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Biz of Acq — PDA, Circulation, and Over-Budget Requests: Harnessing Data to Inform Library Strategies

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What can we do with patron-driven acquisitions (PDA)? This article portrays an experiment with enlisting PDA in two ways: first for comparison of PDA eBook usage against newly-ordered hardcopy materials' circulation; secondly, as a backup plan for unfunded requests left over at the end of the fiscal year. At the close of fiscal year 2011/2012, data were gathered on PDA eBook usage by subject area, circulation of newly-purchased materials by subject area, and year-end over-budget requests. The purpose was three-fold: (1) How does subject use of PDA eBooks compare with hardcopy circulation? Do these differences reflect variations among the degree programs, such as online components and graduate programs? What, if anything, do these figures tell us about demand for print books and eBooks, and do the figures correspond with large cohorts of online course participants and working adults enrolled in some programs but not in others? While ordering patterns are factored into allocation decisions, analysis of the PDA data invited exploration of additional factors: What was the circulation of our newly-ordered hardcopy materials? What was the PDA usage for the past year? How do print and eBook usage compare? Do they complement each other, or are there marked differences in eBook versus print book preference? (2) How can PDA fit into support for titles that could not be purchased at the end of the fiscal year? (3) Which areas saw the most over-budget requests, and how many of them were available as PDA eBooks? What do the figures reveal about eBook versus print availability across various disciplines?

First, a few words about **Winthrop's** main university library to provide a sense of context for eBooks and PDA initiatives: **Ida Jane Dacus Library** is the main campus library supporting the entire range of **Winthrop University's** undergraduate and graduate programs. Founded in 1886, **Winthrop University** in Rock Hill, South Carolina is located 25 miles south of Charlotte, North Carolina and serves about 6,000 full-time and part-time students, divided between approximately 5,000 undergraduate and 1,000 graduate students. Rooted in the liberal arts and teacher education, **Winthrop's** programs organically branched out over time into the current mix of academic and professional programs spanning the humanities, physical and life sciences, visual arts, design, dance, theatre, music, business, and education. Interdisciplinary programs include, for example, environmental sciences and sustainability, which draw from business, interior design, physics, chemistry, biology, human nutrition,

geography, policy, economics, and business, while subject-specific teacher education programs have drawn from strong foundations in each discipline's knowledge base since **Winthrop's** inception. While many of **Winthrop's** buildings are on the National Register of Historic Places, operations and instruction are decidedly modern — information technologies have long supported the university's teaching and learning. As more students work (often full-time), their full and fragmented schedules spur their reliance on off-site access to electronic library resources. Growing online components for courses drive integration of electronic library resources in online course presentation, giving rise to online reading lists and embedded library materials. Graduate students and working adults attending college benefit considerably from such online offerings. Professors' course preparation and research activities are also aided by online library resources. These factors make eBooks a viable addition. In this context, **Winthrop** began subscribing to a major academic eBook collection in May 2011 and implemented patron-driven eBook acquisitions in October 2011. The growth of graduate programs and in-depth research components naturally spurred curiosity about whether the eBook usage reflected growth in these areas. Curiosity also grew about relationships between eBook usage and print circulation. Then year-end over-budget book requests also sparked the new idea of requesting some of these over-budget titles as eBooks through the patron-driven acquisitions program. This series of questions spurred the idea of collecting and analyzing PDA and circulation data in order to derive some meaningful observations.

Part I: Choosing aspects for analysis:

PDA data: Fiscal year 2011/2012 PDA usage data were analyzed on the following criteria: number and percentage of eBook short-term loans by subject area (corresponding with program of study), number of eBooks purchased after the three short-term loans were used up, and PDA eBook average use per title in each subject area.

Circulation data: Circulation data for physical materials were gleaned for new titles purchased in fy2010/2011 because an entire operating year had elapsed after completion of purchases for that year, thereby allowing for meaningful representation of an entire year's natural circulation activity. Information parallels that of PDA data for the year: total circulation in each area usage's percentage of total usage and average circulation per title in

each area. The same data were analyzed for new titles purchased in fy2011/2012. However, the fy2011/2012 data are not as meaningful because some of the just-ended fiscal year's books arrived in the library a few days before the circulation data were compiled in July 2012. The library also underwent a major renovation from Maymester until the beginning of Fall semester classes. The summer's reduced building access during the high-traffic floor's renovation brought circulation activity down considerably from natural levels. Despite these circumstantial impediments and their risk of distorting the same-year data comparison between hardcopy circulation and PDA usage, this usage snapshot still had merit for its potential to provide helpful insights into which areas' titles are likely to be used the soonest after their arrival.

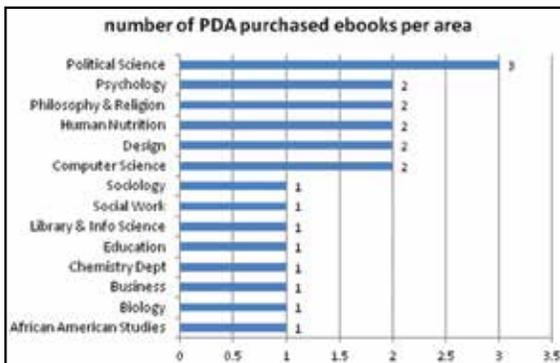
Over-budget requests remaining at fiscal year's end: Every over-budget title was recorded with spreadsheet software and marked with the following information: Fund code (to identify academic program areas for the analysis), title, imprint, publishing year, and print edition price. Each title was then researched for eBook vs. print book availability and library ownership. Each title was annotated to denote the following status possibilities: (1) manually requested as PDA title, (2) not available as PDA (manual request unsuccessful after the attempted PDA request), (3) title available but not requested as PDA (generally due to e-editions' significantly higher-than-print price or title requests marked as "nice to have but not first priority"), (4) PDA eBook discovery record is already available, (5) library already has eBook in subscription database, (6) eBook is available in different library databases other than the eBook subscription database related to the PDA project, (7) library does not own the book, and it is only available in print, (8) print edition is already in the library, and (9) not yet published. Each title was also checked against the print profile approval notifications: although an approval-plan evaluation was not part of this project's original intent, assessing the effectiveness of the approval plan in generating titles of interest to the academic areas seemed to relate logically to the data already being collected and thus a side road worth taking. Lastly, the titles' library/availability status outcomes were totaled to see each outcome's relative percentage in aggregate. The titles' status outcomes were also totaled within each subject area in order to see differences between subject areas and how those might inform library support strategies for **Winthrop's** diverse range of academic programs.

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Part II: What the data revealed:

PDA data: The newly-instituted PDA eBook short-term loans and perpetual ownership purchases began in October 2011 after the semester's course-related library work was already well underway. Momentum built from ground zero, and in fact the PDA eBook short-term loans and perpetual ownership purchases (triggered by exceeding maximum short-term loans on a title) constituted only 3% of overall book purchases. Of the total PDA eBook expenditures, 67% went to short-term loan micropayments, and 33% went to eBook purchases. Despite these humble beginnings, enough PDA eBooks were used across the spectrum of academic programs to glean some insights: The eBook PDA project's first completed fiscal year began generating cost and usage data when the project went live in October 2011. Thus, the pilot's first year was not a complete business year and fy2011/2012 data were collected for the time between October 5, 2011 and June 30, 2012 in order to glean preliminary insights. PDA use did occur during the Fall and Spring semesters, with a total of 317 short-term loan uses and 17 demand-driven acquisitions purchases.

- The highest short-term loan activity was in Psychology (40), followed closely by Business (32).
- Human Nutrition showed the highest use per title (5.5), followed by Computer Science (2.9). Average use per title was 1.35.
- In average number of uses per title in each area, Human Nutrition led in PDA purchases (\$197 for 1 title), followed by Political Science (\$194 for 3 titles).
- In eBook purchases, Biology led in PDA purchases (\$197 for 1 title), followed by Political Science (\$194 for 3 titles).
- In eBook short-term loans (STL), Psychology led short-term loans (\$309 for 40 STLs), followed by Biology (\$273 for 23 STLs).



As PDA gains momentum in the future, eBook usage is poised to increase. Plans for next year include expanding the analysis to year-by-year comparison of fy2011/2012 and fy2012/2013 to glean demand trajectories for helping inform budget planning for library support for the myriad academic programs' visions of their future course delivery. A more complex study plan includes comparison of all eBook use and all hardcopy circulation, broken out by subject area, with usage levels indexed against the respective size of physical and electronic collections. Such indexing to actual collection size will result in a more comparable set of proportional use of e- and print collection. Longer-term analysis will determine whether such comparison turns out to be meaningful for curricular support decisions.

See the four PDA usage graphs located on this page.

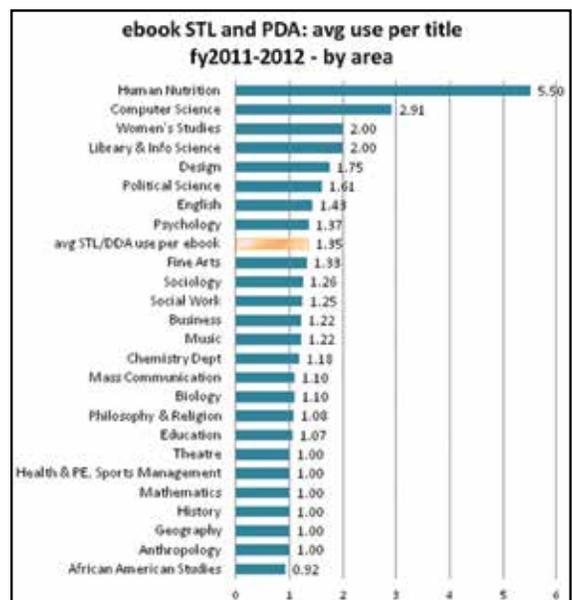
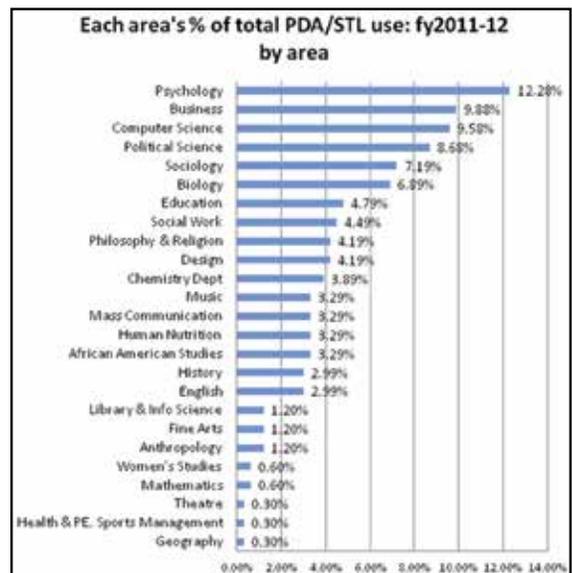
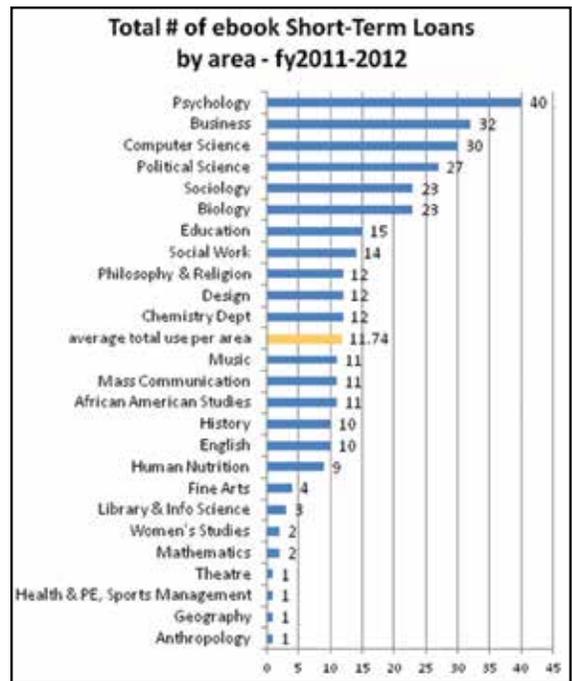
Circulation data: Circulation totals on ordered materials for fy2010/2011 and fy2011/2012 were analyzed by subject area.

- After one full year, 39% of the ordered materials from fy2010/2011 had circulated.
- On average, each volume circulated 2.5 times.
- 29% of the ordered materials from fy2011/2012 had circulated when the data were extracted. This lower usage percentage is due to the fact that many of the books came toward the end of the semester, when user focus was on completing coursework rather than gathering new books. In addition, the library building's reduced access during a four-month renovation led to checking out fewer materials. Circulation activity for these materials will be examined again after a full year has passed.
- On average, each volume circulated 1.84 times, more than the average 1.35 uses per PDA eBook in the same year.

Circulation by subject:

- For hardcopy materials purchased in 2010/2011, Fine Arts had the highest circulation (411), followed by History (344). The highest average circulation per title was in Social Work (2.28), followed by Fine Arts (1.54).
- For hardcopy materials purchased in

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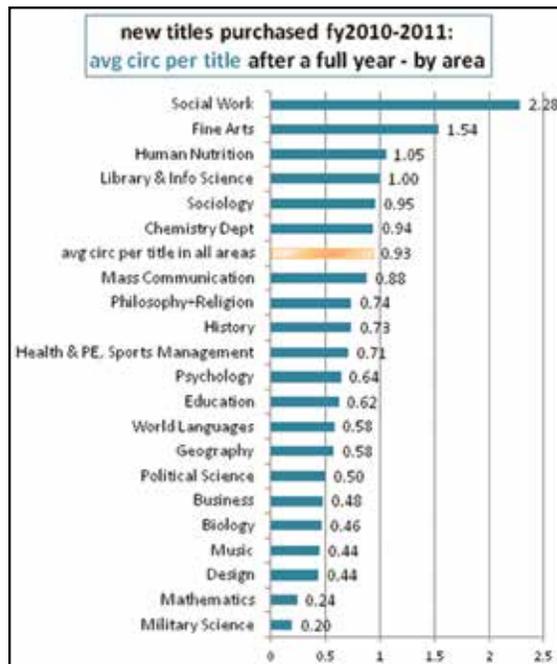
2011/2012, Philosophy & Religion had the highest circulation (290), followed closely by Political Science (284). The highest average circulation per title was in World Languages & Cultures (4.18), followed by Sociology (3.5).

See the three *Circulation graphs for new titles* located on this page.

Circulation data on new titles purchased in year 2011/12 showed Philosophy & Religion to be the most active immediate user of new arrivals with 290 uses, compared to Fine Arts collections' highest use during the full year since year 2010/11 purchases arrived in the library. Moreover, the density of use by area shifted from year 2010/11 to

2011/12: The highest average circulation per title for items purchased in year 2010/11 was 2.28 in Social Work, followed by 1.54 uses for Fine Arts. For items purchased in year 2011/12, World Languages & Cultures showed 4.18 average uses per title, followed by 3.5 for Sociology. It is suspected that the difference is driven by several factors other than changes in academic program patterns: many of the more recent year's books arrived in the library after peak research times. Some departments send book orders much earlier in the academic year than others — later library arrivals generated by later purchases can end up missing that same year's peak points of checking out hardcopy materials. Therefore, following circulation activity over longer time periods would provide more meaningful insights into true demand by area — the reason for leaving year 2011/12 data charts out of this article.

While not all areas show inverse relationships between print circulation and eBook PDA usage, most reveal marked differences between print and eBook PDA usage. These differences are in line with known preferences of faculty research styles, absence or presence of graduate programs, extent of online course components in academic programs, as well as format preference by discipline. While one year is not enough to decidedly ascertain electronic versus print trends by discipline, these data gleaned from the first year's PDA usage form an excellent basis for conversations with faculty about their long-term vision for format preferences for books in their respective disciplines. Visualized usage data also show high and low library usage by discipline — an aspect which warrants multi-year data analysis to determine trends and their significance against the back-

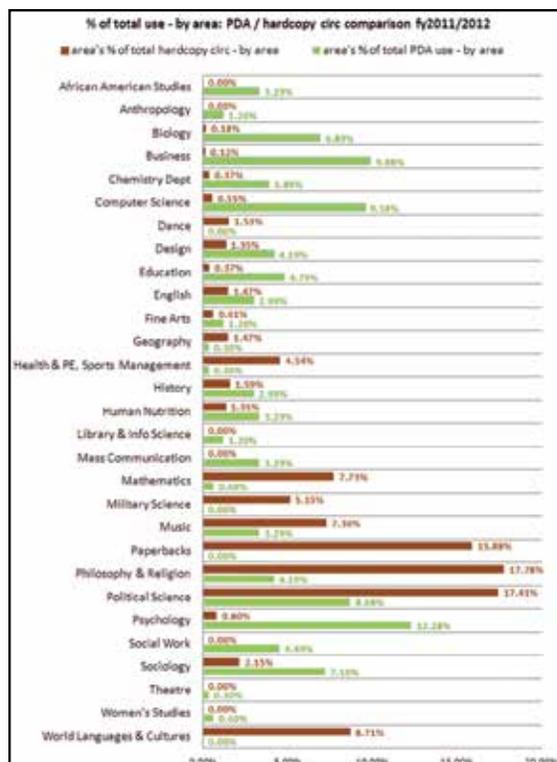
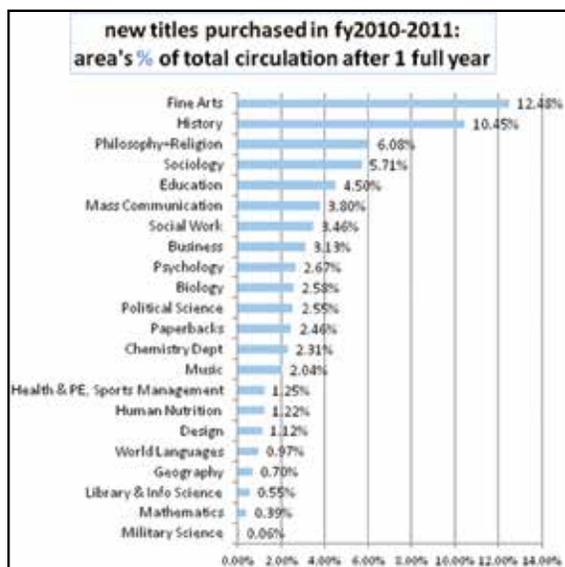
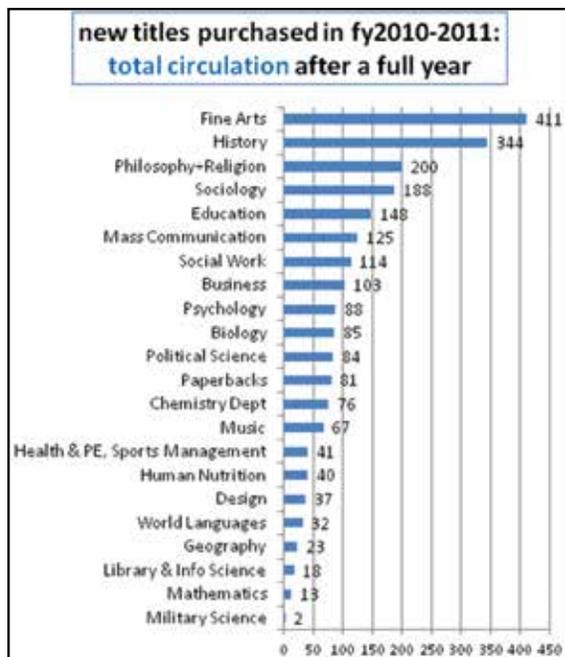


drop of academic programs' historical developments and aspirations for their future.

See *PDA/Hardcopy Circ Comparison graph* located below.

Over-budget requests remaining at fiscal year's end: Of 452 over-budget titles, 140 (35%) were already owned by the library as either print or electronic books. Since one of this pilot study's major purposes was to determine possibilities for offering some of the over-budget requests as PDA eBooks, the availability of eBooks was examined both in aggregate and for each of the subject areas for which the library had year-end over-budget requests on hand. eBook versus print availability was found to vary considerably across disciplines. Although the number of over-budget

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requests varied greatly from one area to the next, a look at the percentages of print-only and PDA-eBook-available titles revealed considerable differences between disciplines.

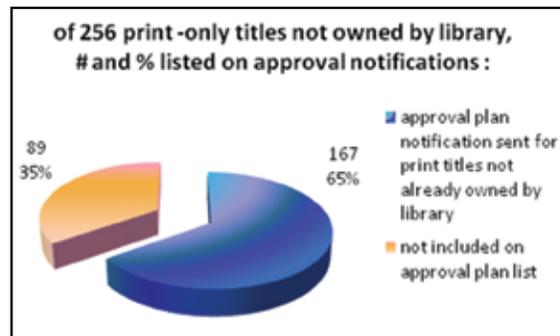
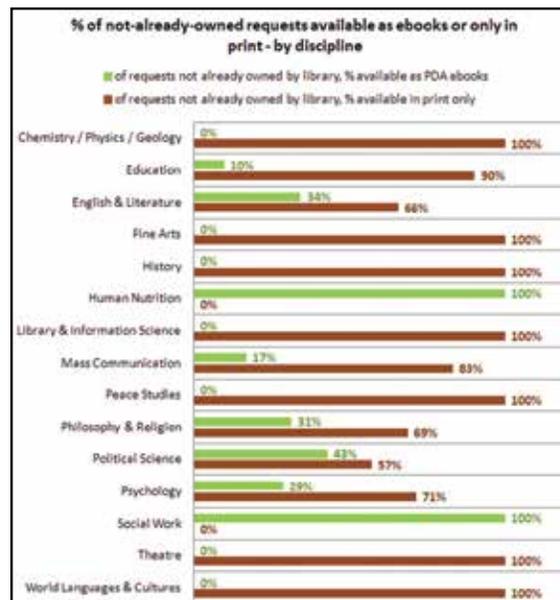
Assessment of the print approval plan profile was not among the aspects intended for examination at the onset of the study. However, stumbling across the fact that so many of these over-budget-requests had been among the titles in the notification lists provided welcome impromptu evidence of on-target approval plan profiling. 262 (58%) of all 452 over-budget requests were titles listed on approval plan email notifications (some of these requests were available as eBooks or already in the library). 256 of the not-already-owned requested titles were only available in print. Of these 256 print-only titles, 167 (65%) were listed on approval plan notifications. Print requests not on the approval plan were split between older important titles meant for newly-developed program areas and overseas imprints not covered through the approval plan. Conversely, almost all of the recent publications were listed on the approval plan title notification lists. While some of the requests were derived from approval plan lists, many more came from a mix of sources including Choice cards, publisher fliers, and book reviews.

See the five **Over-budget requests and PDA title availability graphs** located on this page.

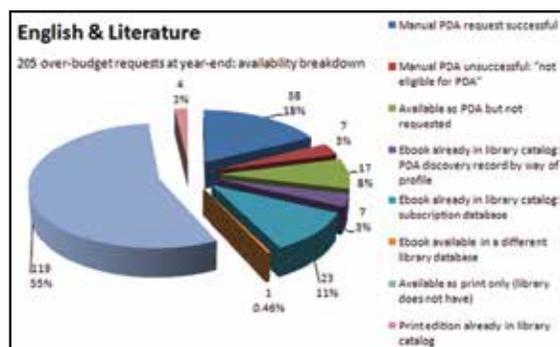
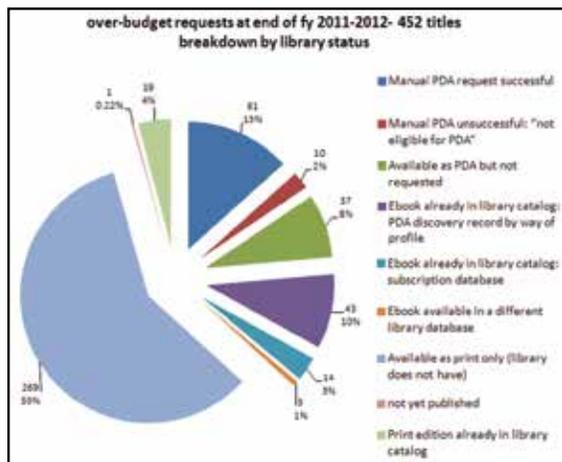
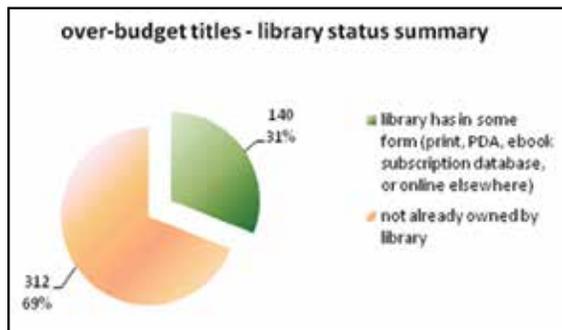
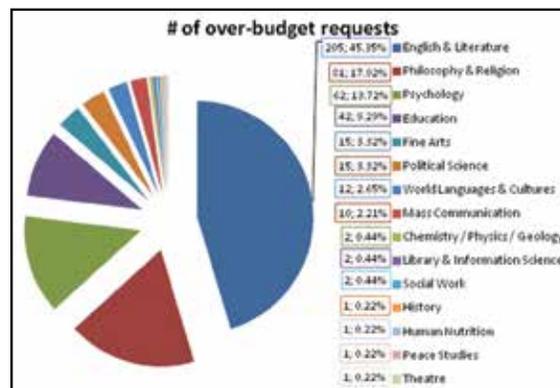
Titles requested for Fine Arts, History, Library & Information Science, Peace Studies, Theatre, and World Languages were only available in print, while the one over-budget title for Human Nutrition was successfully

requested as a PDA eBook. One of the two over-budget Social Work titles was successfully requested as a PDA eBook; the other is not yet published. The remaining areas were distributed to varying degrees of complexity between the numerous possible library status and eBook/print availability outcomes. English & Literature had the largest number of over-budget requests and was the most diversified in library status and eBook/print availability outcomes. The chart shown at the bottom right of this page presents a visual illustration of relative proportions of eBook and print status for English & Literature.

Implications of the data: The first year's PDA data, compared with circulation data, revealed differences in format preferences in some academic programs. Psychology and Business were heavy users of PDA eBooks, while Philosophy, Fine Arts, and Languages were among active users of print books. Philosophy & Religion was the only area active in both print and eBooks. The format availability spread of the year-end over-budget requests on-hand shows similar divergences between print and electronic availability for books across various disciplines. Neither art nor language books were available as eBooks, mirroring the low eBook usage in these areas. For visually intense, hands-on work in studio arts, eBooks are impractical, bringing low demand for eBooks (perhaps also driving the low availability of art eBooks in the marketplace). Most areas showed clear preferences between print and electronic books, largely reflecting traditions within disciplines and classroom-based course delivery. Other fields with greater need for currency (such as Computer Science), as well as areas with working adults and graduate programs show strong usage preference for eBooks (such as Business and Education, especially at graduate levels).



Year-end over-budget requests broken out by subject:



Future data analysis will include tracking each area's relationships between print and

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eBook usage, expanding print to eBook comparison to include all eBook usage, including subscription database eBooks and subject-area circulation for the entire collection rather than only recently-purchased materials. How are usage levels increasing for each area for print and eBooks? Are usage levels mutually exclusive or complementary? Do usage levels by area correspond with student enrollment and program complexity by area? Do usage levels by area correspond with budget-allocation proportions? Do usage levels correspond with online versus in-classroom course delivery and differences between traditional students and working adults? Are usage patterns compatible with the academic programs' plans for future directions, and how do the findings illuminate library strategies?

While the PDA-related data are still young, the first year's data are in tandem with program directions. For example, programs with growing online components have already shown leanings toward eBook usage. The on-site, hands-on nature of other programs makes print books a more meaningful method of support. The future is far from one-size-fits-all approaches: the data invite intensification of in-depth conversations with all academic programs across the board in order to seek out customized library support for their needs. **Winthrop** will continue to collect and monitor the data shown here, as the divergent directions in preference between disciplines are highly likely to impact everything from allocation decisions to library instruction. 



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From A University Press — Ball of Confusion

Column Editor: **Leila W. Salisbury** (Director, University Press of Mississippi, Jackson, MS 39211; Phone: 601-432-6205) <lsalisbury@ihl.state.ms.us>

Column Editor's Note: *In the last issue of ATG I noted that Alison Mudditt's address from the 2012 Charleston Conference plenary session would appear as this issue's column. Unfortunately, that is not the case. I hope you'll enjoy this column in its place, and we hope to publish Alison's piece in an upcoming issue of ATG. — LS*

As I received the deadline reminder for this quarter's *ATG* column, I was finishing an email exchange with our marketing and business directors that had begun with celebration over a healthy payment from one of our electronic content vendors and had concluded with something to the effect of: "What's the sales model for that vendor? Will those checks be getting smaller as the number of new customers diminishes after the initial launch period?" This exchange reminded me that some/much of the time, I couldn't rattle off the exact terms and offerings of our numerous e-vendors. In-house conversations often go something like: "**ebrary**, wait, did they add the STL model that becomes a full purchase after four lends, or am I thinking of **EBL**?" It might be comical if it didn't also seem kind of scary. (In an interesting twist, after I began this article, I learned that **ProQuest** had

just acquired **EBL**, as it earlier had **ebrary**. Mergers and acquisitions may be the ultimate solution to this issue!)

In this burgeoning era of digital content (where talk is rife with acronyms such as PDA, DDA, MUPO, SUPO, STL, and the like), I sometimes hear librarians say that there are so many options and models out there that it's all highly confusing and difficult to determine which vendors and what types of plans will best suit the needs of their library and patrons. To this I say, believe me, I hear you. Or to quote the lyrics to "Ball of Confusion" (pick your favorite version of the song, but they're all surprisingly applicable to today for something written in 1970): "So round 'n' round 'n' round we go / Where the world's headed, nobody knows."

I tend to believe that this profusion of offerings and models is a natural result of the "offer the customer a lot of options, a choice to suit every customer profile" mentality. Perhaps we are like the consumer standing in the cereal aisle at Whole Foods, trying to determine which of the 18 available organic cereals is the right one for us. "Which is more important to me, high protein or fiber? I like that this one has flaxseed, but wait, Jimmy is allergic to strawberries. This one looks good, and I like

this brand, but can I really justify spending \$6.50

on a box of cereal?" Sure, this takes longer and requires more consideration than did simply grabbing the box of All-Bran in days past, but there are upsides as well. There are many tantalizing flavors (user models) to choose from. We have the option to prefer either protein (collection/subject based building) or fiber (PDA). We are increasingly romanced by the benefits of flaxseed (STL) but refuse to knowingly cause allergic reactions in our family members (too-quick browsing purchase triggers in PDA plans). Finally, we are lucky to have that \$6.50 at all, not to mention that we also have the choice to spend it in the way that best benefits our family (library and patrons).

I won't further belabor this already-strained cereal metaphor. What this scenario means in practicality, though, is that we (both as publishers and librarians) are being forced to get much better at math, forecasting, and multi-criteria decision making. **Mark Saunders**, of the **University of Virginia Press**, characterizes the publishers' challenge in this way: "we have

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