

**Expediting the delivery of content to library users: When to buy
versus when to borrow**

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Expediting the delivery of content to library users: When to buy versus when to borrow?

Abstract

If an item is not readily available in an academic library's collection, is it quicker to buy it or does it make better sense to borrow it? At a public, four-year institution, Acquisitions and ILL are exploring a new relationship to improve the users' experience. The question is determining what triggers the decision to borrow versus buy an item. The exploration is born of the institution's ongoing migration from a traditional to a demand driven based collections strategy. This article will elucidate how Acquisitions and ILL can work together to effectively deliver what users need when they need it.

Keywords: interlibrary loan, access, collection development, technical services, workflow analysis, monographs

Introduction

When it comes to accessing scholarly resources, ultimately, the goal of the academic library is to support the research and teaching mission of the university while also being proper stewards of university funds. As it relates to providing access to library resources, one objective is to acquire access to content that supports that goal while doing so in a timely manner. Over the past several years, the traditional philosophy of owning resources has been replaced by one of offering access to content through a combination of purchase and leased options. For print resources, if the book is not already on the shelf, is it quicker under a paradigm of "just-in-time" access to buy it or does it make better sense to borrow it? At The University of Alabama (UA) Libraries, Acquisitions and Interlibrary Loan (ILL) (situated in different departments and spanning both technical and public services), are exploring a relationship to improve the users'

experience. Namely, under present design consideration, is a strategy for determining when to buy versus when to borrow an item. This is an opportunity for our library to bridge the two portfolio areas and improve user services through better coordination and taking advantage of the skill sets that are present in each department.

For the purposes of this article, we are only considering this strategy as it pertains to monographs because journals are more complex (as they involve vendor relationships, licensing, etc.) and therefore we can certainly borrow faster than it takes to negotiate these issues as they pertain to user access. If our strategy works for print and e-books, however, we might anticipate a future state that involves setting up demand driven acquisitions (DDA) for articles etc., as well, but it would have to be demonstrably more advantageous than the ILL borrowing protocols already in place. And, doing so would also be dependent upon publishers and vendors developing purchasing and access models to make article DDA possible for larger research libraries. Current trends toward cancellation of “Big Deal” journal packages may also expedite the development of sustainable DDA options at the article level.

Some of the key considerations for when to buy versus when to borrow relate to issues such as cost, space and storage, potential usage, and overarching collection strategy. This article will shed light on how ILL and Acquisitions are working together to develop a system for quickly determining how and when a book should be purchased versus borrowed toward the improved experience of users, under the premise of a purchase at the point of need collections strategy. It will also offer an adoptable framework for how institutions might explore a relationship between purchasing and borrowing that makes sense for the institution and best supports the user experience.

Literature Review

Contemporary, digitally-mediated access to information has elevated patron expectations of improved, if not instantaneous, delivery of content (Cassidy, Ketner, Litsey, & McEniry, 2015). A large part of this notion can be linked to American consumer culture of shopping online wherein Amazon, specifically, has enhanced the timeframe for book access standards (Price & Savova, 2015). Correlative to this change in patron expectations, “libraries are also measuring user experience and behavior in new ways” (Appleton, Clarke, Kaplan, Roach, & Kemp Goldfinger, 2016, p. 201). Instead of guessing what users need and buying materials for the collection, libraries have begun obtaining materials at the point-of-need (Goedeken & Lawson, 2015). And, increasingly, academic libraries are being measured less by what they own and more by what they can provide access to (Appleton, Clarke, Kaplan, Roach, & Kemp Goldfinger, 2016). It could be said that the paradigm is shifting from “does the library have this item?” to “how long will it take the library to get it for me?” (Price & Savova, 2015). In some instances, library spending has also shifted away from ownership toward access and that impacts the buy versus borrow question at the item level as well (Price & Savova, 2015).

If academic libraries want to remain relevant to the users to whom they provide services, they need to think about how immediate access to scholarly material will help meet their users’ information needs. (Cassidy, Ketner, Litsey, & McEniry, 2015). The threat of shrinking monograph budgets requires libraries to rely more heavily upon leased content available through subscription packages, which provide the lowest cost per title, and therefore, understanding the access-versus-ownership implications and having a plan in place has become imperative (Schroeder & Boughan, 2018). Current library trends, at least from 2005 to present, emphasize DDA and “Big Deal” subscription journal packages (Appleton, Clarke, Kaplan, Roach, & Kemp Goldfinger, 2016). And, ultimately, libraries are working to transform a perceived dead end in a

catalog into an access opportunity (Scott & Barton, 2018). Interlibrary loan has long filled this void and the items requested via ILL represent unmet user needs (Walker & Arthur, 2018).

However, even if ILL requests can shed light on the specific materials users searched for, and did not discover in the collection, how much do ILL requests indicate trends about future use? Is it actually a void in the collection to be remedied by a purchase or is it more likely to represent a one-time, finite need? A title requested via ILL a certain number of times may make it a strong candidate for a purchase (Price & Savova, 2015). Perhaps a worthwhile collection development strategy involves examining user behavior as it pertains to ILL (Barton, Relyea, & Knowlton, 2018). Before the advent of publicly searchable catalogs, ILL was a discrete and opaque service to library users (Scott & Barton, 2018). Over the years, ILL has become more transparent and Texas Tech University Libraries have even created a “Book Raider App” as a mobile solution to link their users directly to ILL services from their personal devices (Cassidy, Ketner, Litsey, & McEniry, 2015). Perhaps it would be advantageous to promote ILL usage by making the service both more visible and more convenient as Texas Tech has done in order to better assist the user (Scott & Barton, 2018). While an app may not be necessary at every academic library, perhaps training sessions, printed and online information guides, and the like might better demystify the ILL process for the user (Cassidy, Ketner, Litsey, & McEniry, 2015).

Using ILL data to inform collection development decisions is also a recognition that librarians can never fully comprehend the information needs of their users (Barton, Relyea, & Knowlton, 2018). Further, the efforts of librarian liaisons have, in institutions with DDA approaches, shifted from title selection to outreach and support for academic programs and this change also meant that liaisons would spend time reviewing the profile instead of participating in direct selection activities (Walker & Arthur, 2018). While that may be an affront to librarians

who esteem their work of recommending purchases for collection development, there exists a lot of confusion, even among them for how ILL and Acquisitions actually work (Cassidy, Ketner, Litsey, & McEniry, 2015).

Although, it should be noted that librarians can serve as powerful checks and balances on a DDA system to steer the academic library away from the pitfall of acquiring books of low scholarly merit - as may happen with a fully automated, non-librarian engaged, DDA system (Tyler, Hitt, Nterful, & Mettling, 2019). As it pertains to developing a long-lasting collection, it is not necessarily safe to rely solely on patrons using DDA because a user is often seeking information that solves an immediate problem or project, and long-term research goals may not be represented by items selected today (Goedecken & Lawson, 2015). One of the critiques of the DDA model is that it removes the librarian from the selection process, thereby giving the patron too much control (Lewis & Kennedy, 2019). However, it is also worth noting that the 80/20 rule tends to stand firm, meaning that a large portion of titles librarians select are never circulated – and not because they are not quality titles (Walker & Arthur, 2018).

Librarians, like any subsection of the human population, can struggle with role changes and DDA represents a major shift to selector behavior (Vermeer, 2015). DDA itself, actually evolved from - and was based upon - the nature of incoming ILL requests (Goedeken & Lawson, 2015). Effective and efficient materials selection is a difficult process, and academic librarians involved in collection building are often at odds to satisfy multiple - and competing - needs (Tyler, Hitt, Nterful, & Mettling, 2019). Previous studies have considered whether a significant difference exists in the usage of books acquired through approval plans and those selected by librarians (Schroeder & Boughan, 2018). If specific patterns in ILL can indicate a need for

specific titles; then an ownership model could be more easily justified. (Barton, Relyea, & Knowlton, 2018).

Sometimes ILL transactions can happen much more quickly than a purchase, too, depending upon the request and how long it might take to receive it, particularly if it is in a digital format (Appleton, Clarke, Kaplan, Roach, & Kemp Goldfinger, 2016). ILL requests may be able to tell you broadly about disciplines wherein the library's holdings need to be bolstered, if one thinks in terms of strengthening subject areas instead of buying specific titles (Barton, Relyea, & Knowlton, 2018). Borrowing via ILL can be less expensive than purchasing journals as periodicals are often part of "Big Deals," but this may not necessarily be the case when compared to the cost per use of purchasing a print book (Barton, Relyea, & Knowlton, 2018). And, of course, it is always a balancing act between user needs and dwindling collection development dollars (Vermeer, 2015). Libraries also need to consider how to manage campus faculties' expectations of collection development in order to avoid the fallout from misunderstandings (Spratt, Wiersma, Glazier, & Pan, 2017).

It is important to consider how ILL requests might trigger a purchase (Barton, Relyea, & Knowlton, 2018). ILL can serve as a powerful informer of collection needs when considered in this capacity. It is a piece of the puzzle that allows librarians working within a DDA system to understand how academic disciplines may be working to shape their collections at their home academic institutions (Dewland & See, 2015). The best DDA model for any library depends on a combination of the institution's collection goals and financial means (Downey & Zhang, 2020). In fact, such an analysis of buying needs and purchase practices can allow academic libraries leverage in budget discussions and larger strategic planning conversations where libraries must continuously demonstrate their value (Dewland & See, 2015). Like any program, DDA needs a

longitudinal approach in assessment, and this, in turn, can help answer questions about usage (Downey & Zhang, 2020).

The other aspect in considering whether to purchase versus borrow relates to workflow and staff time and compensation. Streamlining delivery workflows are mission critical to the success of any ILL or DDA program (Garskof, Morris, Ballock, & Anderson, 2016). There is always a need to ensure that staff are working as efficiently as possible to avoid duplication of work or missed steps in any process (Lewis & Kennedy, 2019). Whenever comparing cost and content, it is also imperative to consider the different models of acquisition in terms of workflow (Spratt, Wiersma, Glazier, and Pan, 2017). And, in turn, workflow should remain fluid and changeable, constantly evolving to leverage against obstacles facing both ILL and acquisitions (Vermeer, 2015). Process mapping, workflow analysis, and consultations with staff are key ingredients for creating a seamless access system (Lewis & Kennedy, 2019). Staff are also key to investigating issues with out-of-scope materials in a DDA pool (Roll, 2016). Once the process is familiar, a system can be designed that works for the given academic library. Procedural documentation on how to choose to buy or borrow can become an easily condensable guide for staff to refer to at their desks (Lewis & Kennedy, 2019).

Background

The University of Alabama (UA) Libraries in Tuscaloosa, Alabama, USA, are comprised of four campus branches and support a student community of over 38,000 undergraduates (as of 2017, 2018, and 2019). It has achieved R1 status, “very high research activity,” in the Carnegie Classification of Institutions of Higher Education. UA is a four-year, doctoral-granting university, and offers more than 70 undergraduate programs in 12 colleges and schools. To support the research and educational mission of the university, UA Libraries provides access to a

collection of both physical and electronic resources. Holdings at the UA Libraries include over 4.1 million volumes and access to approximately 199,515 full text print and electronic journals. UA Libraries also provides access to over 596 major electronic resources via Springshare's A-Z Database Management Tool. Current ebook holdings top more than 1.5 million titles.

Setting the Stage for Collaboration

This particular exploration was born of the UA Libraries' ongoing migration from a traditional to a demand driven collections strategy that emphasizes return on investment. While examining ILL fill-rate statistics, a deeper dive revealed this opportunity for Acquisitions to collaborate with ILL in brainstorming a mechanism for triggering a quick decision between buying and borrowing; one that ultimately fulfills the request in a cost-effective manner while not interfering with the ever-important turn-around time for the user's request.

Presently, in the UA Libraries, incoming requests for print books are treated differently depending upon how the requestor submits them. This is a problematic artifact from when the library had a traditional model for collections that emphasized subject area collection building. A traditional collections strategy at UA was in use up until March 2016 when DDA replaced it (Walker & Arthur, 2018). At the present time, book requests through the library's website as well as those submitted on behalf of faculty by a liaison begin the acquisitions process. However, the same book requested via ILL most often results in a loan request made to another library. The library intends to review this practice with the intention of operating under a set of codified rules. While user requests will continue to flow into each department, the overarching parameters for determining purchase vs. borrow will be shared with both staff areas and used to help direct decisions about purchasing vs. borrowing. Doing so will help ensure that every request for every print and e-book item is evaluated in an equitable way. It will also streamline collections from an

internal library perspective and will reduce perceptions of favoritism, etc. from users who notice different treatment stemming from how they put forward their requests. This is particularly important as the University of Alabama Libraries migrates from one catalog discovery interface (Voyager) to another (FOLIO-EDS) during the coming academic year.

ILL and STLs

It is important to elucidate the concept that ILL is not actually a “free” service. It is easy to conflate the act of borrowing with something being free of cost when compared to making a purchase outright; but ILL borrowing is not actually free at all as it requires employee processing time (at both the borrowing and lending institution), measured in terms of employee salary, as well as associated shipping costs. It is also worth considering the indirect cost of the “shelf space” at the institution that houses the book to be loaned and the waiting time as opposed to expedited shipping for print or nearly automatic access for e-books purchased via Acquisitions. Shipping fees, employee processing time, and shelf space in the library as it pertains to ILL is significant when added up together. For print resources, the time it takes to acquire the materials from a lending library, process them, and find shelf space for them prior to delivery to a user must also be considered in the overall discussion of purchase vs. borrow. These factors have become more important as the time it takes acquisitions to identify, purchase, and process print materials has decreased due to streamlining internal processes.

While the aforementioned refers primarily to print, e-books may provide a cost-effective way to provide access to content that would have previously been acquired in print format via ILL. E-books are often available to users with 24 hours from the time Acquisitions processes the order in GOBI. Titles available via DDA and particularly those that are eligible for short term loan (STL) may be more cost effective for the library than borrowing print. STLs, as enabled in

the catalog, provide limited access at a reduced price. For items that may only be used once or twice, a STL trigger may be the most cost-effective option when compared to borrowing via ILL or buying outright via Acquisitions. At the UA Libraries, DDA cost and use support the notion that for most books, STL is more cost effective than purchase as most books do not reach the 3 trigger uses that result in a purchase. Even when a book incurs 2 STL charges - and then a purchase - the cost per use on the books is often still lower because these books tend to get even more use than regular DDA materials. Even e-books purchased via DDA on first use still have a relatively low cost-per-use. (Walker & Arthur, 2018)

Armed with this information, ILL staff might begin to consider whether acquiring e-book content one chapter at a time (when that is possible) is worth it if they can work with Acquisitions to secure access through purchase or to have the title moved to the DDA pool where the STL process can be launched. The impact of a robust DDA program and the move to purchase based on demonstrated need, as an overarching library philosophy, contribute to this exploration of how Acquisitions and ILL can collaborate more effectively to provide a more cost-effective solution for library users and potentially improve delivery time of books.

Liaisons Roles

Another consideration at the UA Libraries has been the involvement of liaisons with regards to incoming requests, given the move to DDA as a collection strategy. Currently, liaisons submit purchase requests directly to Acquisitions and each liaison has firm order funds assigned to them for each of the disciplines they manage. DDA may have changed their roles from that of librarians helping to build collection content to that of the liaison who focuses more on outreach to their subject areas and assists users with more methods of information access. UA Libraries, like many academic research institutions, no longer has a primary focus on building collections;

the focus is now about acquiring content at the point-of-need. Therefore, all requests for materials need to be evaluated based on shared criteria whether the request originates in Acquisitions or ILL.

Impact of User-Based Selection on Acquisitions and ILL

The UA library participates in demand driven and evidence-based purchasing for monographs and these models have shown to be cost effective and popular with users. The ability to provide access to far more content than was previously available to users is a key benefit to these models that ultimately rest on the premise that libraries will shift from purchase based on anticipated need toward a reliance on purchase based on demonstrated need. As it relates to the current discussion regarding purchase or borrow at the point of need, this idea of relying on users to determine what is acquired within the libraries means that, for both print and e-books, the library will need to find the best ways to determine how to provide the user with the best service.

If requests from UA library users are received into ILL then, for the most part, a determination is made as to whether or not the content is already owned or if it needs to be acquired from another library. If that same requests comes in through the standard library request form or via a liaison to Acquisitions, then a pre-order review is conducted to determine if the content is already available to the user. If the content is not accessible via any known library access points, then the process begins to identify availability and initiate purchase. So why is a request (demonstrated need) for the same content handled so differently? For purposes of this initial workflow analysis the library has chosen to focus only on print requests coming into ILL from the UA community.

Factors Influencing Purchase vs. Borrow

The concept of reviewing all incoming requests in a seamless manner within the library probably does not seem that revolutionary. But, without clear and shared processes, the result to both long term collection strategy and user services can be dramatically different. While both departments, Acquisitions and ILL, will work diligently to acquire the material as quickly as possible, the options available to each area of the library may produce very different results. This can be based on availability, speed of access to the content, and many other factors. So why does it matter where the initial request is received, and can there be one set of parameters for reviewing incoming requests?

As the library begins to consider current practices and endeavors to design a new roadmap for reviewing requests, it is important to identify some key parameters to help shape the discussion. First, all requests for tangible materials need to be evaluated individually based on a number of factors including type of material, relevancy to the teaching and research mission of the university, and the current status of the requestor. Decisions to purchase or borrow may rest on whether it is a print book, a DVD, a music score, or another material type. Other libraries might not lend certain types of materials, for example. Likewise, when considering the requestor, a faculty member's request for content to be used in a course will have more weight than an undergraduate's request for a popular novel.

While workflow analysis can identify areas where continuous improvement can streamline processes or result in the elimination of redundancies, it will not necessarily result in overall cost savings. Staff may be freed up to assume other job duties but the impetus for changes in how incoming library requests are reviewed and processed may result in slight reductions in materials cost and not in salaries. In fact, it should be noted that development of new procedures and policies related to the review of processing incoming requests could actually

result in slightly higher staffing costs; though this might be the trade-off for improved services to library users through additional ownership to content that previously would have been borrowed and subsequently returned to the lending library.

There is also a need to respond to perceptions that the new procedures proposed as a result of this project will improve delivery time of content to users. While there may be some improvement on delivery time it should be noted that there is not currently a voiced concern within either Acquisitions or ILL regarding delivery time. Staffing in both areas is still actively involved with print processing even as the library has moved toward more emphasis on e-resources. As the migration has taken place with a result in less print acquired, there has been a steady reduction in staffing dedicated to the management of print resources. The remaining staff members still have to manage the print processing whether purchased or borrowed. It can be said that one can only be so efficient before one is no longer effective so as long as there is a need for print resources then staffing will need to be allocated toward processing regardless of how it is acquired. Key to this project will be how successful the library can be at identifying selection criteria for review of incoming requests in ILL and Acquisitions.

Determining Key Decision Points for Purchase vs. Borrow

Incoming requests for monographs, in particular, should be evaluated as much as possible based on perceived future use; whether it is of broad interest or esoteric. It was noted previously that the library has made a dramatic shift toward purchase on demand via demand driven and evidence-based purchasing for monographs. As the library explores purchase vs. borrow, the factors of space and storage will be considered. While borrowing does include costs for processing and staff time, the trade-off is that there is not long-term shelving of the item, or cataloging and processing required to make it shelf ready.

There is not one correct solution, so the challenge is to develop some guidelines to help staff who will be on the front line of receiving incoming requests and be able to quickly route them to the correct department. Ultimately, timing is everything because the goal will be to continue the high level of service currently provided by each department while also considering if steps can be taken at the time to make more effective decisions that benefit the library in the long term while possibly improving the speed at which materials reach the end user.

While the goal of this project is to explore the development of a single set of criteria for helping library staff review and correct route incoming requests, it is clear there will be limitations. For example, incoming requests for print books that are available electronically will require a different set of review criteria. Will the library simply move toward a policy of not acquiring print when there is an electronic version available? If so, then that will impact the current policies in both departments. What about requests coming into ILL for books that are rather expensive? If we can borrow them for less cost that may become the deciding factor at the point of request even if a purchase of the title might be to the long-term benefit of the library. There may be a price point that will determine the outcome, if the price exceeds an acceptable level. Delivery time may also be a factor that impacts how an incoming request is handled regardless of which department receives it. If a print book can be borrowed, and yet it is coming from a distant library that will result in a long delay while a purchase with rush delivery will reduce the time to end user then that may sway the final decision.

Purchasing vs Borrowing Criteria

Given the priorities of the UA libraries when it comes to purchasing an item, the following initial parameters have been developed in order to help guide decision making in both departments as it relates to what the library should consider purchasing instead of borrowing.

These parameters were customized at UA based on a similar list of criteria developed by the University of Tennessee, Knoxville for determining when to buy versus when to borrow:

1. Focus on English language monographs published in the last 5 years
2. Priority is on e-book, not print. When print requests are received the library will first explore e-book options. If possible, add requested book to the DDA pool.
3. ILL requested books need to be available for expedited delivery via Amazon in order to maintain expectations for delivery to library user.
4. ILL requested books considered for purchase must be in stock.
5. All books considered for purchase should be academic in nature and support the teaching and research mission of the university. This excludes popular fiction, children's and young adult literature and how-to and self-help books.
6. Requests for access to one or more chapters may also result in a purchase if the book matches up to the established criteria.
7. The library has a no textbook policy. Textbooks should not be purchased or borrowed as part of this project. Some liaisons may purchase traditional textbooks but this should be based on the merits of the title rather than the fact it was assigned to a course. Some textbooks are seminal works and probably should be in an academic collection but this is rare.
8. Acquisitions will review new requests based on these criteria and forward to ILL those that do not meet the purchasing criteria including, older materials that do not replace lost or missing items already in the collection, and titles that are within the 5 year period yet out of print.

The pilot project will begin with these parameters and focus on collaborative and timely interactions between the departments to address questions in the early stages. Existing, and frequently monitored, departmental email accounts will provide the most effective method of communication between the departments when a request has met (or failed) the criteria listed

above and needs to be moved to the other for additional consideration. Members of each department will review materials based on the list above, and hand off requests to the other department if it is outside of their area's parameters. This collaboration will lead to regular meetings wherein the criteria are reviewed and updated to help improve the process. Members will continue to review the established list and then use feedback to adjust, as needed.

Ultimately, the goal will be to ensure that all known costs for Acquisitions and ILL are considered against the short- and long-term needs of the library in a manner that results in more efficient acquisition of content via ILL or Acquisitions, improved responses to users, and faster delivery of materials.

COVID-19

Unexpectedly, in March 2020, the University of Alabama, like most other universities in the United States, closed for an additional week post Spring Break due to the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak. While the week-long extension to Spring Break was expected to be finite, the resulting work-from-home orders for the campus in response to the global pandemic extended well into June 2020 with limited on campus operations planned through fall 2020. The situation shed light on the users' point of view about print and added to the buy versus borrow conversation in ways that were unanticipated.

We discovered that interlibrary loan is apparently understood by our faculty (and graduate student users) as being about access to print books. The bulk of ILL's work at the University of Alabama is centered on acquiring digital copies of articles and delivering them to our users. However, faculty understood our "digital only" ILL for the three months of mandatory COVID-19 shutdown as being inadequate based on their queries of, "when is 'real' ILL coming back?" This question, asked by teaching faculty, and echoed by their liaison librarians, indicates

that ILL is largely understood by our users to be a print-based service. Further complicating the ILL print experience for faculty was that they – and even some of their librarian liaisons – did not understand what it actually takes for a successful interlibrary loan print transaction to transpire. Not only did the University of Alabama need to be open to receive the print book, the members in our lending network needed to be onsite at their institutions in order to pull the book from their shelves and send it to us via mail or courier service based on our request for the item.

The forced closure of the library had other ramifications as well. Acquisitions fielded questions about whether or not faculty should continue submitting requests for books or if they should hold off until the eventual reopening date. With acquisitions staff working from home, many tasks normally completed in-office could be executed at home. However, with looming budget cuts stemming from the refunding of tens of thousands of students' room and board monies as they were sent away from campus for the remainder of spring semester 2020, the library's collection budget was left in an uncertain state. Print books that may once have been ordered based on a simple faculty request, would now require additional consideration based on new budget constraints. Print selection and processing was also on hold because vendors were not shipping materials, the library could not receive shipments, and print materials could not circulate. Quickly, Acquisitions moved to processing e-book orders, adding titles to the DDA pool and improving access to streaming video.

In the unprecedented global shutdown precipitated by COVID-19, access to print suffered another hurdle; namely that of personal purchases made by our users. Whereas Amazon is sometimes seen as the “competitor” to library collection building, the pandemic created a new reality in which only “essential necessities” were being shipped with any regularity. Print books were not understood as being essential (to the dismay of scholars), so the situation played out in

that our faculty users' last ditch "I'll just buy it myself" response to acquiring print was also thwarted. This added an entirely new wrinkle to the access conversation. Namely, "what can faculty do when their campus libraries are closed, print ILL is unable to function, Amazon is not delivering with any regularity, and bookstores (a last resort) are closed, as well? If ever there was a case that supports the libraries' move to a new collection strategy this, is it. During the COVID-19 closure and subsequent limited operations, discovery of electronic resources was at an all-time high and further emphasizes the need for both departments to implement shared guidelines that result in user requests being fulfilled using an electronic access first policy.

Conclusion

The University of Alabama Libraries have been in a steady five-year migration toward e-books as the primary format and with a particular focus on DDA and EBA models. These trends will continue and collaboration between Acquisitions and ILL will impact the library's ability to make the content available as quickly as possible. These changes, however, will not make the library lose sight of the fact that there will always be a need for some print monographs or other tangible formats. Another positive result of this project will be to establish a new focus on how both departments share responsibility for making good decisions from both the library and user perspectives when acquiring print as well as e-books.

Further, the new COVID environment has hastened the move to more electronic access. It now appears that acquisition of print materials will be limited to those situations when essential content is only available in that format. It is yet to be seen exactly how review of incoming print requests will be handled. However, it is clear that because the university may have to move back to online only classes and limited on campus business operations there is a new emphasis on pushing even reluctant users to e-content whenever possible. This new trend

does not negatively impact the planned pilot project and, in fact, only emphasizes the need for such a program to help ensure that both departments are considering e-access to all content as the priority for the library. Doing so also means that the content will most likely be suited for use in online courses and available 24/7 to library users wherever they may be located.

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