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Trish Chatterley

University of Alberta, trish.chatterley@ualberta.ca

Michael A. Arthur

University of Alabama Libraries, maarthur@ua.edu

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Being Earnest with Collections — Rethinking Monographic Acquisitions in a Large Academic Library

by **Trish Chatterley** (Collections Manager, John W. Scott Health Sciences Library, University of Alberta)
<trish.chatterley@ualberta.ca>

Column Editor: **Michael A. Arthur** (Associate Professor, Head, Resource Acquisition & Discovery, University of Alabama Libraries, Box 870266, Tuscaloosa, AL 35487; Phone: 205-348-1493; Fax: 205-348-6358) <maarthur@ua.edu>

Column Editor's Note: *I am writing my column notes on my fourth day at the University of Alberta. I am happy to be settling into the new position, and I am already finding that when discussions here turn to PDA I find myself in familiar territory. That is because, just as I did at the University of Central Florida, I find the issues surrounding the use of PDA, decisions about print vs. online monographs or ownership vs. access, result in routine discussions with colleagues from many institutions. These issues require ample attention as the industry and libraries struggle to find the right mix between immediate access and the need to build strong collections that support the teaching mission today and the research mission long into the future. I have long been concerned that the move from just-in-case to just-in-time acquisitions would erode one of the key objectives of research libraries — that being the development of research level collections. However, having managed the materials budget for a decade, I am also aware that even if that is the objective few institutions have the monograph funding necessary to collect at that level. In this column I am happy to feature the great Trish Chatterley so ATG readers can get a glimpse into how a large (well-funded) research library is also struggling with and trying to manage all of the variables related to monograph purchasing in the 21st-Century Library. Here Trish discusses major changes to monograph selection at the University of Alberta and provides details about the impact these changes (including a rather dynamic move to PDA) had on overall spending. More importantly, she covers the legitimate concerns expressed by those who still prefer print and the overall concern that these changes may negatively impact the ability to build and maintain research level collections. — MA*

Every day seems to bring word of yet another academic library that must cancel subscriptions in the face of either static or dwindling budgets. Many libraries have been reducing their monograph expenditures in an effort to maintain licenses to heavily used serial resources. These factors lead to exploration of innovative, more cost-effective methods for developing and managing collections. The University of Alberta Libraries (hereafter referred to as UAL) recently implemented a new model of monograph acquisitions that resulted in a shift from title-by-title selection by individual liaison librarians to almost exclusive reliance on Patron-Driven Acquisition and approval plans.

The University of Alberta in Edmonton, Alberta, Canada is a public institution with

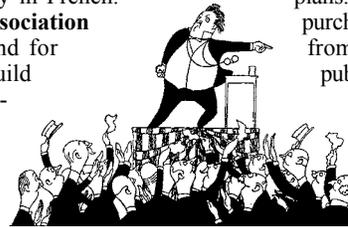
an enrollment of almost 40,000 students and a staff of approximately 5200. UAL is comprised of six subject libraries (Humanities/Social sciences, Science/Technology, Health Sciences, Education, Business, and Law) on the main campus and two cross-disciplinary libraries on distance campuses, one of which collects materials almost exclusively in French.

UAL is a member of the Association of Research Libraries, and for many years attempted to build collections that were as comprehensive as possible. We are extremely fortunate compared to many American libraries in that recent cuts to the collections budget have been small, and we still maintain a monograph budget of 3.2 million CAD, which at the current exchange rate of 0.77 equates to approximately 2.5 million USD.

Our reason for implementing change, therefore, was influenced more by a lack of staff resources than a direct effort to reduce collection development costs, since a voluntary severance program in 2013 had significantly reduced our staff complement. There was a need to reduce the amount of librarian time spent on selection so that innovative services related to research data management, measurement of scholarly impact, and other areas could be explored. As part of the old model, we had only limited approval plans in place, so subject librarians regularly received significant numbers of electronic slips, selected resources title by title, and ordered titles themselves either within the **Coutts OASIS** or **YBP GOBI** systems. This responsibility was removed from their performance expectations in early 2014 when **Coutts Information Services** was awarded a contract as UAL's preferred English-language monograph vendor at the same time that a new electronic-preferred policy was implemented within the system. The time was right to explore workflow efficiencies on a large scale, and a significant electronic Patron-Driven Acquisition plan was implemented in conjunction with new, comprehensive approval plans. Slip notifications were eliminated.

If the recent **ALCTS** e-forum on Patron-Driven Acquisition (PDA) is any indication, librarians each have a different view about how PDA should be implemented and the extent of its role in an overarching approach to collection development. Many libraries still employ thorough approval plans with PDA as a small supplement based on titles that would have been forwarded to librarians as slips, while others rely on comprehensive PDA plans for the bulk of their eBook purchasing. UAL elected

to implement PDA as a first draw on all titles profiled by **Coutts**, with the expectation that a majority of titles would therefore be directed along this route. An exception was made for those titles produced by publishers from which we purchase front-lists directly, which were excluded from our PDA and approval plans. For many years, we had been purchasing eBook front-lists directly from such large interdisciplinary publishers as **Springer** and **Wiley**, as well as smaller discipline-specific publishers. This continued according to the new model, and accounts for a significant portion of our yearly monograph expenditure and automatic purchase of the majority of the eBooks we buy.



Approval plans were devised for each library in the UAL system, with parameters set to match curricular and research needs at a suitable level for the clientele served in each unit. If titles matched our profiles and were eligible for PDA, they were diverted along that route, and temporary records were loaded into our catalogue and made viewable in our discovery layer. We received **MARC** records weekly. We were invoiced for titles as purchases were triggered according to **EBSCO** and **MyiLibrary's** trigger settings, and a PDA fund code was established to track expenditures. If matched titles were available as eBooks but from publishers that did not allow their material to be incorporated into PDA plans, the eBook would be purchased on approval. Since our new plan was to be e-preferred, if only print copies were available at the time of profiling they would be diverted to a holding shelf for an eight-week period in the hopes that an electronic version would be released during that time. If the eight weeks lapsed and no eBook had become available, the print copy would be shipped. Because of the new e-preferred policy and our previous experience with a print PDA pilot program, a print PDA plan was not considered. User feedback had indicated that the turnaround time for receiving the print volumes was too great, and the need for the items had often passed by the time they were received.

As part of the new contract, **Coutts** began supplying shelf-ready print books. Since subject librarians were no longer receiving slips, firm orders were only placed upon specific request from faculty members or students. Whereas librarians could previously purchase books directly themselves, in the new model, an online monograph request form was established and

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And They Were There

Reports of Meetings — 34th Annual Charleston Conference

Issues in Book and Serial Acquisition, “The Importance of Being Earnest” — Francis Marion Hotel, Embassy Suites Historic Downtown, Courtyard Marriott Historic District, Addlestone Library, College of Charleston, and School of Science and Mathematics Building, Charleston, SC — November 5-8, 2014

Charleston Conference Reports compiled by: **Ramune K. Kubilius** (Northwestern University, Galter Health Sciences Library) <r-kubilius@northwestern.edu>

Column Editor’s Note: Thank you to all of the *Charleston Conference* attendees who agreed to write short reports that highlight sessions they attended at the 2014 conference. All attempts were made to provide a broad coverage of sessions, and notes are included in the reports to reflect known changes in the session titles or presenters, highlighting those that were not printed in the conference’s final program (though some may have been reflected in the online program). Please visit the **Conference Website**, <http://www.charlestonlibraryconference.com>, for the online conference schedule from which there are links to many presentations’ PowerPoint slides and handouts, plenary session videos, and conference reports by the **2014 Charleston Conference** blogger, **Donald T. Hawkins**. Visit the conference blog at: http://www.against_the_grain.com/category/chsconfblog/. The **2014 Charleston Conference Proceedings** will be published in partnership with **Purdue University Press** in 2015 (<http://docs.lib.purdue.edu/charleston/>).

In this issue of *ATG* you will find the fifth installment of 2014 conference reports. The first four installments can be found in *ATG* v.27#1, February 2015, v.27#2, April 2015, v.27#3, June 2015, and v.27#4, September 2015. We will continue to publish all of the reports received in upcoming print issues throughout the year. — **RKK**

FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 7, 2014 LIVELY LUNCH DISCUSSIONS

Collecting and Acquiring in Earnest (The 14th Annual Health Sciences Lively Lunch) — Presented by **Andrea Twiss-Brooks**, Moderator (University of Chicago); **Nicole Gallo** (Rittenhouse); **Ramune K. Kubilius** (Northwestern University); **Emma O’Hagan** (Western Michigan University School of Medicine); **Yumin Jiang**, (University of Colorado Health Sciences Library)

NOTE: Wendy Bahnsen served as host and presented in place of Nicole Gallo.

Reported by: **Ramune K. Kubilius** (Northwestern University, Galter Health Sciences Library) <r-kubilius@northwestern.edu>

Host **Bahnsen** greeted close to fifty attendees, and moderator **Twiss-Brooks** introduced the session. **Kubilius** did the traditional “year in review” synopsis of developments since the last conference. (The

handout is posted in the conference site); publisher anniversaries, big data, open access initiatives, new publications.

Bahnsen described the R2 PDA model and shared highlights from a customer survey (May 2013). Of R2 eBook purchases, about 65% were firm purchases and 35% came through the PDA process. Library customers selected from 2 to 4,500 titles for the program but more often, about 400, or 10% are selected from PDA. Overall, 27% of the titles migrated to the shopping cart were purchased. **Jiang** shared insights about three eBook PDA/DDA (patron-driven or demand-driven acquisition) programs: *MyLibrary* (2012); R2 (2013); **EBSCO** (2014, three months before the conference). The library’s goals in trialing: increase access to eBooks, build up subject collections outside core collection areas, and experiment with “just in time” acquisitions. Availability of books in *Doody Core Titles* is an appreciated feature. Desires for PDA: set up a library profile; devise workflows; investigate consortia deals; devise assessment metrics; make weeding decisions. It’s not easy to balance three different providers’ PDA programs at the same time.

O’Hagan shared experience with journal articles “on demand” and “pay per view” at two institutions. The Get It Now delivery service returns articles in under two hours. Her current institution caps the number of requests per day and encourages “thoughtful use.” One problem: multiple individuals needing the same article for a class. She also described other experiments with ReadCube’s institutional model and Reprints as a complement.

Twiss-Brooks moderated varied audience queries about: promotion (PDA and article-on-demand), availability of turnaway statistics from providers, requests through mediated services of articles already available in library-licensed journals, usability, browsing, downloading availability, assessment, usage studies, and surveys.

Discovery on Trial! — Presented by **Christopher C. Brown** (University of Denver); **Bob Boissy** (Springer Science+Business Media); **John McCullough**, (OCLC); **Lettie Conrad** (SAGE)

Reported by: **Christine Fischer** (UNC Greensboro, University Libraries) <cmfische@uncg.edu>

Assessment results shared by **Boissy** (Account Development Manager) for referring sources from the **University of Denver** to **SpringerLink**

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involved regular meetings with subject librarians and unit library collections managers, working with them to review the titles that have come on approval and the titles that were excluded based on the parameters of the plans, in order to tweak the plans to make them more efficient at pulling in material we want and excluding material we don’t. Titles that have been firm ordered from **Coutts** over the past year have also been reviewed, and additional changes to the plans have been made as a result. Regular contact with the **Coutts** collections consultants has been maintained to

ensure that requested changes to the approval plans are implemented and any issues resolved.

While there were many challenges in setting up the new model and many unforeseen glitches had to be worked through, the new model is now working smoothly, and many initial concerns have been allayed. Continued evaluation is needed, as the focus so far has been on ensuring we obtain the titles librarians think we should be receiving. We have not yet assessed use of the titles acquired on PDA or of titles purchased on approval as it was still too early for such analysis, but comparisons are of interest. A major benefit of the new model has been the significant savings, but future assessment will have to be conducted to ensure the savings are not prioritized over the development of a robust research collection. 🌱