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Strengthening the Story: Library Influence on the Academic Book Business

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SCS Monographs Index

These numbers are based on 181 U.S. academic libraries, and 70 million holdings. They include research libraries, state universities, 4-year colleges, and a handful of community colleges. Circulation statistics do not include in-house uses.

Collection measure	Average value	High value	Low value
Monographs Count	388,353	2,152,279	13,367
Titles held by 100+ U.S. libraries—same edition	76%	95%	27%
Titles held by 5 or fewer U.S. libraries—any edition	1%	13%	0%
Held in Hathi Trust with In Copyright status	41%	55%	22%
Held in Hathi Trust with Public Domain status	5%	11%	0%
Titles with Zero Total Charges (circulation)	43%	99%	10%
Titles with 1 to 3 Total Charges (circulation)	33%	57%	0%
Titles with 3+ Total Charges (circulation)	23%	75%	0%
Publication year prior to 2005	89%	99%	59%

Updated: March 2016

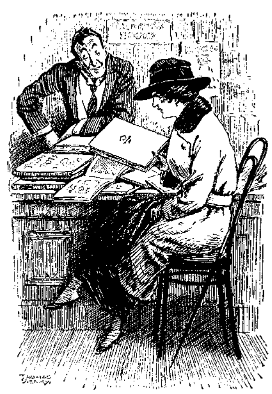
These are early days in aggregating this sort of data, and results should be viewed as indicative rather than definitive. But they can serve to guide us where to look more carefully. And while collective data can suggest the potential for managing print in new ways, each library's situation is different. It can be very useful to have rich contextual data for one's own institution to inform print management strategies; i.e., to determine which titles should be retained, shared, stored, or withdrawn. That's where collection analytics vendors are beginning to contribute now.

But the potential for deeper analysis is even more intriguing, and it's clear that many other opportunities can be identified and pursued, as the data gets richer. Now that it's clear that collection analysis can play a useful role, we'll begin to see additional innovation. For instance:

Can we develop and incorporate monographs citation data, as an indicator of scholarly resonance? Can we use techniques of predictive and prescriptive analytics to feed intelligence back upstream — into purchasing decisions, perhaps even into publishing decisions? Can we determine what characteristics make a monograph useful — or at least more likely to be used? Can we link collection development decisions to patterns of user demand? Can we identify the availability of eBook alternates to low-use print titles? As libraries begin to share print book collections more widely, can we learn to fine-tune discoverability, to bring relevant options into user workflows?

This begins to suggest what the next generation of vendor intermediary might look like — using analytics to support selection, discovery, management, and delivery. At its fullest implementation, such a vendor would consolidate and analyze activity for books and journals, print and electronic — highlighting the value of the library's "facilitated collections" to its users and its funding body. These are difficult tasks. Participants will be fewer, and the span of functions wider and more complex. But as higher education faces questions about student outcomes, research productivity, and the ROI on university tuition, all academic units need to optimize and demonstrate their contributions. Libraries will need new kinds of support, including evidence-based decisions on what content to make available, and what to share, and what to retain. Life in the space between publisher and library will increasingly acquire a quantitative dimension, raising the bar and changing the game once again. But the game goes on.

Strengthening the Story: Library Influence on the Academic Book Business



by **Stephanie Church** (Acquisitions and Metadata Services Librarian, Case Western Reserve University) <stephanie.church@case.edu>

The academic book business has many moving parts and libraries are one of them. To hypothesize on the future, I want to examine how libraries influence the market today. Delving into what I see as a librarian might help to give context to the larger discussion.

One major trend that has emerged and will continue to gain traction in the world libraries occupy is assessment. Assessment is no longer a buzzword. More and more Assessment Librarian positions are appearing in academia. Librarians, in all areas of the organization, are encouraged to contribute to a culture of evidence-based application, where strategic objectives are defined and higher-level decisions influenced by specific, measurable outcomes. Today, libraries need to demonstrate their relevance, viability, and value. These are no longer assumed on campus. Assessment is essential for libraries to make their case.

Libraries must prove and promote their impact and their value to the greater academic community. User-driven business models are very attractive to libraries for these reasons. Considering the push for use analysis and justification of purchases, it is no wonder Demand-Driven Acquisition (DDA) and evidence-based initiatives have been so widely accepted. By design, DDA allows the library to focus purchasing on repeatedly used content or titles requested by our constituency at point of need, ensuring usage. DDA permits libraries to offer a breadth of scholarly material to faculty and students in a highly cost-effective way.

In my position at **Case Western Reserve University's Kelvin Smith Library**, I conducted a usage-based analysis of our first foray into DDA. One of the most influential findings demonstrated that DDA eBooks were eight times more likely to be used than firm-ordered eBooks.[1] Cost-per-use data showed that we were spending roughly $14 per DDA eBook but over $100 for firm-ordered eBooks. A staggering 73% of firm-ordered eBooks had zero usage. This examination has since folded into an analysis of aggregated platforms and DDA models. We are looking to expand our current contribution to DDA and I expect to have higher-level discussions on firm order practices and **CWRU** user preferences.

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Discoveries like this truly aid in strategic decisions, by facilitating the discussion that informs those decisions. This is a significant way libraries can demonstrate fiscal responsibility and build their case to administration, showing why the institution should not only continue its support, but increase investment in the library.

Aside from widening the amount of content available to our users, the less time subject specialists spend on selecting individual titles, the more time they can spend on faculty outreach and research assistance. I expect the DDA trend to continue and grow, with libraries dedicating larger portions of their budget towards user-selected content.

Recent research is suggesting a trend in general library budget growth. However this reportedly modest increase is not necessarily translating into addition funds for materials.[2] With flat or in some cases decreasing materials budgets, librarians have a responsibility to make conscientious collection management decisions.

Collection development policies may be another area of future growth and change. If libraries have not reviewed these policies recently, this is a perfect time to revisit what we collect and why we collect. On a macro and micro level, there are so many questions to answer. Is our library collecting for posterity? What format do we purchase and why? Do we have a preferred aggregated eBook platform? How much funding should go towards user-driven initiatives? Will these decisions affect our consortia? Do we fulfill faculty format requests if that means duplicating content? The list goes on and on, and I foresee libraries making even more of an effort to focus purchasing of monographic content in ways that align with strategic goals. Revisiting the collection policy, with the greater library community's assistance, will only help to strengthen the story a library tells to administration.

When it comes to the format discussion, the physical book is here to stay. With studies published on exhaustive reading, the correlation between screens and reduced retention,[3] and the often expressed tactile joys of using a physical book, it is impossible for me to see a future entirely empty of them. There is still very much a need and desire for academic book use in its physical form, particularly in the Humanities.

Even so, without question, purchasing of physical scholarly monographs has declined over the past several decades. Studies and surveys[4] have indicated this for quite some time. Anyone using **OCLC** Connexion Client can see this purchasing shift in action. Institutional holdings indicate that eBook titles are on the rise and often surpassing physical book holdings, sometimes by a factor of six over the print. While consortial-level buying data may inflate these numbers (**KSL** does not add holdings for shared purchases), this is nonetheless an important purchasing movement that warrants more discussion.

In physical books, one of my pain points in acquisitions is obtaining out-of-print and hard-to-find material. I expect that buying physical copies of titles published decades ago will be challenging. But in this day and age, why should it be just as hard to buy a book from five years ago? I am not well versed in the expense and gamble publishers take on titles and their print runs, or the business side of what it would take, but I do hope to see more print-on-demand content available. While there is a case to be made regarding general appearance and the integrity of the physical book in its original form, what our users and researchers are truly after is content. They want to absorb that content and synthesize ideas into their own work. Libraries want to provide their users with exactly what they need. Content is a huge driver in what libraries purchase. Sometimes librarians have a say in which format is best for constituents, but not always, since monographs are not necessarily available in the preferred format.

In the past few years, publishers have experimented with eBook pricing and they continue to test the market. Successful business models have emerged that seem sustainable for both publishers and libraries. We are starting to see more of a trend with publisher platforms offering content with less restrictive or even no DRM, and with unlimited user access. Journals have offered unrestrictive article downloads and other user-friendly options for years and it is refreshing to see these practices rolled into the world of eBooks. It is what our faculty and students are accustomed to and they have a reasonable expectation to want equitable access in eBooks. Some publishers even go as far as to offer capabilities and assistance with text and data mining projects. These are incredible strides in our industry. Unfortunately these instances, so far, are the exception and not the rule.

In the future, I hope to see more publishers on aggregated platforms allowing for DRM-free chapter downloads, unlimited printing, and simultaneous usage. Is this too much to ask? Maybe. But we are starting to see discussion that open access "may no longer be a pressure point on commercial publishing"[5] on the periodical front. With continued discussion and collaboration, I am optimistic that this could have a residual effect on eBooks.

Why am I optimistic? Because successful open access initiatives are emerging. One such enterprise is **Knowledge Unlatched (KU)**. Established by **Frances Pinter** and first introduced at the **Charleston Conference** in 2010,[6] **KU** harnesses buying power on a global level. It is a way for libraries, publishers, authors, and readers to join forces for the greater good of scholarly achievement through open access. Hundreds of universities in 24 countries participated in the initial pilot, sharing the cost to make 28 frontlist titles from 13 publishers universally available. Pilot assessment findings indicated that titles were downloaded worldwide on average over 1,000 times per week.[7] **KU** has a truly global impact, with library buy-in and interest growing.

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Alternatives to Demand-Driven Acquisition: An Exploration of Opportunity Costs

by **Carol Joyner Cramer** (Head of Collection Management, Wake Forest University) <cramercj@wfu.edu>

If Demand-Driven Acquisition (DDA) dies as an option, or simply no longer meets our needs, what would we do instead?

The **Z. Smith Reynolds Library** at **Wake Forest University** provides an all-you-can-eat smorgasbord for our DDA profile with **EBL**. We currently offer about 170,000 titles. We do not exclude books based on publication date, publisher or subject. We assert that topic areas not covered by our curriculum (e.g., agriculture) will see extremely low use anyway. Therefore, we do not want to waste time pulling those topics out of our pool. On the other hand, if the occasional agriculture book gets used, then hooray, we have served a user without resorting to ILL. However, we do systematically exclude popular and juvenile works (as those categories are defined by **YBP**) and books with a Short-Term Loan (STL) cost of more than $200/day. We also de-duplicate against other eBook providers in our collection. However, we de-duplicate against print only in cases where the STL cost exceeds $76/day.

We can provide such a wide-ranging buffet because we have a healthy book budget and a relatively small user base, especially in comparison to our budget. In fiscal year 2015, we spent about $129 per student on monographs in all formats (including DDA). Also, we have fortunately had budget increases that match journal inflation for several years in a row. The **Z. Smith Reynolds Library** serves about 6,200 students, and the total student FTE at **Wake Forest** is about 7,600. Since the DDA model is fundamentally a pay-per-use model, a lower number of potential users most likely equates to a lower total consumption of books.

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There are other ways librarians try to influence the world of academic book buying. There was a discussion on the SERIALIST listserv recently on electronic resources and how libraries handle platforms that require an additional user login beyond IP authentication. When the choice is available, librarians are actively avoiding platforms and providers that require additional hoops for users to jump though. While additional steps may not stop serious researchers, it is a huge deterrent for undergraduates who could easily confuse the extra steps as restricted access. This is a lose-lose-lose-lose situation for the reader, author, publisher, and library.

Librarians don't want to create adversarial relationships with publishers and vendors, but we are aware that our purchases are powerful. Our purchases speak for library user needs as well as for philosophical beliefs. We will continue to navigate the changing landscapes of technology and economics by developing successful strategies driven by measurable evidence.

Librarians are speaking up in a way that is new to the profession. We are telling our story on an administrative level by demonstrating fiscal responsibility and by a concrete, measurable commitment to the university's goals. We share our stories with other librarians and colleagues, building upon best practices, forming partnerships, and making our story stronger. We also want to share our stories with publishers, vendors, and aggregators, explaining the "why" behind individual purchasing decisions and larger purchasing patterns. With continued discussion and collaboration and mutual listening as a first step, together we can build a future that works for everyone in the business of academic books.

Endnotes

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However, the dramatic DDA price increases and publisher embargoes seen since 2014 have led us to ponder — is there a better way? Should we spend our money differently?

I did a thought experiment to explore other ways we could spend our DDA money. I made two fundamental assumptions: (1) our overall buying power will remain unchanged, and (2) the money we are currently not spending on DDA will continue to be spent exactly as it is today — i.e., this is not an opportunity to cut the budget. Notably in our case, our statewide consortium NC LIVE subscribes to **ebrary's** Academic Complete and Public Library Complete on our behalf. Therefore, I did not explore making more investments in the subscription model. For now, I focused solely on cost-per-use and ignored other factors, e.g., user experience factors, that might make a more expensive choice more desirable.

Instead of looking strictly at actual cost-per-use, this thought experiment speculates about what might happen with hypothetical future purchases, based on actual data on user behavior with our existing collection.

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