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.

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 bounces, 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.

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.

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 standard 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.

References