

Patron Driven Acquisitions? Patrons' preferences and patterns of use

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Abstract

A small-scale, unmediated PDA experiment ran at the **University Library of Southern Denmark** in the spring of 2016. Usage data from existing book collections were used for a comparative evaluation.

We found that much of the PDA usage centered on a few **syllabus** titles, but that the overall book usage was **extensive** and **varied** between subjects.

We concluded that a standard PDA model supplies only some of the books in demand, and may give **preferential treatment** to certain patron groups.

Background

Most of the book collections at the University Library of Southern Denmark are selected and curated by subject specialists, according to their professional judgement.

Patrons' requests, reservations, ILL, syllabi, usage statistics, demographics and the development of academic fields in general, and at the University in particular, are carefully balanced in this process.

It is often questioned¹ if this practice is still viable in a modern university library. We set up a small-scale PDA pilot to see what would happen if acquisitions were determined only by the usage patterns of our patrons.

Method

A unmediated PDA pool of 44.000 academic titles was set up during May-June, when assignment and exam seasons peaked. The PDA pool was restricted to new books (2014-16), not already part of existing collections.

The PDA titles appeared in the library catalogue with no restrictions or labelling. All usage data was collected for a period of 9 weeks. Half of the usage could not be attributed to individual users. For all separable users, PDA usage patterns were analyzed. The PDA pilot was evaluated by comparing with patterns from existing collections.

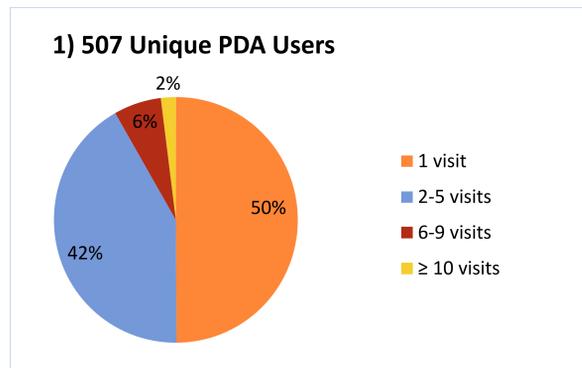
Conclusions

- The overall book usage is **extensive** and varies between **subject domains**
- A few books account for a major part of the activities. All top titles were **syllabus titles**
- A few patrons are **heavy users**, who contribute a large part of activities
- Patrons clearly **preferred full title download** to other types of use
- A few patrons preferred to use the e-books **in print**
- The price model in the PDA experiment **favours purchase** over STL rent, if a title is used more than 3 or 4 times/year
- A standard² PDA setup supplies only a fraction of the books in demand, and gives **preferential treatment** to certain patron groups, such as large student classes.
- The technical setup and maintenance of the PDA system was very **time-consuming**, at least initially.

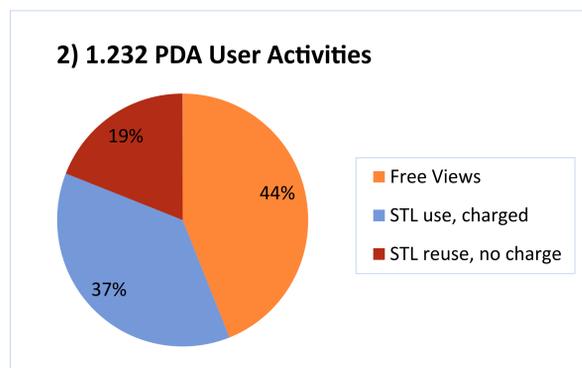
Observations

In total, 507 unique users performed 1.232 activities in the PDA pilot, over a period of 9 weeks in spring 2016. The activities involved 1.070 different book titles.

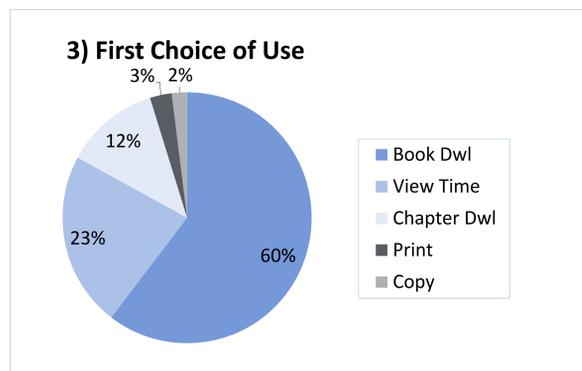
1) Half of the PDA users were casual visitors, who used the collection once during the 9 weeks. A small group (8%) were **heavy users**, who paid more than 5 visits.



2) Nearly half of the activity was **short browses**, which did not trigger any costs. Some titles were reused, but only triggered one payment. Thus almost 2/3 of all activities were free of charge.



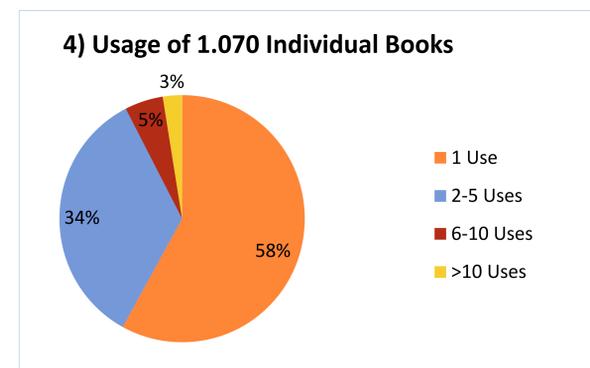
3) As their first choice of use, patrons clearly **preferred downloading** the entire book to reading it online.



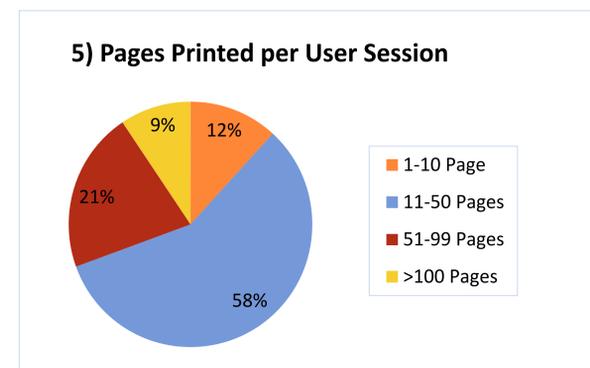
References

1. Fulton, Karin J. 2014. "The Rise of Patron Driven Acquisitions : A Literature Review". *Georgia Library Quarterly* 51(3).
2. NISO DDA Working Group. 2014. "Demand Driven Acquisition of Monographs : A Recommended Practice of the National Informations Standards Organization". *NISO RP-20-2014*. Approved June 2014.

4) During the brief experiment period, most books were used only once. But a small fraction of titles were used heavily, up to 60 times for the **most popular** book.



5) A few patrons chose to **print** from the e-books. When doing so, they printed more than just a few pages, in most cases an entire chapter or section. At least one patron printed an entire book.



6) Certain **subjects** were relatively popular or unpopular with patrons. We offered possible explanations for this.

