

DDA: Limitations and Adaptations

Josh Simpson

INFO 230 White Paper #2

DDA: Limitations and Adaptations

October 11, 2020

Abstract

The “just-in-time” collection development paradigm which emerged in the last decade promised to replace or significantly roll back the long-standing “just-in-case” collections strategy as the dominant collections theory. “Just-in-time” methods ideally extract more value from collection budgets and fine-tune selection processes to accommodate changes in faculty and students’ content preferences, research methods and real time needs. Demand or Patron Driven Acquisition (DDA / PDA) is one of the most important technologies supporting what Uriel (2017) calls “collection-building as a service” provided at the point of need, a new “just-in-time” ordering and delivery tool that enables users to order the e-books and videos they want and have them instantly delivered to their reader devices. As a panacea for the familiar tradeoffs and limitations in collection-building, DDA hasn’t exactly lived up to its initial hype. However, in trying to balance “just-in-case” with “just-in-time” philosophies by skillfully blending the use of traditional means of collection development like approval plans and firm orders, DDA certainly still holds a place at the collection development table. Librarians and vendors continue to elaborate new possibilities for DDA that increase the flexibility and complexity of collection-building strategies.

Problem Statement

Shrinking or stagnant academic library collection budgets, a massive expansion of scholarly content in electronic formats and severe inflation in the cost of that content over the past 30 years have led to a great deal of frustration and experimentation by libraries, vendors and publishers. Since the invasion of academic libraries by new electronic serials in the 1990s, which was followed by a surge of interest in e-books, collection developers have struggled to

DDA: Limitations and Adaptations

reconcile policies, budgets and workflows that support selecting and paying for the content their patrons want. Though DDA does not address the academic journal market, many vendors, publishers and librarians all hoped it would crack the problem of getting the mix of e-book / scholarly monograph content right so that it served all of a school's different constituencies. Yet despite its many advantages and its endurance for over a decade, many librarians and researchers have concluded that DDA on its own is not capable of delivering all the source materials scholars might need or creating broadly inclusive disciplinary / cross-disciplinary collections. Nor is it always sustainable on a cost basis either, as cumulative DDA orders can deplete funds for approval plans or (more likely to be impacted) firm orders. It's become clear to many that DDA is not a one-size-fits-all solution for all institutions, and that it can create new cost and collection coverage problems. Moreover, new problems on the publisher side of the equation – namely, STL (Short Term Lending) pricing models and licensing agreements that made it very difficult for them to recoup the cost of producing scholarly monographs – have led to rising STL costs for libraries, the withdrawal of “frontlist” titles from DDA pools, and abandonment of STL altogether. These changes have in turn caused librarians to reexamine the long-term effects of the DDA model on their collections, which Roncevic notes, “now stand to look radically different without a large number of publishers participating and/or a substantial number of key titles no longer available for discovery owing to embargoes and withdrawals” (2017). In this paper I hope to examine current thinking (both critical and supportive) about the evolution of DDA and attempts to blend it with other collection development methods, and to look towards emerging choices, challenges and benefits that may lie ahead.

Literature Review

DDA: Limitations and Adaptations

Numerous paradigm shifts and new technologies have transformed collection development in academic libraries over the decades, and the pace of change appears to have increased in the digital era. A complex ecosystem has arisen in which vendors and publishers selling subscription and fee-based access to print and electronic content jockey with Open Access models and interlibrary consortia and new delivery tools (among many other developments) to provide new options for librarians to customize their collections-building to maximize the reach and impact of their collections budget for faculty and students. One of the early products in the brave new digital world was dubbed the “Big Deal” by Kenneth Frazier (2005), a comprehensive licensing agreement that allows a library or consortium to buy access to a publisher’s electronic content for the same cost as the print journals already subscribed to by the library / consortium. Yet even as far back as 2005, Frazier cannily noted that “Big Deals are based on the presumption that libraries can continually increase expenditures for journals and that publishers must have perpetual revenue growth. This future cannot and will not happen.” Fast forward to 2019 and Horava still finds it worth noting that “For many years, libraries have been very vocal about unsustainable costs of the Big Deals.” It seems reasonable to speculate that the advent of DDA can be traced back in part to the dissatisfaction of some collection developers with the prominence of the Big Deal in the first decade of this century. That said, though there can be overlap, the type of content Big Deals and DDAs traffic in is typically bifurcated: journal articles on the one hand, and e-books on the other. Edward A. Goedeken and Karen Lawson describe the origins of DDA as a service that “evolved from being based on interlibrary loan requests to the current arrangement whereby a library loads records for e-books into its online catalog or discovery system, whose purchase is then triggered by

DDA: Limitations and Adaptations

patron use” (2015). Fischer quotes Swords succinct description that “[DDA] is the product of technology and very specifically of the coming of the age of e-books.”

The upside of DDA for academic library budgets is realized by not buying content for which there is no (current) user interest; the cost of unused books is effectively zero. This cost savings, when accompanied by deep coverage of a subject area, can free up funds for smaller imprints not included in the DDA pool, subscription content and other lesser priorities. DDA reports offer new insight into patron interests and content usage which enables calculating cost-per-use ROI and provides data to support “evidenced based acquisition,” a service that can complement DDA with anticipatory ordering. While it’s true that faculty and students submitting purchase requests is not a new phenomenon, DDA takes a major step forward in the transition from collection selectors recommending what they think the library should own in various subject areas to a semi-automated acquisition system based on direct input from patrons. These benefits are far from theoretical and extend beyond merely providing more options for buying materials and empowering users, as advantageous as those are. A number of studies back the notion that DDA brings improved ROI and usage in both STEM and humanities fields. In their study of a DDA program powered by GOBI at the University of Alabama, Arthur and Walke found that “overall DDA titles provide for a greater ROI than traditionally-acquired materials, as confirmed by a title-level cost-per-use analyses” (2018). They also observe that the DDA program actually highlighted the “systemic dysfunction in traditional collection development” by exposing “the collection development approaches atop which [unused library collections] rests.” A five-year study of The University of Iowa’s PDA program by Karen Fischer amplifies these positive findings, underlining the “high rate of subsequent use, the reasonable

DDA: Limitations and Adaptations

per-book cost, the breadth of subject coverage, and the cost-control results of using the short-term loan option” (2016).

Downey et.al. (2015) looked at 29 months of DDA usage at Kent State University and while they also reported effective results overall, they discovered that STL model was costly, burdensome and greatly underperformed the ROI on purchase triggers. Unique among the studies I looked at, they also commented on the need to examine DDA programs in terms of “user experience and satisfaction; user needs; library services; balanced collection development; subject / discipline; technical service workflow; publishers, authors, and scholarly communication” (2015). There was also the only article I read that mentioned that the NISO DDA calls for a DDA model that works for publishers, vendors, aggregators, and libraries, and sustainable for all e-book stakeholders involved (2015), an issue that was alluded to by several authors, though not in the context of the NISO DDA. Noting that DDA changes the nature of collection development itself, Cramer touches on a fairly widely held fear: “Any demand-driven plan will skew the collection in favor of the interests of the moment.” That possibility is taken seriously by many practitioners and an array of approaches to mitigate against this “skew” have been crafted. DDA programs offer a variety of ways to lease and own e-books, but perpetual access remains a complex challenge for libraries that have not invested in digital curation. Roncevic explains how “integration of DDA with existing workflows has shown to be a time-consuming endeavor, with libraries often experiencing technical and implementation difficulties, which has added complexity to the workflow” (2017). Blume brings another valuable perspective to the discourse on DDA, unrelated to finance or logistics, which is its failure thus far to keep up “with projections for more diverse campus populations,” a

DDA: Limitations and Adaptations

dangerous shortcoming in publishing diversity in her mind which leaves “future students [unable] to find themselves represented in library collections if decisions are made to rely on DDA more heavily in the future” (2019).

Recommendations

Despite numerous studies’ conclusions in favor of DDA in economic terms, an equally strong message comes through that these findings should not be interpreted to suggest that traditional collection development means should be abandoned or even dialed back. A common observation is that DDA on its own leaves unacceptable gaps in academic library collections. Arthur and Walke argue that DDA programs are “likely best utilized as a supplemental collection development approach that provides high quality content at the point-of-need” (2015) rather than as a foundation for collection-building. Like several other writers, they assert that “there is still very much a place for the selector librarian who is well versed in his or her subject and clearly understands the institution’s mission” (2015). Baker reminds us that “just-in-time” and “just-in-case” collection development are not mutually exclusive, and that “we have to be careful not to concede to budget pressures and move solely to “just in time” practices and end up barely curating a [] library’s collection” (2016). Many of the new digital platforms and tools from GOBI, ProQuest and others offer sophisticated hybrid capabilities to combine DDA with traditional approaches like approval profiles that, remarkably, can work for small colleges and large research universities alike – with effort and patience, the experienced counsel. In their conversation on data-driven collection development and approval plans, librarians Christine Fischer, Simona Tabacaru and GOBI’s Ashley Fast explore the varied ways in which they combine approval plans and profiles with other collection-building methods

DDA: Limitations and Adaptations

and tools including DDA services. Traditional approval plan criteria like LC classes, preferred publishers and price ceilings define Fischer's core acquisitions strategy, and she can then experiment with value adds like including award winning books. As for the future of collection development at Texas A&M, Tabacaru is confident that the effectiveness of the approval plan – which she defines broadly to include DDA, also managed by GOBI - will be harnessed to support new access / acquisition models. While their conversation is not primarily about DDA, I find many reasons for optimism as well as useful roadmaps for using DDA with approval plans in Fischer and Tabacaru's discussion.

Conclusions

It's difficult to speak of the main prevailing trends in e-book collection development because there is so much variability between institutions, but one approach outlined by several authors is layering DDA (and, increasingly, EBA) with subscription bundles, purchases of high-use titles, publisher-direct packages and firm orders. In terms of collection development and approval plans more broadly, Goedecken and Lawson argue for a need for "careful sculpting of the [approval] profiles with price limits, non-inclusion of specific publishers, and elimination of popular materials [which restrict] users' choices [in order] to operate within collection policies suitable for an academic library" (2015). To take a much broader view, the purpose of innovating within collections development is well-stated by Horava: "The paradigm shift we are witnessing is based on the importance of adopting a user-centric focus, where timeliness, quality, breadth of perspective, and user-preferred formats are carefully considered to support the learning, teaching, and research mission of the institution, and adapted to the workflows of users" (2019). One of the interesting takeaways from reviewing the history of struggles

DDA: Limitations and Adaptations

between vendors, publishers and collection developers over DDA (among other things!) is that they all share common ground as well. As Roncevic writes: “both rely on predictability to drive spending and purchasing; both must control fixed budgets that require, at least to some extent, fixed returns on investments; both will adjust the rules to protect their bottom lines as often as needed; both want to invest in products and services to sustain their livelihoods” (2017). At the end of the day, transcending their self-interested strategies, all parties are striving to advance contemporary scholarship by creating multi-faceted, accessible and sustainable collections. A very traditional mission in an ever more technologically advanced milieu.

REFERENCES

- Arthur, M. A. & Walke, K. W. (2018). Judging the Need for and Value of DDA in an Academic Research Library Setting. *The Journal of Academic Librarianship*, 44(5), 650-662.
- Baker, J. (January 15, 2016). Collection Development: Just in Time & Just in Case. In *RIPS Law Librarian Blog*. Retrieved October 9, 2020 from <https://ripslawlibrarian.wordpress.com/2016/01/15/collection-development-just-in-time-just-in-case/>
- CHOICE Media Channel (2019, May 2). *Data-Driven Collection Development: The Approval Plan in Today's Academic Library*. [Video]. YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=o-2xNIMBNEQ&feature=youtu.be>
- Downey, K., Klingler, T., Urbano, C., & Zhang, Y. (2015). A scenario analysis of Demand-Driven Acquisition of e-books in libraries. *Library Resources & Technical Services*, 59(2), 84.
- Fischer, K. (2016). Patron-Driven Acquisitions: Assessing and Sustaining a Long-Term PDA E-Book Program. In Ward S., Freeman R., & Nixon J. (Eds.), *Academic E-Books: Publishers, Librarians, and Users* (pp. 107-126). West Lafayette, Indiana: Purdue University Press.
- Frazier, K. (2005). What's the Big Deal? *The Serials Librarian*, 48(1-2), 49–59.
- Goedeken, Edward A, & Lawson, Karen. (2015). The Past, Present, and Future of Demand-Driven Acquisitions in Academic Libraries. *College & Research Libraries*, 76(2), 205–221.
- Horava, T. (2019). Collection Management: What Lies Ahead?. *Technicalities*, 39(4), 16–21.
- Roncevic, M. (March 23, 2017). Demand-Driven Acquisitions: Do Library Patrons Get What They Need? In *No Shelf Required*. Retrieved October 9, 2020 from

DDA: Limitations and Adaptations

<http://www.noshelfrequired.com/demand-driven-acquisitions-do-patrons-get-what-they-need/>

Uziel, L. (2017) Collection development: General and special, print and digital, and resource sharing. In T. Gillman (Ed.), *Academic librarianship today*. (pp. 101-114). Rowman & Littlefield Publishers
