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David A. Swords (Ed.)

PATRON-DRIVEN ACQUISITIONS

HISTORY AND BEST PRACTICES

CURRENT TOPICS IN LIBRARY
AND INFORMATION PRACTICE

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Patron-driven acquisition (PDA) is changing the way academic libraries and some school libraries think about collecting monographs. A phenomenon of ebooks, PDA enables libraries to give access to far more books than budgets allow them to buy and to spend money only on those that their patrons use. The twelve chapters that comprise this volume present a thorough look at the promise of PDA, its history, its implications for libraries and publishers, and at the best ways to deploy it. The authors all have thought deeply about PDA philosophically and many as practitioners. Today, PDA has been practiced long enough and on a large enough scale that it can confidently be adopted by libraries around the world as a means of becoming both better resources and of spending their money more wisely. This book should be useful to anyone with responsibility for collecting monographs and to publishers who serve academic markets.



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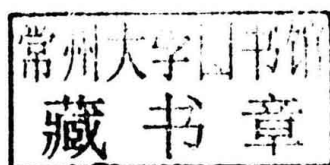
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History and Best Practices

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Acknowledgments

Above all, I thank the authors of the chapters that comprise this volume. Each one of them has a profoundly busy professional life, yet they somehow found time to write these chapters. And in my opinion, none of them did perfunctory work; they all have given us clear, original, informed thinking on the subject of PDA. It is also important to say that the appearance of their names in this volume does not mean they share my opinions or one another's opinions about PDA. One of the strengths of this book is that it gives the reader many windows into the developing world of PDA. Also I thank Mike Shatzkin for his generous willingness to talk about PDA, a subject with which he had no experience and lots of wisdom. Finally, thank you Alice Keller, editorial director of the Walter de Gruyter series in which this volume appears. She took the idea to her executives and persuaded them that the time had come for a book on PDA. She has been patient, wise, funny, and always a good friend.

Editor's Note

Patron-driven acquisitions or acquisition (PDA), demand-driven acquisitions, patron-selection programs, user-driven collection, research-driven acquisition model, patron-initiated purchase, and their derivatives are synonyms in this book. Some authors prefer one term or the other and for defensible reasons. At this time, PDA seems likely to prevail in library parlance. It would not be my choice, given that “personal digital assistant” and “public display of affection” spoke for the letters quite awhile back.* And we cannot be sure that it will prevail. While the marketplace of ideas makes up its mind, for purposes of this book, whichever variation or variations an author has chosen stands.

* A young friend told me recently that he has been “banned from the Denver Zoo for too much PDA.” To squelch any rumors, the friend who said this was not Michael Levine-Clark.

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Introduction

David Swords

Ebook Library

From the ancient library at Alexandria until the 1990s, libraries had been above all warehouses for books. They were orderly warehouses, but to be sure, they were warehouses. Perhaps it was the abrupt shift in journals from paper to electronic that began remaking libraries, but other important forces have been at work as well. One not to be overlooked was the transformation of bookshops, in the United States led mostly by Barnes & Noble, into spaces that looked like libraries, that had their *gravitas*, their dark wood, but that were deliberately commodious, that included coffee shops and comfortable chairs, that invited not just standing and browsing among the shelves but comfortable reading for hours. I remember being in Greenville, South Carolina, in the mid '90s where on any Saturday Barnes & Noble was the most popular nightspot in town, choked with people sprawled everywhere, drinking coffee, talking seriously, and reading. The Eighteenth-Century English coffee shop had come to the Twentieth-Century American bookstore.

Not long after, academic libraries began to follow the lead of their retail cousins. Where formidable librarians had forbidden food and especially drink, they included coffee shops of their own. Where they had been quiet as the cloistered monasteries of the Middle Ages, they became gathering places for students who used the library to meet and talk through, or even act out, assignments.

The evolution continues today as libraries wrestle, for example, less with the issue of which books to buy than with the more pressing issues of which books and how many to weed, so that they can open space formerly devoted unquestioningly to shelves, to other practices. Cushing Academy in Ashburnham, Massachusetts, whose Library Director Tom Corbett describes their evolution in Chapter 6 of this volume, scandalized Boston in fall 2009 when the school announced its intention to do away with its print collection. But far from the philistine practice for which Cushing was pilloried in the *Boston Globe*, the school had taken a bold step in recognizing that its library could serve the Cushing

community far better by becoming something more like a media center, a gathering place where people can talk, can study television or radio as well as books and journals, can get to assignments online and on Blackboard, and can bring the outside world to them and go out to the world from the space the library has become. People have said to me down the years that students no longer go to their campus libraries, have no need to go to them when Google is everywhere, and especially in every Starbucks. But those people have not visited the libraries where I go, such as the Scott Library at York University in Toronto, where students and their ubiquitous backpacks sprawl through every inch of the new information commons. They have not seen the beautifully functional library at the American University of Sharjah in the United Arab Emirates, where students occupy media rooms on some floors and on others, spaces where cell phones are allowed or spaces where they are forbidden. They have not visited the renewed library at Ohio State University, which houses only a percentage of its old book collection in favor of spaces that invite learning in all its forms.

As we begin to examine the thinking of many of our best minds on what is being called patron-driven acquisitions (PDA), it is useful to understand the environment into which this practice comes. In some ways PDA is the child of research that shows library selectors, dedicated to building timeless and timely collections as they are, cannot predict which books people will use and which will languish unused on shelves for decades. PDA is equally a response to recession and diminished budgets, which have led both to the need to buy fewer books and to the need to repurpose staff to public service as positions are discontinued, even as the library becomes busier. And PDA is the child of academic administrators who have instinctively questioned the need for the immense, never-ending blackhole of materials budgets in the face of the need to terminate staff and to apply money to rebuilding and building essential infrastructure. PDA is the result of all of these forces.

But more than these PDA is the product of technology and very specifically of the coming of age of ebooks. Publishers, who have been the objects of ire for their adherence to old ways in the face of new technology, deserve credit for their willingness to go along with PDA as a method for libraries to acquire books. As Chapter 7 discusses, they have been and are wary of PDA, but enough have swallowed their fears and forged ahead that the practice can now be a main method of acquisition even in the largest ARLs (see Dennis Dillon's Chapter 10 on PDA at the University of Texas, Austin). What publishers have specifically

allowed is libraries to put bibliographic records into their catalogues for books, and especially for ebooks, that they do not own. When searches discover these records, a url links patrons out to the books themselves, where the entire work can be browsed. Under some systems the browse period allows all patrons a window in which they can decide whether a book suits their needs before a transaction that costs the library money occurs. In the most economical approach to PDA, whose value Doug Way and Julie Garrison quantify in Chapter 9, when patrons need a book the library pays for a short-term loan, usually 5 percent to 15 percent of the list price, rather than paying full price for a volume that far too often under traditional acquisition methods, might never be used again. In short, PDA establishes a specific measured connection between the cost of material and its usefulness to the community of library patrons. Libraries pay full price for books that are used extensively, pay by the use for books that are used lightly, and pay nothing for books that simply dwell in their catalogues as unwatched bibliographic records.

Why are ebooks critical to this practice? First, they can be delivered instantly. Even if printed in the library through a print-on-demand machine, but more typically delivered from a warehouse hundreds of miles away, print cannot easily satisfy the spreading human demand for instantaneity. Second, ebooks take up no space. When Cushing Academy pitched its collection of some 25,000 books, it opened the library for uses besides warehousing. But it also replaced the print with an ebook collection of some 160,000 titles, which it obviously could never have physically housed. Third, space has specific costs. Rick Lugg (Chapter 1) estimates that on average libraries spend \$4.26 per year keeping each book available on a shelf. With ebooks, all of that money can go to other purposes, including to making available to patrons a larger slice of the canon of books. Which leads, fourth, to what I believe to be the most important contribution of PDA to our research libraries. In Chapter 5, Rex Steiner describes how he has been able to use PDA to create a nearly instant collection with almost no money in his library in Azerbaijan, a task that for he and his co-author Ron Berry in the past has taken years and hundreds of thousands, even millions, of dollars. As I write this introduction, the Azerbaijan Diplomatic Academy has “turned on” an ebook collection of 170,000 volumes for its students and faculty, with more titles added each month. If those books had to be purchased before they could be used, if they had to be shipped to the city of Baku on the Caspian Sea in the Caucasus, if they had to be

processed and shelved, the library could afford only a tiny fraction of them. Instead, as libraries in developed and undeveloped countries are finding, PDA has an exponential democratizing effect. Academies can afford to allow access to what they could never afford to buy. The libraries become much better resources, and if they wish can radically rethink their role and their identity. Most important, because the people who use them have more of the best that has been and is being thought and said at their command, those people can become better citizens of the world.

In conclusion, I should say that if this introduction has been mostly philosophical, it belies the purpose of this book, which is, in fact, mostly practical. As Kari Paulson points out in Chapter 4, PDA as we see it today had its origins in Australia among Australian librarians not long after the turn of the Century, and in that country is now an established acquisitions practice, not an experiment. While a relatively few libraries have full-blown programs elsewhere, the collective experience represented by authors of chapters in this book demonstrates that PDA can be predictably implemented and managed in libraries that serve large and small communities. Sue Polanka and Emilie Deliquié offer an assessment of the different approaches ebook aggregators take to PDA (Chapter 8), and Michael Levine-Clark describes how he has managed the issues that bringing up a PDA program in his library has required (Chapter 3). All of us who have worked on this book believe that PDA has valuable widespread application for secondary-school, college, and research libraries worldwide. That said, Bob Nardini sounds a cautious note in Chapter 2 that deserves to be heard.

My fellow authors would say that if called upon they will thoughtfully offer to any of you who take up this volume the benefit of their experience with PDA.

David Swords, Warner, New Hampshire, 1 July 2011