



Evidence Summary

Five-Month Print and Electronic Patron-Driven Acquisitions Trial at a Large University Shows Circulation Advantages

A Review of:

Tynan, M. & McCarney, E. (2014). "Click here to order this book": A case study of print and electronic patron-driven acquisition in University College Dublin. *New Review of Academic Librarianship*, 20(2), 233-250. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/13614533.2014.906352>

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Abstract

Objective – To evaluate the effectiveness of the first patron-driven acquisitions program in the Republic of Ireland and determine the effects of this acquisitions strategy on circulation, budget, and collection development.

Design – Case study.

Setting – A large university on two campuses in the Republic of Ireland with a total of over 25,000 students.

Subjects – Patron-driven acquisitions including 1,128 electronic monographs and 1,044 print monographs.

Methods – The authors evaluated titles purchased during a five-month patron-driven acquisitions trial conducted in 2013. Patron-selected titles were compared to traditionally acquired (faculty and librarian-selected) titles acquired during the same time period based on subject area and circulation data. Results from the trial were also compared to a literature review of patron-driven acquisitions trials conducted at other institutions. Information on selectors was examined for patron-driven print acquisitions.

Main Results – The most frequently acquired subject areas included business, politics, English, drama and film, medicine, psychology, history, and law. These frequently acquired subject areas were consistent across

print and electronic patron-driven acquisitions, traditionally acquired titles at the institution, and data from the patron-driven acquisitions trials of other institutions. Patron-selected titles in art history and architecture subjects showed a significant print preference over electronic. Patron-selected electronic titles were used 8.45 times compared to 3.27 uses for traditionally selected electronic titles. Patron-selected print titles circulated 1.32 times compared to 1.04 circulations for faculty-selected titles and 0.63 circulations for librarian-selected titles. For patron-driven print acquisitions, 63% of selectors were students and 37% were faculty and staff.

Conclusion – The trial was considered successful in circulation and subject area diversity. Subject breakdown for patron-selected titles was consistent with expectations and mirrored traditional acquisitions strategies and expected demand. Patron-selected titles showed a circulation advantage over traditionally selected titles, though this advantage was more significant for electronic titles. The library intends to continue with patron-driven acquisitions. Considerations for future trials, including higher quality and more selective discovery records for print titles, more informative marketing, and better timing, could improve results.

Commentary

This trial examined both print and electronic patron-driven acquisitions and found a circulation advantage to this acquisitions strategy in both formats. These results were more modest than those found by other patron-driven acquisitions case studies, including those at Kent State (Downey, Zhang, Urbano, & Klinger, 2014) and The University of Tennessee at Chattanooga (Dunn & Murgai, 2014). Higher demand for humanities and social sciences titles is consistent across all three studies.

This study addressed both print and digital patron-driven acquisitions, and the authors

observed “collection development” behaviours among faculty and academic staff. These selectors were more likely to order many items in a single session and were less likely to check out their items when they arrived. This behaviour and the authors’ observations that their new program was poorly understood by students and faculty members potentially calls into question that the population is representative of all eligible users, as outlined by Glynn’s (2006) critical appraisal tool. Despite this, the observations and lessons included in the study will be informative to practitioners hoping to implement patron-driven acquisitions programs in their own libraries.

The electronic book discovery records included in the patron-driven program featured a unique trigger process that may have influenced results. The custom in patron-driven research is to exclude trigger views from circulation data, but the protocol in the study required electronic books to be clicked at least twice within a 24-hour period to trigger purchases. The exclusion of these uses, which patrons could have found satisfactory for their research needs, could potentially explain why the circulation results of this study are more modest than those of similar studies that feature less demanding trigger protocols.

Despite these challenges, the authors found clear advantages to patron-driven acquisitions while working through the complexities of implementing a new acquisitions strategy. The authors describe their experiences with a nationally mandated and lengthy tender process which required vendors to compete for bids after meeting set criteria for inclusion. The study represents a holistic examination of the beginning stages of a patron-driven program and further and longer trials will provide evidence of the sustained benefits or long-term implications of this model. Practitioners in the early stages of planning a patron-driven strategy, particularly in public university libraries with complex tender processes for new vendor agreements, will find this study a useful guide.

References

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