

Debbi Dinkins

# Individual title requests in PDA collections

## A small university library's experience

**P**atron driven acquisition (PDA) is nothing new to academic libraries, especially for the print format. Libraries have been using patron requests to help drive collection building for years, through interlibrary loan (ILL) suggestions and requests for acquisition. More formalized PDA programs, such as that at the Purdue University library, fill ILL requests with purchased books. Librarians concluded that they could buy books for about the same cost as obtaining them through ILL and the books tended to circulate more than regularly acquired books.<sup>1</sup>

In recent years, librarians have wrestled with e-book PDA programs. It seems as if most academic libraries have either tried PDA or are considering it. At Stetson University, a small university in central Florida, we jumped on the PDA bandwagon through the vendor, ebrary, in October 2010, and we have been pleased with the results.

We already subscribed to ebrary's Academic collection, an e-book collection of around 55,000 e-books in 2010. Our faculty and students were receptive to using e-books and usage was impressive. When ebrary offered a PDA program, we decided to give the program a try with a small initial deposit. Our assumption was that PDA could save us money by purchasing only those books used beyond the trigger point. However, the true saving power of PDA was illustrated by adding individual titles to the PDA collection.

### Setting up PDA subject collections

The Stetson library decided to try ebrary's

PDA program in Fall 2010. We first loaded a small number of e-books from subject areas in support of Stetson's most popular majors: psychology, business, and language and literature. Also, the language and literature subject area was chosen because many of our English faculty were avid ebrary users. At the beginning, our PDA collection contained about 3,300 titles.

To establish the PDA collection, we agreed to deposit a small amount (\$1,500) in a deposit account with ebrary. As titles were purchased, the payment would be taken from the deposit account. We preferred a small deposit amount because we had no idea how fast it would be used. This was truly a pilot project to test the PDA e-book concept at Stetson.

One of the reasons we chose ebrary's PDA program was because we liked the threshold they set for triggering a buy within the program. With ebrary, an e-book is purchased from your PDA collection if one of the following circumstances is met: 1) a user spends ten minutes within a book; 2) a user looks at ten pages of a book; 3) a user prints one page from the book, excluding front and end materials, like title page or index.

The first deposit of \$1,500 was consumed in two months (October 18, 2010 to December 2, 2010) and we purchased 23 e-books. We then deposited an additional \$2,000 and

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it took three months (December 2, 2010 to March 30, 2011) to purchase 28 books with the \$2,000. Obviously, the PDA program was working and was affordable. Between October 2010 and March 2011, 107 e-books were viewed but not purchased.

After the second deposit was depleted, ebrary agreed to let us “pay as you go” for triggered e-books in our PDA collection. We were sent invoices as e-books were triggered for purchase. At this point, ebrary asked us to set a limit on total purchase from March 2011 forward. We set a limit of \$2,000, with the understanding that ebrary would notify

able to reactivate with a new spending limit set. For the time period between March 30, 2011, and October 21, 2011, we purchased 34 books with \$2,000 (see Table 1).

As of October 2011, we had one year’s worth of data on our PDA collection. Price per title bought averaged to \$66.16 per title. This was a reasonable price, considering very few e-books are offered at discount. Many titles bought were published by university presses, which typically are more expensive than trade or popular publications. The potential savings for those titles accessed but not triggered for purchase was considerable at \$12,741.56. This

	<b>October 2010 – December 2010</b>	<b>January 2010 – March 2011</b>	<b>April 2011 – October 2011</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b># e-books bought</b>	23	28	34	85
<b>Amount spent</b>	\$1,534.44	\$2,136.74	\$1,952.82	\$5,624.00
<b># bought e- books used more than once</b>	12	16	22	50
<b># e-books ac- cessed but not bought</b>	53	54	71	178
<b>P o t e n t i a l amount saved</b>	\$3,910.74	\$3,616.20	\$5,214.62	\$12,741.56
<b># books accessed more than once but not bought</b>	12	10	10	32

Table 1. Total PDA collection at a glance: October 2010 to October 2011

us when we approached that spending limit. We would then set a future limit on spending from that point. In theory, this approach makes sense as libraries try to stay within an annual budget. In practice, the system did not work as well as we hoped. When we reached our \$2,000 limit in October 2011, we were not notified, and the PDA collection was automatically shut down for our users. After many phone calls and e-mails, we were

potential cost was calculated by summing the list price for the titles accessed but not triggered for purchase. Granted, these potential savings may only be deferred savings since the e-books may be triggered for purchase as long as they remain in the PDA collection.

One thing to note from Table 1 is the number of titles bought through PDA that were used again. Of the 85 titles were purchased, 50 (59%) were used more than once, which

is a high rate of use for a library collection. A pilot project conducted by the University of Florida found that 78 percent of their purchased e-book titles were used again after their pilot ended. The librarians at the University of Florida judged the pilot to be a success and made PDA part of their e-book collection building process.<sup>2</sup>

The MARC records for the e-books in the PDA collection were downloaded into the library's Sirsi catalog. We distin-

guished the records from regular e-book records in two ways. Sirsi offers a flag for permanent additions to the catalog. We chose to unflag this. Sirsi also offers two statistical fields at the copy level of a bibliographic record. We chose to designate the PDA MARC records as temporary using one of the statistical fields. As titles were purchased, the e-book MARC record was fully cataloged and these two PDA indicators were changed (see Figure 1).

### Individual titles added to PDA collection

In October 2010, we decided to add individual titles to our PDA collection. Traditionally, collection development has been a collaborative process between library faculty and teaching faculty at Stetson. Faculty are sent reviews from *Choice* on a monthly basis. They are asked to read the reviews, on individual print cards, and send back those review cards in which they are interested for addition to the library's collections. Additionally, teaching faculty and librarians are encouraged to request titles they have encountered through other means, such as journal articles or publisher advertisements.

By adding individual faculty requests to the PDA collection, we speculated that we would save money on collections. Based on anecdotal evidence, we hypothesized that faculty members sometimes do not use the titles they request. To be able to provide many

requested titles using a "just in time" model with PDA was appealing to us and seemed to be a way to save money on faculty requests.

At this point, it is important to describe the process that

we use for ordering individual title requests. In 2009, the Stetson library chose to designate ebooks as the preferred format for collection building. This decision was made in response to the explosion of use of our subscription ebook collection from ebrary. Before we advertised the availability of the subscription collection, usage was considerable. Already, we had seen a preference for the ebook format in our Reference collection. It was clear from the ebook usage numbers that our students preferred the ebook format. Therefore, when requests for additions to the library's collections were made, librarians first tried to fill that request with an ebook rather than a print book. Only if the ebook was unavailable did we purchase print.

In October 2010, we added another step to this process. Was the title available to add to the PDA collection? If yes, then add it to PDA. If it was not available through PDA but only available through outright purchase, we purchased the e-book. Of course, there were exceptions to this rule, such as novels and popular biographies. However, most of the library's purchases were considered for e-book selection.

The screenshot shows a library cataloging interface with two main sections: 'Call number information' and 'Item information'.  
 In the 'Call number information' section:  
 - Call number: PS3515 .E37 Z574 2009 EB  
 - Class scheme: LC  
 - Call library: MAIN  
 - Shelving key: PS 003515 .E37 Z574 2009 EE  
 - There is a checkbox for 'Shadow call number' which is unchecked.  
 In the 'Item information' section:  
 - Item ID: 544333-1001  
 - Copy number: 1  
 - Type: E-BOOK  
 - Item library: MAIN  
 - Home location: ELECTRONIC  
 - Current location: ELECTRONIC  
 - Item cat1: (empty)  
 - Item cat2: ACQTEMP  
 - Media desk: (empty)  
 - Number of pieces: 1  
 - Total charges: 0  
 - Price: \$0.00  
 - There are two checkboxes: 'Permanent' (unchecked) and 'Circulate' (unchecked).  
 - Next to the 'Permanent' checkbox is the text 'Permanent Flag unchecked.'  
 - Next to the 'Circulate' checkbox is the text 'Item cat2 shows temporary record.'

Figure 1. Designation for ebrary PDA records.

As a subset of the total PDA collection, we tracked the number of individual requests added (Table 2 shows the data on this subset of 299 e-book titles).

Seventeen of the 299 individually requested titles were triggered for purchase during the 13-month time period. The potential savings for this subset of titles is staggering at \$20,601.03. Potential savings were calculated by summing the list price of all titles in the subset of individually requested titles that were not triggered for purchase. When compared to spending more than \$20,000 on print titles that consume valuable shelf space and are not being used, the savings are impressive.

When presenting these findings informally at an annual meeting of the Independent Colleges and Universities of Florida Libraries Group in 2011, I was asked if the Stetson library notified faculty about availability of their library requests. Faculty are not notified when

their requests are available for use, whether they be bought in electronic or print format. The library notifies only if expressly

asked to do so by the faculty member. The vast majority of purchases are simply purchased and cataloged without faculty notification. When adding e-books to that workflow, we maintained the same faculty notification policy with one exception. If a title is already part of the library's e-book collection at the time it is requested, a librarian notifies the faculty member and sends him or her a link to the title. Granted, purchases of e-books in the individually requested subset of our PDA collection probably would have increased if we notified faculty routinely of availability.

### Challenges of the PDA Study

One challenge encountered during our PDA study concerned the loss of publisher rights.

Occasionally, ebrary lost the right granted by the publisher to include a title in their PDA offerings. When notified by ebrary that a title was no longer PDA-eligible, we then had to consider buying the e-book outright (if available), buying the print, or not buying the title in either format. Typically, if the title was requested by a teaching faculty member, it was purchased either in electronic or print format.

Another challenge in managing the PDA collection was downloading the vendor-supplied MARC records. Since we also subscribe to ebrary's Academic Collection, which is updated throughout the year, it was a challenge to control which titles were downloaded. Because we tried to distinguish the PDA MARC records from the MARC records for the subscribed e-book collection, special care was taken when downloading records from the ebrary site. Often, we thought we were downloading only PDA titles, but we were also download-

ing subscribed titles because of the designations on ebrary's download site. Even if the PDA collection was the only collection highlighted for download, all MARC records eligible for download were loaded. Keeping accurate

count of the PDA-designated MARC records with this download flaw has been difficult.

### Further study

As of April 2012, Stetson's PDA collection has grown to 4,094 titles. In the spring of 2012, we plan to survey teaching faculty in order to gather data about their ebook usage. Is it true that they are not interested in the titles they suggest for purchase, or do they dislike the ebook format? Now that ebrary offers downloads to mobile devices, such as the iPad or cell phone, will the number of PDA purchases increase? Anecdotal evidence since mobile downloads became active with ebrary suggests an increase in purchasing from the PDA collection.

*(continues on page 255)*

Number of Requested Titles Added	299
Number of Requested Titles Bought	Librarian Requested—6 Faculty Requested—11
Potential Savings	\$20,601.03

Table 2. Individual requests added to collection: October 2010 to October 2011

## ACRL President's Program/Preconferences

**ACRL Presidents' Program, Monday, June 25, 2012, 10:30 a.m.—12:00 p.m.**

*Future of the Book: Innovation in Traditional Industries.* ACRL/ALCTS Joint Program. Duane Bray, partner at IDEO, a global innovation and design consulting firm, will discuss the challenges traditional industries often face when experiencing disruptive change. He will share concrete techniques for recognizing and harnessing opportunities for innovation.

### Preconferences

*Note:* Pre-registration is required for all preconferences. Visit [www.acrl.org](http://www.acrl.org) (click on "Conferences & Continuing Education" for details).

**Friday, June 22, 2012, 9:00 a.m.—4:00 p.m.**

*Digital Humanities in Theory and Practice: Tools and Methods for Librarians.* This preconference will position humanities librarians to participate in, create, and lead digital humanities initiatives. In addition to introducing theories and practices that characterize the digital humanities, explore several examples of how librarians currently lead library digitization initiatives, collaborate on faculty projects, and participate in national grant-funded efforts.



Duane Bray

Investigate project management complexities, digital humanities' impact on research collections, humanities librarians' work with faculty to manage their digital humanities research, and digital humanities' role in scholarly communication. Registration materials and additional program details can be found at [www.ala.org/acrl/digitalhumanities](http://www.ala.org/acrl/digitalhumanities).

**Friday, June 22, 2012, 8:30 a.m.—4:00 p.m.**

*Planning, Assessing, and Communicating Library Impact: Putting the Standards for Libraries in Higher Education into Action.* Libraries in higher education are increasingly required to demonstrate their value and document their contributions to overall institutional effectiveness. The

Standards for Libraries in Higher Education is a framework for library planning and assessment that can be used for a variety of circumstances, including annual planning, program review, and accreditation self-study. Through presentation, discussion, and group activities, learn how to use the standards to communicate your library's impact. Registration materials and additional program details can be found at [www.ala.org/acrl/standardspreconference](http://www.ala.org/acrl/standardspreconference).

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(*Individual title . . .* cont. from page 252)

Furthermore, we would like to explore the short-term loan option for our PDA collection. California State University-Fullerton recently published the results of a study of their PDA collection, which featured three short-term loans before triggering a buy. They found that their average cost for providing access to content of a title was \$10.78, considerably less than purchasing the e-book.<sup>3</sup>

PDA e-book collections are already changing the way acquisitions librarians provide resources. As we collect more data on the use of our PDA collection, we will be better able

to tailor our collection to our users' needs, all while our users help determine the content.

### Notes

1. Jennifer Howard, "Reader Choice, Not Vendor Influence, Reshapes Library Collections," *Chronicle of Higher Education* 57 no. 12 (2010): A11–A12.
2. Steven Carrico and Michelle Leonard, "Patron-Driven Acquisitions and Collection Building Initiatives at UF," *Florida Libraries* 54 no. 1 (2011): 14–17.
3. William Breitbach and Joy E. Lambert, "Patron-Driven Ebook Acquisition," *Computers in Libraries* 31 no. 6 (2011): 17–20. ♪