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The Patron as Collection Developer:

Purchase on demand and patron-driven acquisitions,

and how both can be used at your library

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Abstract:

With ever-changing patron demands, libraries struggle to remain a significant part of their user's lives. Library gate counts increase while monograph circulations decrease. This is only a symptom of a larger problem. Patrons no longer need the library for books, but rather as a gathering place. The mindsets of patrons are shifting, and librarians must also modify their mentalities about the library collection development. One way to do this is through a patron-driven acquisition program. This type of program can be easily customizable to fit the needs of a specific library; however it has many effects on both the library and the patrons. Implementation can also be challenging, but with the recommendations given by the author in this paper, it should be fairly simple.

Keywords: purchase on demand, patron-driven acquisitions, demand-driven acquisitions, user-driven collection development, user-selection collection, collection development, electronic resources, e-books

THE PATRON AS COLLECTION DEVELOPER: PURCHASE ON DEMAND AND PATRON-DRIVEN

ACQUISITIONS, AND HOW BOTH CAN BE USED AT YOUR LIBRARY

The library's reason for existence is changing

Change is the one constant in life, and the world of libraries is changing. While many library gate counts are increasing, the book circulation is decreasing. Patrons aren't simply using the library for books anymore. The library is becoming a place to congregate, study, collaborate on projects, visit with friends, and even drink coffee. Patrons are using the library, but the print collections are slowly losing their importance. To help make room for these gathering place, librarians are faced with the hard decision of removing books.

Some libraries are simply cutting back on their new purchases; some are weeding and balancing the integrity of the collection with the patron's new needs for computer labs and study spaces. Librarians cannot predict which books patrons will use and which will just sit on the shelves. (Swords, 2011), Paul Courant estimated that it takes about $4.26 per year for each volume to simply sit on a shelf in open stacks (2010). It's also estimated that in most academic libraries, many monographs never circulate, and those that do, are used less and less over time (Reynolds, Pickett, Van Duinkerken, Smith, Tucker, & Harrell, 2010). With all these books not being used, and costing so much money and space, the library has had to decide what to do. Libraries need to stay relevant, and viewed as a vital part of teaching, learning, and research, however, with the large percentages of unused books, they "run the risk of becoming (and [are] becoming) viewed as a warehouse for [these] unused books" (Lugg, 2011, p 9).

Librarians aren't the only experts

The quantity of unused books in academic libraries is a symptom of a larger issue: that of the collection developers' attitude toward collecting. The old mindset of a just-in-case collecting, or acquiring materials to fulfill a possible future need, is shifting to a new mindset of just-in-time collecting, where the materials are not purchased until the actual need arises (Way, 2009).

Academic library collections are matched to the curriculum rather than to the user's real needs and demands (Chadwell, 2009). Knowing the needs of the users and taking them into account can be difficult but Chadwell (2009) mentioned some useful tips on how to focus more on the patrons. Some ideas included self-checkout, home delivery of materials, purchase-on-demand print books and the patron-driven acquisitions of e-books.

Librarians select books based on perceived need, not definite need, and most books selected by these experts are not being checked out. Librarians also need to come to the realizations that most patrons can judge what they need, and librarians are not the only ones who can make good decisions (Dahl, 2012).

Purchase on Demand Acquisitions

This is where the first form of purchase on demand (POD) comes into play. Some see the interlibrary loan (ILL) requests as an indicator of an unmet need in the library (Way, 2009). With the early forms of POD, instead of requesting a book from another library for a patron, a librarian would simply purchase the book and add it to the collection for future patrons to use as well. Librarians were no longer simply buying what they thought the users wanted, but now they were actually taking suggestions from the users (Chadwell, 2009).

POD is not to be confused with another, newer solution to this same problem, patron-driven acquisitions, or PDA. With POD, users request print books from a librarian and the librarian then decides if the book would make a good addition to the collection, and if so, purchases, processes, and catalogs it, then lets the requesting patron be the first one to check it out. Most libraries have always taken some form of patron requests for new additions, but the POD is a more formal program than these simple requests. Some libraries, such as Ellen Clark Bertrand Library at Bucknell University, have a very large user centered POD program (Chadwell, 2009; Perdue and Van Fleet, 1999; Way, 2009).

The problem remains that the housing of the print materials is expensive and sometimes the costs of storing these books can't be easily justified when patrons would rather have computers and study areas. If the library cannot physically expand the building to accommodate both gathering areas and the books, then the library may have to shrink the print collections. To most librarians, this is a very hard decision because the value of a library, of a collection, is usually based on the size on the collection (Dahl, 2012). Libraries with smaller collections weren't as appreciated as much as those with larger collections.

Patron-Driven Acquisitions

Since librarians also have many more duties than just collection development, there's just not enough time in the day to focus on instruction, so many tasks. Even with a POD model, the librarians still need to look at the book to ensure it will be a good addition to the collection, and send the order in. Today, electronic resources, such as e-books are growing in popularity, in fact, in Lugg's own library, full-text downloads of documents outnumbered physical book check-outs 6 to 1 (2011).

Patron-driven acquisitions, also called demand-driven acquisitions, (Chadwell, 2009), is partially the response to the reduced budgets of the recent economic recession, user expectations, technology, and "the coming of age of e-books" (Lugg, 2011, p. 7). PDA is quite possibly one of the most discussed ideas in the library world today, and it has the "potential to fundamentally transform decades of library practice" (Lugg, 2011, p 7).

Patron-driven acquisitions (PDA), combines the idea of patrons selecting material from POD, and the e-books, along with the librarian's need to save time in ordering what the patrons want.

Dahl (2012) clearly defines PDA as

> ...the automatic practice of allowing patrons to select books for their library, most often through the process of clicking on records that have been added to their library's catalogue. The records of titles available for purchases are added to the catalogue based on profiles and parameters set by the library, and in most cases can be either browsed or clicked on a set number of times before a purchase or short-term loan is triggered. (p. 120)

The libraries usually deposit a set amount into an account with the publishers and once the money in the account is depleted, there are no more purchases until more money is deposited (Chadwell, 2009; Lugg, 2011). Dahl also described a print version of PDA, in which records are loaded for print books, and when patrons would like to read the book, a request is sent and the book is purchased (2012). This method is not instant, and it only differs from POD in that patrons view the record and request it rather than hearing about the book elsewhere and requesting it.

According to Paulson, the idea of PDA first arose in Australia from a librarian named Alison Sutherland, who was inspired by what the music industry was doing with iTunes (2011). Her ideas were used to form the Ebook Library (EBL) and from its launch in 2004, EBL was programmed for PDA. It contained many features such as making records that the library currently didn't own available to patrons, short-term loans on materials, and a browsing period (Paulson, 2011). Way (2009), on the other hand, claims that Perdue and Van Fleet of the Ellen Clarke Bertrand Library at Bucknell University were the first to introduce the idea of patron-initiated electronic collections (Perdue & van Fleet, 1999; Way, 2009). The rise of the internet and constant connectivity has changed patron expectations related to information seeking. Society today seeks instant gratification. POD was not instant; in fact, a user had to wait several weeks to get the book. With PDA, the patron gets the book instantly.

Each vendor approaches the PDA parameters for selection in a slightly different manner, however, the choices ultimately rest with the library. For example, "one view" according to one vendor might be when the user clicks on the record. With another vendor, the same phrase may give a patron up to 10 minutes to read the e-book before it is counted. Each vendor, eBooks from EBSCO*host*, Ingram, EBL and ebrary, work with the library to customize services (Polanka & Delquié, 2011). Almost all aspects are customizable and include: the types of records a patron gets to view and select from, the number of clicks or views before a purchase is made, librarians can review (or not) purchases to be sure they're appropriate for collections, only certain users can trigger a purchase (such as only faculty or graduate students), and how much money that is set aside, are all things the library can select (Dahl, 2012).

The Effects of PDA on Librarians and Patrons

Since the patron-driven method of acquisitions challenges some of the very core structures of libraries and collections (Dahl, 2012), many librarians have concerns about it. The main one appears to be that patrons are not formally trained experts in collection development. They may not select appropriate materials and the requesting patron might be the only ones who check out the book. The user-selected collections will be unbalanced. If patrons start doing all the collection development, there will be no more need for the collection development librarians (Price, McDonald & Paulson, 2009).

All of these things are valid concerns, but there have been many studies proving that these things don't always happen. Price et al. (2009) found that user-selected e-books are more than two times likely to be circulated again than librarian-selected e-books. Chadwell also found similar statistics for print books (2009). Materials selected by patrons also generally fall into the scope and established guidelines as valued additions to collections (Hussong-Christian & Goergen-Doll, 2010).

Other concerns have been about cost. E-books are fairly cheap, especially compared to their print counterparts, however, the expense can still add up if many are purchased at a time. This is easily remedied by not allowing more purchases after the set amount is used up for that time period, or approving all requests after a set percentage of the funds have been used. With lower prices, e-books are also ideal for reduced budgets in times of recession (Swords 2011; Lugg, 2011). These e-books will take up no room on physical shelves, leaving more room for the socialization areas that the patrons crave.

E-books are not without fault. Although the actual they are cheaper than print books, often the equipment required to read these e-books can be quite expensive. Under-privileged

and elderly patrons, might not have the means to access these books, and if they do, they might not understand how to use the technology. Physical symptoms such as eye strain may occur when reading e-books for long periods of time. Electronic text can also be more difficult to navigate than print books. There are also issues with long term preservation associated with e-books and ever-changing electronic formats.

The advantages of using PDA is first, the librarians will have more time for other duties such as outreach programs and library instruction; second, user satisfaction may increase (Reynolds et al., 2010) with the knowledge that librarians are listening to them, and buying their books. Patrons will more often find materials that are useful, and there will be less unused books on the shelf. There will be more use of the library, and librarian's job satisfaction may increase with the participation of the patrons (Reynolds et al., 2010).

With PDA, librarians will have a more flexible purchase date for books. Print books must be purchased fairly soon after publication because they might go out of print. E-books are easier for publishers to keep than print books, and therefore are easier to sell to consumers, including libraries. Libraries will ideally save money with e-books because they are usually lower priced than a print version of the same title.

Patron-driven Acquisition is what Lugg (2011) considered a disruptive technology, or an innovation that replaces a previous technology. This might significantly disrupt library practices. Book selection as been one of the most important and main roles of the library for the past few hundred years. We don't know how this substantial shift in thinking will affect the library of the future, but we do know that ideas like what defines a library, a collection, the value of a collection, and expert selection are changing (Dahl, 2012).

How to Implement

Reasons that libraries implement PDA vary widely from library to library, but numerous libraries are at least trying out PDA (Dahl, 2012; Way, 2009). One of the charter libraries of PDA, Bertrand Library at Bucknell University, found that books selected by patrons circulated at a higher rate than those acquired in more traditional ways. They quickly recognized the merits of this program as they executed a full-time PDA process (Perdue & Van Fleet, 1999).

Several things any library wishing to set up a trial run of a PDA system needs to think about are: limits on acquisitions, budgetary guidelines, patron feedback, criteria for success, and staff members to monitor orders.

Limits set on acquisitions are the central foundation of PDA. Each boundary helps limit spending and costs. These limits help patrons to more easily identify materials that would be both appropriate for the collection and fit into already set guidelines. Regulations on language would help guarantee that current patrons of the library could use the book. Publication date restrictions confirm that only up to date information is purchased. This also limits the amount of books in the pool for patrons to select. Librarians can select older books that are needed. For print books, ship date is important since books need to be available to patrons as soon as possible and they may be pressed for deadlines (Reynolds et al., 2010). Libraries set a cutoff point at a price (usually between $75 and $150) for each title; this helps curb the costs. Sometimes only approved patrons can request books. In trials, it is often only faculty, graduate students, and/or distance students that can request books (Way, 2009).

Setting a budget keeps a tight rein on spending, since it is fairly easy for spending to get out of hand. Anywhere between 1% and 10% of the collection budget is generally be

allocated for PDA. When the money has been used each time period, requests are no longer approved, so to provide constant and continuous service to the patrons, it's important not to set the spending ceiling too low. It's also not beneficial to set the ceiling too high, because other areas of the library might begin to suffer if you take funds from these areas.

Patrons can offer criticism from the trial run of PDA. Many libraries use the feedback to find out how to further improve the process of requesting and ordering books. One thing mentioned by several different libraries was that the patrons wanted more communication on the process. Many librarians mentioned a need for more communication. At Texas A&M University, many respondents to surveys said they would have liked to know if the book request was approved, when the book would arrive, etc. (Reynolds et al., 2010). They tried to change several things according to this feedback. If the user's request was denied, they tried to explain to them the reasoning; this helps the patrons learn more about appropriate requests for the future. They also wanted to let them know when the book comes in. Texas A&M wanted to let patrons know how they be contacting them, and better yet, they offered several options for the patron to select how they would like to communicate. Circulation librarians also spoke to the subject librarians. Some wanted to be notified of every new addition, others did not want to be troubled unless the cost is over a set price. Many librarians at Texas A&M University would have liked to know what the new books in their areas were so they could suggest them to other patrons (Reynolds et al., 2010).

Selecting criteria for success will also help safeguard high quality practice. Some libraries use circulation rate of the newly requested books as criteria, others use surveys to gauge patron and librarian satisfaction. Other criteria for success could include cost savings, turnaround time, and if the materials are suitable additions to the collection (Way, 2009). In

many cases, subsequent circulations of requested materials are considerably higher than other materials. Subject liaisons should be prepared to review purchases to determine appropriateness; many of the books were appropriate and scholarly in nature (Way, 2009). There appear to be no major PDA or POD failures mentioned in the literature. That does not mean the program always works, it just means that libraries where this program might have failed have not yet written about it.

A PDA program will also need staff to monitor orders, review purchases, and to maintain communication between other library staff and patrons of the library. Another thing to remember if the library is doing a PDA, all materials are not available electronically. Patrons will still need a way to request the valuable print resources that they need.

Call to arms

With the ever-changing user demands, libraries should try to stay one step ahead of the trends to continue to entice patrons to the library. Using patrons as collection developers and focusing more on electronic resources is just one way to appeal to the masses. Libraries are no longer simply warehouses for books; those libraries that do not change will begin to fade from patron's vision and will be forced to close. Do not let this happen in your library. Equip the library with the proper weapons and tools for future generations of both librarians and patrons to keep enjoying the library and tap into the priceless resources that have been gathered.

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