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

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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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>SCU</th>
<th>USF</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Undergraduates</td>
<td>5,486</td>
<td>6,845</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graduate students</td>
<td>3,529</td>
<td>3,856</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Full-time faculty</td>
<td>530</td>
<td>459</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Part-time faculty</td>
<td>399</td>
<td>651</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bound volumes (without law libraries)</td>
<td>~920,000</td>
<td>~900,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SCU patron type</th>
<th>Local transactions</th>
<th>Non-local transactions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Undergraduates</td>
<td>18.8%</td>
<td>28.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graduate students</td>
<td>6.6%</td>
<td>8.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Law students</td>
<td>8.7%</td>
<td>10.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All student types</td>
<td>34.1%</td>
<td>47.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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.
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

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