

2014

Changing Library Operations: Consortial Demand-Driven eBooks at the University of California

Allen McKiel

Western Oregon University, mckiel@wou.edu

Jim Dooley

University of California, Merced, jdooley@ucmerced.edu

Follow this and additional works at: <https://docs.lib.purdue.edu/atg>



Part of the [Library and Information Science Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

McKiel, Allen and Dooley, Jim (2014) "Changing Library Operations: Consortial Demand-Driven eBooks at the University of California," *Against the Grain*: Vol. 26: Iss. 3, Article 31.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.7771/2380-176X.6771>

This document has been made available through Purdue e-Pubs, a service of the Purdue University Libraries. Please contact epubs@purdue.edu for additional information.

Storage Facilities. Faculty don't like books to be put in storage, no matter how carefully done and how fast the delivery system works. Whether or not their concerns are reasonable, the academic library is not giving them what they want. Few public libraries have storage collections. They make their resources directly available to their users.

Weeding the Print Collection. From the student perspective, weeding might give them what they want — more study space and an easily browsable collection. Since most faculty seldom work in the library, they consider this step to be even worse than sending the books to storage. Most public libraries weed heavily for the same reason that academic libraries would like to — they have space for only a limited number of items and wish to retain the most popular titles.

Foreign Language Materials. I'm the selector for faculty in French, Italian, and Spanish literature areas. The current trends in academic library collection development have penalized severely this group's teaching and research. They want books in the languages that they teach. Instead, resources have flowed to online databases and PDA from eBook packages. At my institution, the *MLA Bibliography* is about the only important online resource that they might use. This tool includes some full text but almost always in English, while a link is the best that they can usually find to materials in the languages of interest to them. The same is true for eBook resources in my local **ebrary** collection with only 254 items of all types in French compared with 113,842 in English.

The examples above should give sufficient proof that academic libraries overlook many of the known collection development wants of their student and faculty users. Instead, the goal of academic libraries is to meet their needs. To me, the guiding principle would be meeting the broadest number of current needs that match institutional goals while serving the maximum number of users. To return to

my examples above, buying two books with different content provides greater collection depth than buying two copies or formats with the same content. Purchasing textbooks and recreational reading would take funds away from the more important goal of supporting student and faculty research. The two Italian faculty at my institution would certainly want and use an Italian literature database, but I can't justify this expense for two faculty in an area without a doctoral program. Overall, I therefore support most of the decisions that I have listed above even when they are counter to our users' wants.

The decision to focus on needs brings with it a heavy obligation to take great care to assess accurately these needs. As a current faculty member who was an academic librarian for twenty-five years, I'm not completely certain that the two groups understand each other as well as they should. Some decisions to focus on needs may have unintended negative consequences. I support, for example, giving each doctoral student in an area with few library resources a small collection development allocation to purchase key works. The academic library should also make the commitment to repurchase items withdrawn from the collection if these items should turn out to be important in the same way that most academic libraries return storage materials to the active collection after a certain number of uses. In other words, a certain portion of any savings from decisions that go against user wants should be allocated to remedying the cases where the perceived want is a valid need.

To return to the issue of the key difference between public and academic libraries, the public library must meet user wants because users directly or indirectly determine its funding. The public library is following a dangerous strategy if it claims to be meeting user needs by overlooking their wants. The philosophy that the goal of the public library is to increase their

users' cultural sophistication by purchasing only the highest "quality" materials is dead. The public library must give its users what they want to keep them coming back as public libraries fight for survival.

Academic libraries don't get their funding directly from their users. Students don't get to vote on the library budget. If they did, I'm sure that many academic libraries would have huge textbook collections. Instead, the administration determines the library budget and most often understands the difference between meeting needs and meeting wants. Administrators realize that many of the decisions above are based upon the principle of an effective use of available funding to best meet institutional goals. The academic library should pay attention to user wants, especially those of the faculty since this group has much more power than students; but higher education administrators will support a good reason to say no, especially one with positive fiscal outcomes.

I have one additional point to make. In an answer to a comment to her column, **Fister** states that "none of us can afford books in both e- and print formats." This claim is literally inaccurate because I can think of no academic library that could not afford occasional or perhaps even systematic duplication between the two formats. I would reformulate this comment to what I'm quite sure she really meant: "purchasing books in both e- and print formats is not a good use of scarce resources." Let's be honest in what we tell users, especially when the "right" decision is to say no.

I'll conclude by returning to my opening conceit: "But if you try sometimes, you just might find you get what you need." Most likely, the majority of academic library users are better off from the decision to focus on collection development needs rather than on collection development wants. 🐛



Changing Library Operations — Consortial Demand-Driven eBooks at the University of California

Column Editors: **Allen McKiel** (Dean of Library Services, Western Oregon University) <mckiel@wou.edu>

and **Jim Dooley** (Head of Collection Services, University of California, Merced) <jdooley@ucmerced.edu>

If the number of sessions at the **Charleston Conference** and at **ALA Annual** during the past few years is any guide, many libraries have implemented demand-driven acquisition (DDA) eBook plans. Some libraries have even implemented DDA plans for print monographs. Given the level of interest at individual libraries, it was probably inevitable that experiments with consortial eBook programs would not be far behind.

The program that has had the most influence on **University of California** planning is that of the **Orbis-Cascade Alliance**. Initial planning for this consortial eBook DDA program was described in the article "*Pioneering Partnerships: Building a Demand-Driven Consortium eBook Collection*" by **Emily McElroy** and **Susan Hinken** published in the June 2011 issue of *ATG*. Actual experience with the model was described in "*Pilot to Program: Demand-Driven*

E-books at the Orbis-Cascade Consortium, One Year Later" by **James Bunnelle** published in the November 2012 issue of *ATG*.

Each of the ten **University of California (UC)** libraries has its own history and culture. As a result, each library is at a somewhat different place in the transition from print to electronic resources, the acceptance of eBooks, and the willingness to implement a DDA model

continued on page 60

Changing Library Operations from page 59

of eBook acquisition. These differences made it difficult and time-consuming to reach consensus on the desirability of a systemwide DDA eBook pilot. Conversely, the continuing effect of the 2009 fiscal crisis on library budgets was a strong motivating factor towards implementing a systemwide eBook DDA plan. Between FY 2007 and FY 2013 the collection budgets of the individual UC libraries declined between 10% and 49%, adjusted for 5% inflation. While the **University of California** libraries have a long tradition of consortial collection development, this budget reality caused librarians to look even harder for opportunities to share collections. A systemwide DDA eBook plan promised increased available content while at the same time sharing and hopefully controlling costs as well as reducing monograph duplication among the UC libraries.

At the same time, several campuses had local eBook DDA programs in place. In my article "*Demand-Driven Acquisitions at UC Merced*" published in the November 2012 issue of *ATG* I describe **UC Merced's** use of DDA as the principal means of acquiring eBooks. In the same issue of *ATG* my colleague **Martha Hruska** describes DDA activities at **UC San Diego** in "*Letting the Patrons Drive...Research Library Acquisitions?*" Other eBook DDA programs are underway at **UC Irvine**, **UC Riverside**, and **UC Santa Cruz**.

As a result of these factors: a dire fiscal situation, a long-standing tradition of shared collection development, and local campus experience with eBook DDA plans, the UC Collection Development Officers decided in early 2013 to charge a task force to implement and assess a systemwide eBook DDA pilot. The task force is chaired by **Kerry Scott** from **UC Santa Cruz** and includes a member from each of the nine participating campuses and the **California Digital Library (CDL)**. I'm the member for **UC Merced**. **UC San Francisco** is not participating in the pilot for reasons that will be explained below.

Before the task force could begin work, there needed to be agreement on the funds to be allocated for the pilot and how much each campus would contribute. We agreed on an initial fund of \$200,000 and that we would use a cost share model based on library collection budgets. DDA is both an access model and an ownership model. Everyone needed to understand that it was not possible to predict at the beginning how much money would go toward short-term loans and how much to purchases. This would be determined by user behavior during the pilot. It was therefore not useful to set an initial goal for the number of titles to be purchased during the pilot or to use such a number to assess the success of the pilot.

Several parameters were used in designing the pilot that continue to influence the results. First, the pilot is limited to social science, arts, and humanities titles. Second, the pilot is limited to university presses. UC librarians in the arts, humanities, and social sciences have

complained for some time that collection budgets have become skewed toward the physical and life sciences and engineering largely due to the costs of the "big deal" journal packages. One way to address this imbalance would be to make a significant number of high-quality arts, humanities, and social science titles available for possible purchase systemwide. Structuring the pilot in this way also allows UC to direct collection funds in support of university presses. Since **UC San Francisco** is exclusively a graduate medical and life sciences campus, it chose not to participate in the pilot.

The task force chose to partner with **ebrary** for the pilot because of the breadth of **ebrary's** coverage of university presses. Another aspect of breadth is that **ebrary** also offered content from publishers with the highest percentage of campus spending in recent years. We also work with **YBP** to manage the profile of titles to be made available to users—the "discovery pool." This is a standard profile documenting allowable publishers, LC classes, publication years, etc. **YBP** notifies **ebrary** of titles that meet the profile, and **ebrary** then makes those titles available on its platform to the nine participating campuses. **YBP** also handles the deposit account. **YBP GOBI** is the consortial DDA management system.

We wanted to use the short-term loan (STL) model that is a feature of the majority of DDA plans. After discussion, we settled on an initial configuration of three short-term loans with purchase of the title on the fourth access. As part of our discussions with **ebrary** we had to understand exactly what **ebrary** counts as an "access." Based partly on the **Orbis-Cascade** experience, we understood that we needed to be willing to adjust the number of STLs going forward if necessary in order to manage spending.

We originally intended to limit titles in the pilot to 2012 and later because of fear that an earlier start date would result in significant duplication with already-purchased print copies. However, when **YBP** informed us of the number of available titles from 2012 onward, we decided to change the start date to 2010. We also established an upper cost limit of \$250 per title.

One of the central goals of the pilot was that all purchased titles would be available with perpetual access to all nine participating campuses. In order to achieve this goal we had to reach agreement with the publishers on the multiplier to be applied to the price of the eBook in order to make it available to all campuses. Fortunately, **YBP** was able to supply historical data on the average number of print copies from each publisher acquired by the UC libraries. Based on this data, we were able to agree on a multiplier of three with most publishers and a multiplier of four with a few. This means that we have three or four single-user copies of a purchased title to be shared among users at the nine participating

campuses. While turnaways are possible under this methodology, we believe they will be few.

One other important question to be resolved was the mechanism for MARC record distribution to the libraries. Since **ebrary** requires a campus-specific URL for each title, we originally thought that each library would have to access the **ebrary** site and download a set of campus-specific records. We subsequently determined that the **UC Shared Cataloging Program (SCP)** could distribute DDA pilot records in the same way that it distributes MARC records for other consortially-licensed electronic resources. The workflow is as follows: the Shared Cataloging Program accesses the **ebrary** site and downloads a set of records that are then distributed to the campuses weekly. Each record contains a URL that points to the systemwide SFX link resolver which is able to create on-the-fly a campus-specific URL that meets **ebrary's** requirements.

To recap the basic outline of the pilot:

- Arts, humanities, and social science titles
- University presses
- Three short-term loans with purchase on the fourth access
- Publication years 2010-2014
- Multiplier of three or four for access by all nine campuses
- \$250 per title limit

The task force has established a Website with a more detailed explanation of business terms, a list of participating publishers and FAQs at <http://www.cdlib.org/services/collections/current/DDA/index.html>.

We set what turned out to be a wildly optimistic goal of having the pilot operational by July 1, 2013. Reality set in quickly. We underestimated the time it would take **ebrary** to persuade the university presses to agree to participate in a DDA pilot using short-term loans. A few refused, but in the end sixty-five university presses agreed to participate. We also underestimated the amount of time it would take to work out all of the details among the UC libraries, **ebrary**, and **YBP**. Finally, the question of how to acquire and distribute MARC records for the titles in the pilot took much longer than anticipated to resolve. All of these factors led to the pilot finally getting underway with the first distribution of MARC records in early January 2014.

As a result of the delayed start, we will most likely extend the pilot through 2015 to allow two full years of experience before we try to assess its success.

As this column is being written at the beginning of May, the pilot has been in operation for about four months. This is too early to draw firm conclusions, but some early statistics are available. As of 4/30, 1,697 titles were visible in the discovery pool; 422

continued on page 61



Changing Library Operations from page 60

titles had been accessed; 287 titles had triggered at least one short-term loan; and nine titles had been purchased. Thus approximately 17% of the available titles had triggered a STL. Short-term loans were triggered for all publication years in the pool, with usage being heaviest for 2013 and 2014 publication years. Total expenditures were just over \$7,000 with about 45% of that being spent on STLs. Usage continues to increase with each week of operation. The task force is reasonably pleased with these numbers, but they do point to some decisions that will have to be made going forward regarding the rate of spending.


Individual campus usage varies widely, from a high of 40% of the total (**UC Berkeley**) to a low of 1.5% (**UC Merced**). **UC Merced** has approximately 2.5% of the total **University of California** FTE, so DDA pilot usage may not be as low as it initially appears. At the same time, usage is clearly low in relation to other eBook usage. During the four months of the operation of the pilot, almost 2,200 STLs were triggered in the local **EBL** DDA program and usage of the **ebrary** Academic Complete subscription package was equally strong. So it is not a case that **UC Merced** users don't like eBooks, nor that users don't like the **ebrary** interface. At this point, the conclusion seems to be that for whatever reason the titles in the pilot have not been of interest to **UC Merced** users.

Various issues arose during the planning for the pilot in 2013 — some publisher related, some vendor related. Problematic publisher practices include:

- the use of DRM on titles available by DDA through an aggregator but not on the same titles available in a package on the publisher's platform
- the most desirable titles are often not made available through DDA
- only a small proportion of a publisher's output may be available through an aggregator
- the eBook price may be significantly higher than the print price


None of this is particularly new; many librarians have complained about these practices in articles in *ATG* and in other publications. At the same time, DRM in particular was problematic for many in the **UC** libraries.

The task force experienced several issues with **ebrary** during planning for the pilot. It took an inordinate amount of effort by **California Digital Library** staff to negotiate a license even after the outlines of the pilot were agreed upon. It was often difficult for the task force to learn the appropriate communication channels within **ebrary** and to receive prompt and complete responses to questions. Communication between **ebrary** and **YBP** was sometimes problematic. Consortial reporting functionality was not well-developed; issues remain with conflicting data on various reports. While these issues were frustrating at the time, they have been largely resolved with the implementation and ongoing operation of the pilot.



The science of service.

At Eastern Book Company, we've spent more than half a century shaping our unique brand of service. The first step is fulfilling our customers' orders with unmatched speed and accuracy. Then we custom-fit our operations to our customers' needs, allowing libraries to streamline processes and maximize budgets. And finally, we cultivate next-generation technologies to help our customers build the libraries their users need.

 **Eastern Book Company**

1-800-937-0331
www.ebc.com

Trust. Expertise. Service.

One significant issue that affected the roll-out of the pilot in 2014, but was not **ebrary's** fault, was the inability of **OCLC** to promptly supply **OCLC** numbers in the MARC records received from **ebrary**. The **University of California** union catalogue (Melvyl) is powered by **OCLC WorldCat Local**. Many of us have learned the hard way not to rely on the **OCLC** batch loading algorithm to attach library holdings to the correct bibliographic record. Since library holdings may need to be deleted from records either at the termination of the pilot or to implement a decision to remove earlier content from the discovery pool, it was critical that all MARC records distributed to the campuses contain **OCLC** numbers before being loaded into WorldCat. An early decision of the task force was that **ebrary** records lacking **OCLC** numbers would not be distributed to the libraries by the Shared Cataloging Program; SCP would research the **ebrary** site weekly and distribute records as they received **OCLC** numbers.

As much as 50% of some early files of records retrieved by the Shared Cataloging Program from **ebrary** consisted of records without **OCLC** numbers. The situation improved significantly as **ebrary** became more proactive in working with **OCLC**. As of April 30 only one MARC record for a title in the pilot did not contain an **OCLC** number. Hopefully, this means that the problem has been resolved going forward.

After four months of operation, the pilot is working smoothly with new titles being added weekly. The task force has now changed from weekly conference calls to monthly calls. The one ongoing concern is the level of spending. If spending over two years proceeded at the same rate as over the first four months, less than one-quarter of the initial allocation would be expended. While this may be an unfair comparison in many aspects, it does raise questions. At this point the task force is not considering lowering the number of short-term loans to increase purchases and expenditures, although that is certainly possible in the future if necessary. We are also not considering expanding the pilot beyond university presses. We are considering increasing the size of the discovery pool by adding two more years to the backfile (back to 2008) and also by expanding subject coverage to include science and technology. We have asked **YBP** for data on the potential increase to the discovery pool of either or both of these actions.

The **UC** DDA pilot is very much a work in progress. Stay tuned. 🌱