



*Erica Cooke has been going back in time to explore the benefits of PDA in libraries.*

## PDA 101

**P**atron-driven acquisition (PDA) is not a new idea. It's been appearing in library literature for over a decade and is now part of the day-to-day services of many libraries around the world. As a new graduate working in a public library, Erica Cooke wanted to revisit the concepts of PDA and understand the benefits and issues around purchasing on demand for library patrons.

Patron-driven acquisition is the process of buying materials based on patron demand or item requests. This model of purchasing allows materials to be purchased at the point of need (just-in-time) rather than purchased by library staff speculatively and held in the hope it will one day be used (just-in-case). By collecting at the point of need, libraries are creating a collection that accurately reflects the needs of its users, and are responding to the ever-changing role of libraries and library spaces in the community.

Patron-driven acquisition allows libraries to fill requests in a timely manner, to fill requests for new, unusual or difficult to find items, demonstrates responsiveness to the community's needs, creates a diverse and evolving collection, increases circulation, and increases customer satisfaction. A library has a lot to gain by adopting a PDA system.

Patron-driven acquisition can be processed in libraries in a variety of ways. Early PDA practices used interlibrary loans as a way of forwarding requests for purchase. If a title was requested by a patron, this request would be forwarded to a staff member who would assess its eligibility for purchase. If it met the requirements of the collection it was then purchased; if it did not meet these requirements the request would be completed through an interlibrary loan. With the popularity of electronic resources (especially in university libraries) processes of PDA are changing and

case-by-case staff regulation has been reduced. Some libraries allow an item to be displayed in the public library catalogue but delay purchase until a patron actually uses the item. This seamless delivery means that patrons have no way of knowing whether the item was already part of the library collection, or whether it was not yet purchased.

Opening up the library's online catalogue to items that can be purchased by patrons on demand is one way of delivering a more robust PDA service. Although many libraries have adopted some form of PDA, it is often not widely advertised or obvious to library users. Making 'suggestion to purchase' a simple and obvious option in the public library catalogue can help them realise that purchasing is a possibility. For example, when a search does not deliver any results, the patron could be redirected to a page that says "Didn't find what you are looking for? Make a suggestion to purchase". For public libraries, Overdrive provides a PDA service called WIN which allows library patrons to search for books that are not yet part of the ebook collection and suggests purchasing with a single click.

Library patrons are usually surprised and excited when we tell them that they can make a suggestion to purchase at the library. The more the library can promote their PDA service, the more input they can expect from their patrons and the more diverse and responsive their collection will become.

Adopting, encouraging, and promoting PDA in the library is a step toward becoming a patron-driven library and a step away from the old model of speculative collection development and just-in-case purchasing. Sally Pewhairangi stated on her blog Finding Heroes that 'patron-focused' libraries know that their patrons are important and will learn whatever they can about their patrons to improve the library's services. 'Patron-driven' libraries know that their patrons are their business. Rather than learn about their patrons, patron-driven libraries think like their patrons and use this information to change the way the library is run.

I think Sally makes an important point. As libraries move from silent storehouses of books to vibrant community spaces, from patron-focused libraries to 'patron-driven' libraries, it is important that the collection development processes of the library evolve along with these changes. The library collection should be as responsive, up-to-date, and adaptable to the community's needs as possible, and PDA is a proven process that helps libraries on their path to becoming truly patron-driven services.

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**ERICA COOKE**

ericalcooke@gmail.com

Erica Cooke is a recent QUT Library and Information Science graduate and is currently working as an Information Services Librarian at Ipswich Libraries in Queensland. Her interests include social media (currently she's addicted to Pinterest), youth services, and all forms of community outreach).



# LET'S TALK: FACE-TO-FACE NETWORKING FOR ONLINE STUDENTS

Increasing numbers of Library and Information Studies (LIS) courses are being run online and, while this provides greater flexibility for students, it can also be very isolating.

I recognised the need for online students to have the opportunity to meet each other face-to-face after talking to a student who reported not knowing anyone else studying in the field.

Melbourne Library Service offers six industry placements a year and four placements this year were for online students. I partnered with Mary Carroll from Charles Sturt University to organise the first Let's Talk event for students studying any LIS course online through any Australian TAFE or University.

**WE HAVE BEEN OVERWHELMED BY THE STUDENTS' POSITIVE RESPONSE TO THIS EVENT. AS ONE STUDENT COMMENTED, "ONLINE DISCUSSION BOARDS ARE FINE BUT MEETING PEOPLE FACE-TO-FACE MAKES ALL THE DIFFERENCE".**

Some 57 students from ten different institutions attended Melbourne City Library to meet up in October, and all reported that they would love to attend more events like this. Food and wine was provided during the mingling/networking time and an interesting panel of four library professionals, at different stages of their careers, provided an educational focus to the evening by answering questions from the audience.

We have been overwhelmed by the students' positive response to this event. As one student commented, "Online discussion boards are fine but meeting people face-to-face makes all the difference."

Melbourne Library Service is looking forward to hosting similar events in the future.

LORETTA KELLY

Course & Career Support Librarian,  
Melbourne Library Service  
loretta.kelly@melbourne.vic.gov.au



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