



When customers select customer - initiated acquisition of E-Books in an Academic Library

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ABSTRACT

The Eugene McDermott Library at University of Texas at Dallas explored options to enable customers to select materials for the collection. By creating a patron-initiated selection program for electronic books and by purchasing requests received through Interlibrary Loan, the Library is experimenting with new models of collection development that could be expanded. Over the last 6 months, the Library has expanded access to technical materials by adding pay-per-view services to titles in the social sciences and computer science, and technology. The project provides access to hundreds of titles that can be viewed online, could be used for a few hours or a day, or might be purchased upon repeated use. The project acquires materials selected by users who are unaware that they are making a purchase decision. The programs will be expanded to include different subjects and use of the patron acquisitions will be evaluated over time to determine how much the titles are accessed. These materials insure that the Library can provide titles 'just in time' and create collections focused on the customer.

About the University of Texas at Dallas

Established in 1969, the University of Texas at Dallas is a component of the University of Texas System. The University enrolls over 15,000 students. Approximately 37% of the students are enrolled in over 80 graduate and 45 undergraduate programs. The University has strong programs in the natural sciences and mathematics, management, engineering, computer science, humanities, public affairs, the neurosciences, and interdisciplinary studies. The Library has over 1.4 million volumes and access to nearly 500,000 e-books.

Interlibrary Loan

Customers indicate what materials should have been included in collections by requesting titles through Interlibrary Loan services. Some of their selections are for highly specific projects and might be outside the development guidelines established by the library. Other requests are simply needs not originally identified by the selector or are a result of funding issues. Whatever the reason, collection development and acquisition librarians have used the lists of borrowed materials to supplement the materials originally selected for collections.

While many libraries use this list of borrowed materials to augment the collection, some libraries have taken the opportunity to purchase the material after the transaction is complete. The University of Texas at Dallas has expanded on that model by purchasing the title as part of the borrowing transaction. Rather than acquiring materials with the hope that a customer will use an item in the future, this model is immediately successful in having a ready customer. The political appeal of the model builds support for a library by alerting the customer that the request was considered so important that the librarian purchased the item for permanent inclusion in the collection.

When purchasing Interlibrary Loan requests, pre-established guidelines insure that the material can be ordered, received, and processed within a very tight timetable. In most cases, this model requires deposit accounts, credit card purchasing, and rapid processing. So, the direct purchasing of Interlibrary Loan requests enables the customer to select a title even if they are not aware of their impact on the collections.

At McDermott Library, Interlibrary Loan Services has been purchasing individual requests for over 3 years. Yet, the program has not been publicized. A set of criteria was established that includes a list of publishers and specific subjects, a price limit, and a publication published in the last 5 years. If an item meets these criteria and can be received within a few days, the item is purchased. The project is successful in that items find a use immediately upon receipt. An email is sent to let the customer know that their request was important and was purchased rather than borrowed.

Customer-Initiated Selection and Usage of Electronic Books

In most academic libraries, bibliographers or selectors work with faculty and students to acquire the materials needed for research projects or which support the curriculum. The research on this type of selection shows that while materials are acquired, large numbers of those items are never checked out or used in the library. If librarians are selecting materials that are going unused, perhaps a model where the customer is selecting a portion of the books would provide additional materials that would meet needs not anticipated by the selector.

The UT Dallas Library participates in a number of programs to acquire electronic books. Since 1999, e-books were licensed by subscribing to collections such as *Safari Tech Books* or the *Ebrary Academic Collection*, were purchased by librarians using an approval plan vendor, and were selected through consortial purchasing within a University collaboration initiative. In addition, the subscription to historic e-book databases (*Eighteenth Century Collection*, *Early English Books Online*, and *The Making of the Modern World*) expanded access to older materials that were not available in many newer libraries. Together, the Library has access to nearly 500,000 ebooks.

For electronic books, statistics on usage are reported by vendors and each company has different ways of presenting the information. Some vendors report the number of books downloaded, the number of pages loaded, the number of minutes used per month, or the number of browses or sessions. Many vendors are not yet using COUNTER statistics to report e-book usage.

The e-book usage statistics gathered from McDermott Library indicate that customers are selecting the electronic format in preference to print in many subjects. Over 90,000 downloads from e-books occurred in 2008. The number of downloads from electronic books is gradually approaching the number of checkouts from the print collection.

The Experiment

With increasing pressure to deliver titles that are used versus those available just in case a customer is researching in a particular subject, the Library wanted to investigate patron-initiated ebook selection. Beginning in 2008, the Library worked with EBL to expand access to e-books through pay-per-view and acquisition models. This project was not advertised or announced to library customers in order not to skew the results and not to compromise the budget allocated for the project.

EBL enables the library to set parameters for their customer-initiated program for on demand acquisitions. The library can load all of the available records from their entire collection into a library catalog. EBL expands their offerings by thousands of titles every month. Over, 95,000 titles are available. The library determines when the book is automatically purchased versus paying for a pay-per-view for each time the title is selected. Each view costs a percentage of the total purchase price of the title. This view cost is determined by the publisher. A book could cost \$11.99 to view/download for a day and then later cost \$100 for the purchase of the title. The total charges for this type of transaction would be \$111.99.

The UT Dallas Library decided to load records as titles are published. By choosing this method, the Library limited its exposure to materials that might already be owned in print or online. This restriction provided a "soft start" for the program as the Library gained experience with how much money would be needed to run the EBL on demand model and how the titles might be used or acquired.

To start the program, a profile was completed that involved the selection of subjects and publishers. Secondly, the library set a cost limit. The librarians wanted to enable customers to find a bibliographic record for an e-book in the library catalog, yet not make it obvious that the title was different from any other book in the permanent collection. The library catalog presents items in 2 ways: citation and complete information. A series for EBL on Demand was included in each record which only available in the complete display. From past analysis of catalog use at UT Dallas, the view of the complete bibliographic record is rarely selected by customers. Since the series does not suggest that the item would be purchased, the selection of materials through this method is considered legitimate rather than someone clicking through records without any intended use of the title.

Prior to the experiment, the Library was involved with EBL through the Blackwell approval program. The selection of EBL titles provided the library with detailed statistics

on the use of these acquisitions. The EBL on demand service was initiated by selecting several broad subject areas (technology, social sciences, management, and economics) or Library of Congress call numbers (all H's, J's, QA, R, T, TA, TJ, TK, and TP). In addition, the librarians chose approximately 50 of over 300 publishers prominent in those subject areas. These selections were based on previous ebook usage patterns from other vendors such as NetLibrary and ebrary.

A library set a cost limit of \$200 per volume. If the title costs more than this limit, no bibliographic record was provided and the book was not purchased.

The final element in profiling was to establish how many times a title could be used before it was purchased. The pay-per-view cost could pose a serious impact on the project's budget. The acquisition process is seamless to the customer and results in instant access to a title wanted by students and faculty. In the catalog, there is not a visual or operational difference between an EBL title that was ordered and configured from one that only has a provisional "on demand" record.

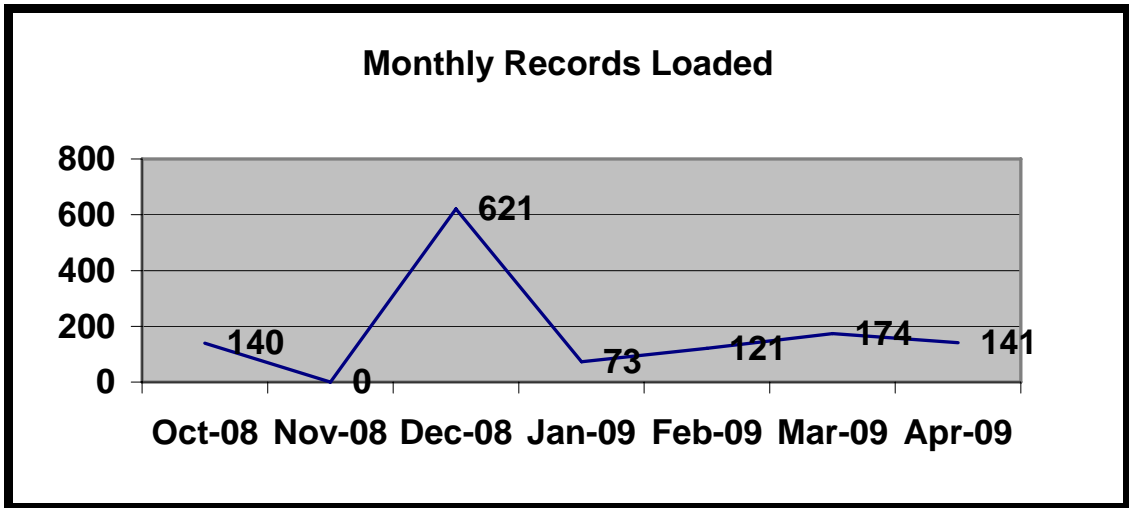
In the EBL on demand model, temporary bibliographic records are provided. The initial analysis of these records showed that some were incomplete and needed some revisions. The records are not improved before they were loaded because the item was not part of the collection. The authority work for each record was not always accurate, many titles do not include subject headings, and notes and table of contents were incomplete. Some items did not have call numbers although all items were assigned one as part of this analysis. Customers browsing by call number or subject might not retrieve some of the titles. Searching for a specific title or works by an author would be more complete. Keyword searching would be effective at retrieving any EBL ebook. Despite those technical issues, the books are being discovered and used by customers. The project would not be possible if the records had to be edited prior to the use or purchase of any title. The bibliographic records are edited when a book is purchased.

After completing the profile, the library began receiving bibliographic records each month. A series entry was added to each record making it easy to identify the records so that they could be removed in the future for items that were never used or purchased. It could be important to use a means to count the records that have not been acquired and subtract those totals from what is actually part of the collection.

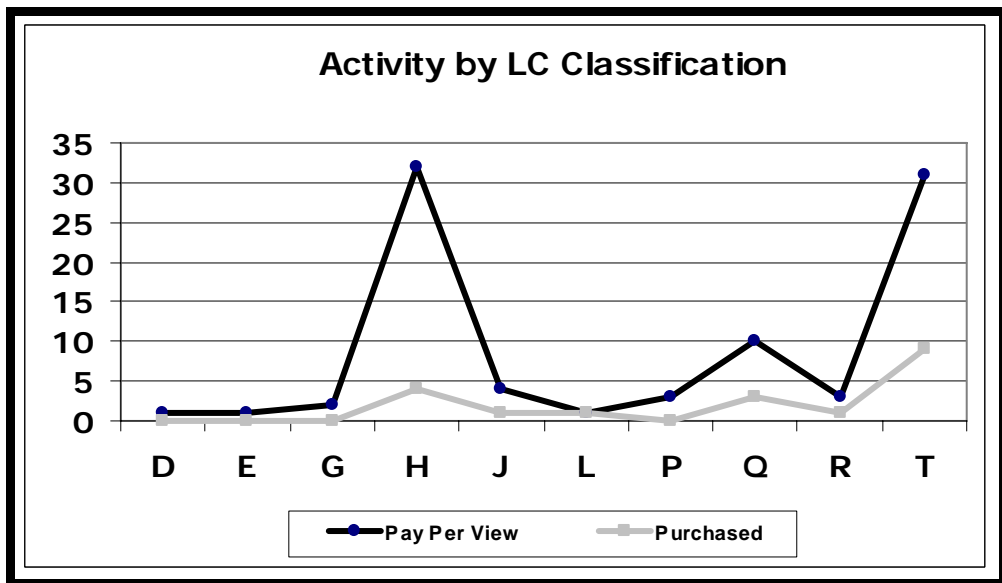
The budget for the experiment was \$10,000 and set up as a deposit account to eliminate the paperwork required to pay monthly bills. Each month, the Library receives a complete inventory of the titles that were used and the titles that were purchased.

Experiment Results

From October 2008 through April 2009, over 1,200 records were added to the catalog. As indicated by the graph below, the number of records received varied each month.



Initially, the profile was set to purchase a title after 2 uses. The purchasing model was amended in January 2009 as the cost of each pay-per-view was considered too high. After 6 months of the project, the pay-per-view costs averaged \$14.42 per title. Approximately 68% of the pay-per-view charges constituted 15% of the costs with the remainder going to purchasing the titles. The pay-per-view costs ranged from 5-35% of the purchase price of the book. The average cost of each automatic book purchase was \$106.82. The cost per volume is significantly higher than the average cost for printed titles purchased for the Library, but is due to the emphasis on technology publishers.

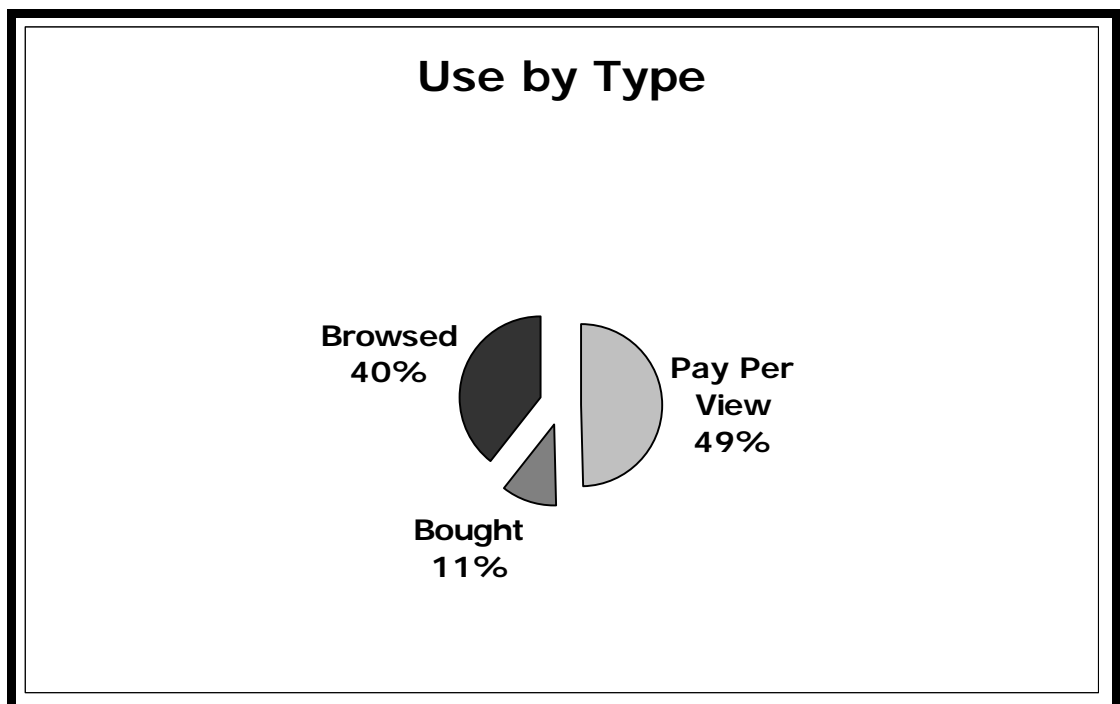


Nearly all of the books fell into the broad subject disciplines selected in the initial profile and the majority of the use occurred in management, economics, and technology. The number of titles used in 6 months is over 9% of the total books added to the catalog. This statistic is expected to increase over time. While the number of books used is relatively low, all customers had access to hundreds of additional titles that were not selected. The Library did not expend any funds except for the staff time to load the bibliographic records. Potentially the titles could have been used or added to the collection at any time or "just in time".

Through April 2009, the initial use of the titles occurred within the first 49 days after the temporary bibliographic record is loaded. However, this statistic is increasing each month. The longer the unused records remain in the catalog, the time between the initial loading of many of the records and the first use of the ebook will expand. While this is not creating a budgetary issue at this time, the number of unpurchased records in the catalog increases the potential for charges.

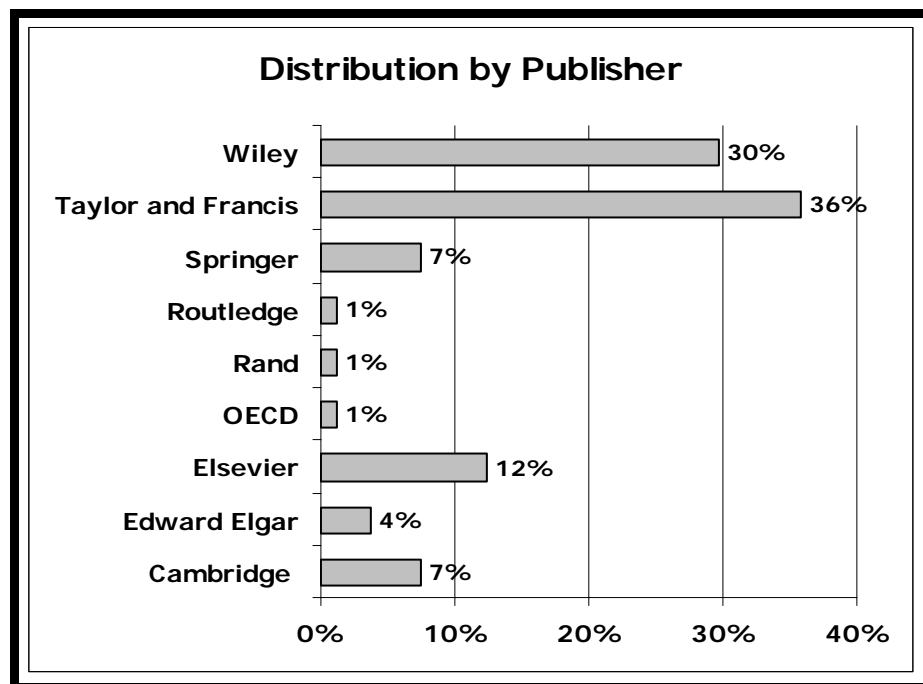
Prior to purchasing the title, the usage of the electronic books occurred in 2 categories. EBL supplied data on the number of titles browsed online within the first 10 minutes of use and the number of Short Term Loans (use longer than 10 minutes). The final type of use was the automatic purchase of the ebook. Within the browse category, customers could make some use of the item before the library is even charged. This type of use is invisible to the customer except after 10 minutes, the user is asked if they want to continue using the item. If the customer wants to continue to view the book, the library is charged the pay-per-view charge or for the purchase if it has been used once. If the library opted to purchase the title after a series of pay-per-views, those charges would increase the costs incrementally. These charges might be much smaller than the cost of the book.

The usage of the EBL collection fell into several groups. The majority of titles have not been used. If the title was used between October 2008 and April 2009, customers browsed a title 40% of the time (clicked into a book and viewed in for less than 10 minutes). The extended reading or downloading of the books resulted in 49% of the use. Finally, the purchase of the ebook resulted in the smallest category of use at 11%, but the largest amount of expense. The library benefits from making the content available even if it not owned.



One of the major issues connected to purchasing across ebook vendors is detecting duplicate materials. The Acquisitions Department provides an extremely important role in checking for the duplication of titles against other orders created by librarians. When checking print orders, the Library generally did not purchase the book if an EBL on demand record was already in the catalog. This item was not purchased because the EBL title would be automatically purchased if it was used. At present, the Library does not have a way to check what titles might already be in the collection because the records do not have a matching point for the loader programs. There has been very low duplication of titles and the procedures have limited most of the problems.

Despite selecting more than 40 publishers, the resources browsed or purchased were from only 9 publishers.



Through April 2009, the Library spent 30% of the entire budget which is less than expected. One explanation is that there are already a significant number of ebooks available in the catalog. Some customers prefer print over electronic books and do not even consider looking at the electronic book. The usage is strong enough to expand the project to include more titles from the sciences and mathematics. In addition, since the profiling was completed in the summer of 2008, additional publishers have made their titles available. The library will expand the number of publishers included in the project.

The overall usage is correlated with the subjects selected. Because the records are for newly published books and because of the large amount of electronic books already available, the usage of the EBL on demand materials is small and highly eclectic. There are no patterns observed when looking at the titles that were browsed or purchased. The titles were selected from a list of available resources in the catalog. However, the use should not be discounted because it is small. Since the ownership of the title is invisible to the user, the acquisition of these materials is even more important in that they were outside the materials selected by the librarian. Whether the resource was retrieved because of the title, author, summary, or table of contents, the customer

selected the item. Their selection of the materials makes a subtle change in the collection.

The Library has not marketed the project to customers so that there is not artificial use of the EBL on demand materials. This conservative approach reduces the chance of frivolous use by customers. So, the existence of the project and its support for customer-initiated selection is not noticed. The project will be most desirable for budget negotiations in that the titles are available, can be used for a short period of time without cost, and all costs are associated with usage.

The Experiment Expands

Customer selection could certainly make librarians nervous. Traditionally, the selection of library collections has been the domain of librarians and sometimes faculty members. Potentially the acquisition of books selected or requested by users creates a collection of items that have a built-in audience or are available to be delivered on demand. While not all users are enamored with electronic books in all disciplines, usage statistics indicate that many customers prefer the format.

The experiment placed boundaries on the type of books that could be delivered. In most cases, the profile selected scholarly publishers. If the library wanted to control purchasing of books recommended by various reviewing sources, a delay in the purchase can be mediated. If the library wanted to delete bibliographic records for titles receiving poor reviews, this could be done on a title by title basis.

The results of the experiments at the University of Texas at Dallas could be unique. The customers at this University can access a wealth of electronic material and the use of both ebooks and ejournals is extremely strong. Ebooks are one type of resource available to find relevant information. This activity is very different from finding books to read. While the EBL usage reports indicate that some customers do read some portion of a resource online over a period of hours per login, others probably print some portion of the title to read from paper. The total number of EBL records loaded as part of this project is a small percentage of the entire collection of ebooks available at the University. If librarians were to add EBL records into a catalog that did not contain any ebooks, the usage could be very different.

In summary, the project is under budget and the usage is manageable. The titles reflected in the monthly record loads seem to support the curriculum and were produced by important publishers. The titles rarely duplicate titles already purchased by the librarians. The catalog provides entrée to the book just in case it is required and expands access to the information while limiting the space required for storage. Browsing the title for a short period of time is not costing the library expect for the time spent loading the bibliographic records.

During the summer of 2009, the Library will expand the project to include more disciplines including natural sciences and mathematics. Additional publishers will be integrated. After the expansion, the librarians will evaluate the entire project to review the costs and use of the materials over time.

Through the programs involving the purchase of Interlibrary Loan requests and the patron-initiated purchase of electronic books, the Libraries at the University of Texas at

Dallas are redesigning collection development. In addition to purchasing highly regarded titles as reviewed in standard sources or buying materials requested by faculty, the Library is providing a budget for the customers to secure resources that provide value to them.