Against the Grain

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The Evolution of Academic Book Vendor Services for eBooks

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The Evolution of Academic Book Vendor Services for eBooks

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As an integral part of the book supply chain, academic monographic booksellers continually strive to meet the challenges of a quickly-changing landscape. Ten years ago, our newest competition came from online booksellers, providing rapid fulfillment on a wide inventory of books. That development changed academic library expectations for traditional book distributors. Academic book vendors like **YBP Library Services** responded by decreasing fulfillment times and continuing to offer value-added services, such as sophisticated collection development support, and shelf-ready cataloging and processing. The next sea-change in our marketplace came a few years ago, with the widespread acceptance of academic eBooks and the development of multiple eBook platforms. Given academic libraries' experience with electronic journals, physical space pressures at large research libraries, and the rise of online education, we find many of our customers moving rapidly to replace print monographic purchasing with eBooks.

YBP focuses on both the challenges and opportunities eBooks bring to the academic book marketplace. Much of the apparatus vendors have developed to support academic collection-building in a print paradigm is extensible to eBooks, with some modifications. We have leveraged the profiling work already done for print titles in order to alert libraries to eBooks available both from aggregators (such as **EBL**, **ebrary**, and **EBSCO**) and directly from publishers with their own platforms, such as **Cambridge University Press**, **Gale**, and **Wiley**.

In late 2009 **YBP** introduced ePreferred Approval Plans to support our customers' evolving collection development strategies. We began tracking the release of print and electronic, or "E" versions to better understand the number of titles in the "approval universe" available in eBook format. This tracking alerted us to the lagging availability of digital content and the need to work with our publisher and aggregator partners to increase the availability of simultaneous print and eBook content. (To be considered a "simultaneous" eBook publication for **YBP** eApproval Plans, the eBook must be available within eight weeks of the print title.) In 2009, 6% of the print books we profiled were available simultaneously in E format. Two years later, the average eB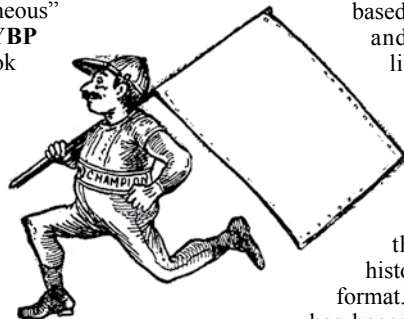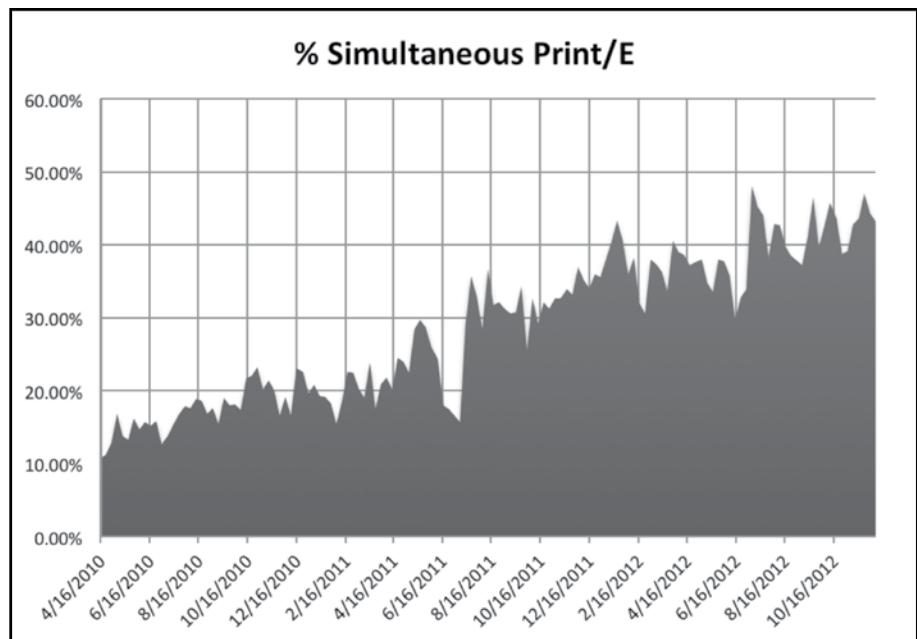ook approval availability was 20%. Today the percentage continues to increase, with an average of 42% of approval books now available simultaneously in eBook format.

YBP has worked with our content partners to raise awareness of the importance of simultaneous print and eBook publishing. Our goal is to provide libraries not only the choice of print or E, but also the choice of supplier and access model. The eApproval Plan allows libraries to create their own custom collections based on the availability of print and eBooks, driven by the library's flexible approval profile. In order to effectively provide Print and eBook titles on approval and prevent duplication, we link all formats of a title so that the library purchase history is accessible from any format. Collection development has become increasingly complex with the introduction of new formats, multiple supplier options, and varying methods of acquiring monographic content. As more content becomes available in E format, and E becomes the preferred format, libraries want to know as early in the selection-to-acquisition cycle of the title what options are available so that they can spend their limited budgets as effectively as possible. We aim to provide this information to the library in a timely manner via the GOBI database.

New title notifications and approval plans extend existing collection development models to eBooks, though some aspects of print collection development do not necessarily fit well with the new eBook models. For example, some publishers choose to sell their eBook output in collections. These collections may include their entire annual output or be limited to more targeted subject collections. Coordinating collection purchases with individual monographic purchases can be difficult, espe-

Figure 1: Simultaneous Print and E, by Fiscal Year (July 1 – June 30)

YBP Library Services: All Profiled Titles								
	Print Approvals			eBook Alternate			Percentage available in eBook format		
	Title Count			Title Count					
	FY2011	FY2012	FY2013 YTD	FY2011	FY2012	FY2013 YTD	FY2011 % eBook	FY2012 % eBook	FY2013 YTD % eBook
Totals	60,898	59,951	27,587	12,253	20,554	11,583	20%	34%	42%

Figure 2: Simultaneous Print and E, from the beginning of YBP ePreferred Approval Plans

cially for duplication control. Though an eCollection can be purchased in a single transaction, it is still critical to supply cataloging records for every title in the collection and to control duplication for the print versions. This duplication control is not always simple because it depends on identifying the titles that will be offered in the eCollection before the print counterparts are ordered or profiled. Early notification from publishers and continual updating of the collection information is key when managing duplication between the eCollection and other monograph purchases.

We also see increasing reliance on demand-driven purchasing (DDA) as academic libraries adopt eBooks. For libraries offering DDA, patrons can progress seamlessly from the bibliographic record into a brief, no-cost browse of the eBook's content, and then to a short-term loan or an automatic purchase. None of these transitions affects the user's immediate access to the eBook, and all acquisitions transactions are handled after-the-fact and behind the scenes. Many libraries have come to see DDA as another tool in their standard collection development strategy, with approval plans automatically gathering the core titles for the library, selectors working with faculty and students to identify additional titles for firm order purchase, and library users triggering DDA titles to supplement other selection methods. While book fulfillment is still the endpoint in the DDA process, other pieces of the service become equally valuable: the profile that determines selection of titles for the DDA discovery pool; the rapid supply of rich, accurate discovery records; a smooth process for de-duplicating books acquired through a variety of methods; and a streamlined process for invoicing titles that have been selected.

Academic libraries have crafted print approval plans to be extremely cost-effective. As libraries shift to purchasing more and more content in eBook format, they are faced with the higher cost of an eBook title compared to the cost of its print counterpart. This cost difference comes from an eBook price that is typically as high as the hardcover list price, with little or no discount. Several factors contribute to the higher cost, including 24x7 availability of eBooks; multi-user access; and the technology surrounding creation, hosting, searching, and delivery of the content. That additional cost for increased accessibility forces libraries to reconsider how to provide the same amount of content to library users without going over budget.

We are seeing an increasing trend to collaborative eBook purchasing across libraries. What is unclear, and will remain so into the near future, is how to package eBook purchases that are intended to be shared by multiple libraries. At present, publishers and aggregators do not have a standard "out-of-the-box" solution, as the composition and need of each consortium or buying group varies. In order for publishers to allow access to their eBook content beyond the one-library model, consideration must be given to the number of libraries, the type of content to be shared, and the volume of past purchases.

Figure 3: Calendar Year 2011 Print-E Approval Profiling Comparison, by Broad Subject

Subject	At Time of Profiling			# Add'l E Post-profiling	Total E	Overall % E to P
	# Print	# E	% E Simultaneous			
Anthropology	1,761	345	19.6%	305	650	36.9%
Architecture	800	42	5.3%	56	98	12.3%
Art	4,315	180	4.2%	234	414	9.6%
Business-Economics	6,537	1,874	28.7%	1,632	3,506	53.6%
Education	2,505	696	27.8%	514	1,210	48.3%
History	7,613	1,320	17.3%	1,566	2,886	37.9%
Law	3,392	466	13.7%	679	1,145	33.8%
Literature/Linguistics	14,095	2,243	15.9%	1,833	4,076	28.9%
Medicine	5,670	1,427	25.2%	1,288	2,715	47.9%
Misc	559	114	20.4%	83	197	35.2%
Music	1,173	209	17.8%	190	399	34.0%
Philosophy	1,363	388	28.5%	396	784	57.5%
Politics	2,190	588	26.8%	594	1,182	54.0%
Psychology	1,117	233	20.9%	259	492	44.0%
Religion	4,285	556	13.0%	745	1,301	30.4%
Science	8,916	2,659	29.8%	1,973	4,632	52.0%
Sociology	4,472	1,070	23.9%	1,110	2,180	48.7%
Technology	5,183	1,466	28.3%	971	2,437	47.0%

Publishers face a downward spiral if libraries' only goal for shared purchasing is to purchase fewer books at lower prices. New models constantly emerge, and no one model can be applied across the board at this time. This trend of consortial buying offers libraries the opportunity to display a larger pool of digital content to their patrons without one individual library incurring all the cost. However, because there is no set model, the coordination and documentation needed for purchasing can take additional time. Careful consideration of the impact of these consortial acquisitions on the participating libraries' workflow for monograph purchasing is also required. **YBP** has played — and will continue to play — a critical role in these models, working closely with our partners to reconcile consortial purchasing with individual library purchasing. Though some consortial models have been implemented successfully, we expect that our support of cooperative eBook purchasing will continue to develop in the coming years.

Like all academic book vendors, **YBP** has done significant internal development work over the last few years to support the supply of digital monographs. We have consciously chosen to develop our new services in stages, which allows **YBP** the flexibility to make more rapid changes as the needs of the academic library market continue to evolve. Our eBook DDA service introduced the ability for customers to use an approval plan as the framework for content to be identified for DDA. Partnered with **EBL**, this service provided weekly additions of new discovery titles to respective customer DDA repositories while ensuring duplication control against other titles purchased through **YBP**.

We learned that libraries wanted choices of eBook aggregators as well as the option to select individual titles for DDA. Subsequently, we added **ebrary** and debuted new functionality to allow library staff to manually select titles for DDA. As we and early customers gained experience with the new service, we realized that our duplication control for DDA was sometimes too restrictive, and that we needed to include a larger universe of DDA content than **YBP's** standard approval titles. Next we introduced **EBSCO** titles into the DDA service, and began offering Multi-Vendor DDA to broaden the discovery options still further. Multi-Vendor DDA allows libraries the option to use multiple suppliers in an integrated DDA program. We expect this new DDA service will continue to grow and change in the coming years, as libraries continue to expand their use of DDA.

Along with the increasing importance of eBooks, libraries face the next phase of migration for their library management systems. Library vendors are beginning critical development work with the next generation of library systems, such as Alma (**Ex Libris**), Sierra (**Innovative Interfaces**), WMS (**OCLC**), Intota (**Serials Solutions**), and the cooperative Kuali OLE project. Like GOBI, these new systems aim to integrate print and electronic resources where possible, removing some of the silos that are present in traditional integrated library systems, discovery layers, knowledgebases, and ERMs.

As book vendors, **YBP** and others must continue to evolve ever-more-quickly to meet the needs of our customers. We continue to integrate workflows using a single source and a single ordering tool (e.g., GOBI). With the number of eBook suppliers and platforms continuing to grow, a book vendor provides a consistent, single point for ordering, invoicing, and payment, thus simplifying all aspects of monograph acquisition, from identification

A Demand-Driven Future

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of titles to making them accessible to library patrons. Our collection development and technical services options offer predictable, uniform access to an ever-widening and complex universe of monographic content. Finally, we bring the strength of our customer service and internal operations staff to the challenges of delivering access, workflow, duplication control, and financial value.

YBP development work involves customer discussions, to sort out exactly what is needed and how we can supply a solution to fit those needs. We also depend on our strong partnerships within the content community to help shape and develop new services. We face changing relationships with library systems vendors and bibliographic utilities, as metadata begins to move to shared, cloud-based models. Academic book vendors have come a long way from the original wholesaling model of buying books from individual publishers and selling them to individual libraries.

In NASCAR, racers and fans discuss the concept of "coopetition": cooperation and competition at the same time. For instance, race teams from the same race shop share tips to make all their cars run faster than competing race shops' cars. But when the race comes down to those last few laps, each driver is in it for himself or herself, racing for the win. We see a similar network emerging in the world of academic books. Libraries certainly purchase books, but they also look to publish books these days from archival or OP holdings. Consortia may or may not seek to use book vendors when negotiating deals with publishers or aggregators. Aggregators are a newer partner in the academic supply chain, offering publishers multiple new, competing channels for their content and offering libraries competing ways to access that content. And book vendors are in the middle of it all, trying to ensure that publishers, aggregators, consortia, and libraries all hear and understand each other's competing priorities and needs. As monograph content becomes increasingly digital in the coming years, our relationships will continue to shift and grow. We enthusiastically embrace these new opportunities to transform academic collection development and bookselling. 🐢

librarians have always craved content for their collections. If the Big Deal whetted our thirst, librarians now have the opportunity to offer access to even more content using demand-driven systems. What made the Big Deal attractive to librarians was that publishers could sell all of their unsubscribed journal content upfront at a discounted price. Coupled with the sale of eBook packages, large quantities of content were purchased in the likelihood students and faculty might find and use the content. However, over the years, these large bundles have increasingly tied up a significant portion of the library's budget leaving many no options but to cancel. However, a newer model has emerged to increase access through mediated and unmediated solutions and restored the librarian's ability to add content to the collection that was previously unattainable due to cost or lack of digitization. As many libraries have watched their monograph and serials budgets decline over the past two decades, demand-driven purchase and lease options through third-party vendors have offered the ability to provide access to unsubscribed content at the point of need.

Beginning in 2008 at the downturn in the economy, the **University of Alabama at Birmingham (UAB)** libraries could no longer maintain large serials bundles to most scientific, technical and medical publishers. This serious blow to the collection meant the libraries returned to subscribing to individual journal titles.[1] **UAB's Lister Hill Library of the Health Sciences (LHL)** retreated from purchasing "Big Deals" and electronic book collections long ago, and is currently reorganizing the collection to provide and pay for access at the article and book chapter level rather than purchasing bundles of titles. There will always be a certain portion of the budget spent on content that users expect the library to provide, but these are often the materials found on opening day collection lists, and items users need, but rarely want to purchase. This means a greater portion of the materials budget is available to acquire content through demand-driven solutions.

In 2009, **LHL** set up various pay-per-view accounts with commercial publishers to supply articles on demand, but use of the mediated service was infrequent. Most users reported that the document delivery service was too costly even though **LHL** subsidized the cost so the most an individual paid was $12 per article. The campus community also desired a way to gain immediate access to journal content, especially when the library was closed. When the **Copyright Clearance Center (CCC)** advertised a new unmediated service that could deliver full-text articles directly to the user within min-

utes, **LHL** configured a Get It Now with PayPal account. The **CCC** offers both a mediated and unmediated article fulfillment service, but **LHL** favored the unmediated service that includes a PayPal option — requiring the user to contribute to the cost of the article. With most articles priced at $24 each, the user pays $6 towards the cost of the article and **LHL** subsidizes the remaining cost. Access to the Get It Now with PayPal service is available through the library's Serials Solutions Article Linker page. When the user finds a journal article the library does not own, Article Linker displays options to pay $6 for immediate access to the article through Get It Now with PayPal or to request it through the library's interlibrary loan service for free or $3. Being promoted as an experimental pilot, the Get It Now with PayPal service has been active since late September 2012. So far, early users report satisfaction with the service. **LHL** is beginning to collect data using Google Analytics on how many times the Get It Now link is selected on the Article Linker page compared to the ILLiad request form. In spring 2013, data will be analyzed along with a user satisfaction survey in an attempt to determine if the service is effectively meeting need on campus and supplementing the library's traditional interlibrary loan service. Some questions still remain, such as whether $6 is the right price point to charge users for an article, and if the Get It Now service delivers articles fast enough to satisfy users' expectations. Most of the articles users have purchased are from publishers with whom the library once maintained Big Deal agreements. Most of the larger commercial presses and society publishers offer their content through the Get It Now service, and the amount of money **LHL** set aside to subsidize this service is much less than the library spent on any of its former journal packages.

In addition to losing the Big Deals, **LHL** was also unable to maintain most of its monograph standing orders. While most health sciences libraries do not spend a significant portion of their budget on monographs, after five years of this practice, the collection was becoming inadequate, despite both electronic and print books being purchased upon individual request. **LHL** users are generally comfortable in accessing and using online textbooks so titles are purchased in digital format whenever possible. The library's last LibQual survey showed widespread dissatisfaction with the monograph collection. The biggest complaint was the age of the works. However, users acknowledged gratification in the comments section that when they requested a book that request was fulfilled. It seemed natural to move to a demand-driven solution to acquire monographs since many of the titles users requested for purchase were available for sale through the eBook aggregators. **LHL** allocated $7,000 towards its first demand-driven pilot with **ebrary**. Using the library's book vendor, **YBP**, a tightly focused profile was created to select the titles health professional students often requested for purchase. This typically included test preparation and board