



### *Evidence Summary*

## **Analysis From Seven Years of DDA-Centered Collections Strategy Indicates Long-Term Effectiveness for Acquiring Electronic Monographs**

### **A Review of:**

Lowry, L., Arthur, M. A., & Gilstrap, D. L. (2024). A retrospective look at a DDA-centered collection strategy: Planning for the future of monograph acquisitions. *The Journal of Academic Librarianship*, 50(1), 102831. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.acalib.2023.102831>

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### **Abstract**

**Objective** – To examine long-term data for confirmation that the Demand-Driven Acquisition (DDA) strategy is a viable method for supporting ebook monograph collections.

**Design** – Analysis of cost, usage data, and Library of Congress Classification (LCC) for DDA monographs.

**Setting** – University of Alabama, a public R1 university.

**Subjects** – Seven years of usage, cost, and classification data for ebook monographs in the DDA pool.

**Methods** – Authors requested data on ebook monographs from EBSCO dating back to the beginning of the DDA plan. After data cleaning, they used Excel PivotTables and PivotCharts for analysis, as well as SPSS linear regression for determining the strength of relationships between key data variables.

**Main Results** – Cost per use of ebooks purchased or loaned through the DDA pool showed a high return on investment. Breaking data down by LCC for regression analysis showed links between the percentage of the DDA pool size and the percentage of “triggered” purchases or loans, as well as between the percentage of full-text requests and the percentage of triggers. The percentage of triggers for a given LCC can be predicted by percentage of the DDA pool and percentage of full-text requests. However, primary LCC was not itself a significant predictor.

**Conclusion** – The authors concluded that DDA plans can act as effective long-term collections strategies but also noted that basing a plan on an existing approval profile and continuous assessment of the plan are useful approaches for ensuring a DDA plan’s success. Supplementary strategies may be necessary for developing areas of the collection where needs are not met by the DDA plan, such as purchasing ebook packages and utilizing approval plans. In addition to overall cost-effectiveness, they further recommended DDA plans because these strategies offer an approach to collection building that frees staff to focus substantial time on other initiatives.

### **Commentary**

Demand-Driven Acquisitions (DDA) or Patron-Driven Acquisitions (PDA) is a popular strategy for collection development in academic libraries because it allows for patron input, often fulfilling immediate needs, and reduces librarian time spent building collections. In spite of concerns over the appropriateness and usefulness of DDA materials, this manner of selection can be an effective means for procuring highly circulating materials (Tyler & Boudreau, 2024). Assessments of DDA plans have largely focused on returns on investment (Monroe-Gulick et al., 2024) and the current study adds to that literature with seven years of data from a DDA plan (Lowry et al., 2024).

Glynn’s (2006) critical appraisal tool for library research was used for this evidence summary, showing validity in the study’s data collection, design, and results. Data collection for this study is of particular note, as the authors were able to obtain more than 35 data points for each title in the DDA pool, dating back to the beginning of the DDA plan in 2016. The comprehensiveness of these data appear to have allowed the study design to determine factors that speak to the long-term effectiveness of the DDA plan. However, the full list of data points is not provided. The researchers’ conclusions, which can be summarized to say that the DDA plan has strategically built a monograph collection that supports campus needs, are firmly grounded in the results.

Although the critical appraisal tool asks if subset analysis is kept to a minimum, a detailed examination of results by LCC class here is especially illuminating and likely to be relevant to other libraries. The researchers employed a “percent of expected use” (PEU) calculation to determine differences in a given LCC class’s percentage of titles in the DDA pool and the percentage of total accesses for that LCC class. The PEU calculation was useful for showing areas where the DDA pool for a given LCC class could be expanded. However, the authors correctly reasoned against using this same calculation to reduce areas of the DDA pool, as there was no cost for unaccessed titles.

The researchers also examined results in the context of the University of Alabama’s idiosyncratic needs. While this has more limited applicability for other institutions, an understanding of how the authors considered these results could be useful. LCC classes that took up larger percentages of the LCC pool and saw greater access numbers corresponded with campus majors with sizeable enrollments, demonstrating that the DDA pool was well-suited to the University of Alabama’s unique collection development needs.

As other academic institutions see their DDA plans age, they will likely face similar challenges with how to assess their long-term effectiveness and overall return on investment. The summarized study offers a pathway to address these questions while making excellent use of the abundance of data available through these plans. Furthermore, the assessment strategy used here showed that a DDA plan addresses a direct need for materials acquired in this manner and can help institutions identify areas of the collection where the DDA plan could be adjusted to serve unmet needs. This potential for evidence based DDA plan modification should further alleviate common institutional concerns about overspending and usefulness of materials acquired through DDA plans. Although not mentioned in the summarized study, further research on revising DDA plans based on assessment findings would enhance libraries' ability to use these plans to their full potential.

## References

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