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# Being Earnest With Collections--Rethinking Monograph Acquisitions in a Large Academic Library

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## Being Earnest with Collections — Rethinking Monographic Acquisitions in a Large Academic Library

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Column Editor's Note: I am writing my column notes on my fourth day at the University of Alabama. I am happy to be settling into the new position, and I am already finding that when discussions here turn to PDA I find myself in familiar territory. That is because, just as I did at the University of Central Florida. I find the issues surrounding the use of PDA, decisions about print vs. online monographs or ownership vs. access, result in routine discussions with colleagues from many institutions. These issues require ample attention as the industry and libraries struggle to find the right mix between immediate access and the need to build strong collections that support the teaching mission today and the research mission long into the future. I have long been concerned that the move from just-in-case to just-in-time acquisitions would erode one of the key objectives of research libraries — that being the development of research level collections. However, having managed the materials budget for a decade, I am also aware that even if that is the objective few institutions have the monograph funding necessary to collect at that level. In this column I am happy to feature the great Trish Chatterley so ATG readers can get a glimpse into how a large (well-funded) research library is also struggling with and trying to manage all of the variables related to monograph purchasing in the 21st-Century Library. Here **Trish** discusses major changes to monograph selection at the University of Alberta and provides details about the impact these changes (including a rather dynamic move to PDA) had on overall spending. More importantly, she covers the legitimate concerns expressed by those who still prefer print and the overall concern that these changes may negatively impact the ability to build and maintain research level collections. — MA

very day seems to bring word of yet another academic library that must cancel ✓ subscriptions in the face of either static or dwindling budgets. Many libraries have been reducing their monograph expenditures in an effort to maintain licenses to heavily used serial resources. These factors lead to exploration of innovative, more cost-effective methods for developing and managing collections. The University of Alberta Libraries (hereafter referred to as UAL) recently implemented a new model of monograph acquisitions that resulted in a shift from title-by-title selection by individual liaison librarians to almost exclusive reliance on Patron-Driven Acquisition and approval plans.

The University of Alberta in Edmonton, Alberta, Canada is a public institution with

an enrollment of almost 40,000 students and a staff of approximately 5200. UAL is comprised of six subject libraries (Humanities/ Social sciences, Science/Technology, Health Sciences, Education, Business, and Law) on the main campus and two cross-disciplinary libraries on distance campuses, one of which collects materials almost exclusively in French.

UAL is a member of the Association of Research Libraries, and for many years attempted to build collections that were as comprehensive as possible. We are extremely fortunate compared to many American libraries in that recent cuts to the collections bud-

get have been small, and we still maintain a monograph budget of 3.2 million CAD, which at the current exchange rate of 0.77 equates to approximately 2.5 million USD.

Our reason for implementing change, therefore, was influenced more by a lack of staff resources than a direct effort to reduce collection development costs, since a voluntary severance program in 2013 had significantly reduced our staff complement. There was a need to reduce the amount of librarian time spent on selection so that innovative services related to research data management, measurement of scholarly impact, and other areas could be explored. As part of the old model, we had only limited approval plans in place, so subject librarians regularly received significant numbers of electronic slips, selected resources title by title, and ordered titles themselves either within the Coutts OASIS or YBP GOBI systems. This responsibility was removed from their performance expectations in early 2014 when Coutts Information Services was awarded a contract as UAL's preferred English-language monograph vendor at the same time that a new electronic-preferred policy was implemented within the system. The time was right to explore workflow efficiencies on a large scale, and a significant electronic Patron-Driven Acquisition plan was implemented in conjunction with new, comprehensive approval plans. Slip notifications were eliminated.

If the recent ALCTS e-forum on Patron-Driven Acquisition (PDA) is any indication, librarians each have a different view about how PDA should be implemented and the extent of its role in an overarching approach to collection development. Many libraries still employ thorough approval plans with PDA as a small supplement based on titles that would have been forwarded to librarians as slips, while others rely on comprehensive PDA plans for the bulk of their eBook purchasing. UAL elected

to implement PDA as a first draw on all titles profiled by Coutts, with the expectation that a majority of titles would therefore be directed along this route. An exception was made for those titles produced by publishers from which we purchase front-lists directly, which were excluded from our PDA and approval

> plans. For many years, we had been purchasing eBook front-lists directly from such large interdisciplinary publishers as **Springer** and **Wiley**,

as well as smaller disciplinespecific publishers. This continued according to the new model, and accounts for a significant portion of our yearly monograph

expenditure and automatic purchase of the majority of the eBooks we buy.

Approval plans were devised for each library in the UAL system, with parameters set to match curricular and research needs at a suitable level for the clientele served in each unit. If titles matched our profiles and were eligible for PDA, they were diverted along that route, and temporary records were loaded into our catalogue and made viewable in our discovery layer. We received MARC records weekly. We were invoiced for titles as purchases were triggered according to EBSCO and MyiLibrary's trigger settings, and a PDA fund code was established to track expenditures. If matched titles were available as eBooks but from publishers that did not allow their material to be incorporated into PDA plans, the eBook would be purchased on approval. Since our new plan was to be e-preferred, if only print copies were available at the time of profiling they would be diverted to a holding shelf for an eight-week period in the hopes that an electronic version would be released during that time. If the eight weeks lapsed and no eBook had become available, the print copy would be shipped. Because of the new e-preferred policy and our previous experience with a print PDA pilot program, a print PDA plan was not considered. User feedback had indicated that the turnaround time for receiving the print volumes was too great, and the need for the items had often passed by the time they were received.

As part of the new contract, Coutts began supplying shelf-ready print books. Since subject librarians were no longer receiving slips, firm orders were only placed upon specific request from faculty members or students. Whereas librarians could previously purchase books directly themselves, in the new model, an online monograph request form was established and

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a centralized, two-person monograph ordering team became responsible for placing the orders. This workflow allowed for greater regulation of ordering practices as well as the removal of unit level credit cards, thereby reducing the amount of time spent on invoice reconciliation.

As you might imagine, there was concern among subject librarians about the impacts this change would have on them, the collection, and the university's user community. A traditional role that had been part of their work expectations for a very long time was now being removed, and especially in some disciplines, great effort had been invested in building strong, well-rounded collections. While we cannot foresee what the long-term impact a PDA-preferred model will have on the collection as a whole in terms of its depth and breadth, at least in the short-term, the results have been primarily positive and a wide range of titles purchased. The PDA plan places more focus on purchasing materials that faculty and students are choosing to read, while the eBook packages and approval plans still supply a large core of materials that anticipate future needs. What may be lacking are unique title purchases from small publishers that are not profiled by our chosen book distributor.

One of the greatest concerns raised related to **UAL's** new e-preferred policy. The general impression in some disciplines was that our users prefer print books whenever possible. Results from the **Ithaka S+R** survey, distributed to **UAL** Faculty in January 2015, certainly revealed that many faculty find eBooks frustrating to use. They cited concern over the multitude of interfaces, poor functionality, restrictions on printing, and limitations of online reading which inhibit deep connection with and comprehension of the content. Other faculty indicated an appreciation for eBooks because they can be shared among a greater number of students. There was also a fear that with an e-preferred policy, only eBooks would now be supplied. Given the current limitations on what is made available in eBook format, this fear was unfounded.

Out of the ~19,000 books acquired from Coutts in our last fiscal year according to the new model, less than 15% were purchased in eBook format. The number of print books shipped would have been even higher if some unit libraries had not implemented exclusively eBook-only approval plans. A great many more eBooks were made accessible to our users than were purchased. In our first year of implementation, close to 12,000 PDA records were loaded, while only about 1,200 purchases were triggered. This equates to a proportion of approximately 10%, though that proportion continues to climb as we carry into the second year of the new model and has now reached 13.3% as of the end of July 2015. We expect this growth to continue, and anticipate that the proportion of titles purchased will plateau at about 20%. Since so many titles that matched the parameters of

our approval plan were routed to PDA instead of being purchased outright, considerable savings resulted. Had the untriggered titles been purchased at the average cost per PDA title of about \$135, an additional 1.4M+ dollars would have been expended. As it stood, 1.2M dollars remained in our monograph budget at fiscal yearend. This was fortunate timing for us, as the money offset the higher serials expenditures encountered as a result of the plummeting value of the Canadian dollar.

While we are still purchasing large numbers of books, this significant drop in spending may lead to gaps in the collection, especially if the pattern of decreased spending continues. We expect spending on the approval plans to increase in our second year, however, as we have made many changes to LC classes, and to non-subject parameters like maximum price and formats, so that more desirable material ships automatically. PDA purchases will also increase as the volume of records grows in the catalogue. We will rely on our user community to submit requests for any titles they might need, which will help to fill possible gaps. With increasing numbers of eBooks and print-on-demand options, it is becoming much easier to purchase older titles than ever before.

Consistent communication about the new model and how it has been functioning has been an important component in its success. I was seconded part-time to conduct assessment of the new monograph acquisitions model. This has

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### Reports of Meetings — 34th Annual Charleston Conference

Issues in Book and Serial Acquisition, "The Importance of Being Earnest" — Francis Marion Hotel, Embassy Suites Historic Downtown, Courtyard Marriott Historic District, Addlestone Library, College of Charleston, and School of Science and Mathematics Building, Charleston, SC — November 5-8, 2014

Charleston Conference Reports compiled by: Ramune K. Kubilius (Northwestern University, Galter Health Sciences Library) <r-kubilius@northwestern.edu>

Column Editor's Note: Thank you to all of the Charleston Conference attendees who agreed to write short reports that highlight sessions they attended at the 2014 conference. All attempts were made to provide a broad coverage of sessions, and notes are included in the reports to reflect known changes in the session titles or presenters, highlighting those that were not printed in the conference's final program (though some may have been reflected in the online program). Please visit the Conference Website, http://www.charlestonlibraryconference. **com**, for the online conference schedule from which there are links to many presentations' Power Point slides and handouts, plenary session videos, and conference reports by the 2014 Charleston Conference blogger, Donald T. Hawkins. Visit the conference blog at: http://www. against the grain.com/category/chsconfblog/. The 2014 Charleston Conference Proceedings will be published in partnership with Purdue University Press in 2015 (http://docs.lib.purdue.edu/charleston/).

In this issue of ATG you will find the fifth installment of 2014 conference reports. The first four installments can be found in ATG v.27#1, February 2015, v.27#2, April 2015, v.27#3, June 2015, and v.27#4, September 2015. We will continue to publish all of the reports received in upcoming print issues throughout the year. — **RKK** 

#### FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 7, 2014 LIVELY LUNCH DISCUSSIONS

Collecting and Acquiring in Earnest (The 14th Annual Health Sciences Lively Lunch) — Presented by Andrea Twiss-Brooks, Moderator (University of Chicago); Nicole Gallo (Rittenhouse); Ramune K. Kubilius (Northwestern University); Emma O'Hagan (Western Michigan University School of Medicine); Yumin Jiang, (University of Colorado Health Sciences Library)

NOTE: Wendy Bahnsen served as host and presented in place of Nicole Gallo.

Reported by: Ramune K. Kubilius (Northwestern University, Galter Health Sciences Library) <r-kubilius@northwestern.edu>

Host Bahnsen greeted close to fifty attendees, and moderator Twiss-**Brooks** introduced the session. **Kubilius** did the traditional "year in review" synopsis of developments since the last conference. (The

handout is posted in the conference site): publisher anniversaries, big data, open access initiatives, new publications.

Bahnsen described the R2 PDA model and shared highlights from a customer survey (May 2013). Of R2 eBook purchases, about 65% were firm purchases and 35% came through the PDA process. Library customers selected from 2 to 4,500 titles for the program but more often, about 400, or 10% are selected from PDA. Overall, 27% of the titles migrated to the shopping cart were purchased. Jiang shared insights about three eBook PDA/DDA (patron-driven or demand-driven acquisition) programs: MyiLibrary (2012); R2 (2013); EBSCO (2014, three months before the conference). The library's goals in trialing: increase access to eBooks, build up subject collections outside core collection areas, and experiment with "just in time" acquisitions. Availability of books in *Doody Core Titles* is an appreciated feature. Desires for PDA: set up a library profile; devise workflows; investigate consortia deals; devise assessment metrics; make weeding decisions. It's not easy to balance three different providers' PDA programs at the same time.

O'Hagan shared experience with journal articles "on demand" and "pay per view" at two institutions. The Get It Now delivery service returns articles in under two hours. Her current institution caps the number of requests per day and encourages "thoughtful use." One problem: multiple individuals needing the same article for a class. She also described other experiments with ReadCube's institutional model and Reprints as a complement.

Twiss-Brooks moderated varied audience queries about: promotion (PDA and article-on-demand), availability of turnaway statistics from providers, requests through mediated services of articles already available in library-licensed journals, usability, browsing, downloading availability, assessment, usage studies, and surveys.

Discovery on Trial! — Presented by Christopher C. Brown (University of Denver); Bob Boissy (Springer Science+Business Media); John McCullough, (OCLC); Lettie Conrad (SAGE)

Reported by: Christine Fischer (UNC Greensboro, University Libraries) <cmfische@uncg.edu>

Assessment results shared by **Boissy** (Account Development Manager) for referring sources from the University of Denver to SpringerLink

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involved regular meetings with subject librarians and unit library collections managers, working with them to review the titles that have come on approval and the titles that were excluded based on the parameters of the plans, in order to tweak the plans to make them more efficient at pulling in material we want and excluding material we don't. Titles that have been firm ordered from Coutts over the past year have also been reviewed, and additional changes to the plans have been made as a result. Regular contact with the Coutts collections consultants has been maintained to

ensure that requested changes to the approval plans are implemented and any issues resolved.

While there were many challenges in setting up the new model and many unforeseen glitches had to be worked through, the new model is now working smoothly, and many initial concerns have been allayed. Continued evaluation is needed, as the focus so far has been on ensuring we obtain the titles librarians think we should be receiving. We have not yet assessed use of the titles acquired on PDA or of titles purchased on approval as it was still too early for such analysis, but comparisons are of interest. A major benefit of the new model has been the significant savings, but future assessment will have to be conducted to ensure the savings are not prioritized over the development of a robust research collection.