Changing Patterns in Monograph Selection and Acquisition at Medium and Large University Libraries

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The survey

- Hypothesis: how libraries are selecting and acquiring books for their general collection is changing rapidly
- How to explore this? A survey!
- Topics: current use of book vendors, ebook packages, DDA, EBA, OA; staffing, preferred formats, assessment, etc. - and predictions for future trends
- 44 medium and large Canadian academic libraries collecting primarily in English invited to respond; 32 valid responses

Survey question structure

For each acquisition method …

- Does your library currently use this method?
- Probing questions about that acq method: staffing, assessment, etc.
- Prediction: in the next 5-10 years, do you anticipate your library's use of *[method]* will increase / stay the same / decrease?

Use of *[method]* in 5-10 years:

↑ **x%**

→ **y%**

↓ **z%**

Library use of book vendors

84% receive slips/forms

53% receive approvals/auto-ship

85% selection done by subject librarians

Sample quote: "Until two years ago all of our [vendor] approval plans were operational with the e-preferred format. Since then, they are all set to virtual: i.e. slips are sent instead of books."

Use of book vendors in 5-10 years:

↑ **7%**

→ **33%**

↓ **60%**

Book format preference

65% e-preferred

6% "e-encouraged"

29% no policy

Format selection factors:

- Cost (11)
- License model, DRM (8)
- User request (8)
- Discipline (6)
- Nature of content (3)
- Intended uses (3)

Library use of ebook frontlist packages

84% order ebook packages

"Every 3-4 years, ebook packages receive a full review to consider COUNTER usage of the package. Librarians measure 1) Percentage of materials in the package that have never been used, 3 and 4 years post acquisition; 2) Cost per title in the package compared with individual title acquisition"

Use of packages in 5-10 years:

↑ **59%**

→ **26%**

↓ **15%**

Library use of DDA and EBA

59% use DDA plan(s)

72% use EBA plan(s)

Use of DDA in 5-10 years:

↑ **32%**

→ **42%**

↓ **26%**

2 will start

Use of EBA in 5-10 years:

↑ **74%**

→ **9%**

↓ **17%**

2 will start

EBA title selection considerations

- Usage (20)
- Libn input (9)
- Cost threshold (8)
- Disciplinary diff (6)
- Faculty rec (4)
- Duplication (3)
- Local author, weeding opp, pub year …

"... download counts cannot be the only criteria considered. Depending on the subject coverage of the EBA, each relevant subject cluster … is generally allocated a % of the total purchase commitment amount for their selections."

Assessment

- Book vendors: mostly tweaking of approval profiles
- Ebook packages: "We purchase it and then we're done thinking about it."
- DDA: "We look at usage and then work with the subject librarians to refine the pool. We also remove old titles (older than 3 years) on a regular basis." *vs.* "No real assessment as we don't buy unless it's used."
- Hard to generalize, but: not much focus on assessment

Managing OA ebooks: complaints

- Which collection to activate: low qual, non-English titles, regional copyright
- Poor metadata, broken links, slow to update
- Double-dipping

- "Hathi Trust overwhelmed our own catalogue results and had to be turned off."
- Platform neutrality
- (local records) Too much work, link rot

"How will book selection and acquisition in academic libraries look different ten years from now?"

#1 Theme: more e, less print (20)

- But: concern for niches, ILL, guest users

#2 Theme: reduced collections role for subject librarians (12)

- "the role of the subject librarian in selecting material will be minimal, again focused more on unique/specialized materials"

Themes - part 2

#3 Theme: more DDA / EBA (10)

#4 Theme: more OA (10)

- "OA is a fad", "bit of a mess frankly"

#5 Theme: role of book vendors - split

- more direct purchasing from publishers (3)
- Less use of approval plans (2) vs. more (4) - "boosted by AI"

Themes - part 3

3-5 mentions

- OERs replace textbooks
- More frontlist packages
- Less book purchasing in general (budgets, OA)

2 mentions

- Collaborative / consortial purchasing
- More purchase-to-open
- Diversity problem: small pubs not available e
- Accessibility concerns

Provocative summary

- Role of book vendors ↓
- Packages ↑, DDA →, EBA ↑
- Assessment: we're not doing enough
- OA: desired but problematic

- Role of subject librarians ↓
- EBA title selection: a work in progress
- E-preferred ↑

Does this match your data and your instincts?