
Best Practices in Defining a Collection Development Strategy and Evaluating Business Models for eBooks

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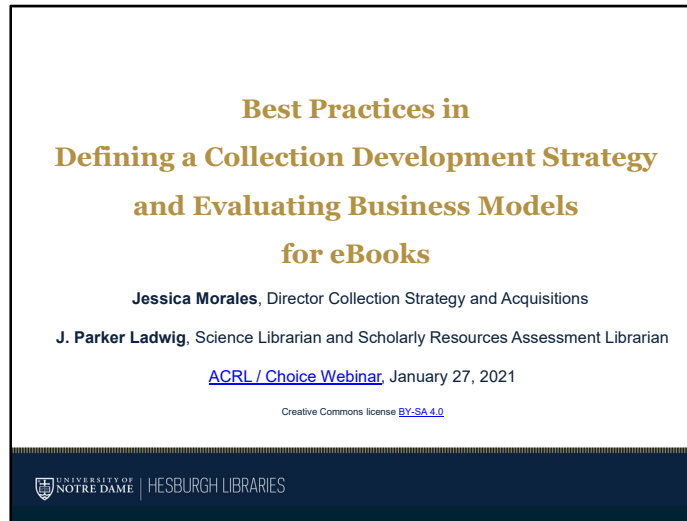
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Jessica: Today Parker and I are going to discuss best practices around defining a collection development strategy and evaluating business models for ebooks.



"The ebook acquisition landscape is complex with multiple vendors, platforms, and purchase models to navigate. Despite this complexity ..., libraries are effectively handling the challenges and do not see them as insurmountable barriers to acquiring ebook content."

Novak, John, A. Ohler, and A. Day. "Ebook Collection Development in Academic Libraries: Examining Preference, Management, and Purchasing Patterns." ACRL/Choice. 2020, i. <http://choice360.org/librarianship/whitepaper>.

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Parker – New report from ACRL/Choice. This quote from the executive summary sums up things well.

Facts & Figures

- University of Notre Dame** (founded 1842), private Catholic
- Carnegie classification. R1: Doctoral Universities—very high research activity
 - Operating budget for FY 2020-21: \$1.7 billion
 - 1,396 instructional faculty; 3,950 graduate students; 8,731 undergraduates and 75 majors
- Hesburgh Libraries** (Hesburgh Library, 3 branches)
- Expenditures for FY 2020-21: \$31.5 million; Acquisitions: \$12.9 million
 - Continuations: \$8.7 million; One-time: \$4.2 million (32%)
 - 153 staff, 53 non-tenured faculty, incl. 25 subject librarians

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Parker will take lead

One-time: About \$600k is committed to ebook packages; the rest is a mix of print and ebook, with print still predominating

Hesburgh Library "Touchdown Jesus" (Word of Life Mural)



<https://www.facebook.com/NDLibraries/>

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Parker will take lead



Jessica: Defining a collection development strategy and evaluating business models begins with support from upper-level administration. The first level of support comes in the form of staffing positions whose roles and responsibilities support data-informed decision-making which is the backbone of our collection strategy approach. I've highlighted four areas that support collection development strategy. The first being strategic direction, stewardship of the budget, content selection, and data gathering, analysis, and product evaluation. Within our organization these responsibilities are upheld by a variety of positions. In this slide those positions that are listed at the top of the list are closest aligned to the daily operations of that area.

The program director focuses on the strategic direction, stewardship of central funds, setting priorities across the program, along with negotiations.


The collections data analyst is responsible for gathering, analyzing and preparing reports, these efforts help inform selection and deselection decisions.

Our electronic resources associates handle the day-to-day operations around electronic resources management, and they provide support for data gathering for smaller scale projects and ad hoc requests. They also address access issues and note the quality of support we received on the providers end.

We recently underwent a reorganization and we now have subject librarians spread across multiple programs, most of the subject librarians have dual responsibilities depending on their overall workload. Including responsibilities for scholarly resource assessment. Subject librarians are our conduit to our faculty and help us truly understand the needs for research and teaching. They also steward funds assigned to support specific disciplines

Our Associate University Librarian as well as our University Library and set the strategic direction and objectives they also set priorities at the highest level. Last, but not least the Office of Finance and Administration work closely with us to set the budget every year and do forecasting.

Parker will talk about SRA Librarians -- As a team, the three SRA Librarians collectively serve as a collection strategies network, working across divisions, programs, and units to facilitate discussion regarding library collections. We are responsible for managing discussion around collection growth, disposition, renewals, shared print initiatives, and collaborative funding approaches. We are also a voice for the Libraries' key stakeholders and advocate for policies, practices, process improvement, and shared concerns in the best interest of all constituents. I work with the STEM and business subject librarians; my colleague Mark Robison works with the social sciences librarians; and my colleague Julia Schneider works with the humanities, arts, and architecture librarians.



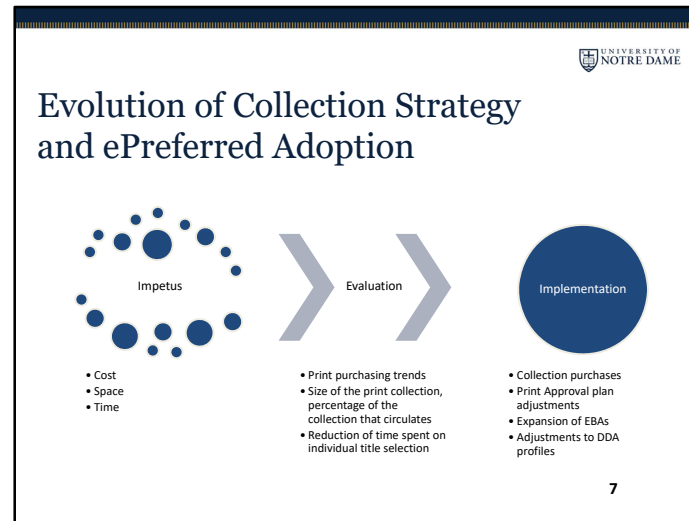
Strategy Drives Evaluation and Selection of Business Models

Hesburgh Libraries Strategic Initiative:

Develop scalable, strategic, and responsive collections to advance teaching and research within a sustainable budget.

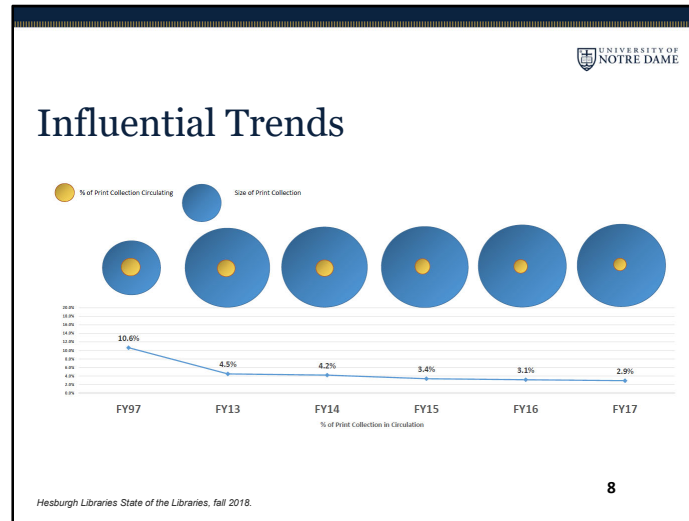
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Jessica: On the last slide I mentioned Strategic Direction being an instrumental component of collection development strategy and I wanted to highlight that area again here. I am sure we are not alone in tackling competing priorities and managing a constant influx of projects and new ideas. The way we are able to balance all of this is through our strategic initiative process. Strategic initiatives carry weight within our organization and guide priorities at every level. This academic year one of our strategic initiatives is to develop scalable, strategic and responsive collections that advanced teaching and research - and to do so within a sustainable budget.

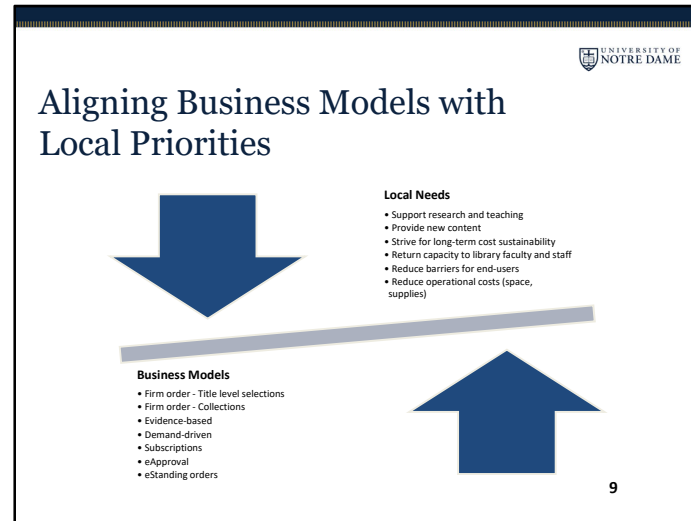


Jessica: As we read in the literature and engage in conversations amongst colleagues throughout the profession, the user related advantages of ebooks, are well known and significant - and preference for format no longer holds the weight that it once did. However, at the University of Notre Dame, we are still a bit behind in that trend. Just four years ago we moved to an ePreferred model for our collections, the driving factors behind that decision were Cost, Space, and Time - with many circumstances following into all three of these buckets. As we moved toward adopting an ePreferred model we examined our historical print purchasing trends, particularly looking at publishers and subjects and the circulation history. We also already had a fair number of ebooks in our collection, and we able to consider that data in this context as well. On a larger organizational level we were looking for ways to reduce the amount of time that was spent on individual title-level selections so we could focus more energies on other strategic areas such as data management, teaching and outreach. As we moved into the implementation phase of an epreferred strategy we let those pieces of data from the evaluation phase guide implementation - which resulted in focusing on frontlist collection purchases with specific publishers.

Parker – some differences among broad subject areas because of disciplinary practices. STEM first to adopt, social sciences next, humanities slower



Jessica: I want to revisit our largest influential factor that informed the decision to adopt ePreferred. From this graph you can see that over time our print collection, which is represented here by these blue circle continued to grow and grow, while the percentage of the collection that circulated was dwindling. This growth rate was not sustainable in terms of the space that we have available.



Jessica: Now that we have our organizational support in place, momentum has been built - we can really began to focus on our local needs and priorities and examining how various ebook business models can support us meeting those goals. Our primary goal is to support research and teaching on our campus through access to scholarly resources, while being responsible stewards of our funds, so we naturally seek out options at provide longer term cost sustainability. We've particularly found evidence based acquisition models provide us with the flexibility we need in terms of cost and while simultaneously making a large amount of content available. This is particularly of importance to us for STEM resources, where we have budget constraints. Of course, all EBAs are built a little different, and we certainly prefer and prioritize those that include frontlist content. Previously, I mentioned that we were looking to return capacity to our library faculty, so we could prioritize other initiatives where their expertise was needed. One of the ways that we have been able to accomplish that is through our collection purchases - so by switching to publishers based eApproval models and firm order subject collection purchases we were able to reduce the time spent on title level selections.

Another priority that we have is reducing barriers for the end-user and have found demand driven models

beneficial in accomplishing this goal, by being able to curate a wide selection of resources on one platform. However, there are challenges in balancing this when it comes to platform preference and DRM restrictions.

We'll never be able to provide immediate access to every ebook available, at least within the models that the current marketplace offers, so we will continue to get title level selection requests and use firm order single title purchases to fulfill those requests.

We have personally moved away from subscription based e-book models because we have a high priority of ownership, or rather perpetual rights over access.

We used to have a substantial print approval in place, which has decreased significantly in size over the past several years, however we continue to examine best approaches. Earlier this fiscal we considered shifting the entire plan or portions of the plan to e. After working with our vendor on understanding the cost implications we decided not to move forward. I do want to give the caveat about my mentions of returning capacity to the organization. Are focus was strategic in returning capacity in a certain area, but the increase in electronic content did result in the demand for more support electronic resources management and analysis and evaluations, some of those needs were able to be met with our reorganization.

Challenges Influencing the Decisions

Pricing

DRM restrictions

Publications released after print

Duplication control

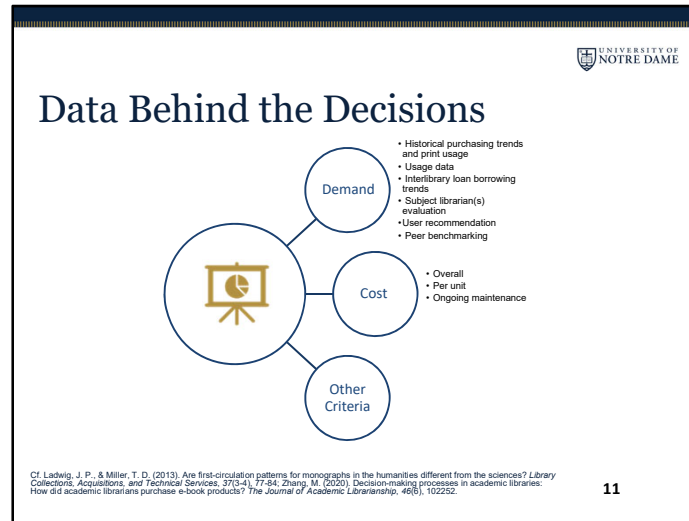
Platform

Discovery/Metadata

Preservation

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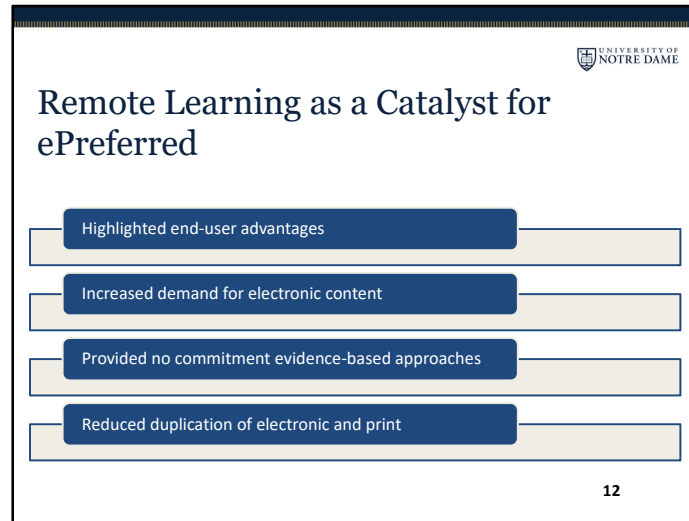
Parker— be brief on this slide, example of duplication control



Parker takes the lead . Often forget this part of our evaluation. Include Zhang article

Both while evaluating a product and after its acquisition, the return on investment (ROI) or cost per use / demand should be assessed. Demand is measured not only by hard numbers, like usage data, but also by qualitative data like a subject librarian's evaluation or feedback from users. One particular challenge is defining "low use" -- because more than half of print books acquired by a library never circulate, even 1 use is good. But when evaluating a subject collection, for example, do we focus on the total usage of the entire collection, or do we focus on the highest used individual titles?

Cost includes not only the overall purchase price or annual subscription, but the cost of acquiring MARC / RDA metadata and ongoing maintenance costs (i.e., is the product easy to keep up, or does it require a lot of attention). Sometimes the cost per unit or per ebook is helpful, for example, if you could purchase individual titles through an EBA model. But sometimes it isn't -- why look at unit cost when a subject collection of hundreds of books is the only option?



Jessica: I've shared that we're a little bit behind the curve on adopting an epreferred approach, some of the factors behind this may be attributed to our historically heavy emphasis on the humanities, as well as the fact that pre-pandemic we did not offer online classes, except on limited occasions, and our students are required to live on-campus for their first three years, and many choose to remain on-campus all four years. So, remote learning as a result of the pandemic has really been a catalyst for us in fully embracing ebooks. The end-user advantages of ebooks were immediately highlighted when we moved to fully remote learning, we also saw a huge increase in demand for electronic content from our faculty and students that we didn't see before.

During this period many publishers made content freely accessible, which allowed us to make some data-informed decisions in a commitment free environment, which further boosted our confidence in this area. Of course this also with some set backs when access was removed and funding wasn't available.

Parker: advantage foe ebooks and reserces

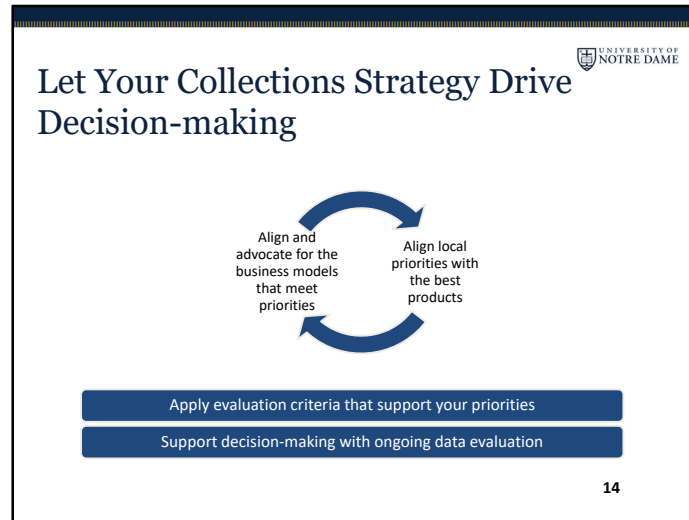
End-user advantages – reserves, for example




Jessica: As we continually examine our strategies, and look to optimize collection building we frequently examine where we are and where we want to be, and those steps that are going to get us there. We've done a lot in terms of shifting our strategy in the past couple of years and we are currently in a period of review, and examining the sustainability of our past choices. One of the ways we have done that is by looking at our ROI, specifically looking at overall percentages of title used in a package, how many years it takes for a specific package to get 50% or 60% of that content used - are we hitting that marker.

We are preparing to launch a community of practice under one of our strategic initiatives to build a shared understanding through dialog around collection building approaches, along with other topics of interest.

We are committing to moving away from chasing the latest hottest deal and really focusing on our priorities.



Jessica: In conclusion, we want to emphasize that the Strategy you develop to meet your own institutional goals should drive your decision-making. Align your priorities with available ebook models and products - and don't lose focus on your evaluation criteria and available data. If you don't see an option that fits your needs, advocate for one!. We've been able to successfully work with publishers and vendors to put in place models that weren't initially offered.



Questions?

- Jessica Morales, Program Director, Collection Strategy and Acquisitions, jmorale9@nd.edu
- J. Parker Ladwig, Science Librarian and Scholarly Resources Assessment Librarian, ladwig.1@nd.edu
- Link to presentation, [doi:10.7274/r0-2y9q-bh73](https://doi.org/10.7274/r0-2y9q-bh73)

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Existing practices – how your library's subject librarians are currently making decisions
Disciplines – STEM, social sciences, humanities