Evidence Based Library and Information Practice

First-Time Use Books are Frequently Available for Patron-Driven Acquisition

A Review of:
Herrera, G. (2015). Testing the patron-driven model: Availability analysis of first-time use books. *Collection Management*, *40*(1), 3-16. doi: http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/01462679.2014.965863

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Abstract

Objective – To determine whether a hypothetical Patron-Driven Acquisition (PDA) purchasing model is acceptable in terms of making available print monographs after their initial publication.

Design – Quantitative data analysis.

Setting – A large public university located in the southern United States of America.

Subjects – 8,020 item records representing books used at the author's institution for the first time in 2012. Non-circulating monographs and items such as personal copy reserve materials and government documents were excluded from the sample.

Methods – Using the libraries' ILS, a listing of the titles of monographs that received first-time use in 2012 was generated and exported to Microsoft Excel. The Getting It System Toolkit (GIST) was used to batch-search possibilities for acquisition and/or access, including purchase (including Amazon and Better World Books) and free access (such as HaithiTrust and Google Books).

Main Results – A total of 76% (6,130) of titles from the sample of 8,020 were available for purchase. A total of 3% (165) of these titles were both available for purchase and freely available online. Books not available either freely or by purchase represented 21% (1,682) of the sample. When participation in a regional resource-sharing consortium was accounted for, only 1% (101) of the titles could not be obtained. Books published before the 1920s

were more likely to be freely available due to being in the public domain; however a majority of the titles (64%; 5,127) had a publication date of 1990 forward. The humanities represented the largest disciplinary grouping at 57% (4,563), with Social Sciences (31%; 2,472) and STEM (11%; 879) following.

Conclusions – In sum, the results indicated a very low margin of unavailability for titles. The author notes that, based on the findings, there should be no PDA purchase restrictions according to publication date if a large-scale program were to be implemented at their institution, and that researchers requiring humanities titles would be likely to benefit most from such a program (p. 14). It should be noted that a significant budget for PDA was allocated at the author's institution.

Commentary

Patron-driven acquisitions (PDA), also known as demand-driven acquisitions (DDA), is a collection development method that allows patrons to indicate their need for an item that can then be acquired. PDA has been rapidly adopted as an alternative method for acquisitions due in part to many libraries' fiscal constraints imposed by declining budgets and the rapidly escalating costs of electronic subscriptions. While there exist a large number of case studies on PDA models in a range of settings, a majority of this work focuses upon e-books instead of print. Anderson et al. (2010) is a noteworthy exception, finding that over the course of ten years their library's PDA program contributed appropriate and cross-disciplinary titles to the collection. The study at hand investigates the question of what proportion of first-time use titles could have hypothetically been purchased on-demand, and determines that the retrospective purchase of titles as patrons require them is frequently possible in terms of availability.

The strengths of this study include the appropriateness of the methodology to provide evidence regarding the research question, well-defined criteria for the sample, and the clear presentation of data collection methods and the results. In addition, the study provides context for the library's print collections so that readers may apply this information to their own setting. One area where the reviewer found the research to be lacking was in the absence of suggested areas for future work. However, this omission does not negatively impact the quality of the findings presented.

This research holds implications for libraries considering or participating in PDA. The findings are encouraging for librarians interested in pursuing or expanding a print PDA program but concerned that they would be unable to obtain books after their initial publication. As the author observes, the results may be used to inform and guide collection development decisions, including whether to implement a PDA model for print books. Future studies in this area might consider the broader implications of PDA in terms of collection diversity and other ramifications, positive and negative, of moving towards patron-driven models. For instance, Walters (2012) expresses concern that PDA programs may not distinguish between users' "immediate desires and their long-term educational needs," do not take advantage of librarians' expertise, and may fail to represent marginalized stakeholders and the educational mission of the university (pp. 204-206). Moreover, PDA is part of a larger tendency that prioritizes "just-in-time" delivery over the ownership of materials, which is itself a continuing trend in library collections that deserves additional scrutiny and deliberation if we are to develop and maintain collections that do not just fill an immediate information need, but aim to provide access to a variety of perspectives and materials.

References

Anderson, K. J., Freeman, R. S., Hérubel, J.-P. V. M., Mykytiuk, L. J., Nixon, J. M., & Ward, S. M. (2010). Liberal arts books on demand: A decade of patron-driven collection development, part 1. *Collection Management*, *35*(3-4), 125–141. doi: http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/01462679.2010.486959

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