The Library facilitated collection:
the challenges of managing collections shaped by user choice and publisher bundling

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Rethinking Collections
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the challenges of managing collections shaped by user choice and publisher bundling

- What do we understand by these approaches?
- Can they ever be reconciled?
- Are we compromising the integrity of future collections by letting our users determine what we purchase?
- Is the role of the librarian being terminally eroded?
- Can we successfully blend these and other strategies in the service of our core users?
Approaches to Collection Development (1)

- User choice = patron led, patron-driven
- Publisher bundling = big deal – esp, but not exclusively for journals

- What’s missing?
- How else do we develop our collections?
Approaches to Collection Development (2)

- User choice = patron led, patron-driven
- Publisher bundling = big deal – esp, but not exclusively for journals
- **Plus…**
- Scholar/Librarian selects = traditional approach, building collections for the future
## Scholar/Librarian led Collection Development

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Approaches to CD</th>
<th>scholar/librarian led</th>
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</table>
| **typified by**        | title by title selection  
plus gifts and donations - "it might be useful one-day" 
separate funds for different formats 
rigidly defined school/departmental budgets |
| **defining characteristics** | "every academic library worthy of the name should have this" 
"we've got holdings back to vol 1..." 
mostly print based 
may still apply to reading lists |
| **strengths**          | comprehensive coverage?  
b - but only as far as budget allows 
maintains breadth and depth of collections  
building for the future |
| **weaknesses**         | can be inflexible  
hard to broker cancellations  
just in case provision  
questionable ROI  
relatively slow pace of change  
not particularly user focussed |
Too much Scholar/Librarian led collection development???

Newcastle University Library in the 1920s

“Outstanding Library Team”
# Publisher-led Collection Development

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Approaches to CD</th>
<th>publisher-led</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>typified by</strong></td>
<td>the big deal - mostly for e journals, but also for ebooks sometimes both formats bundled together top-sliced funding - replacing departmental level budgets publisher decides what you get</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>defining characteristics</strong></td>
<td>as much as you can eat... (or afford) generally access rather than ownership largely e-based pricing model largely based on historic print spend</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>strengths</strong></td>
<td>facilitated major growth in journal collections for comparatively small additional spend facilitated move to e-only - the VAT still an issue made it easier for newer Unis to catch up with older in terms of journal provision multi yr deals with price caps - help budget planning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>weaknesses</strong></td>
<td>often inflexible - all or nothing limited cancellation options still just in case gobbles up lion’s share of resources budget multi yr deals - can limit flexibility to respond to changed circumstances little scope for title level acquisition for niche areas not particularly user focussed</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Patron-led collection development

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Approaches to CD</th>
<th>patron-led</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **typified by**  | PDA ebook acquisition  
can also apply to print books  
and doc del of articles |
| **defining characteristics** | largely, but not exclusively ebased.  
typically library exposes non-owned content via  
its discovery platform  
loans/purchases triggered by student preference  
costs deducted from deposit account |
| **strengths** | highly personalised  
just in time provision  
helps to address concerns raised in staff-student committees,  
NSS surveys, and other fora where student satisfaction is discussed |
| **weaknesses** | can be hard to predict or control expenditure  
puts the librarian in the back seat... does this matter??!  
takes funding away from other collection development  
approaches  
leads to unfocussed/unstructured collections?  
could damage heritage collection building |
Dividing up the (Ncl) Acquisitions Budget: which approach consumes the lion’s share?
Publisher-led spend – largely defined by Big deal journal packages
Scholar/Librarian-led spend next – largely driven by reading lists
Patron-led: largely ebooks, but also some print
Other factors which influence Collection Development

- Flat or reduced budgets
- Increasing user demand and expectations
- Majority of budget devoted to e-content
- Growing VAT bill
- International campuses
- New interests emerging faster than old ones declining
- Space pressures
- Big deals exerting stranglehold on budgets

Outstanding Library Team
Back to my original questions...

- Can the different approaches be reconciled?
  - YES – but it isn’t easy
  - One size does not fit all
  - Must adapt to suit local needs
  - Approaches may evolve over time

- BUT: in current HE funding environment, a collection development policy which does not demonstrably take account of student needs, is likely to attract criticism.
Why we cannot ignore student opinion: typical comments from the National Student Satisfaction Survey (NSS)

“The Library does not have enough books”

“Insufficient main texts in the library…”

“Books for our course are expensive and there aren’t enough copies in the library for everyone”

“not enough books for my essay”

“we need more core texts”

“There are never enough books for our course”
Patron led approaches won’t effect miracle cures, but can moderate negative comments

- May be coincidental, but:

- NSS Library Scores went up for
- 6 of the schools who constitute top ten users of our patron led ebk service

- Final yr UGs ( = the NSS survey cohort)
- are amongst heaviest users of the service

- Further investigation needed...
Debunking the myths:

- PDA doesn’t mean money will be wasted on non academic content
- Nor does it mean we wash our hands of any responsibility for collection development
Are we compromising the integrity of future collections by letting users determine what we purchase?

- NO, not necessarily...

- What evidence do we have to suggest we are so much better at collection development?
- How many of us are currently resourced to build collections for the future?
- Why do we build collections in the first place?
- (remember your service mission!)
What is the purpose of the University Library?

- “The Library supports the University’s learning and teaching, research, innovation and engagement by providing resources and professional expertise to enable the effective discovery and use of information and the development and communication of knowledge”

- Taken from Newcastle University Library Strategic Planning Statement
What is the purpose of the University Library?

- Or to put it more simply...
- We are an academic SERVICE whose prime responsibility is to support the CURRENT information needs of our academic staff and students
- Collection development is the MEANS by which we achieve this, it is NOT an end in itself
Is the role of the librarian being terminally eroded?

- NO - but it is changing -
- Traditionalists may be dismissive of the rise of PDA:
  - “the lunatics are taking over the asylum”

- But if you are truly committed to serving user needs – be prepared to experiment with new service models
  - “adapt and survive” a better motto than “resist and perish”
Can we successfully blend these and other strategies in the service of our core users?

- YES, provided that:
  - You are willing to EXPERIMENT
  - Remember:
  - A responsive service is more likely to be highly valued by its user community
  - This may influence future funding
Concluding Thoughts

- Managing and developing collections in academic libraries is hard work!
- A varied approach may deliver the best results
- Current user needs must be taken into account
- Funding position will influence approaches taken
- Be prepared to experiment!
- Talk to others about their experience
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Thank you for your attention
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