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# Let's Get Technical--Piloting a DDA Program for Specific Subjects

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# Let's Get Technical — Piloting a DDA Program for Specific Subjects

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**Column Editor Note:** *In this month's column, we feature the experience of piloting a DDA program for specific subjects. Sally Krash, previously Head of Acquisitions at the Howard-Tilton Memorial Library at Tulane University, now Head of Information Resources Management at UMass Amherst, and Eric Wedig, Chief Bibliographer for the Social Sciences at the Howard-Tilton Memorial Library at Tulane University describe their experience with implementing this pilot program. — SM and AM*

## The Pilot Program

The **Howard-Tilton Memorial Library (HTML)** serves as the main campus library for **Tulane University**. Currently, 62% of the collections budget is spent on electronic resources. As many libraries move towards demand-driven selections as a replacement for more traditional collection development activities, the HTML collections management group was more inclined to continue traditional selection practices and “test” demand-driven acquisitions (DDA) as a supplementary approach for acquiring titles on the fringe of what we collect. Our library has established e-approval plans for social work, economics and math, and this pilot program would be used as an enhancement to the social work and economics e-approval plans.

## Implementing the Program

During the first part of 2014, a working group was formed to investigate best practices, costs, and workflows involved in implementing a DDA program. The working group consisted of stakeholders in technical services and collection development. The group determined that we would take a conservative approach to DDA by initially conducting a pilot project, and selected to focus on economics, social sciences, history, education, and religion titles that would not normally come in on our regular approval plans.

Two principal non-subject parameters were established, limiting the number of publishers included and establishing a price-range. The publishers offered in the pilot were limited to **Routledge, Ashgate, Brepols, Brill, Earthscan, Elsevier, Lit Verlag, IMF, Peter Lang, Routledge, Springer, and Wilfred Laurier**. The price range for eBooks was set at \$125 through \$200. (Our upper limit for our e-approval plans is \$125.) These presses and the price range were chosen to allow peripheral materials, normally not purchased by the social sciences selectors or matching our approval plans, to be discoverable to **Tulane** library users through the library's discovery platform and online catalog. Additionally, we excluded titles that met these parameters but came in under print standing orders.

Our approval vendor, **YBP**, was selected as our DDA vendor and **ebrary** was selected as our DDA platform. At the time of the pilot project, all of our domestic approval plans were with **YBP** and we had established e-approval plans with this vendor and platform. It was logical to continue using the same vendor/platform, as we had well-established relationships with this vendor, were familiar with the **YBP** GOBI interface for managing selections and invoicing, were less likely to include titles that had previously been received by the library, and had established technical services workflows including the supply of MARC records. We initially provided technical specifications for DDA MARC records delivery and selected the single-user purchase option (the same as our e-approval plans) which only allows for one user to access one eBook at a time. **ebrary** also offers a multiple-user option at approximately, 50% more per title a significantly higher price. We further specified no short term loans; an option available for DDA plans that allows a specified number of uses before a purchase is triggered. We chose not to use this option, as the cost for loans had increased significantly, and our purpose for the pilot was to enhance our collection, not temporarily “rent” titles.

Internal workflows and processes were established and documented through the technical services department wiki at <http://tulst.pbworks.com/w/page/84523930/DDA>. Information on the pilot plan was distributed to the larger collections group initially and throughout the project.

In the fall of 2014, the pilot project began with an initial deposit of \$10,000. This amount was expected to cover the term of the project, from October 2014 through June, 2015, the end of the fiscal year. We determined this figure after consultation with our **YBP** book representative, who believed that this amount would be sufficient based on her experience with other academic libraries conducting similar pilot projects or placing similar parameters on their DDA plans.

We included titles in our program that met the parameters of the plan for the last two calendar years, and initially loaded 2389 MARC records into our Voyager library system. Voyager bibliographic records fed into our Primo discovery layer, so they were discoverable in three ways: through Primo, the library's online catalog, and the **ebrary** online platform. Additionally, bibliographers could identify titles included in the plan on the GOBI platform or by looking at the local code (980 \$c DDA) added in individual catalog records. **YBP** provided records that matched our profile on a weekly basis, and cataloging staff retrieved

those records and loaded them into Voyager. In addition, the subject bibliographer was able to manually move titles into the DDA plan, and those were included with our weekly record loads. The total number of discovery records loaded into Voyager for the duration of the pilot was 3588, including 27 that were manually added to the plan. Additionally, 95 invoice records were supplied to the library for titles purchased, and acquisitions staff overlaid the MARC records as part of invoice processing.

## The Pilot Takes Off

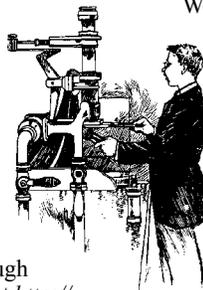
Initially the pilot got off to a somewhat slow start, but it was not long before it was obvious that the program was being well used. We noticed by the end of the fall semester that we needed to further limit our subject parameters, as many titles were being pulled into our DDA program that we did not intend to include; specifically a large number of business titles.

We decided to make adjustments to the subject parameters, excluding eBooks that were related to business and management, as those were collected by a separate library at **Tulane**.

Even after eliminating the business and management titles, there continued to be significant purchases over the late fall term and continuing into the spring term. It was obvious by March, 2015 that it would be necessary to increase our deposit if the pilot program was to continue. Fortunately, we were able to identify a source for additional funds and increase our deposit with **YBP** to \$19,000, which covered DDA purchases for the remainder of fiscal year 2015.

In total, we incurred 95 trigger events, or purchases, and spent a total of \$14,374 on the DDA pilot project, with an average of \$151 spent per title. eBook purchases spanned 33 LC classifications, with Economic History (by Subject) and Theory & Practice of Education being the most popular classes. One aspect of the pilot that was not foreseen was the number of books that we would remove from the plan. This was due to price increases over our maximum set price, due to the title coming in under a standing order, due to a decision to obtain print instead of an eBook, and largely due to titles that met our parameters but did not meet our collections needs, such as business titles. This required monthly processing by both the acquisitions librarian and subject bibliographer to identify and remove those titles from the plan, taking approximately eight hours total per month. A total of 370 titles, or just over 10%, were removed from the program.

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**Random Ramblings**  
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revenues in many jurisdictions. In the same way that higher education must talk about its practical consequences in growing the economy and training students for productive careers rather than the joy of learning, the public library needs a stronger case than saying it provides reading whose only consequence is that the reader enjoys the book and perhaps escapes from a humdrum reality for a few hours. Instead, the public library, in addition to education, literacy training, and acculturation to American society, often makes the case that it supports economic development by helping individuals to learn employable skills and to find jobs through library resources including Internet access. An even better justification is to argue that the library supports the economic health of the community by supporting entrepreneurs and small business people. If all people do is read for pleasure, the modern-day Puritan might easily say: "Let them buy their own books. Why should my tax dollars support such frivolous activities?"

To be even more cynical, do librarians sometimes refuse to accept credit for this great success because they feel it devalues them and the library profession? When they answer questionnaires about their jobs and the role of libraries, do they feel the need to omit the heavy circulation statistics for popular fiction since these figures don't support the intellectual reputation of librarianship? Is providing popular materials for genre fiction readers less satisfying than helping a patron discover information about an uncommon medical condition? Does the library director worry about the expenditures for the integrated library system, staffing the reference desk,

and purchasing databases when many patrons go right to the fiction shelves, where they know they'll find what they're looking for without using these expensive services? Will my students be less interested in becoming librarians if I tell them that they will spend much of their time pouring over reviews for genre fiction rather than discovering the right databases and formulating searches with both high precision and high recall? Will the same students wonder why they spent years to get their education, graduated magna cum laude, and then got a masters' degree to watch patrons leave the library with stacks of best sellers?

To conclude this segment with a true story, my librarian spouse, **Martha J. Spear**, years ago in the 1980s, worked in a branch library in Salt Lake City that served a neighborhood with a high percentage of Hispanics. Her predecessor had bought lots of Spanish language books, but her academic training led her to choose the classics: **Cervantes, Lope de Vega, Unamuno**, and other canonical authors. They sat on the shelves with an occasional circulation. To try a different strategy, **Martha** asked her patrons what they wanted. The response was popular fiction in Spanish including best-sellers translated from English. These materials flew off the shelves. On the same principle, her branch subscribed to the *National Enquirer*. While some of the librarians at the main library had raised eyebrows, the publication was exceptionally popular even among librarians from elsewhere in the system when they came to visit.

But enough for now.

Next month, the second installment on this issue will deal with the responses on the PUBLIB discussion list where I posed this question. Stay tuned for their reaction. 🐿

**Let's Get Technical**  
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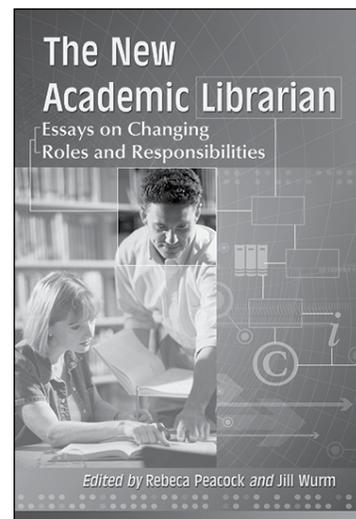
**Lessons Learned**

This being our initial foray into DDA, we certainly learned a lot from this experiment. This pilot project was initiated to allow users to have access to a much wider array of materials than the library would normally have purchased, and that goal was achieved. Peripheral titles were offered without risk that funds would be wasted if they were not used. The choices made by patrons were not limited to books for which a librarian was able to predict interest, as expected. While our project was implemented on a relatively small scale, it served as a valuable supplement to the large number of books purchased for the selected subject areas.

We experienced a number of disadvantages. The number of eBooks that incurred trigger events or purchases was more than we had initially predicted and our costs exceeded our initial deposit. One of the mistakes we made was setting a price range of \$125-\$200 per title. This price drove the costs up too fast; many of the books purchased were more than \$150. If we continue the plan in the next fiscal

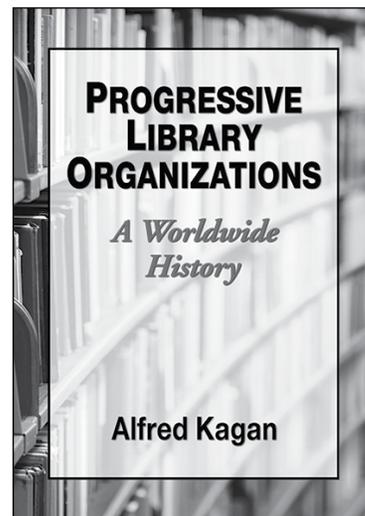
year, limiting the ceiling for DDA purchases to \$150 would significantly reduce costs. Also, limiting the number of presses in the plan would keep costs under control and still provide access to peripheral publications, such as those produced by **Ashgate** and **Routledge**. Should we continue with DDA, in addition to considering the benefits of DDA, we will also consider the impact on staff required to run the DDA plan: one acquisitions technician to load MARC records, one acquisitions librarian and one subject bibliographer to monitor the plan and make adjustments, and one acquisitions technician to process invoices and overlay MARC records.

Overall, the plan provided a valuable learning experience with some success and some disadvantages. We were able to offer titles to patrons at the point-of-need, include selections that may not have been purchased through normal processes, and reasonably fit processes into existing workflows. However, the very high price range made it difficult to stay within our initial budget after only a small number of purchases were made. Going forward, we need to determine the best way to keep costs under control and make sure any expansion of the DDA program has a minimal effect on staff time. 🐿



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