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# Biz of Acq-eBook PDA at Eastern Michigan University

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the aftermath of the spring 2012 closure or reformulation (since reversed) of the **University of Missouri Press**. Protests came not just from scholars and press authors all over the country, but also from Missouri readers, writers, faculty, alumni, and leaders. It became exceptionally clear that a Press is an integral part of a university's community and, more, can help to open up that community in irreplaceable ways.

University Press Week will carry the lesson of Missouri into all of our communities. The focus of the 2012 celebration is presses' role in "contributing to an informed society." For that is the true work an AAUP member press undertakes for all its constituents, local, national, and international — the books, journals, reference works, apps, and scholarly networks of these publishers offer reliable information, knowledge, and lasting availability through a variety of formats. AAUP's "Books for Understanding" program, listing the highest-quality books across a spectrum of contemporary issues, demonstrates what the American university press means for an educated citizenry, and the University Press Week Fine Print\* (\*not just print!) online gallery highlights what it has meant for disciplines and communities for more than a century.

Creating an informed society is certainly impossible without the work of librarians, and so our talks with each other continue and intensify. Libraries and university presses are the most natural of partners, and so we are especially pleased to invite our colleagues and friends at Charleston and throughout the library world to celebrate University Press Week and, as you'll read elsewhere in this issue, to help us look forward to the next 75 years of collaboration in service to the advancement of knowledge. [www.universitypressweek.org](http://www.universitypressweek.org) 🍷

fearing being wrong at the cost of the valuable knowledge we gain from experimenting with what books we choose to publish and how we publish them. University presses can and should be a lynchpin in the new system of scholarly communication. It is up to us, however, to understand what it is that we do that works and how we add value, and conversely, which of our activities need to be reimagined for a digital age. This can best be done through considered experimentation, whether with electronic workflows that make our content more flexible (in both its putting together and taking apart) or with enhanced eBooks that enrich both the user's knowledge and experience. So here's to the next 75 years, AAUP. May they unfold in an environment of reimagining, experimentation, and purposeful collaboration that will make university presses matter, keep us relevant, and make us thrive. 🍷

## Biz of Acq — eBook PDA at Eastern Michigan University



by **Joe Badics** (Acquisitions Librarian, Bruce T. Halle Library, Eastern Michigan University, Ypsilanti, MI 48197; Phone: 734-487-0020 x.2053) <[jbadics@emich.edu](mailto:jbadics@emich.edu)>

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One of the hot topics at recent conferences, including the **2010 Charleston Conference**, has been Patron-Driven Acquisitions, or "PDA." It was the topic of two publications in 2011: *Patron-Driven Acquisitions: History and Best Practices*, edited by **David A. Swords**, and *Patron-Driven Acquisitions: Current Successes and Future Directions*, edited by **Judith M. Nixon, Robert S. Freeman**, and **Suzanne M. Ward**.

As the **Nixon** set points out, "PDA" has already been occurring. Virtually all libraries have used patron input to build their collections; and many libraries, including ours, have been purchasing interlibrary loan requests rather than borrowing when appropriate to the collection. In our case we have been purchasing paper copies and rush order and process them. **NetLibrary** offered the "PDA" of eBooks many years ago.

Why the sudden attention to patron-driven acquisitions (again)? Tighter (if not decreasing) acquisition budgets, the cost of storing volumes, declining print circulation, pressure to repurpose library space, and continuous expansion and embracing of electronic resources by the public are just some of the reasons libraries are migrating to eBooks. The pendulum has been swinging away from just-in-case collection development to favor just-in-time purchasing.

eBooks are not new to our library. We have participated in Michigan state-wide purchases of **NetLibrary** eBook packages and purchased selected Springer eBook backfiles. Our computer science selector has been managing a small subset of computer books in "Safari." Our Department of Information Technology has graciously been paying for campus access to "Books 24x7," for which we have added a record and link for each title in our catalog. With the exception of "Safari," our purchases have been for sets of books.

In 2011 we expanded our selection options in **YBP's** Gobi book ordering system to allow our selectors to purchase individual electronic books instead of paper format when we signed an agreement with **ebrary**. Since we already had a contract with **NetLibrary** for earlier purchases, selectors could also opt for **NetLibrary** eBooks when available (now called **EBSCOhost**). Several selectors immediately embraced electronic over print in the expected subjects of business, science, and computer science. Our business collection has especially migrated to electronic as our College of Business is located downtown and not on the main campus where the library is. The rest of selectors have chosen electronic over print in their areas sporadically to never.

After hearing and reading about the various "PDA" eBook selection programs, we decided to launch a pilot project by expanding our existing pacts with **YBP** and **ebrary**. **ebrary's** short-term loan (STL) system allows our patron to use the eBook for free until a charge is triggered by 1) using the resource for more than ten minutes, 2) viewing ten or more pages (not counting table-of-contents or indices), or 3) copying pages. Once triggered, a STL generally costs 10-15% of the eBook price and allows unfettered access to the book for 24 hours without generating another STL. We decided to pay for three STLs with the fourth event generating a purchase.

Our current approval/slip plan with **YBP** was reviewed. The profile was retained with some exceptions: for instance we excluded publishers that do not allow any short-term loans (one event automatically triggers a purchase). We also excluded textbooks, cookbooks, conference proceedings, dictionaries, and books classified by **YBP** at a professional level. We also capped the price for an eBook at \$200.

We decided to add records for all **ebrary** eBooks that matched our profile from 2010 to date (2009 and older was deemed already out of date for many subjects). The ISBNs from our current catalog were matched against the **ebrary** database. Only eBooks that we did not already own in print or electronic were added to our catalog.

The initial **ebrary** "PDA" catalog records were reviewed by our cataloging librarian. Our systems librarian arranged for the backfile of 2010 to-date eBook records to be added to the catalog as well as for weekly download of new "PDA" records. It was decided to add the phrase, "DDA Title," in a 590 note: the librarians and staff can identify the **ebrary** titles from other eBooks in our catalog. (**YBP** calls their system "demand-drive acquisitions" hence the "DDA").

We created a deposit account with **YBP** to pay for the orders for the pilot instead of penalizing any subject fund; thus, assuring those selectors who have refused to select any eBooks in their subjects.

Due to extenuating circumstances (ahem: a flood), we finally got the "PDA" new and backfiles of older records started in the beginning of May 2012. We did a silent rollout: we did not announce to the public that there were approximately 10,000 new eBooks available.

During the first three months (May-July 2012) 77 books generated STLs and five received enough STLs to be ultimately purchased. Of the

*continued on page 72*

# Papa Abel Remembers — The Tale of A Band of Booksellers, Fascicle 19: Economic Realities



by **Richard Abel** (Aged Independent Learner) <reabel@q.com>

**B**y 1974 the competitive environment had changed markedly — particularly in North America. **John Coutts'** firm in Canada, after he spun off from our firm, had not only garnered a significant fraction of the Canadian scholarly book market but had established a U.S. presence first for the acquisition of books published in the U.S. and not co-published by Canadian publishers and, later, for the marketing of the firm's services to academic libraries along the northeastern tier of states. In a parallel development, several regional booksellers of scholarly books had emerged from among some local or specialist booksellers. All of them began to offer some parts of our services — filling firm-orders generated by libraries; standing orders for books in series, Approval Plans based upon LC card or MARC records, the supply of cataloging for books supplied, etc. All had been patterned after the body of services we had developed. We well understood that the competition would imitate this integrated body of services, for we had widely and openly distributed the relevant explanatory literature to academic and research libraries across the continent and abroad. But we were somewhat taken by surprise at the number of regional imitators that had sprung up. In addition, of course, we had to contend with the assorted regional university networks which had materialized around the country thanks to the largesse of various state capital grants and those of the **CLR**.

The consequence for the Argonauts was that we had to work harder at marketing our services — both in North America and abroad. The overseas demand for scholarly books was becoming, both in fact and in our planning terms, of increasing importance. It had proved an increasingly profitable segment for the firm.

This was not only because overseas libraries required increasing numbers of scholarly books published in the English language to compensate for the dearth of books acquired during the war; for the massive rebuilding effort demanded after the cessation of hostilities, and lastly due to the increasing dominance of English language scholarship. They also were grateful for the rapidity of our air-transport system as well as the fact that we attached no mark-up over list prices as both the ossified system of book distribution overseas had imposed and required.

It will be recalled that the business plan worked out with the underwriting firm, which had agreed to take the firm public, called for making this stock offering in 1975. This plan assumed that our sales volume and level of profitability were such as to price the shares at \$10. So, we were keenly aware of these newly-emerged competitors and the exigencies resulting therefrom. We were maddeningly pressed by the need of resolving on schedule the financial stringencies under which we had labored from virtually the first days of the firm. Having our necks and spirits relieved by the removal of this financial albatross was keenly anticipated by nearly the entire staff. So, we bent every effort to realizing the objectives of the financial projections — and were on track to that end despite the newly emerged competition.

But as the year evolved, the remarkable inflation, which had already persisted for a couple of years, became harder to deal with — particularly in connection with keeping our wage and salary programs intact. But this difficulty soon proved of lesser significance than a couple of others which had cropped up. The first of the latter were that the results of the research by **Charles Marshall** into our specific costs

of doing business were beginning to come in. They were disquieting. Even more disquieting was the observation by **Keith Barker** that our conventional accounting results were showing a decline in our profit margins. He recruited **Paul Sibley** to help in uncovering the causes of this decline. Within months the principal cause was discovered to be the fact that the ratio of the library-originated orders coming in had been progressively skewing to a growing number of orders for hard-to-obtain or no-discount titles or low-priced short discount books. This finding could quickly be related back to the increasingly frequent reports from the firm's various domestic office managers that libraries that had switched part of their business to the newly emerged competition were clearly sending us all of their orders for hard-to-obtain or no-discount or low-priced titles. Meanwhile, **Charles Marshall's** cost studies had revealed that short discount books bearing a list price of less than \$20.00 would not support our costs in providing them. Our firm was, in short, the default supplier of such books as the other booksellers returned, such library orders as "OP" or "indefinitely out of stock" or "not available through the trade" or other such dodges invented to maintain the competition's margins. This was, of course, a sensible thing for the libraries to do, for we were prepared, as we had always been, to provide a total service regardless of our margin. So the librarians playing this strategy could feel good about cultivating assumed dealer competition and satisfying regional loyalties while obtaining all the profitless materials demanded by faculty and graduate students.

What was the answer to this cluster of related problems, which were weighing increasingly heavily upon our economic viability? After some months of debate and the examination of a wide range of alternatives to the resolution of that conundrum, we settled on a radical approach to the solution to this knot of problems. We ultimately concluded that a cost-plus pricing schedule based upon the actual costs of handling various classes of books and attendant services best fit our circumstances and the interests of libraries whose budgets were being increasingly hard-pressed. Thus, a title carrying a high list-price and a trade discount would command a far greater discount from list-price than a low list-price title sold to us at a short discount. By way of further example, a title in-series would be assigned a lesser discount if provided as a library-generated order for the same title — this to provide for the greater costs incurred in managing and policing the standing order. Yet one more example: a title supplied on the Approval Plan would carry a lesser markup than a library-generated order, as the former was a mass-produced service while the latter required additional costs of shelving, picking, and the increased risk of becoming dead inventory stock.

*continued on page 74*

## Biz of Acq from page 70

five, only one was a computer manual while the others were surprising: *Russian Origins of the First World War*; *Place, Writing, and Voice in Oral History*; *New Science of Religion: Exploring Spirituality from the Outside In and Bottom Up*; and *Metaphor and the Historical Evolution of Conceptual Mapping*. The STLs covered all subjects across the board, including humanities (e.g., religion, history, language arts, political science, and literary criticism), science, and social science (psychology). The cost was \$1300.

**ebrary** offers good statistics at their Website. It was interesting to see how many and what books were viewed, how many pages, and how many user sessions. This again shows that our patrons were making use of the electronic content.

There are some complications. We discovered that the links to the contents may not work.

The invoices for STLs are in paper, so the Acquisitions staff will have to design procedures to accommodate them. The Acquisitions staff will also need to account for any titles purchased outside the **ebrary/YBP** system (standing orders, **Amazon**, etc.) to make sure duplicates are not received.

As more libraries experiment with PDA, hopefully more will publish about their experiences. The April 17, 2012 issue of the *Chronicle of Higher Education* has an article called "Is psychology about to come undone?" All of the studies published in the 2008 issues of three psychology journals (*Psychological Science*; *Journal of Personality and Social Science*; *Journal of Experimental Psychology: Learning, Memory, and Cognition*) will be reproduced to check the validity. If psychologists can check the results of their peers, in that spirit, we hope other libraries will consider comparing their PDA results. This version of "PDA" is still a pilot for us, but the initial results are intriguing. 🐼