Redesigning Workflows and Implementing Demand-Driven Acquisition at Virginia Tech: One Year Later

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Background

Virginia Tech formally adopted an e-preferred policy for all library resources purchased as of April 2012. The Virginia Tech Provost, Mark McNamee, inspired by a 2011 report entitled "Redefining the Academic Library: Managing the Migration to Digital Information Services," provided the direction that lead Virginia Tech Libraries on the path toward pursing a demand driven-acquisitions (DDA) program (University Leadership Council, 2011). The Provost and the Dean of Libraries, Tyler Walters, were eager to pursue the possibilities that the DDA model could provide the University Libraries in moving towards a more accessible e-collection. The other benefit centered squarely on cost. The potential to save money by adopting the demand-driven model over a just-in-case model appeared particularly attractive in that doing so could conceivably allow for diverting funds to new initiatives. Overall, there were many reasons for our interest in DDA including economic concerns, continued growth in distant education, and the recent changes in library leadership, all of which were of specific interest to our Provost.

Considering the current market of e-book publishers, platforms, and access methods, we established our criteria with respect to selecting providers for Virginia Tech's DDA pilot program. Multi-use being the primary foundation of our policy focused our attention on providers with the least restrictive digital management (DRM), allowing our patrons the seamless ability to copy, forward, download, print, and manipulate content. Initially, we began our DDA pilot with Ebook Library (EBL) and Yankee Book Peddler Library Services (YBP), but shortly afterward, we implemented a multivendor DDA option with YBP

for summer 2012. Our DDA e-book vendors now include both EBL and ebrary. Based on our current approval plan, we were able to select and load 3 years of retrospective imprints into the consideration pool. This first consideration pool loaded into our discovery layer Summon included e-books in call numbers H, J, K, L, and T, areas where we anticipated higher usage. After several months, we elected to include all disciplines or subjects in the DDA consideration pool.

Workflows

Like many large academic libraries, our workflow at Virginia Tech is complex. We use Innovative Interfaces, Inc. (III) for our library catalog, Serials Solution as our link resolver, Summon as our discovery layer, and YBP as our primary book supplier. As for DDA, each week, the acquisitions unit receives new titles for the consideration pool. (On the whole, Virginia Tech has elected not to scrutinize the consideration pool for duplicates, as we have found, thus far, the cost of duplication is virtually nil, and YBP provides duplication control.) All titles are uploaded into Sierra and are discoverable via Summon. While it is not the case for ebrary, EBL sends an e-mail to members of our acquisitions unit for all short-term loans (STLs) and autopurchases incurred. YBP sends weekly, comprehensive print invoices that are then posted by an acquisitions specialist, and those posts trigger an immediate payment to YBP.

More than five STLs trigger an autopurchase. E-book prices are capped at $300, and any STL more than $30 must be approved by the Head of Acquisitions. Thankfully, approval is not often necessary, and when approval is required, the dollar amount over the threshold is typically nominal.
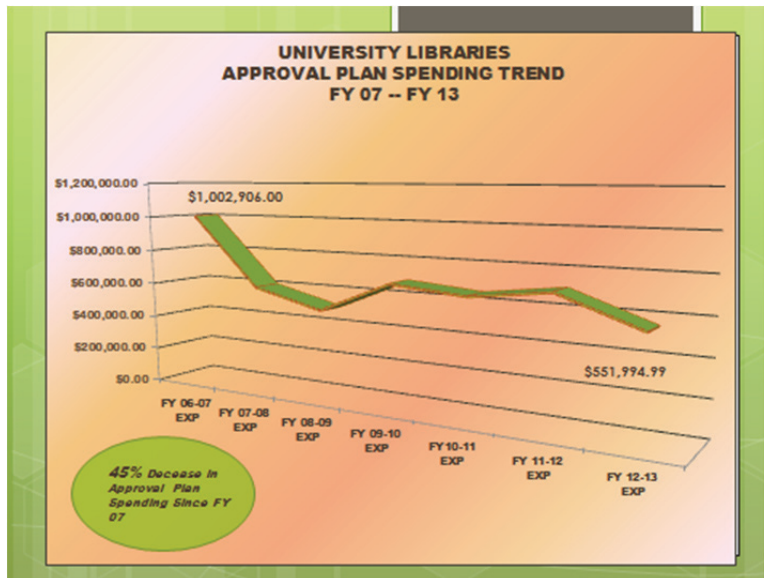
Figure 1. University Libraries Approval Plan Spending Trend FY 2007–2013
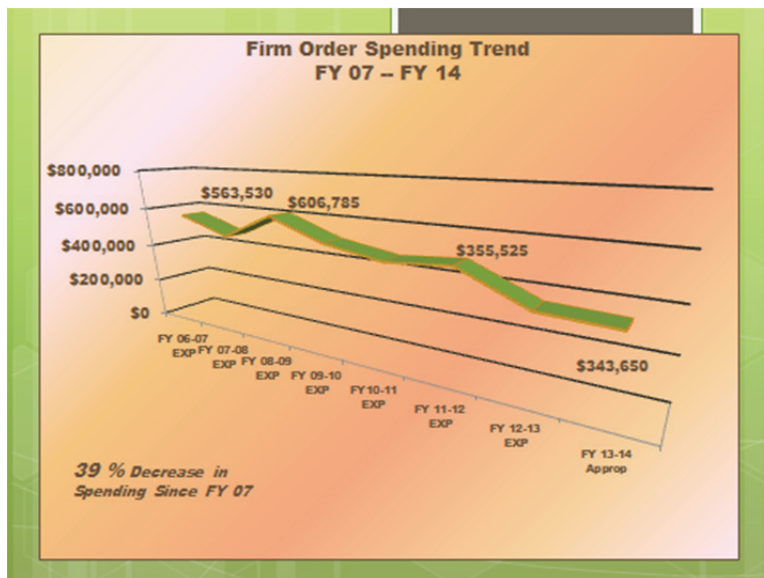

Figure 2. Firm Order Spending Trend FY 2007–2014

A combination of adopting the DDA model, adopting an e-preferred purchase policy, and trimming our current print monograph approval plan continues to shape workflow and highlight our purchasing trends. Although we have formally adopted an e-preferred policy and procedure for all purchases, we continue to acquire print monographs based on exceptions such as unavailability in e-format or patron request. The decision to purchase the print version is based on collection appropriateness and curriculum relevance. However, the number of monographic purchases continues to decrease yearly, as depicted in Figures 1 and 2.

DDA Analysis: One Year Later

In total, acquisitions specialists loaded 12,800 records in all during FY 2013. Once a purchase is triggered, access and payment history is recorded to our library catalog, and we begin to analyze the usage and cost data.

What we found was that of the 12,800 records, 47% fell into the H classification. Call numbers
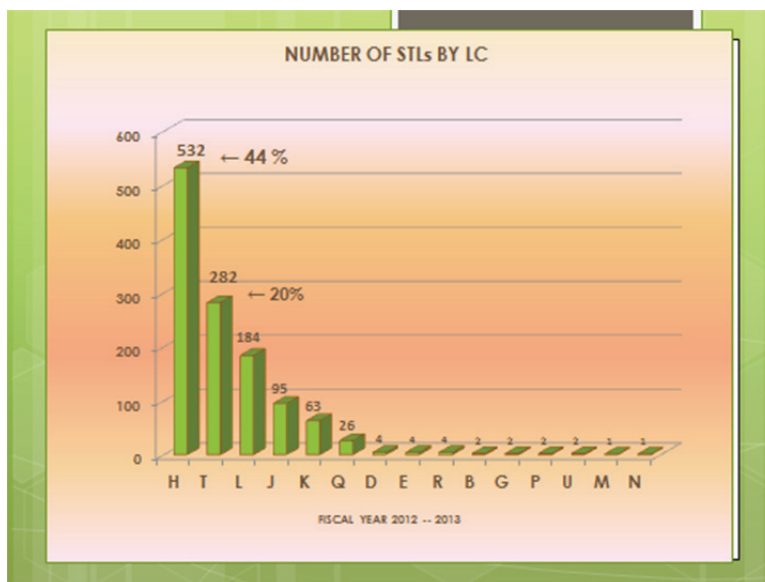
Figure 3. Number of STLs by LC

such as T,J,K, and L made up approximately 10% each of the total consideration pool, with all other call numbers constituting less than 5% each. Of the total amount of loaded records, the number of STLs triggered totaled 1,204 at an approximate amount of $17,000. Virginia Tech's median price of all STLs was $12.70. And, of all the STLs, 69% were unique titles that had no more than one STL. Eighty-five percent of the STLs occurred within the H, T, and L classifications, as depicted in Figure 3.

Looking into the usage numbers by Library of Congress (LC) classification, we were not surprised to see that 44%, roughly 532 STLs, came from the H classification and that 20% of usage came from the T classification, given that the Pamplin College of business and the College of Engineering are both popular and highly ranked disciplines at Virginia Tech.

However, we were surprised by some of the much higher median STL prices in LC areas such as: Q, J, K, and some humanities titles in M and P. In addition, for purchases triggered by STLs (just 31 in total for FY 2013), the median price per title was a bit higher

from ebrary than EBL. Overall, the median price for all titles regardless of provider was approximately $120. By the end of FY 2013, Virginia Tech spent just over $20,000 in its first year using the DDA model.

Overall Savings

Considering our direct cost for FY 2013 of just over $20,000, we calculated our potential savings for the year. Had we spent the median cost of $120 for 835 unique STL titles, we would have spent $102,200. Therefore, our net savings, when subtracting the total DDA median e-book purchase, comes to approximately $82,000. We saved additional dollars in many intangible ways, including spending less time and money in selecting and processing monographs. The reduction in these resources has allowed more room for the Library Commons area and maps directly to University Libraries' strategic plans of upgrading the Newman Library space to improve our patrons overall experience. Further, the savings afforded by our pilot DDA program also allows Virginia Tech Libraries to fund partnerships with HathiTrust and other organizations dedicated to Open Access Initiatives.

References

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