Data Informed Approach: Reinstating an Approval Plan

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AMVIG Panel – 2015 ALA Midwinter Meeting

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Libraries approval plan history

- Started approval plans in late 1980s
- Manage book workflow and expenditures following large budget increase
  - Trade approval plan
  - University press plan
  - Art book plan
- Relied on approval plans during lean years, too!
- And allocated other one-time money to selectors (based on FTE formula) starting in 2004
Then things changed- 2008 Economic Crisis

- Déjà vu all over again!
- 99% of materials budget from university
- FY09 acquisitions budget = $6,504,766
- Campus asked all departments to create budget scenarios for cuts – potential library impact:
  - 10% or $650,000
  - 16% or $1,040,763
  - 20% or $1,300,000
FY 09 Materials Budget

- Serials & eResources: 74%
- Books: 13%
Scaffolded approach to budget cut scenarios

- Review use of ejournals outside packages (i.e., low hanging fruit)
- Prepare list of print journals/standing orders for faculty review
- *Reduce* monographic/other one-time purchases
- And *if worst case scenario* invoked, review licensed packages
FY09 Monographic Expenditures – 16% of Materials Budget

- Approvals: 56%
- Firm Orders: 39%
- Books on Demand: 3%
- New York Times: 3%

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Fortunately worst case scenario not realized

- 10% reduction
- Cancelled little used material but that was not enough to cover $650,000 shortfall + inflation!
- Turned off auto-ship of trade and university press plans – lack funds to support them
- Continued annual one-time allocation to selectors
- Continued to purchase NYT reviewed books, Books on Demand (ILL requests) and Reserve
Recurring question: assessment of book purchases

- Assessment Committee takes on task of harvesting circulation data in 2010
- Goal: selectors would use data to inform current/future purchases
- Data made available through spreadsheets
- Right idea – difficult to manipulate

- Absent data continued model of allocating majority of book budget to selections – title-by-title model
Selector allocation model problematic

- Erratic ordering/expenditure even with deadlines
- Trouble identifying items to purchase
- Selecting title-by-title difficult and for some a time sink
- Scrambling April-May to order one-time material (almost exclusively eResources)
- Need to focus on higher organizational/campus priorities: information literacy, scholarly communication, and marketing services

- Time for a change!
Libraries Acquire Data Visualization Tool

- Started using Tableau in 2012 to visualize various data we were collecting
- Assessment librarian and 2 members of Assessment Committee start work to ingest recent purchases (FY09+) and circulation data
- Visualizations shared in spring 2014
FY09-FY14 Monographic Expenditures

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Dashboard with book purchase analysis debuts

- FY14 – book expenditures = 7% of budget
- Rolled out dashboard in spring 2014
- Sought feedback and suggestions for additional data points
  - Add publisher and LC class
- Set up individual sessions with selectors to get them comfortable with tool
Dashboard view – use by purchase category
It showed...

- Approval materials circulated well
- “Hand” selected titles did not circulate as well – with some exceptions
- Sharp contrast compared to use of data in 5C DDA pilot for ebooks
- In meantime, campus adopted a ‘resource centered management’ budget process
  - Anticipate increasing ‘need’ to demonstrate how much we contribute to campus enterprise
  - Many demands on materials budget
  - Need to minimize ‘lost opportunities’
Conclusion

- Fall 2014 reinstated university press approval plan
- Ordering only faculty requests, ILL Books on Demand, NYT, and reserve items

- Assessment will continue!
- Use dashboard to tweak approval profile
- Discuss reinstating trade plan selectively
Thank you!

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