

LIS: INVESTIGATIONS

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PDA – panacea or problem?

FROM OUR COLLECTION:

Walters, William H. 2012, 'Patron-Driven Acquisition and the Educational Mission of the Academic Library', *Library Resources & Technical Services* vol. 56, no. 3, pp. 199-213

Patron driven acquisition (PDA) has been adopted by many libraries across all sectors in Australia as a cost effective method of collection building and an efficient way of meeting the information needs of patrons without delay. William Walters looks at some of the downsides to this method of collection procurement.

Walters describes all the variables that can be manipulated and combined to create PDA programs that suit individual institutions – very handy for anyone thinking of establishing PDA in their library. He goes on to outline two key principles of academic librarianship that can guide the assessment of PDA or other collection development programs. The problems he identifies with PDA stem from the acceptance or rejection of these principles. The first is "libraries serve

The problems that PDA programs are prone to will be viewed differently according to the librarians' stance on these two principles. Walters outlines six problems that can beset all PDA programs and four that can affect ebook-only programs:

- failure to distinguish between students' immediate desires and their long-term educational needs
- failure to make full use of librarians' knowledge and expertise
- failure to represent the full range of library stakeholders, such as future students and faculty
- systematic and idiosyncratic biases in selection
- potential overspending or discriminatory restrictions on spending arbitrarily imposed
- issues related to bibliographic control – records being available in the catalogue but the item not being available for use

Ebook-only:

- limited availability of academic titles available as ebooks
- embargoes on the availability of a title

others that agree strongly with Walters' principles, assessment of acquisition programs is much harder and would involve an attempt to demonstrate the relationship between library services and educational outcomes such as research productivity, test performance, and the quality of students' written assignments.

This is a very well written and useful article for anyone wanting to get a clear, comprehensive picture of the pros and cons of PDA, and an overview of what to consider if establishing this as a method of purchase or alternative to traditional interlibrary loan.

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The most effective collection is not necessarily one that provides access to the greatest number of resources.

their parent agencies". If the academic library serves the university, does it exist to teach students or is its role purely to supply requested information? How the library answers that will inform how they assess the success of any acquisition system. The second principle is "selection increases the value of the collection". The most effective collection is not necessarily one that provides access to the greatest number of resources. The role of the librarian is to restrict the collection so as to guide patrons to the works that are the most useful and best quality.

- as an ebook
- high prices of academic ebooks
- ebook licensing issues that limit patrons and libraries' rights

For those libraries which view their services in technical terms, the ultimate goal may be to deliver documents in response to requests; acquisition programs with this goal can be assessed simply by statistical means. For

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