

Demand-Driven Acquisition: Saviour, False Prophet, or Mere Mortal?

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Abstract

Collection development in academic libraries has always depended on the librarian's knowledge of the assigned subject area, of the research and curricular needs of the campus, and of the breadth and depth of the collection with an eye toward persistence of value. Demand-driven (or possibly more accurately, patron-driven) acquisition as a method of collection development has seen widespread implementation in recent years, exacerbated by inflating costs, shrinking budgets, and the desire to ensure collections are actually used by patrons.

Several years on, has DDA made good on its promise of delivering content at the point of need while reducing collections budget outlays? What is the correct balance of DDA and bibliographer-based selection? Of e-book versus print DDA? Is this a boon for collections democracy or a blow against the librarian as subject specialist? Do faculty and students want this responsibility or would they prefer to leave it to librarians? Does providing just-in-time content have implications for the research process, and for the long-term cohesiveness and significance of library collections?

Proceedings

Ann Roll (CSU Fullerton)

CSU Fullerton's approach to collections is a hybrid of DDA for monographs and streaming video, approval plans and e-book packages, and librarian selection, their goal being to provide as much content electronically—so anytime, anywhere—as possible, with space concerns and the concomitant reduction of the print collection in mind.

Fullerton began DDA with EBL in 2010, adding YBP and an approval plan in 2011; YBP slips were for both print and electronic formats simultaneously. Four short-term loans were required to trigger an automatic purchase, with librarians mediating purchases over \$50. Having noticed the print books sent on approval were also available as e-books, the approval plan was revised in 2011–12. Textbooks, which had been gotten on approval, were removed from that plan and added as e-books if available.

This collection method was then assessed to determine if it would indeed save money and whether the purchased titles were being used. Because DDA titles were on an STL trigger, they had obviously been used four times before being purchased; print approvals however were not receiving five uses. This led in 2013–14 to the adoption of a DDA e-book-preferred plan, resulting in less spending for more titles, with greater use. Overall librarians had more to spend for their purchasing as well. When the STL model became much more expensive in 2014—seeing cost-per-loan increase from 5% to 25–50% of purchase price—many libraries abandoned DDA or at least removed from their DDA profiles those publishers that had enacted the steepest increases. Fullerton waited it out however, placing an STL cap of \$50 on purchases.

The situation has stabilised in intervening years, with approvals still down a bit and DDA up a bit. Content is still being acquired at about the same rate and costs have not skyrocketed, although not being a research library may be a factor. Fullerton is still looking to balance just-in-case and just-in-time approaches. Ultimately, DDA has been a boon and provided more flexibility for selectors, but it hasn't fulfilled all the criteria of the other methods employed in the hybrid approach.

Kerry Scott (UC Santa Cruz)

It is not necessarily the case that libraries have always relied on librarians for collections expertise, as some have used disciplinary faculty, staff, or combinations thereof for the purpose. Even many librarians' educational backgrounds are not always aligned to their collection assignments, except for their MLS degrees. During a period of major budget reductions (2009–13 saw a 30% decrease), UCSC decided to move its English-language approval plan to DDA, both direct and slipped. Acquisition costs remain at less than half of that in 2010, which has helped with consortial licensing costs and allowed the Library to retain large journal packages and purchases other materials (e.g. digitised archival collections) faculty request. A bonus has been that this process provided the Library a window on what research is being conducted on campus.

There are staff costs involved in mediating DDA requests however, and the Library needs to calculate these costs. Changing publisher models can make interactions more time-intensive and must be taken into account as well. The Library has begun working with new e-book vendors like JSTOR, but it is expensive; an evidence-based plan has been adopted with JSTOR. There is also an increased cost in staff time that must be considered, so there is a lot to keep up on.

UCSC librarians aren't selecting anymore, although there are some specialised approval plans for non-English-language materials and for photography and art exhibition catalogues that are not DDA and rely on librarian expertise. Librarians

are also analysing data in DDA to fine-tune the profile and are engaged in other higher-level decision making.

A group of faculty were very concerned at this change in procedure, so they gave the Library \$50,000 in one-time monies to purchase materials they wanted. One hundred ninety-six unique titles were purchased; 59% were either already owned or DDA-ready and in the catalogue; 29% were published pre-DDA. The balance of print and electronic formats is very subject-specific. Users are pretty good about getting what they need and not duplicating requests. As for any impact of DDA on the research process itself, it seems not very different from the past. DDA is akin to representative democracy, with users voting for their research needs.

The DDA profile still determines the universe of titles available for purchase, so DDA does not include everything and is not completely open. Librarian selectors are still involved in a very different capacity, and the Library strives to work with vendors with good models, without regard to print or electronic format. This has opened opportunities to participate in new initiatives like the Knowledge Unlatched open-access platform. DDA is then just one piece of the acquisition puzzle and has in fact led to greater collection cohesiveness across the UC system, as no one library can buy everything it needs.

Chris Schaffer (UCSF; ex-Oregon Health & Science University)

OHSU is a member of the Orbis Cascade Alliance, which includes public and private academic institutions in a range of sizes and missions, from research universities to community colleges, with a student population of 250,000. The consortium exists primarily for the purpose of resource sharing, of electronic books in particular.

A task force was formed in 2010 to determine how consortial e-book sharing my best be accomplished decided that DDA would be the method and it would be facilitated by the consortium. Shared collection development was through YBP, with the goal being no more than three print copies across the system (though this rule was not followed to the letter). Costs were distributed on the basis of 30% paid by consortial libraries, 35% based on student FTE, and 35% based on current library materials budget, in an attempt to make costs more equitable between large and small libraries in the system. The Alliance owned the materials purchased, so they were equally available to all institutions.

Automatic purchases were triggered by ten short-term loans (due to their being thirty-seven libraries involved), with a maximum title cost of \$250. Problems developed however with record loading due to the varying LMSes across the system, with records requiring loading and unloading in each individual system; this ultimately led to the decision to adopt a shared LMS and catalogue.

The automatic-purchase threshold was lowered to five STLs in 2011, which raised usage but led to the collections budget running out prematurely. The trigger was then raised to fifteen STLs, and the trigger number was in fact changed about fifteen times in the attempt to better control the funding pool. Once the STL increases of 2014 took effect, retrospective titles previously available were limited, and those published 2009–11 were removed. Title choice was further limited and, in 2015, titles from publishers like NYU and Sage were removed due to cost (>\$200).

Cost per use varied wildly, from \$2.34 at large institutions to over \$27 for a small liberal arts. This was obviously a major problem for the smaller institutions and for the sustainability of the consortium's entire shared collections approach. The consortium had maintained its ebrary package all along, and DDA was becoming more expensive than it, so it was decided to cut both in half. The Alliance's purpose had been to hold materials in perpetuity, but ebrary's subscription plan didn't fit this model. A switch was made to the EBL subscription package, which resulted in much lower cost per item; usage also rose. While still not adding permanent titles to the collection, permanency was not the goal of the member libraries, where usage and connection to curriculum and point-of-need was utmost. By 2017, the Alliance began using evidence-based acquisition with Wiley and purchasing direct outright, incurring no STL costs, via Oxford and DDA was no more.