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# Testing the Patron-Driven Model: Availability Analysis of First-Time Use

## Books

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*With shrinking book budgets, traditional collection building, or the “just in case” purchasing model, has been supplemented at many libraries by patron-driven purchasing. Targeting 2012 first-time use print titles as a sample, this study tests the feasibility of moving to a large-scale patron-driven model for the acquisition of print books. Results reveal a broad spectrum of publication dates for titles used. Overall, 76% of the titles were available for purchase in print and 5% were freely available online with a 2% overlap. The remaining print titles were available through ILL leaving less than 1% or 13 titles unavailable, thus demonstrating a reasonable success rate.*

**KEYWORDS.** *Patron-driven acquisitions (PDA), demand-driven acquisitions (DDA), patron-initiated purchasing (PIP), books on demand, print books print book collection use*

## INTRODUCTION

Patron-driven purchasing is creating an entirely new dynamic. For some libraries, comprehensive collection building is no longer fiscally sustainable and libraries must rely on interlibrary loan and cooperative purchasing to meet user needs. Libraries bound by physical and fiscal constraints may begin to consider or invest more heavily in patron-driven acquisition (PDA) options as an answer. A traditional concern with purchasing print titles at the point of need is that many titles would not be available in the future for researchers if they are not purchased at their time of publication

(Esposito et al. 2012). Given these considerations, an interesting question arose at the University of Mississippi Libraries (UML); by examining print books from UML's entire circulating book collection that were used for the first time in 2012, what percent of first-time use (FTU) titles could have been purchased on demand? Using these 2012 FTU titles as a sample works well because they meet the scope of the collection and represent evident user needs. The resulting sample also includes a wide range of publication dates. Since the library's founding in 1849 (Lloyd 1979), books have been acquired through donations and purchases. The library began using approval plans during the 1990s leading to the millionth volume celebration and subsequent readmission to the Association of Southeastern Research Libraries in 1999. Approval plans continued after reaching the pivotal millionth volume but funding gradually decreased until the program was cancelled in 2004. The library has more books published in the 1990s than any other decade due in large part to these goals. Exploring availability of 2012 FTU titles may inform collection development decisions as well as shape plans for patron-driven projects at UML as well as at other institutions. In 2005, the UML Assessment Committee established a 75% benchmark for collection success in meeting user needs (Assessment Committee 2005). For the purposes of this project, the same local measure of success was used. If 75% of the FTU titles were available either for purchase or freely online, the patron-driven approach would be considered successful. For unavailable titles, a second question related to ILL partner availability was explored.

The University of Mississippi was founded in 1848 as a public university providing a liberal arts education (Lloyd 1979), and today it is the second largest university in Mississippi with a total enrolment of over 19,000 students (University of Mississippi 2014). The university has a strong College of Liberal Arts alongside schools in Accountancy, Applied Sciences, Business Administration, Education, Engineering, Journalism, Law and Pharmacy. Like many libraries,

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UML has a subset of its print collection that has never been used according to integrated library system (ILS) use statistics. Each year several thousand titles are used for the first time and added to the corpus of used materials. A study at Cornell University Library (2010) analyzing monographs published between 1990 and 2010 revealed that approximately 55% of their collection did not circulate. Using Cornell's criteria while shifting the publication date range to match a twenty year period ending at the time of this study (1992-2012), reveals that only 38% of UML's collection was unused. Even with more of UML's book collection being used, a decrease in the use of print books is evident.

At UML, the number of print FTU titles has been decreasing in recent years. In 2010, a total of 42,296 print books at UML were used. Of those books, 46% (19,526) had been used before while 54% (22,770) were used for the first time. Use includes both internal use and circulations. Over the past three years, the number of FTU books has decreased steadily from 22,770 in 2010 to 9,273 in 2012. UML's patron-driven program for print books is included in this figure but only accounts for 1-2% of FTU books. With FTU books nearing the libraries' ordering capacity of around 8,000 firm orders annually, exploring the potential fill rate for a large-scale PDA program could provide valuable information.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

Changes in the marketplace and the long-term availability of books have set the stage for the success now seen by many patron-driven programs. The idea of using online booksellers such as Amazon to extend the library's budget and fill patron requests is not a new idea. The earliest studies explored success in finding out-of-print titles (Black 1998; Bickers 2002; Holzenberg 2001; Tafuri 2003). Levine-Clark (2004) studied the availability and pricing of high-demand

in-print titles concluding that “there are significant numbers of used and discounted new in-print books available through Abebooks, Amazon, and Alibris, many of them in large quantities and at heavy discounts from list price” (296). Holley and Ankem (2005) at Wayne State University concluded with the following important implications “(1) the distinction between in-print and out-of-print in regards to availability has disappeared; (2) materials in the out-of-print market are often less expensive than when published; (3) retrospective buying projects are feasible; and (4) for monographs, purchases may be a reasonable substitute for interlibrary loan” (118).

Literature related to patron-driven acquisitions (PDA), also known as demand-driven acquisitions (DDA), books on demand, and patron-initiated purchasing (PIP), is prevalent. Libraries facing shrinking budgets, space shortages and use-based assessment measures view the practicality of patron-driven programs with favor. Early literature demonstrated the benefits to the collection especially in filling interdisciplinary needs (Anderson et al. 2002; Anderson et al. 2010). Esposito et al. (2012), in talking about patron-driven acquisitions, stated that it “has now moved from the experimental stage into a more central part of the practices of many libraries” (58). While patron-driven programs have typically been successful and acceptance has grown among librarians, the unanticipated needs of future researchers and the availability of those materials remain a concern for many librarians in considering a significant shift from “just in case” collection building to PDA.

Much of the PDA literature focuses on criteria, use and appropriateness to the collection. From library to library the criteria and processes vary to meet the needs of the institution. Walters (2012) provides an overview of criteria used by thirteen PDA programs at various institutions. Many of these institutions exclude popular books, high-cost items, conference proceedings, theses/dissertations, and they apply limits based on publication date. Continued use of the

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materials purchased by such PDA programs has also been demonstrated (Perdue and Van Fleet 1999; Price and McDonald 2009). Nixon et al. (2010), authors who were early adopters of the print PDA model, attribute increased success to “the rise of the online booksellers, when library staff could quickly and easily check price and in-stock status with suppliers committed to rapid fulfillment” (120). They also summarized the results of many PDA studies stating that “most people reviewing the literature will be convinced that the patron-driven acquisitions model has proved itself on a number of levels, including cost-effective collection development; user satisfaction; high subsequent circulation; and flexibility in meeting local constraints for price, content, and processing” (121). Notably, there is still serious concern about the needs of future researchers (Walters 2012; Levine-Clark et al. 2009).

Historically, libraries have acquired books to meet both the current and future needs of researchers. During the 1800s and 1900s, libraries operated in a world where books generally had to be purchased not long after publication. Academic and small presses in particular were known for printing short runs. With the development and success of online booksellers, it has become much easier to purchase books, even out-of-print books, when needed. Studies on book availability in the marketplace have primarily focused on scarce or recent titles. No comprehensive studies examining the availability of FTUs from a broad circulating collection with an extensive range of publication dates exist. With growing support for patron-driven purchasing and lingering concerns regarding the needs of future researchers being met, a study reviewing the purchasability of FTU titles, which demonstrates actual user need, might provide interesting information and help settle the question of availability.

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UML's first PDA program was established in 2009 to purchase electronic or print books requested through interlibrary loan (ILL PDA). The purpose of the program was to use ILL requests to further supplement the collection with needed and used titles. The program originally followed in the footsteps of other libraries such as Purdue University Libraries using their tested guidelines. One of the criteria, for example, limited acquisitions to books published within the past five years (Anderson et al. 2002). In assessing the UML program after the first year (Herrera and Greenwood 2011), it was clear that using the publication date as a limiting criterion was problematic and unnecessary. Many ILL requests had inaccurate or blank dates and older titles were as easily obtainable and just as necessary as more recent titles. Based on analysis, UML removed the publication date as a limiting criterion.

In general, users have appreciated the benefits of purchasing requested items rather than simply borrowing the item. Benefits include extended loan periods with renewals and the option to purchase e-books when available. Proving the Kent study (Kent 1979) truism that past use is the best predictor of future use, UML sees higher use of the patron-driven acquired titles, including titles published more than five years ago.

## METHOD

Using UML's Millennium ILS, an item-based list of 2012 FTU monographic books was generated and imported into Microsoft Excel. Use includes both circulation and internal use dating back to the ILS implementation in 1994. Personal copy reserve materials (items not owned by the library), interlibrary loans, patron-driven purchases and government documents locations were excluded from the study as were non-circulating locations such as Special Collections. Added copies of the same monograph were also removed yielding a unique title-based list. Using these criteria, there

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were 8,020 FTU titles in 2012.

The Getting It System Toolkit's (GIST) Gift & Deselection Manager developed by State University of New York College at Geneseo is a standalone open source program used for evaluating gifts and weeding (<http://www.gistlibrary.org/gdm/>). GIST uses application programming interfaces (APIs) to return information from a variety of sources such as OCLC, Amazon, Better World Books, Google Books and HathiTrust. GIST was used to analyze FTU books by batch searching purchase information along with the free access options for public domain materials in HathiTrust and Google Books. E-book options were not comprehensively explored with the exception of freely available title results returned by the GIST tool.

Levine-Clark (2004) noted in his study that Amazon had the largest number of titles available. On average, UML purchases about 78% of patron-driven titles from Amazon making the GIST tool effective for batch searching purchase information for thousands of titles. GIST's batch search can be based on OCLC number or ISBN; UML used OCLC numbers as the primary method of batch searching, and ISBNs were used as a secondary look-up.

Any titles that did not automatically show a purchase price via Amazon or Better World Books were briefly searched for purchase availability from other sources such as AbeBooks. Since searching occurred at a later time than use of the title, the study does not reflect availability at the actual time of need. Instead all titles were searched shortly after the 2012 calendar year ended. GIST and manual searching results were merged with UML's unique title-based list. To further analyze the titles by broad discipline, UML's call number to discipline mapping table was employed.

## FINDINGS

Of the 8,020 unique titles used for the first time in 2012, 76% (6,130 titles) were available for



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purchase (see Table 1). Out of the 6,130 titles available for purchase, 3% (165 titles) were both available for purchase and freely available online. Currently, UML will purchase print copies of electronically-available books based on user preference making the purchasability of print alternatives worth noting. Three percent of the total unique titles (208 titles) were not available for purchase but freely available online through HathiTrust or Google Books. Twenty-one percent (1,682 unique titles) were not available either freely or for purchase.

[INSERT Table 1. *Availability of First-Time Use Titles*]

### *FTU Title Publication Date Analysis*

Regarding publication date the majority (5,127 or 64%) of titles were published from 1990 forward (see Figure 1). Three titles had no publication date and publications in the 2010s were excluded from the line graph since that decade was incomplete. In the 1900s and 1910s, fewer than 100 titles per decade were used. Each decade after 1900 trends upward; like most libraries, the majority of FTU titles are from more recent years. In fact, more than half of the titles (4,172 or 52%) had a publication date of 2000 or later. Therefore, analysis by publication date yields a long tail with older materials not being used as much as newer materials, but still being used nonetheless.

[INSERT FIGURE 1. *First-Time Use Title Availability by Publication Decade*]

Examining FTU availability by decade (see Table 2) reveals the prevalence of freely-available titles for the earlier decades alongside the ever-increasing purchasability of titles

published after 1969. In the 1910s, more titles were freely available (31) than were available for purchase (24). The trend continues in the 1900s (1900-1909) with 27 titles freely available and only 16 available for purchase. Prior to 1900, 68 titles were freely available and only 37 were available for purchase. With books published prior to the 1920s now in the public domain, the trend of these older publications being freely available stands to reason.

From the 1920s through the 1960s, the number of titles that could not be purchased were greater than the number that could be purchased. The decades where more titles were unavailable for purchase (1920s – 1960s), closely mirror changes in copyright law making it especially noteworthy. At the time of this study, copyrighted works before 1923 were in the public domain (Library of Congress 1999). Copyright for titles published after this date covered twenty-eight years from the point of registration; one renewal added an additional twenty-eight years (Leaffer 2009). Determining copyright from 1923-1977 requires manual investigation and is latent with a certain amount of risk. Beginning in the 1970s, more FTU titles were available for purchase than were not, marking a notable turning point in purchasability. Overall, 76% (6,130) FTU titles were available for purchase. With so many titles available for purchase, why limit PDA programs by publication date?

[INSERT Table 2. *First-Time Use Title Availability by Publication Date*]

### *Disciplinary Analysis & Comparison to Print Book Collection*

Analyzing the FTU titles by broad discipline as depicted in Figure 2 illustrates the majority of FTU titles were in the humanities, and for each discipline the majority of titles were available for purchase. It may be helpful to consider these results within the broader context of the entire print

book collection.

[INSERT Figure 2. *FTU Title Availability by Discipline*]

For UML's entire print book collection, humanities titles make up 46% (see Table 3); 41% of unused titles were from the humanities, making it the largest pool of unused titles in addition to being the largest disciplinary collection of books. With more titles in this collection and more unused books in this collection, it is not surprising that most FTUs were humanities titles. Social science titles constitute 38% of the print book collection; 35% of unused titles are from this group making it the second largest pool of unused titles. Correspondingly, these titles also rank second with FTUs at 31%. STEM titles represent the smallest collection for all measures. Interestingly, the percentages are relatively similar across the board by discipline with only slight variation whether considering the entire collection, unused titles or 2012 FTUs. In comparing the social science and STEM collections with FTUs, the slightly lower FTU percentages may point toward Subject Librarian investments in and user adoption of e-books. Both disciplines participate widely in PDA e-book programs with only minor participation from humanities areas which remain primarily vested in print.

[INSERT Table 3. *Disciplinary Analysis of FTU Titles Compared with Entire Print Book Collection*]

### *Resource Sharing Availability*

As members of the Association of Southeastern Research Libraries (ASERL), UML

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participates in a resource sharing agreement that facilitates the lending of materials to member libraries. Within that group, another arrangement funds a fast delivery service. UML's purchasing philosophy for patron-driven requests is to purchase the item if it is available (and meets the criteria) with borrowing as a second alternative. The titles that were not immediately available for purchase were examined for interlibrary loan availability within our ASERL consortia. Of the 1,682 titles, 94%, or 1,581 titles, were available from a partner library. Among the ASERL members with a fast delivery service, 89%, or 1,494 titles, could be obtained quickly with an average four day turnaround.

Out of the entire set of 2012 FTUs, only 101 titles or 1% could not be purchased, obtained freely, or borrowed from an ASERL partner library. Out of the 101 titles, many of them were a part of a gift collection such as the American Institute of Public Accountants Collection, the Chun-Jo Liu Chinese Collection, and the Kenneth S. Goldstein Folklore Collection. Of these 101 titles, almost all of them were published by small or foreign presses and 26 were foreign language materials. The specialized foreign language gifts such as the books supporting the University's Chinese Language Flagship Program were difficult to compare due to foreign language cataloging standards. Even so, 88 of the remaining 101 titles were held by other libraries outside of ASERL making it likely that they would be accessible to researchers via ILL. This then leaves only thirteen unobtainable titles. Many of the remaining unobtainable FTU titles were pamphlets or catalogs that were included in these unique gift collections. They may not have been considered for cataloging at other institutions and probably would not have been added to the library's circulating collection had they not been a part of a large and notable gift collection. This very low margin of unavailability for such highly-specialized materials is acceptable considering UML's local benchmark for collection success.

## OWNERSHIP COST COMPARISON

For the titles where UML has historical pricing, a comparison between the historical cost of ownership and patron-driven purchasing were made. For many years, ILS order records had to be recycled which limited the ability to comprehensively compare costs prior to 2002. For the 3,497 titles that had current pricing and historical pricing, a cost comparison yielded interesting results. It would have cost the library an estimated \$165,414 to have purchased these books at the point of need in 2012. Price caps typical of PDA programs were not applied. Historical pricing of the purchased titles as recorded in the ILS totaled \$162,044. This figure does not include any adjustments for inflation. Shelf years were calculated for each item using the invoice date and totaled a cumulative 12,824 shelf years. Courant and Neilsen (2010) list the annual average cost of shelving a book in hybrid open stacks at \$1.53 (96). The number of shelf years at \$1.53 per year results in an additional \$19,621. For titles owned, this raises the historical cost of ownership of FTU titles in 2012 to \$181,655. These figures do not take into consideration the costs of unused books, a focus of many other studies at institutions like the University of Pittsburgh and Cornell University (Kent 1979; Cornell University Library 2010). From a pragmatic point of view, patron-driven purchasing proves more cost-effective.

## DISCUSSION

The findings of this study have a number of implications related to collection management. While the Kent study noted that older, unused materials are increasingly unlikely to circulate; this study found that 3,845 titles published prior to 2000 were used for the first time in 2012. It is evident that some users are reading older literature and that libraries can provide access for their users by

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purchasing them or directing them toward freely available titles. For libraries with a PDA publication date restriction of five to ten years, these older titles would not have been considered for purchase. And yet using the FTU titles in this study with publication dates prior to 2000, 58% (2,223) were available for purchase. For UML then, it is important that the library not impose purchase limits based on publication date if a large-scale PDA program is implemented.

It is worth noting that given UML's current ILL PDA criteria, 147 of the FTU titles would have been routed to ILL borrowing given the price cap of \$200. The price cap has not been reviewed since 2010. Increasing the price cap to \$300 would route notably fewer (51) titles. In considering a shift to a larger-scale PDA program, UML would need to adjust the price cap.

A relatively small percentage of titles (5%) were freely available from HathiTrust or Google Books. During this time period, HathiTrust public domain materials were available to users via the libraries' discovery service. It is possible then that some users have used freely-available e-books rather than using the print copies held by the library. Unfortunately, there were not any methods in place during this time to help determine use. It is also worth noting that more titles may have been freely available elsewhere.

The humanities collection is the most used disciplinary book collection. In 2012, 68% of the titles (4,329 titles) borrowed through ILL were for humanities researchers. This leads to the conclusion that humanities researchers have the greatest book needs and would likely benefit most from expanding the PDA program. In analyzing the ILL PDA requests filled by UML, the majority of titles acquired annually have consistently come from humanities researchers since the project began in 2009. Additionally, humanities titles had the highest fill rate in this study, making an excellent case for expanding the program.

## CONCLUSION

Many libraries have begun a shift from “just in case” collection building to patron-driven purchasing. For some, this shift was precipitated by budgetary constraints while for other libraries the goal was simply to meet immediate user needs. PDA programs range from print to electronic formats. For libraries considering or employing a print PDA program at any scale, the findings of this study should be reassuring since the vast majority of print books needed by UML users were available for purchase. This study indicated that 76% of FTU titles were available for purchase with another 3% freely available via HathiTrust or Google Books. If UML had relied entirely on purchasing books at the point of need, it would have successfully provided access to more than 75% of the materials needed. Therefore, UML’s local benchmark for success of 75% was met. Additionally, publication date criteria should be carefully considered since many older titles are available on-demand.

The future of book availability is promising. Levine-Clark (2010) notes, in his discussion of academic publishers and the transition to e-books, “books will no longer go out of print; libraries will be able to purchase e-books at the point of need instead of at the time of publication” (201). YBP currently estimates for 2014 that 46% of print books have an equivalent e-book within eight weeks of publication (Bailey 2014); by contrast, in 2010, only 20% of books had an e-book equivalent (Levine-Clark 2010, 203). In four years, the number of e-book equivalents has doubled. With this shift in publishing and an increase in user adoption of e-books, the success rate of on-demand purchasing will increase over time. As the results of this study indicate, older materials, although used much less, are still used. Technological advancements and new print-on-demand services may also help with availability as well as turnaround time for those preferring print.

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