PATRON-DRIVEN ACQUISITIONS: OR I WISH I KNEW THEN ...

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Abstract: The ups and downs of initiating and assessing a patron acquisitions program at the University of North Texas will be highlighted. Emphasis will be placed on changing the philosophy of collection development, how to start the program (through a jobber or directly), coordinating print and electronic acquisitions processes, and assessing the first year's purchases.

Keywords: collection development, acquisitions, patron driven acquisitions

Background
In the traditional method of collection development, the librarian works with faculty/researchers to develop detailed collection development policy statements that include defined levels of collecting for sub-divisions of each subject area. This just-in-case model attempts to have a specific book or books on a topic on the shelf when a user wants it.

As budgets were reduced, a just-in-time or patron driven acquisitions (PDA) model was developed. In early iterations of this model, a book was purchased when a user requested it via interlibrary loan (Anderson et al., 2003; Anderson et al., 2010; Bracke, 2010; Perdue & Fleet, 1999).

With the increased availability of electronic books and the increasing desires of users to get what they want when they want it, book vendors apply the PDA model to e-books. MARC records of e-books are loaded into a library's catalog, with the e-book immediately available. This model makes sense when you consider that only 20% of library books are ever used (Best, 2008). PDA ensures that there is at least one use of the book. Based on these factors, a number of academic libraries have started participating in pilot programs of e-book demand- or patron-driven acquisitions (Breitbach & Lambert, 2011; Fischer, Wright, Clatanoff, Barton, & Shreeves, 2012).

Patron-Driven Acquisitions Models
At the University of North Texas Libraries, we began investigation of PDA in summer 2011. We were already purchasing e-books from several sources. The two models we used for purchasing or leasing e-books were from individual publishers, such as Springer and Wiley, or from aggregators such as Safari Books, eBrary, and NetLibrary (now eBooks on EBSCOHost). The librarians, with input from faculty and researchers, selected individual titles or packages of titles on a particular topic. The titles in the book packages were preselected by the librarians on the vendor's staff, so we had confidence in the quality of these collections.

Yankee Book Pedlar (YBP), our primary book jobber, started a pilot PDA program through eBrary. A benefit of using YBP was the ability to see in the acquisitions module whether a PDA record was already in the catalog, separate searches of the catalog. Also, we could build our PDA acquisitions profile based on the profile we had already established for print monographs, which has been refined to meet the needs of our faculty and students. Under the PDA program we would receive a record to download to our catalog and the book would be immediately available.
YBP presented several options for handling purchasing, leasing or renting e-books. The first model was a Simple Purchase Model, wherein the user could look at a book and scan it to see if it was of interest. This is the equivalent to taking a physical book off the shelf and deciding whether or not to check it out from the library. In this model, we agreed to automatically purchase the book based on three “triggers”:

- Viewing the book for more than ten minutes. To assure that actual use was measured, a time-out of three minutes of inactivity was enabled.
- Viewing more than ten pages.
- Downloading, copying (copy and paste), or printing from the book.

The second model was the rental option, in which we would pay a fee, usually 10% of the purchase price, for each time a patron triggered the usage of a book. This model seemed less desirable to us as we could pay more than the price of the book for books that were checked out many times, and never own or retain permanent access to the items.

The third model was a rent-to-own model. We would pay a fee, about 10% of the purchase price, for a set number of rentals that we determined. The next time the item was used, it would be purchased at full-price. We were concerned about the potential budget impacts of this model. If we rented five times, we could end up paying 150% of the purchase price or more, depending on the number of rentals selected and the rental fees. There would be fewer titles actually purchased to which we would have permanent access.

**Vendor Comparison**

While we decided to start our PDA program through our existing jobber, YBP, to consolidate our ordering, as we were making our decision we took into account several other variables:

- What subject areas are covered? We wanted as many as possible.
- Which publishers does the program handle, and what percent of their front and back list titles are available? Just because a publisher is listed doesn't mean that all of their titles are covered.
- Are there fees for setting up and maintaining the PDA program?
- How would the records be loaded into the catalog and how frequently? Is the quality of the MARC record important? What level of quality of the final record did we want in our catalog, and are there extra charges?
- What are the purchase triggers? Are all rentals the same percentage? Would we be invoiced for each purchase or is the amount deducted from a deposit account? What kind of purchase report would be made available to us and how frequently? How would we be notified when we came close to spending our deposit?
- What happens when we reach our deposit limit? Must we withdraw or suppress the records from our catalog?

**Getting Started**

Our first consideration was how much to allocate for PDA purchases, which would be the driver for the program. We wanted to start with a range of subjects that covered the entire curriculum. We were able to dedicate enough funds to do this. With more limited funds, we would have had to target only a few subjects and hope to grow the program.

Next we considered how to handle duplicates of items already available in our print collection. We considered which format our users would prefer and whether having duplicates was of value to us. We decided to exclude *exact* duplicates from the PDA program but include newer editions. The YBP profile enabled us to limit by type of book or treatment, as well as audience levels, textbooks, specific series, and even specific publishers. Thus, we were able to exclude titles in the General and Juvenile categories, textbooks and selected publishers.
Finally, we considered how we would assess the program by defining level of success. We would be satisfied if the amount that was set aside was spent at the planned rate and if the titles purchased were similarly distributed across the subject areas as our print monograph collection.

**Methods of Assessment**

The methods we used to assess the PDA program were based on our primary concerns: ensuring that the resources available are of high quality: that the items purchased by our patrons are distributed across the curriculum; and that our funds are well managed. To address the first two concerns, we compared the PDA titles against our print collection in terms of the distribution across the spectrum of subjects. We also compared the distribution of usage by class (Figures 2, 3) with print monograph circulation during the same time period. To address concerns regarding costs, we monitored the amount spent versus the expected spending. We mapped the Library of Congress classification numbers of the titles to subject funds using the same algorithms used for our print approval plans. Then we combined them into six classes: arts, business, humanities, interdisciplinary, social sciences, and STEM (science, technology, engineering and medicine).

**Results**

The distribution of print monographs, PDA titles available, and PDA titles purchased are compared side-by-side in Figure 1. It shows that there are only minor differences in the distribution of titles between print and available available in the PDA collection (called “Discovery”). The most striking differences are that there are more arts, interdisciplinary, and STEM titles in the print collection, and more business and social sciences titles in the Discovery set. This suggests that the distribution of titles by class in the Discovery collection is not quite meeting the needs of our users.

![Distribution](image)

In the Discovery collection, social sciences represented a greater percentage of usage than of print circulations. The usage of PDA titles, however, does correspond closely with the distribution of titles in the collection. It is surprising that circulation of titles in the arts and music exceeds their representation within the print monograph collection.

While online usage is difficult to compare directly with print circulation due to differences in length of availability, we can compare the distribution of usage across the same classes described above. In Figure 2 and 3, distribution of circulation by class is not comparable to that of online sessions of the
Discovery collection. It is clear that arts and music titles (excluding music manuscripts) in the print monograph collection represented a much greater percentage of all titles that circulated than that of the PDA titles.

![Circulation](image)

*Figure 2. Circulation*

![DDA User Sessions](image)

*Figure 3.*

Regarding the costs, we were concerned that the rate of purchases would exceed the rate expected throughout the course of the year. Indeed, that is what happened (see ).
By the end of June 2012, we could see that we were going to run out of funding by early in the fall semester, so we started examining options, specifically short-term loans. The data clearly indicated a power-law distribution of title-usage, showing that many of our titles were not used more than a few times. While this rate of multiple-usage was far greater than print or EBSCO e-books, the title-usage curve required us to seriously consider short-term loans.

But what difference would have short-term loans have made to the bottom lines of both amount spent and titles owned? We used Excel’s Scenario Analysis (AKA “What if...” analysis) to set up several scenarios. The variables were the number of loans prior to purchase and the total cost of titles that would have been actually purchased (after meeting the requisite number of loans). The key outcomes were the total cost of loans and purchases, and the total number of titles owned (Figures 6 and 7).

The curve of number of titles owned is steeper than the curve of total amount spent, particularly above the two-loan scenario. Thus it became clear that the two-loan option would have enabled us to spread our funding further without seriously impacting permanent availability of titles. The UNT Libraries will be pursuing this option for the next fiscal year.
What We Wish We Had Known

The key lessons learned from our pilot program include:

- Continuous monitoring of funds spent is critical for proper management of the accounts.
- Publisher/vendor definitions of content levels do not always agree with our definition.
- Simple Purchase Model requires more funds and does not necessarily lead to better collections.
- A truly patron-driven acquisitions program will ensure that only those titles that have an established demand are actually purchased.
- Not all publishers have rental options available and not all charge the same rates. A number of publishers charge 20% or more.
- Collection size will vary widely, as we disabled and subsequently re-enabled access to the Discovery Collection due to availability of funds. This needs to be taken into account when reporting to external agencies.
- Careful evaluation of the content of titles provided prior to starting the program would have been helpful to determine the coverage.

Overall, we consider the PDA program a success, since the titles were used at least as heavily as, if not more than, the print monographs and the other e-book packages. We will be looking at the PDA options from other e-book providers to fill gaps of coverage in the eBrary collection. Finally, we will continue to monitor the rentals and purchases of two-rental model in order to maintain high-quality collections and are good stewards of our collection development funds.
References