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The Books We Didn't Buy: Assessing What We Don't Have

Rice Majors

Santa Clara University, rmajors@scu.edu

Erika Johnson

University of San Francisco, eljohnson5@usfca.edu

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The books we didn't buy

Assessing what we don't have

Rice Majors, Santa Clara University

Erika Johnson, University of San Francisco

Questions, from easy to hard

- How can we assess what we are **not** doing in terms of collection development?
- What can we learn from consortium (and ILL) borrowing data to create a deeper more browse-able collection?
 - What specific books should we simply buy?
 - What improvements can we make to our autoship/ approval profile?
 - And will this be whack-a-mole?
- How can we measure the impact of these changes on the meta-collection for our consortium?

Existing collection analysis options

- No single best practice for collection analysis
- Ratio of circulation to holdings (“relative use”; “use factor”)
 - sometimes separated by method of acquisition (approval, faculty request, etc.)
- Ratio of new acquisitions to ILL borrowings by subject
- Ratio of ILL borrowings to holdings (“ratio of borrowings to holdings”; “collection failure quotient”)
- Ratio of ILL borrowings to [circulation+ILL borrowings] (“ratio of user needs not met by collection”)

About our institutions

- Both small Jesuit universities in the San Francisco Bay Area
- Similarities in size & programs allows for potential comparison

	SCU	USF
Undergraduates	5,486	6,845
Graduate students	3,529	3,856
Full-time faculty	530	459
Part-time faculty	399	651
Bound volumes (without law libraries)	~920,000	~900,000

About LINK+

- We belong to a 65-library consortium (LINK+) of academic and public libraries with unmediated, patron-initiated borrowing
- There is no coordination of collection development (not really feasible given the mix of libraries / library types)
- Very diverse metacollection in general
 - 5.8M out of a total 9.1M bibs are uniquely held by one member library (58.8%)
- Within the consortium:
 - SCU holds 803,682 bibs uniquely (50.8% of total SCU bibs)
 - USF holds 174,036 bibs uniquely (21.7% of total USF bibs)

Our patrons & LINK+

- >90% of our total “ILL” traffic comes through LINK+
- Patrons organically discover that LINK+ exists and make use of it, including undergraduates

SCU patron type	Local transactions	Non-local transactions
Undergraduates	18.8%	28.1%
Graduate students	6.6%	8.0%
Law students	8.7%	10.9%
All student types	34.1%	47.0%

Our methodology

- Within a call number range, we decided to look at:
 - How many **titles were bought** in the last five years (as a proxy for our current level of investment)
 - Are those books **circulating** at all (as a proxy for our successfully meeting (some of) the demand)
 - The level of our **LINK+ borrowing** (as a proxy for unmet demand)
- Compare unmet demand to current investment
- Compare unmet demand to total demand (circ & LINK+)
- Compare the relative performance of the two peer institutions to get an idea of what “normal” might be

Data normalization & scope

- We pulled data for January 2013 – July 2015 for LINK+ transactions where our patrons borrowed materials from other libraries
 - ILLiad transactions were so fewer in number (about 10% of LINK+ activity) that we have ignored them for this phase
- Added LC call numbers for all transactions that lacked them
- We eliminated transactions for all audio and video formats and manga (but not graphic novels) as being outside of scope, as this data would not inform what we buy

First: Comparing our LINK+ borrowing

- 23,871 total transactions
 - USF 11,077 = 46.4%
 - SCU 12,794 = 53.6%, or 115% of USF's activity
- Imbalances in many call number ranges
 - SCU had 62% of B, 60% of J/K, 74% of Q, and 70% of T
 - USF had 59% of E, 62% of F, 63% of Z

Second: Are the books we are buying circulating?

- Last five years of purchases only
 - Ignoring A, C, U, V, Z
- SCU 41.2% have circulated at least once
 - F, M, N are all in the 20-29% range
 - D, E, P are all in the 30-39% range
 - No call number ranges over 60%
- USF 58.9% have circulated at least once
 - No call number ranges below 40%

Third: Should we buy **more** stuff or **different** stuff?

- Analyzing the ratio of unmet demand to total demand
- If the local collection is performing well but there is still a lot of unmet demand, consider buying more
 - SCU: H, T
 - USF: M
- If the local collection is not performing well and there is a lot of unmet demand, consider buying differently
 - SCU: F, M, N
- Due to budget, only so many changes are practical in one year

SCU purchases

- This year, we invested \$45,000 in buying both exact titles and titles in selected subject areas to address clear gaps
 - Food and culture
 - Intersection of science and religion
 - Selected topics in SF Bay Area history
 - Gender studies (especially transgender issues)
 - The Holocaust
- Also informed purchases for popular reading collection

SCU changes to profile

- This data is excellent feedback for recalibrating our collection development profile with our book vendor
- We have made 36 (small) changes to our autoship and approval profile; we anticipate making more
- Various areas in D, DP, HQ, N, QA, QP, and TR were moved from slips to autoship
- Areas in BP, BS, BT, BX, D, DG, DS, GN, ND, PE, QA, and TK were already autoship and we increased our collection depth for autoship

SCU subject librarians

- Subject librarians are looking at the borrowing data as another data source for considering what to buy
- Many (but not all) of the profile changes originated with the subject librarians
 - Some librarians are still reviewing the data, which has been overwhelming for some subject areas
- Especially interesting for interdisciplinary topics (e.g. food and culture) where no one subject librarian would have anticipated the amount of borrowing

Coordinating our changes

- In some areas, both universities could potentially have decided to build deeper collections
- For example, SCU will build more deeply to support Gender Studies:
 - HQ 12-502 Sexual life.
 - HQ 503-1072 The family. Marriage. Children.
 - HQ 1101-2034 Women. Feminism.
- USF will build more deeply for other social sciences areas:
 - HD 56-57.5 Industrial productivity.
 - HV 6437-6439 Gangs.

Future goals & measurement

- We hope to add Loyola Marymount University to the study to better understand what is “normal”
- We intend to delve into more granular call number ranges
- We hope to see:
 - A modest decrease in borrowing through LINK+ as we better satisfy needs through our local collection
 - (At least) normal levels of circulation for materials added based on this data
- We’ll be interested to see:
 - Lending of these added materials through LINK+ (have we also addressed a consortium-level need?)
 - An upward trend in uniquely-held materials in LINK+

Questions & discussion

Rice Majors rmajors@scu.edu

Erika Johnson eljohnson5@usfca.edu