Who’s At the Wheel?

Expert Selection and Monograph Usage

ALCTS Publisher-Vendor-Library Relations IG
ALA Midwinter 2009

R2 Consulting LLC
Rick Lugg, Partner
R2’s Focus

- Library workflow analysis and redesign
- Organizational redesign
- Product analysis & development for the academic library market
- Accelerated Strategic Planning
- Sustainable Collection Development
Is the print collection this…?
Or this?
If the latter...

- Does it matter whether that storage and fulfillment is
  - In the library?
  - On Campus?
  - In the Vicinity?
  - At the vendor?
  - At the publisher?
EXPERT SELECTION: HOW WELL HAS IT WORKED?
The Kent Study

The Kent Study

• Hillman Library, University of Pittsburgh
• Chapter II: “Circulation and In-House Use of Books”: Stephen Bulick, William N. Sabor, and Roger Flynn
• Focused on the 36,892 monographs acquired in Calendar Year 1969
• Followed their circulation history through CY 1975 (6-year period)
Kent Study Findings

- 14,697 (39.8%) had never circulated during the first 6 years
- 22,1772 (60.2%) circulated 1 or more times
Kent Study Findings

• If a book did not circulate within the first 2 years of ownership, its chances of ever being borrowed were reduced to 1 in 4.

• If a book did not circulate within the first 6 years of ownership, its chances of ever being borrowed were reduced to 1 in 50.
Kent Study Findings

• If a minimum of 2 *uses* were established as a criterion for a cost-effective acquisitions program:

• 54.2% of the titles purchased in 1969 would not have been ordered.
Kent Study Findings

• If a minimum of 3 uses were established as a criterion for a cost-effective acquisitions program:

• 62.5% of the titles purchased in 1969 would not have been ordered.
1969-1975

- Print-based collections
- Approval plans and blanket orders largely undeveloped
- OCLC and union catalogs in their very early stages
- Growth in higher education funding
- Many new academic libraries built
1969-1975

- Common goal: increase collection size
  - ARL Rankings
  - Accreditation
- Materials budgets massively expanded
- Raw volume counts critical to prestige
- Collection Management emerges as specialty
- Emergence of vendors, approval plans, standing orders, blanket plans: Mass Gathering techniques
Kent Study: Comments

- In 1969, most selection was done title-by-title, by faculty or expert selectors.
- Electronic content barely existed
- Resource sharing was difficult and rare
- Study was criticized for not counting in-house use
- Still… a best-case scenario for expert selection
Expert Selection: 1975

- 37.5% effective if 3-use minimum
- 45.8% effective if 2-use minimum
 USERS AND COLLECTIONS CONTINUE TO CHANGE
ARL Volumes Held, 1969-2006
Collection Development is Changing

- Bibliographer model has nearly vanished
- Selection competes for priority with instruction, liaison work and other duties
- More selection time devoted to e-resources, media, and non-print source
- Space issues drive increases in collection analysis, de-selection
Users Are Changing

- NetGen Students
- Conditioned by: Amazon, Google, NetFlix
- Undergraduates: course-centered research
- Strong preference for electronic
- Strong preference for full-text, multimedia
- Interactivity, visual cues, tutorials
- Naiveté about resource quality
- 2% of library users begin search from library Web site
Studying Students
The Undergraduate Research Project at the University of Rochester

edited by
Nancy Fried Foster and Susan Gibbons
So...

• What do print book use and expert selection look like now?
R2’s Informal Circulation Survey

For circulating monographs in your collection with an imprint date of 2006 or earlier:

– what percentage has never circulated?
– what percentage has circulated once?
## Never Circulated

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<th>High</th>
<th>Low</th>
<th>Average</th>
<th>Samples</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>ARL</strong></td>
<td>64%</td>
<td>53%</td>
<td>56%</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Non-ARL</strong></td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>6</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Four Year</strong></td>
<td>73%</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>53%</td>
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Circulated Once

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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-ARL</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Four Year</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Expert Selection: 2006

• 32% effective if 1-use minimum
Other thoughts on use

• Raw circulation numbers are increasing in some institutions, but…
Circulations Per FTE Are Declining

Initial Circs Per Enrolled Student

- 1997
- 1998
- 1999
- 2000
- 2001
- 2002
- 2003
- 2004
- 2005
- 2006
- 2007

Initial Circs Per Enrolled Student

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Other thoughts on use

- Breadth of use increases as discovery improves (the long tail effect); i.e., more titles are used...
Is Use the Only Criterion?

- “Research libraries are the ‘in case’ in “just in case” collecting

- If use is not the criterion, then what is?

- Can patrons do a better job?
Limitations of Listening to Users

- Users have a limited frame of reference
- Users focus on past and current experience
- Users tend to offer incremental, rather than bold, suggestions
- Users are less familiar with potential of future possibilities
- Innovation is the responsibility of staff

“[Selectors] are torn between [selecting]... the books people want and the ‘good’ books”
Patron-Initiated Selection

- At least one use guaranteed!
- Users may not be better than experts at selection, but the bar is not high.
- E-Book models make this more possible, but it can work for print; e.g., University of Vermont
- Give users a fund of their own?
THE EFFECT ON PUBLISHERS
Potential Drawbacks

- Reduced frontlist sales
- Reduced sales per title
- Less predictable sales – disruption of established approval plan/new title streams
- Institutional market is critical to scholarly monographs
- Will reduced/delayed sales per title render more titles non-viable?
Publishing Costs

• Editorial and marketing costs are amortized over the number of units sold

• Physical production costs are a surprisingly low % of the cost of a book

• Fewer sales per unit = higher prices
Changing the Publishing Model?

- Still smaller print runs?
- Increasing delivery in electronic format?
- Increasing opportunities for print on demand?
- Are micro-payments a viable alternative?
Potential Benefits?

- Improved discoverability of more titles
- Broader exposure for more titles
- Long tail: backlist sales persist longer
- Use-based transactions provide income in cases where a sale may not have occurred
Deciding and Acting

- “Purposeful Abandonment”: Strategy means saying no to some tasks

- “The necessary outcome of strategic planning is not analytical insight but resolve.”