in charge of their Monograph Acquisitions Unit, hoping to improve user experiences. They found that this new perspective allowed the unit to have more of a focus on patrons and there was a vast improvement in user satisfaction.[4]

The process would be similar to the usual reference interview or research consultation: showing researchers how to use tools while finding resources along the way. This process often includes moments of disappointment when both parties notice items that would be perfect but that the library does not own. At this point in the process, the librarian and patron would discuss how best to get these items. Some considerations would include: Is it in print and is it available from vendors? Do other libraries have it, and how likely is it that it will be available via ILL? How likely is it that this will work for the patron's research, and would they use it again? Could they imagine other patrons making use of it? When is the paper or project due? They would decide together how to get the items. The staff member would complete all of the necessary acquisitions processes, according to the established workflow at that institution, during the interaction, while making notes about what would be acquired and when it could be expected in a Word document. The patron would leave the interview with a prescription of sorts, a document outlining everything that the staff member had gone over with them, including the items that had to be purchased or borrowed and when the patron could expect them. With the popularity of Websites like *Amazon.com*, patrons are used to evaluating books without having them in hand, making this type of interaction all the more feasible and useful.

What would it take to get there? Librarians and staff in acquisitions, interlibrary loan, and reference would have to be cross-trained. To help maintain the cohesion of this collaborative group, they might establish it as a named team. It would also be helpful to have regular team meetings, including representative staff from departments such as Acquisitions, who might not be serving at the desk, to facilitate communication among all parties. They might also design a series of assessments to evaluate the new workflow, including surveys and interviews to evaluate user satisfaction and perception of collection quality among both library users and librarians.

Why is this a good idea? The library would be purchasing more of what users actually want, based on their research needs, instead of relying on what they find in the catalog. It would empower users to influence the shape of the collection in their library. It would let users know that purchasing is an option, and would make them more likely to approach library staff with requests for purchases in the future. It addresses the users' needs more effectively by engaging them in a dialogue. It would be a more positive experience for the user because the staff member would be more empowered to get them what they need. It would bring acquisitions into public view. Turnaround time would be faster, in theory, because purchasing would actually occur during the interview, while the patron is still at the desk, instead of doing it later, as a part of a batched process. It would increase cross-training in the library and would increase the number of staff who could help at public service desks. We could avoid those common moments of disappointment during the reference interview by increasing the possibilities for our users. We would learn more about users' format preferences and their attitudes and perceptions about the library. One assessment of an ILL PDA program at **Oregon State University** indicated that patrons would prefer to have some input on library purchases of their ILL requests because they might not always feel that the materials are worth purchasing or appropriate for the library.[5]

Anne C. Barnhart, from the **University of California, Santa Barbara**, wrote about a related project in her article "Want Buy-In? Let Your Students Do the Buying! A Case Study of Course-Integrated Collection Development." She created a collection development project as an assignment in a library credit course for graduate students, and with positive results. The students were given a budget and told to select books for the library as their final project. **Barnhart** reported that the students were excited to be able to spend the library's money; and in subsequent semesters, other students told her that they were taking the class because they had heard about the final book-buying project.[6] This shows that students do have an interest in the library and what materials are purchased. It also indicates that word of mouth among students is more powerful than we might realize.

Incorporating acquisitions into reference interviews and research consultations is just one method among many of using patron-driven acquisitions to build a well-rounded collection that will actually be used rather than developing a collection based on ideas of what an academic library ought to hold. To build a just-in-case collection, in the current economic climate, would be a waste of the little money that we do have to spend on books. There are so many possibilities and opportunities for librarians to allow users to be more involved in collection development and to collaborate on collection development decisions. Let's create a future where we can finally let go of our approval profiles and build a collection that matters.

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ous expectations generated among members of our information ecosystem. Keeping in mind both the emerging options (and also restrictions) in content formats and use "rights," as well as the specific mission of each respective library, ethical engagement with our community must account for the variables that go into decisions about content acquisition. Recognizing the mutual dependence of all the stakeholders in the ecosystem (and the expectations that such dependence, in turn, conditions) is a critical starting point for determining our obligations. However, expectations born of mutual dependence do not always imply that a rigid or preset structure of ethical obligations can be imposed. Balancing the library's mission and resource limitations with the shifting economic, legal, and social context in which it functions creates a challenge to universalizing obligations.

The "question" of obligations in terms of ethical decision-making is not really a single question to be answered definitively. Rather, it is more a question of how to think about expectations and related obligations. Beyond some basic, foundational obligations (e.g., ordering selected content, paying invoices, etc.), subtle expectations are just that: expectations. We are more likely (and most productively) to address competing expectations through an approach that favors negotiation to pronouncement. We should frame our approach to ethics as a way of thinking that

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Patron-Driven Acquisitions: Integrating Print Books with eBooks

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Introduction and Background

Cowles Library at **Drake University** has had a successful eBook patron-driven acquisitions program in place — using **E-Book Library (EBL)** — since fall 2009. We are a small, private, academic library with 4623 FTE, and we're one of the first academic libraries in the Midwest to employ PDA. We deem the program to be successful because we have broadened access to materials (with 124,000+ titles available via our catalog) at the point of need at a minimal cost. Because the value of eBooks available to our users is over $10 million, it would obviously not be feasible to purchase these titles "just-in-case." Between short-term loans and purchases, we have spent a total of $37k over the last three years on this project, which averages slightly over $12k per year.

The reasons we decided to expand PDA into print were the same as for the **EBL** program: expanding access to more materials and more effective utilization of the monograph budget. We undertook a study to examine usage of books purchased on our approval plan with Blackwell from 2007-2009. We defined usage to be a checkout or in-house use. During that time we spent $238k on 5858 books. Of those, 1970 (34%) were used at least once, and 3888 (66%) were not used. We consider a "use" to be the measure of success, and given that measure, our approval plan has been less than successful. We are aware that this closely mirrors other studies (Kent, 1979; Task Force on Print Collection Usage, 2010).

Selecting a Vendor

We initiated the **EBL** program as a pilot and have since dedicated a permanent budget line to this form of access. Since we had been successful with PDA eBooks, we sought to determine the feasibility of adding print to the mix. We were looking to avoid duplication between the formats, and we decided early on that we preferred a vendor that could provide an integrated print and electronic book profile. In 2011 we began evaluating a handful of vendors for the integrated PDA pilot, and while most vendors offer both electronic and print formats, we ultimately decided on **Ingram-Coutts** because of their ability to integrate PDA formats the way we desired. We did not previously have a relationship with **Ingram** but had seen their system in operation at **ALA** 2011 in New Orleans and thought it could work for us. The final deciding factor was **Ingram's** ability to meet the technical objectives we had outlined for the request process.

Technical Objectives

We had two technical objectives we hoped to accomplish with the pilot. First, we wanted to make the request process as convenient for the patron as possible. One convenience is the ability to view book availability information before filling out the request form, and the **Ingram** stock-check API allowed us to provide that. Another convenience is the option to rush books when needed; we realized that if the service could make PDA books available to patrons in a few days, rather than a few weeks, it would be an attractive option.

Second, we wanted to provide our Acquisitions Department with the necessary information about both the book (e.g., fund code) and the requester (e.g., patron status) without requiring extra work of either the patron or the Acquisitions Associate. We accomplished this by customizing the URL in the 856|u MARC field and creating the necessary fields in the request form. For example, the fund code is provided by **Ingram** as a parameter of the URL (see the "Customization and APIs" section below for an example), so when the user clicks on the URL to arrive at the request form, the fund code is stored in the form as a hidden field value. Upon form submission, the fund code is then included with the rest of the field values that are emailed to Acquisitions.

Building Profiles with Faculty Involvement

We decided on a pilot project with our four professional programs as subject areas: Business, Journalism, Education, and Pharmacy. We have exceptionally-engaged liaisons from these programs and had already garnered their agreement to work with us on developing profiles for this project. These departments agreed to divert their library monograph allocation to fund the pilot; rather than submit monograph (print or electronic) orders for "just-in-case" purchasing, they would instead let users and faculty in their areas find and purchase materials at the point of need.

Our profiling sessions included representatives from Ingram, the Collection Development Coordinator, the Acquisitions Manager, the

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