What's Next for Collection Management and Managers?
User- Centered Collection Management

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USER-CENTERED COLLECTION MANAGEMENT

We as collection managers like to think that we administer our collections in ways that always keep our users in mind. But let's be honest. What we had in mind was often what we *thought* our users wanted. In academic libraries we often set out to build collections of materials that matched a conceptual notion of a curriculum-based collection or a comprehensive collection rather than an expedient and useful collection based on users' real needs and demands. All too often we have focused our collection building and management on establishing procedures and policies that lightened our workload rather than those allowed users easier access to the materials they sought. Think of all the years that many libraries did not circulate copies of videos or bound journals. These days we have no fear with loaning videos and bound journals in addition to laptops or mp3 players! Certainly it is all too easy to be critical of collection managers for not having had a more user-focused approach; however, this type of collection building and management did lead to the development of some world class libraries. While it is true that we should have considered our users' needs more carefully than we did, this consideration was not always an easy task to pull off. Many of us still remember the days when staff and volunteers spent countless hours in the stacks tallying usage statistics by hand while re-shelving print journals. It was also extremely onerous to poll users' attitudes about services in the not so halcyon days before Surveymonkey evolved.

Fortunately, the transition to the digital world has facilitated putting the user at the center of collection management. In the digital realm it is easier than before to gather and analyze statistics

that keep collection managers better informed about users' needs and behaviors. Any number of products and services are available to help us sort and analyze the daily deluge of usage statistics. But it is not just that the change from print to digital has helped us consider our users' needs more often when enhancing collection services. This rapid transition has also required that we consider our users' needs more often. Increasingly our users seek convenient and seamless access to materials that duplicates the access they experience using Google. They also seek to cut out the middle person when it comes to identifying and then acquiring stuff. The success of sites such as ebay, amazon.com and the iTunes store attest to this do it yourself (DIY) spirit.

There is a multitude of ways that libraries can embrace and have been embracing our users' spirit of self-reliance. Though several of these user-centered activities have been around between five and ten years, they are showing up with increasing frequency in many libraries in recent years. Other activities are newer ventures that some collection managers have just begun to pursue.

SELF CHECKOUT

The technology underlying self checkout has been around since the 1970s. Public libraries took to self checkout much more rapidly it seems than academic libraries. However, more academic libraries have been implementing self checkout in the last year or two. These days self checkout systems use Radio Frequency Identification (RFID) tags. The user brings items that he/she wishes to checkout and presents some form of identification—typically a PIN as well as a library card to be scanned. The user then scans the items to be checked out and receives a receipt with the due date. In her blog Something New Every Day, Phyllis Christensen relates the experience of Farmington Public Library (NM) after they implemented a new 3M self checkout system. Not only did the new self-checkout system improve the efficiency of circulation staff, but the implementation also led to improved customer service. Collection managers can also benefit noticeably from self-checkout

systems. Because the RFID tags can track the location of an item, tasks such as searching for lost books, reshelving, and inventory control are not as arduous as before. Collection managers and their staff theoretically have more time to pursue other user-centered activities.

HOME AND OFFICE DELIVERY

Lots of libraries have been providing a Netflix-like service to their users for years—home and office delivery of library materials. Rather than making a user come into a facility to pick up materials, these libraries cover the costs of mailing materials that are being held. Books no longer linger on shelves waiting to be picked up. In his blog, David Lee King was somewhat taken aback but pleased to learn that his new employer, Topeka & Shawnee County Public Library, had been offering this service since the 1970s. King writes that the Topeka Library had even budgeted approximately $360,000 for the service in 2006. He goes on to report that the Topeka Library examined the cost savings of the "mailing holds program (packaging and mailing items) vs. doing holds the normal way (a shelf in the library, constant babysitting of said shelf, staff time to shelve, reshelve, calling patrons who forgot to pick up items, etc)." According to King, "The cost savings, believe it or not, was minimal" (King 2006).

PURCHASE ON DEMAND INSTEAD OF INTERLIBRARY LOAN

Purchase on demand refers to the practice of purchasing material, typically a monograph, that a user has requested through interlibrary loan rather than filling the user's request through resource sharing networks. Cost comparisons suggest that purchase on demand is a worthwhile solution because it is often less expensive to purchase the title rather than borrow it and then pay to return the loaned material. One of the earliest adopters of this practice was Bucknell University's Bertrand

Library in 1999. (Perdue 1999). Dudley Emmert reports on other successful purchase on demand projects, notably the activity at Purdue University led by Suzanne M. Ward. Purdue's purchase on demand program along with those at the University of Wisconsin Libraries, the Thomas Crane Public Library and California State University--Monterey Bay vet their acquisitions through traditional book vendors, through amazon.com, and through Alibris, a relatively large supplier of new, used, and out of print books. According to its website

(http://www.alibris.com/librarians/ill_program.cfm?S=L&DI=1), Alibris even allows ILL staff to use OCLC's Interlibrary Loan and Internal Fee Management systems to identify and purchase a new or secondhand book from the Alibris inventory of 60 million titles.

Purchase on demand programs ought to gain more acceptance. Their implementation means that users do not have to wait for a librarian to decide whether titles are suitable for acquisition. Many libraries might opt to place some restrictions on the service to control costs. For instance, academic libraries might elect to not purchase textbooks, and they also might allow only faculty to take advantage of this service since some faculty are already participate in selection decisions. But even when libraries place restrictions on what purchase on demand programs will acquire, this just in time endeavor represents a terrific user-centered service.

ELECTRONIC BOOKS: PATRON DRIVEN ACQUISITIONS

Before libraries invest too heavily in purchase on demand services, they need to remember that estimates suggest that the costs of maintaining a print collection ultimately end up being higher than the acquisition costs for the same collection of items, especially in the case of journals (Odlyzko 1999). Because purchase on demand programs also emphasize the print version, they ignore the convenience many users might want and expect from electronic versions. A logical complement to a purchase on demand program focused on print is a patron-driven acquisitions (PDA) service focused

on electronic books.

Depending on the business model, patron driven acquisitions is set up so that users have access to a large number of electronic book titles. Users can browse or borrow titles. At some point a specific number of loans will activate or generate an actual purchase. Librarians work with the PDA e-book vendors to control the costs of the PDA program. They do so by setting up deposit accounts or by pre-selecting a collection in advance of making a larger collection available online to library users. Perhaps the best enhancements that PDA has brought to acquiring e-books have been the changes in pricing models and greater selection autonomy. Users have access to a wide selection of titles that they may use for a fraction of the actual purchase price. Libraries are not saddled with acquiring a set of e-books that neither selectors nor patrons chose for their collections. It would be great if future iterations of the PDA business model allowed librarians to profile their purchasing. This means different triggers for different disciplines are aligned with the varying costs of monographs within those disciplines—shorter triggers for traditionally book-intensive areas like humanities where monographs are less expensive and longer triggers for science areas where monographs tend to be more expensive on average.

Like purchase on demand, patron driven acquisitions has been available for collection managers for at least 10 years. NetLibrary first rolled out a patron-driven acquisitions model for electronic books in 1999. One of the early adopters was the Marion County (IN) Internet Library project. Another early adopter on a large scale was the Colorado Alliance of Research Libraries (CARL). More recent libraries to jump on the PDA bandwagon include a host of Canadian academic libraries, including the University of Winnipeg as well as the University of Alberta.

After their pilot project, librarians at the University of Winnipeg analyzed their borrowing requests and their purchases. They loaded 7000 records from NetLibrary into their catalog between January and March of 2008. They agreed to purchase the top 100 requests. As it turned out, approximately a quarter of these top 100 requests were titles published by university presses (University of Winnipeg

2008 Patron Driven. .) Because the 7000 records included NetLibrary titles published since the mid 1990s, older titles were available to Winnipeg's users. It is interesting to note that among the top requested, most were published in 2000; they were not newer publications ((University of Winnipeg 2008 PDA NetLibrary. . .)Though not reported, it would be even more interesting to discover the percentage of NetLibrary's titles published in 2000 compared to other publication years.

EBL is another e-book provider who is partnering with major book vendors like YBP and Blackwell. According to EBL staff at the November 2007 CIBER meeting hosted by CASPUR, early implementers of the EBL service include Australia's Swinburne University and Brown University in Rhode Island. As part of distinct pilot projects, both libraries loaded all the MARC records from EBL into their online catalogs. They also received monthly updates of MARC records for new titles during the project.   These are basic MARC records and so subject access to these titles is limited. The enhanced records cost about $1 each.   Both Swinburne and Brown established a mechanism so that patrons could enjoy automatic pay-per view for non-owned titles for at a reduced cost. Then the libraries automatically purchased titles that had been used according to a pre-established number—4 accesses for Brown and 3 for Swinburne. The cost of the pay per view or short term loan averages between 10 and 15 percent of the total cost. (Paulson 2007).   Once a library actually purchases a title it is owned in perpetuity. However if a book is borrowed more than 325 times in a year, a library must automatically purchase a second copy. (Hardy 2007).

   Still another player in this new arena for e-books acquisitions is Ingram Digital$_{SM}$. In September 2008, Ingram Digital rolled out its first PDA model, MyiLibrary Patron Select program, in a deal with the Greater Western Library Alliance. Participating GWLA members get to customize their collections rather than buying a predetermined or preselected collection. The actual purchase of titles works very much like that of other e-book vendors mentioned above (Greater Western Library Alliance 2008).

Booksellers have already tried some version of patron driven acquisitions by developing and marketing e-book readers such as amazon.com's Kindle or Sony's e-book reader. While fashionable and perhaps ultimately useful for consumers, these readers have presented a challenge to some acquisitions and collection development librarians. It is not clear how libraries, especially libraries whose procurement procedures are closely monitored by parent institutions, might control the actual payment of titles. PDA has also presented a challenge to libraries in regard to how they might manage costs. Both the Marion County (IN) and CARL projects had to turn off their access because they ran out of money (Colorado Alliance of Research Libraries). Swinburne and Brown also struggled with managing costs. In the future, it is not likely that most libraries during times of economic downturn are going to be able to secure additional one-time funding to initiate efforts toward PDA. Neither is it likely that most libraries are going to be able to sustain the allocation of money for traditional approval plans and conventional firm orders in addition to setting aside funds for PDA.   Instead collection managers are going to have to carve out funding for PDA from existing funds in order to make this user-centered venture possible.

JUST IN TIME MEDIA

Users are not going to be satisfied with purchase on demands or patron driven acquisitions that focus just on books. To meet the DVD needs of their film loving users, some libraries have been employing NetFlix as a just in time service to give users quick access to DVDs that are not already held by the participating library. Take the University of Libraries Media Center, for example. The Media Center offers "access to a free Netflix DVD rental service" for instructors as a way to gain quick access to titles that the UW Libraries don't already own or that cannot be borrowed via Summit, their consortial catalog. (University of Washington 2008). *The New York Post* reported that the Brooklyn Public Library began negotiations with NetFlix to establish a service whereby Netflix

would provide content to BPL users at home, though this deal apparently never came to fruition (Seifman 2007). A March 2008 article in Newsweek made it clear that Netflix frowns upon those who use a "personal" account in order to loan to others (McGinn 2008). It isn't clear what the future holds for libraries in relationship to Netflix. Will there be litigation? Will Netflix figure out some innovative way to provide services for libraries that satisfies users and libraries and earns them a profit? Clearly there is a demand for such a service, especially since some libraries appear to be willing to push the envelope on appropriate use of Netflix accounts.

Though they do not constitute just in time purchases for users, other libraries have toyed with various applications and players as a way of showcasing their music collection. The Cherry Hill (NJ) Public Library burned its entire music collection on to iTunes. Users can listen to music in the library as a way to determine what CDs they want to check out (Brookover 2007). In late 2008, Overdrive, one of the largest vendors for downloadable audiobooks, finally began offering mp3 versions of titles from its catalog that are playable on Ipods (Burleigh 2008). This change should create a whole new audience for electronic audiobooks offered largely in public libraries and perhaps ratchet up user demand that collection managers make more library content available on mp3 players.

ADDRESSING THE NAYSAYERS REGARDING USER-CENTERED SERVICES

Instituting PDA, purchase on demand, or some service that makes use of a media provider such as Netflix seems to fly in the face of building comprehensive collections for a particular area. Traditionalists will wonder about wrecking our time-honored investment in building depth and breadth in our collections. There will be resistance and concern that collections will develop unevenly and not meet overall research and curricular needs. But is there any reason PDA or purchase on demand can't augment traditional efforts to build collections? For PDA to work, it seems that collection managers will have to stop thinking about this type of purchase as something

that is just an add-on.

When contemplating these services, for some collection managers, there remains the question of why traditional interlibrary loan (ILL) or some other resource sharing system won't fulfill these needs? The answer is simple; collection managers need only remember that more than anything many users want expediency and they want immediacy. It still takes time to get a copy of a book or video from one library to another. In many academic settings, it also may not be enough just to make a copy of a book available to a faculty member. Because of their investment in collection building, some faculty will want to be sure that a copy is readily available the next time a title is required reading. But ILL and these newer user-centered services need not be mutually exclusive. Instead, collection managers ought to consider all of these services as crucial components in their bag of tricks.

Though PDA and purchase on demand programs shift selection responsibilities over to the user, collection managers should not necessarily expect to recoup that time in order to address other initiatives. As David Lewis makes clear, time not spent selecting titles is going to be spent managing the records in the catalog (Lewis 2007). Gary Hardy echoed Lewis when he discussed how Swinburne managed updates and dealt with various editions of the same title.

Hardy also shows some compelling evidence to suggest that the usage of PDA titles is higher on average than those selected by more traditional means. (Hardy 10). This is good news for collection managers intent on satisifying user demands. However, collection managers should also to expect to spend more time managing usage statistics. Implementing PDA effectively will require expert analysis about projected collection use and anticipation of demand. First and foremost, it will be important for collection managers to analyze e-book usage so that they get it right in terms of the point at which an automatic purchase occurs. As stated earlier, most ebook vendors work with libraries to establish a threshold at which borrowing stops and a purchase is triggered. Collection managers don't want the threshold to arrive too late since this means spending much of the budget

quickly on short term loans. Likewise, collection managers don't want the threshold to come too soon because then libraries end up purchasing more books than they ought to purchase. Because e-book vendors provide a better sense of how e-books are used (browsing, only a reading a single chapter, downloading entire or partial titles) ideally collection managers will be happier massaging data about e-book usage than they ever were milking statistics from circulation or checkout data.

WHAT THE FUTURE COULD PROMISE

After reading up on existing user-driven initiatives, it shouldn't be difficult for collection managers to dream up or imagine other services that could be implemented. If patron-driven acquisitions works for electronic books, why not just load the records of print titles that once were going to be shipped on approval plans? Then users can just request that a print title be purchased and shipped, shelf-ready of course, to their home or office. Once the item is due, it is returned to their local library—perhaps in a readymade mailer like Netflix uses. Better still, users would be allowed to select the format of the material they are seeking as availability allows.

Pay per view for journal articles is not new to collection managers.   With present models, an individual requests an article and then that article is purchased by the library. Some publishers allow the PPV article, once purchased, to be available to any authorized user at the subscribing library in a 24-hour time period. If journals become a thing of the past, why couldn't journal publishers allow the purchased article to just become a part of the library's collection. Surely, the technical staff at big commercial publishers like Elsevier and Wiley are clever enough to build a system that simulates EBL's patron-driven acquisition model, but for articles. Envision a business model for electronic journal articles that allows a library to buy an article just like they might buy an electronic book from EBL. But instead of limited access, the library owns the article. If/when the article is used again or "borrowed" more than a specified number of times, the library forks over a reasonable

fee.

   If libraries are allowing users to check materials out themselves and to select materials to go into

the library collection, why not also allow the user to define a circulation period that suits his or her

needs. There might have to be some outer limit initially but if a graduate student needed a copy of a

biography on some obscure historical figure, the odds are favorable that no one else will need that

biography in the next year. Such a system could be especially useful in a consortial setting.

Cooperating libraries could lend and borrow with greater ease rather than spending time engaging in

recall wars. Consortial members could agree that if a user from Library A had borrowed a title from

Library B and then the title was needed at Library A, then Library A either had to guarantee that the

title would be returned in 48 hours or sooner or Library A would have to buy another copy for the

consortium to be readily available for Library B.

CONCLUSION

   As we move forward and make more progress in the transition from print to digital, it is clear that

it is going to be easier and easier to determine the impact that our collection building has on our

users' daily lives. It is also going to be imperative that we keep our users' developmental, education,

and entertainment needs in mind--more than we ever did in the print realm. If libraries and collection

managers wish to compete with other user-focused services, we need to enlist our users regularly in

collection building and collection management activities that once were mediated by library staff.

We may risk losing relevancy in our users' daily lives if we do not.

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