Keeping Up With... Patron Driven Acquisitions

This edition of *Keeping Up With…* was written by Stephen Arougheti.

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Just-in-Case versus Just-in-Time: A Paradigm Shift in Collection Development

At times a subjective practice, academic collection development relies on the professional knowledge of librarians to select material tailored to course curriculums and the anticipated demands of library users. Favoring a broad approach, libraries often apply a "just-in-case" collection model. Purchasing in excess, libraries acquire books for the potential they might someday offer. This collection model serves libraries well by assuring an exhaustive diversity of material is always available and functions as a superficial determinant of a libraries worth based on the amount of material collected. Ostensibly, the just-in-case model failed due to unsustainable increases to costs and reduced acquisitions budgets, but more importantly a variety of factors including technological advances, the advocating of data curation, and the proliferation of e-books revealed the just-in-case model as an ineffective approach to acquisition.

In reaction to this failure, libraries are adopting a "just-in-time" model. The general premise for the model dictates that patron demand is the primary impetus for acquisition and the purchase process remains delayed until the user requires access to the title. Known by a variety of derivatives, including patron-driven acquisition or demand-driven acquisition, the process relies on immediate user needs to reveal a collection's deficiencies and rectify the issues through a library purchase. Through such strategies the collection is improved beyond the immediate interests of a single user as the long-term usability of the collection is strengthened. While the process and methodology of patron-driven acquisition (PDA) evolved through a variety of strategies, the concept of a user and librarian partnership toward collection development remains.

The Evolving Methodology of Patron-Driven Acquisition and its Impact Upon Circulation Rates

The process of PDA evolved according to a series of strategies, by which the approach was originally meticulously controlled by librarians to an automated system of user generated acquisition. The adoption of PDA derived in part due to the recognized increasing stagnant circulation of monographs within a collection. In 1979, a University of Pittsburgh study revealed 40% of a collection never circulated versus a 2010 Cornell study which discovered 55% of books purchased since 1990 never circulated and 65% of books purchased in 2001 had not circulated by the conclusion of 2009.[1] Early trials exploring the feasibility and effects of PDA relied on interlibrary loan (ILL) requests as an indicator of a collection's deficiency. Received ILL requests were reviewed and if certain criteria were satisfied (e.g. price range, shipment within a specified duration, published within x years, et cetera) librarians purchased rather than borrowed the title.

Accumulating data during a ten year span, Judith Nixon and E. Stewart Saunders sought to determine the long-term impact of PDA on the circulation of a collection. In other words, is PDA limited in its scope to addressing only the immediate demands of the user or do acquisitions improve the overall long-term circulation of a collection? Analyzing data acquired from Purdue University's Books on Demand service between 2000 and 2010, which fulfilled ILL requests through purchases rather than borrowing, Nixon and Saunders noted, "…books acquired through this user-initiated program have higher circulation rates than books acquired through the normal selection channels. The difference is quite large, a mean of 4.1 compared to a mean of 2.4, when the first interlibrary loan use is included as a circulation." [2] Detractors note that high use does not equate to quality. While increased circulation serves as a justification for a library fulfilling its role, the measure of a library's collection is its scholarly integrity and comprehensive breadth. Yet, with the decreasing circulation of print monographs and a crusade to replace shelves of books with open areas for user engagement, it is imperative to optimize library space with material patrons will use and is serviceable to their studies.

Implementing Patron-Driven Acquisition and Establishing a Viable Approval Plan

As libraries recognized the potential PDA provided and sought to expand its influence, librarians discovered an effective and agreeable partner in vendors. Appreciating an opportunity to further market their holdings and increase sales, vendors collaborated with libraries to delay the purchase of offerings until demand arose from users. Vendors provided MARC records of material outside the collection for inclusion in the library's catalog in accordance with an established profile. For print material, a hyperlink is included within the record for the user to manually select and initiate a purchase. Generating a purchase request through the catalog automatically initiates a purchase; avoiding review by the subject librarian as the title was previously vetted to comply with the library profile.

Establishing a profile or approval plan requires the librarian to effectively partner with a vendor to identify a predetermined set of specifications (e.g. subject, format, language, cost, et cetera) by which corresponding titles will be provided. From the approval plan the library is supplied with titles for inclusion in the catalog which conform to the library's specifications. Through an approval plan, librarians are able to determine the books available for PDA and retain control of ensuring the library's core academic mission is served by developing a collection of breadth and merit that supports the research endeavors of the university students and faculty. Despite the benefits of acquiring print material through the PDA process, a number of concerns including delayed delivery times and patron frustration inhibit its value. Continuing progress with e-books offers a remedy to these shortcomings through immediate access and user-friendly methodology.

Patron-Driven Acquisition and e-Books: Benefits and Challenges

Similar in design to the acquisition of print material, e-book acquisition provides users with access to titles the library has yet to purchase. The difference occurs through a variety of facets. The MARC records for e-books are made accessible through the library's catalog or discovery tool with the entirety of the book's content freely available. Unbeknownst to user, it is accessing the book which

generates the purchase of licensing rights to the title. In collaboration with the vendor, libraries create an approval plan which establishes a set of criteria (e.g. total viewings, percent of content accessed, and duration of use by the individual) to which point a 'trigger' is initiated and the library pays a fee to rent or purchase the book. Despite the benefits of immediate access to the desired information and increased efficiency through automating the process, which reduces the demand on staff, obstacles remain which deter libraries from implementing an e-book PDA system.

Many of the challenges associated with the acquisition of e-books through patron demand are consistent themes plaguing e-books for the past decade. Most notably, is the limited accessibility of e-book titles; whether they are unavailable electronically or embargoed by publishers to encourage the continued sale of print materials. In an analysis of the challenges associated with e-book PDA, William Walters notes, "Fewer than half of all academic titles are available as e-books." and "Ebrary, the e-book vendor with the largest catalog offers just 31 percent of the titles profiled by YBP Library Services." [3] Concerns related to Digital Rights Management, difficult user interfaces, and managing long-term licensing costs remain challenges which cause academic libraries to be slow in adopting an e-book PDA system.

A Continued Role for Librarians

It is best to view PDA as a tool amongst several to augment a library's collection development policy. User selection serves to facilitate the immediate and short-term demands of developing a collection within niches; yet the requisite foresight required to refine a comprehensive collection for future scholarship and address ongoing subject trends necessitates the continued role of librarians in advancing an inclusive strategy. Mutually beneficial, PDA bespeaks the appreciation libraries express for the user as a valued partner. A cost-effective and customer-service oriented policy, PDA remains an evolving strategy with a demonstrated history of success.

Recommended Resources and Readings

Collection Building. MCB University Press. "*Collection Building* aims to provide well-researched and authoritative information on collection development for librarians in academic, public, company and special libraries. The journal offers expert analyses of resource development, technology and resource sharing. It also looks at developing methodologies for expanding and managing collections."

Collection Management. Haworth Press. "An essential resource for librarians who develop library collections, *Collection Management* examines the latest developments in the field and their implications for college, university, and research libraries."

Thomas Kaczorowski. "(E-book) Patron Driven Acquisitions (PDA): An Annotated Bibliography." Fordham Law Archive of Scholarship & History." Last modified July 15, 2013.

Albitz, Becky, Christine Avery, and Diane Zabel. *Rethinking Collection Development and Management*. Santa Barbara, California: Libraries Unlimited, 2014.

Nixon, Judith M., Robert S. Freeman, and Suzanne M. Ward. *Patron-Driven Acquisitions: Current Successes and Future Directions*. London: Routledge, 2011.

Swords, David A. (Ed.). *Patron-Driven Acquisitions: History and Best Practices*. Berlin: De Gruyter Saur, 2011.

Ward, Suzanne M. *Guide to Implementing and Managing Patron-Driven Acquisitions*. Chicago: American Library Association, 2012.

Notes

[1] Pelish, Matthew. "Redefining the Academic Library: Managing the Migration to Digital Information Services," page 37 (August 16, 2011), accessed May 7, 2014,

[2] Nixon, Judith and E. Stewart Saunders. "A Study of Circulation Statistics of Books on Demand: A Decade of Patron-Driven Collection Development, Part 3." *Collection Management*, 35, no.3 (2010): 151.

[3] William H. Walters. "Patron Driven Acquisition and the Educational Mission of the Academic Library." *Library Resources and Technical Services,* 56, no. 3 (2012): 207.