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Managing PDA at the Liberty University Jerry Falwell Library

Rusty Tryon, M.L.S., M.Div.

Background

Liberty University

Liberty University, founded in 1971, began pioneering distance education in 1985 and is now the nation's largest private, nonprofit online educator. Of the University's 100,000+ students, over 90,000 receive online instruction. Liberty University Online offers 187 degree programs at the undergraduate, graduate, and doctoral levels.

The Jerry Falwell Library

The Liberty University Jerry Falwell Library piloted e-book patron-driven acquisitions in 2010 with a profile of over 40,000 titles. An e-books librarian was hired in the spring of 2011. A major weed of the profile was conducted in the summer of 2011. Since then, various attempts have been made to best manage the program.

Goals

- Meet the information resource needs of the ever-increasing number of online programs and students
- Satisfy accreditation standards to provide access to adequate collections
- Satisfy an institutional priority to create comparability between residential and online student experiences
- Fulfill institutional strategic plan objectives (The library's PDA program is actually delineated in the institution's strategic plan.)

Methods

1. Optimization Formula

A data-driven approach based on previous years' usage data as supplied by the vendor, manipulated in Microsoft Access and Excel, in order to predict potential future use of titles by LC class with percentile rank. First used in September 2012.

2. Extended Access

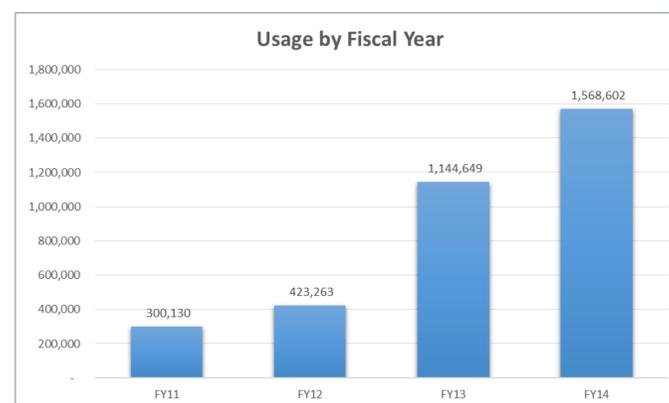
A turnaway prevention feature which automatically upgrades licensed access within the following parameters:

- Title maximum list price of \$200
- Automatically purchase next available license, preferably multi-user perpetual license
- Purchase up to 3 single-user-only perpetual licenses (if no multi-user license option is available)

Implemented in November 2012.

Data

Profile Name	No. of Titles	Percentage
Social Sciences (Education, Psychology, etc.)	6,027	37.49%
Religion	2,414	15.02%
General	2,044	12.72%
Business	2,026	12.60%
History	1,507	9.37%
Education	949	5.90%
Communication Studies	609	3.79%
Public Policy	207	1.29%
Paralegal	119	0.74%
Public Health	103	0.64%
Information Systems	33	0.21%
Engineering	20	0.12%
Medical Assisting	12	0.07%
Languages [ASL]	5	0.03%
TOTAL	16,075	100.00%



Methods (cont.)

3. Short-Term Loans

An acquisitions method to address the reality that the majority of titles purchased receive only one or two uses. Eligible titles are

- Loaned in one-day increments
- Loaded three times with the fourth use triggering the purchase.

Piloted in September 2013.

4. Selection Schedule

A collection development strategy to provide current, curriculum-relevant content to users. An annual weed of titles that have been in the profile longer than 18 months is conducted in the summer. Titles are added in July, October, January, and April. Process initiated in summer 2013.

Results

Usage continues to climb even in light of significant weeding of profiles, in part to the success of the optimization formula. Turnaway prevention was disabled in February 2013 after only a few months of use because of unexpected rapid depletion of the funds committed (\$25,000). Short-term loans have proven wildly successful in maintaining costs and improving ROI, as only those titles with demonstrated significant use are actually purchased. Because of insufficient staff and cumbersome workflows the selection schedule has yet to be fully implemented.

Future Considerations

- Pricing model changes by publishers in May 2013 bring into question the continued cost-effectiveness of STLs
- A combination approach of STLs with Extended Access enabled
- Additional consortial STL programs on the horizon
- E-approval plans to facilitate selection and profile building
- Consolidation of various profiles to one profile

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