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Biz of Acq — Promoting eBooks at the University of Maryland Eastern Shore

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Introduction

Established in 1886, the **University of Maryland Eastern Shore (UMES)**, Maryland's historically black 1890 land-grant institution, provides high-quality education to qualified students of diverse backgrounds in the liberal arts, health professions, sciences, engineering and technology, and teacher education. Degrees are offered at the Bachelors, Masters, and Doctoral levels. It has 206 full-time instructional faculty and 149 adjunct faculty. As of fall 2011, **UMES** had a total headcount enrollment of 4,509 students (i.e., 3,862 undergraduates, and 647 graduates). It aspires to attain a Doctoral Research University Carnegie Classification status in the near future. In fulfilling its mission, **UMES** is supported by the **Frederick Douglass Library**.

The Library's mission is to acquire, organize, preserve, and provide access to books, serials, and other resources in all formats. Its main goal is to support the learning, discovery, and engagement activities of the faculty, students, and staff of **UMES**. As of February 10, 2012, the library's total collection was 183,491 titles and 254,725 volumes. The titles include 43,597 eBooks and 305 current serial subscriptions, 89 of which are e-journals. In addition, the library subscribes to 150 databases. For an institution of **UMES's** size and age, this collection needs enhancement to meet the needs of the university effectively.

Book Satisfaction Survey

For several years, the library's collection development policy has been adversely affected by budget cuts. Librarians were concerned about this trend especially because it happened at a time when the university was launching new graduate programs. Therefore, in 2007 **Mrs. Theresa Dadson** (the Coordinator of Acquisitions and Collection Development) and I (**Mrs. Cynthia Nyirenda**) conducted a book satisfaction survey. The main purpose of the survey was to identify areas in the library's book collection and other resources and services that require improvement, and to use the results as a basis for requesting more funds for the library.

The survey consisted of 30 questions comprising 25 closed-ended and five open-ended items. The Lickert type scale used for some of the close-ended items solicited information concerning the patrons' extent of use and satisfaction with the book collection and services provided by **Frederick Douglass Library**. Open-ended questions, on the other hand, provided opportunities for patrons to share their opinions about the library resources. The survey was administered to 4,075 patrons. Three hundred and seventy nine responses were received, representing a response rate of 9.3%. The respondents comprised the following cat-

egories of clients: 249 (66%) undergraduate students, 22 (6%) graduate students, 74 (20%) faculty, 22 (6%) staff, and 12 (2%) "other."

Patrons' Attitude toward eBooks

The survey yielded informative results, including the use of eBooks at **Frederick Douglass Library**. A recent search on the library catalog retrieved 43,597 titles. Twenty-five percent of these were **NetLibrary** eBooks which were purchased through the USMAI (University System of Maryland and Affiliated Institutions) consortium. The library supplements this collection through annual subscriptions to the **NetLibrary** database and the **OCLC** FirstSearch eBook database.

Some patrons did not respond to the two questions concerning eBooks. Twenty-five percent of those who responded indicated that they use eBooks while the remaining 75% did not. This outcome was an indication that eBooks were unpopular. In addition, anecdotal information indicated that while serving at the Reference Desk, librarians observed disappointment in some students when they discover that the book they wanted were available only in electronic format. On the other hand, students are happier accessing e-journals as opposed to the print version. Results of the book satisfaction survey showed that the eBooks, which constitute more than 25% of the total collection, are underutilized. The purpose of this paper is to re-examine ways of promoting the use of eBooks among patrons in order to make their acquisition more cost-effective.

Discussion

Similar studies elsewhere have shown that downloading MARC records of eBooks into the catalog encourages the use of eBooks. (Croft & Davis, 2010, p.545). This was not the case at **Frederick Douglass Library**. The fact that a considerable number of respondents did not answer the questions on eBooks suggested that they were not aware of the availability of eBooks in the library. Therefore, in their survey report **Dadson** and **Nyirenda** recommended that librarian-faculty liaisons should make it a priority to promote eBooks in the information literacy classes and prepare subject guides in their liaison areas that include eBooks. (**Nyirenda** & **Dadson**, 2007, p.9)

Other reasons cited in these studies concerning why patrons may not have liked to read eBooks were:

1. Reading from a computer screen for a long period causes eye strain,

2. Navigation issues — which make it hard to read and browse long documents online,

3. Inability to highlight and take notes as when one reads a book,

4. Lack of eBook titles to meet the patron's research need.

(**Gregory**, 2008, p.269-271).

Since 2007 when the survey was conducted, there have been technological advances in digitization and development of a variety of eBook readers. The most notable are the **Kindle Fire** from **Amazon**, **Nook** from **Barnes and Noble**, and the **iPad** from **Apple**. They have made tremendous impact on the way we store, access, and share information. The e-readers are easier on the eyes, for there is no backlighting. They provide a good reading experience, full-color screen, video playback, Web browsing, and email options. It is now possible to do a keyword search on an eBook; and using Adobe Acrobat Pro, one can make annotations, highlight text, insert links, and

then search through one's notes. (**Shelbourne**, 2009, p.63.) The **iPad** is not compatible with Adobe, but it works with applications such as BlueFire to perform similar functions. Because of these advances in e-readers and availability of more online resources, one hopes that the patrons' attitudes toward eBooks may change for the better. The library management, for its part, plans to supplement the number of laptops for lending to students with **iPads**. eBooks will be downloaded into **iPads** and checked out to students for a specific number of days or weeks.

New Collection Development Policies for eBooks

Since **EBSCO** bought **NetLibrary**, negotiations are underway for new policies on the acquisition of eBooks both at the consortium and institutional level. The USMAI consortium is leaning towards the subscription model with unlimited users. The advantages are that the consortium will have access to more eBooks, and more recent titles will be added to the collection every year. The major disadvantage is that once the subscription expires the USMAI will lose access to all eBooks on the **EBSCOhost** platform.

Library management at the **University of Maryland Eastern Shore** is using this opportunity to participate in the consortial subscription model as well as expand on the eBook purchases on a title-by-title basis. Librarian-faculty liaisons will continue to collaborate with faculty in the selection of eBooks. **Frederick Douglass Library** will also adopt the Patron-Driven Acquisition model. This means browsing an eBook for more than ten minutes, downloading, or copying will trigger an order for the book.

These policies will encourage the use of eBooks because they will have been purchased to fulfill course requirements or research needs.

Students and faculty who work at a distance at some point in their programs will benefit most from this policy. Examples are Physician Assistant students who will be able to access the eBooks relevant to their studies when they are on rotation off campus or even out of town. Other student beneficiaries are those taking Organizational Leadership and Educational Leadership Programs who maintain their regular jobs and attend classes at weekends.

Discovery Tool

The USMAI is in the process of selecting a discovery tool. The choice is between **EBSCO** Discovery Service (EDS) and **OCLC** WorldShare. Through a keyword search typed into a single search box a discovery tool will be able to retrieve relevant items in the databases, the library catalog, and even book chapters of eBooks. Whichever discovery tool the **University of Maryland Eastern Shore** chooses, it will facilitate access to all the library resources, especially eBooks. This is because **Frederick Douglass Library** subscribes to 26 **EBSCOhost** databases, and the FirstSearch eBook database includes other databases.

Summary

Based on the Book Satisfaction Survey conducted in 2007, this paper identified some of the causes why the eBook collection at the **University of Maryland Eastern Shore** was under-utilized. To rectify this situation, librarians were encouraged to promote the eBook collection through information literacy classes and preparation of subject guides. The development of new e-readers — **Kindle Fire**, **Nook**, and **iPad** — has helped some patrons develop a more positive attitude towards eBooks. The use of eBooks at the **University of Maryland Eastern Shore** will be enhanced by the anticipated purchases of eBooks by individual title and a discovery tool.

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