

Executive Summary of the Recommendations

1. Continue the funding model adopted for FY13 that is based on 30% equal distribution/35% FTE/35% Materials Budget.
2. Increase the funding for FY14 to \$1 million.
3. Re-examine the importance of ownership in the Alliance DDA program.

Recommendations

1. Continue the funding model adopted for FY13 that is based on 30% equal distribution/35% FTE/35% Materials Budget.

Although no funding model is perfect, the model used in FY13 recognizes the common commitment of Alliance libraries to the program, as well as taking into account each institution's unique FTE and materials budget profile. It does not disincentivize use, as seen by the fact that the eight libraries seeing the greatest growth in use from July 2011 to December 2012 experienced dramatic declines in cost per use, ranging from -53% to -84%.

2. Increase the funding for FY14 to \$1 million.

At its March 23, 2012 meeting, the Council voted to fund the FY13 program at \$750,000 and declared an intent to fund at \$1 million in FY14. We ask that this commitment be actualized in FY14. As will be discussed below, the DDA program is demonstrating increasing value to Alliance members. A recent [article](#) in *College & Research Libraries* asserts, "Of all factors [influencing use of an ebook collection] examined during the course of this study, it was the size of the collection that exhibited the strongest association to usage levels and would suggest just how important the size and content of a collection can be to patron acceptance and utilization."¹ However, with increased usage come increased costs until a title is purchased and owned by the Alliance. To avoid ongoing removal of used but unpurchased content and corresponding diminishment of the DDA collection size, more funds need to be allocated for the program.

3. Reconsider the importance of ownership in the Alliance DDA program.

Increasing costs arising from use and from publisher actions may require the program to shift to more of an access model, particularly since the Working Group is committed to retaining the content that is currently in the program. Within the current DDA environment, we have the potential to save money by such access-oriented means as shifting the purchase trigger higher, resetting the short-term loan count annually back to zero (in effect requiring many short-term loans over time to trigger a purchase), and – in the most extreme case – suspending purchasing altogether.

¹ Alain R. Lamothe, "Factors Influencing the Factors Influencing the Usage of an Electronic Book Collection: Size of the E-book Collection, the Student Population, and the Faculty Population," *College & Research Libraries* 74 (January 2013): 39.

Value

The DDA program is valued by libraries and their users. More than 90% of the respondents to the January 2013 Demand Driven Survey (Appendix 2) stated the program was a success. Use is increasing steadily over time. As shown in Appendix 1, all members participating in the July-December 2011 pilot experienced usage increases for the corresponding July-December 2012 time period, ranging from a low of 79% to a high of 719%. As of December 31, 2012, the Alliance had bought 805 ebooks, and use of these purchased titles has steadily grown, from 2 owned uses in September 2011 to a cumulative total of 43,730 owned uses in December 2012.

There is strong interest on the part of Alliance members in increasing the value of the collection through the addition of new publishers, and we are pleased that a number of those approached by EBL have indicated a desire to participate in the program. Using YBP data on publishers most often duplicated by Alliance members, the Working Group identified a small group to focus on and has surveyed the DDA liaisons for preferences. New content from the top choices will be added as the budget allows.

Anecdotal evidence obtained in the DDA survey also indicates that the program is helping to shape collection development decisions made at member libraries. However, because it is not immediately obvious in YBP's GOBI record that a given title is in the Alliance DDA, unintentional duplicate purchasing may occur. The purchase of print duplicates has actually increased in the period July to December 2012 in comparison with the last two six-month periods, though the number of duplicate print purchases made after the Alliance ebook was bought has declined. There has been a smattering of duplicate electronic purchases as well; again, to a much smaller degree after the Alliance copy was bought than before the autopurchase. While the continued purchase of print copies may be explained as a way to satisfy user preference and may actually be a consequence of the increased discoverability of content by electronic means, it nevertheless deserves a closer look, especially because one of the original hopes of the DDA program was that libraries would realize savings in print acquisitions. The purchase of electronic duplicates is particularly concerning. Further investigation is required to understand whether this represents ignorance on the selector's part of the presence of an Alliance copy, problems in local deduplication mechanisms, or some other factor. Meanwhile, YBP has announced that it will improve the display of consortial DDA content in GOBI later in 2013.

Sustainability

Cost control measures

A continuing challenge of the program has been to stay within budget, even with the infusion of an additional \$288,000 in funds for FY13 over FY12. By May 2012, the first year program's funding had been completely spent, requiring a temporary loan from the Alliance Operating Reserve until new funding became available on July 1. Various measures were used in May and June 2012 to slow down spending, including raising the purchase trigger and finally suspending purchases altogether. After purchasing resumed in the summer it became clear that a new strategy was needed. The Working Group decided to reduce the size of the content pool by removing unpurchased content published prior

to 2011, an idea that had first been presented to liaisons at the Alliance Summer 2012 meeting. It was reasoned that most of these books had not been in the original content scope, and that their earlier publication dates made it unlikely that a library had based its current collecting on their availability in the DDA. The goal was to accomplish the removal in September, before classes were in full swing, but problems with OCLC described elsewhere in this report prevented this from happening until late November.

The strategy, though necessary, was not a popular one with Alliance members, as it contradicted the DDA logic of providing continuing access to materials with proven use. In some cases faculty had depended on the availability of certain titles that had been removed; in addition, the unforeseen delays in content removal negatively impacted students at the peak of term paper writing. Going forward, any uncertainty on the part of Alliance selectors concerning the persistence of content is likely to result in more duplication as libraries buy titles “just in case.” It makes good collection development sense and ensures the best user experience if continually accessed DDA content, regardless of age, remains available. For these reasons the Working Group is committed to retaining the content currently in the DDA program, as well as continuing to expand it with new content profiled by YBP.²

Publisher-initiated changes in pricing and access models

Besides planned content removal, in Summer 2012 Cambridge University Press precipitated the removal of over 1,000 titles of varying publishing dates because it instituted a limited simultaneous user model for a subset of its titles deemed likely for course adoption. The Working Group agreed this “textbook” model was inappropriate for the DDA program. Simultaneously and for similar reasons, Taylor and Francis also designated certain titles as “textbooks”; EBL DDA customers could retain these titles with limited concurrent access at a purchase price of 125% list, or they could keep them in the existing multiple concurrent user model at a purchase price of 150%. The Working Group opted to retain the affected Taylor & Francis (T & F) ebooks as multiple simultaneous user titles for the time being and will also to pay the added cost going forward for any new T & F titles in this category. Meanwhile, we will monitor the financial impact of this change, as T & F is second only to Wiley in terms of use and expenditures, and with the Alliance’s purchase multiplier every T & F ebook costing 150% list actually costs us 250% more than previously.

Should this practice expand to other DDA publishers, it will pose a significant concern for the program. Our content will be curtailed and/or our costs rise, or else we will have to accept a two-tiered access model. None of these choices is welcome.

Rethinking the access/ownership balance

For all the reasons noted above – the popularity of the program and the desire to expand rather than curtail it, coupled with the price pressures beginning to be felt – it is time to reexamine our commitment to owning a significant portion of Alliance DDA content. We may have to accept an increased

² It should be noted that efforts were made to ameliorate the impact of content removal, by alerting libraries to titles accessed by their own users, in case the libraries wished to buy the ebooks themselves. Also, regardless of publication date, any ebook seeing 8 or more short term loans triggered by at least 3 Alliance libraries was kept in the content pool.

proportion of our budget to be used for short-term loans rather than outright ownership. Increased funding may allow us to continue purchasing at a significant rate for awhile, but how long we can afford to do that is uncertain.

Vendor Alternatives

It has been almost two years since the original Ebook Team invited proposals from the aggregators EBL, ebrary and EBSCOHost. In November, 2012, responding to an invitation from the Working Group, ebrary and EBSCOHost updated us on developments to their platform and model. While it is clear that both vendors have made improvements to their services, nothing was presented that convinced the Working Group to recommend switching vendors at this time.

Recently several university press aggregators have entered the ebook arena, most notably Project MUSE and JSTOR. At this time, the only consortial option for these vendors is the traditional model of a buying group, where higher participation yields higher discounts to group members. There is not an option in which a consortium can buy books that all members can access.

The academic ebook landscape is ever changing, as evidenced by the recent announcement of the purchase of EBL by Proquest. It is important to continually survey the field, considering different vendors and models that are affordable and meet the needs of Alliance libraries.

Technical Issues

The most time-consuming issues facing the Working Group and Alliance libraries this year have been technical ones. These are discussed below.

Issues with multiple local discovery method decisions

From the beginning of the project, each Alliance library has been able to make local decisions about its discovery method and record loading. In order to enable this local decision (which takes into account staffing levels, expertise, workload, control over systems, and the library's discovery environment), the technical services side of the Ebook Working Group has developed and supported workflows for a wide variety of cataloging and discovery options. When changes are made to the processes or the systems supporting this project, and when changes are made to the content that is part of the project, a number of technical and timing issues have been tackled by the Ebook Working Group.

Delay of content removal

As discussed above, the Working Group agreed in August 2012 to content removal in order to control spending and be able to add new content. Content removal was delayed by several months because we were waiting on OCLC to generate files of records to enable a full purge and reload of records at local libraries.

Switch to OCLC WorldShare Metadata Services

The Alliance previously used WorldCat Cataloging Partners for record matching and generation of a file which was emailed to institutional representatives regularly by Greg Doyle. Alliance-level WorldCat holdings were maintained manually by one staff member, Tom Larsen of PSU.

Technical services representatives from the Ebook Working Group met repeatedly with OCLC about OCLC's WorldShare Metadata Services (WMS). This service was promised to offer a new matching algorithm which would improve record quality and a new record delivery option, which would enable individual Alliance libraries to retrieve files of records themselves. Because record quality has been an issue from the beginning of the project, and because WMS offered a good deal more local control for libraries in the future, the switch was made in late Fall of 2012. Unfortunately, the change has not been problem free:

- **Timelines of updates:** Though the team was guaranteed an increase in frequency of record loading, technical issues on OCLC's side delayed record delivery, and frequency has not increased to weekly yet (as was promised this fall). OCLC now intends to increase load frequency in early February.
- **Matching issues:** In addition to matching and record quality issues that have been present from the beginning of the project (non-English cataloging records, print format rather than electronic, non-standard GMDs, missing subject headings, etc.), the shift to WMS and OCLC's new file handling process using the new matching algorithm resulted in some confusion and inaccuracy: records were marked as both purchased and unpurchased, marked for both delete and new, and have appeared as new records in files for separate weeks. In addition to individual bibliographic record matching issues, the record counts do not match for the separate OCLC WMS KnowledgeBase collections of purchased and candidate records, and they vary by institution.
- **Local institution issues:** Due to a wide range of local expertise at Alliance institutions as well as weaknesses in local III Millennium load tables, the duplication of records and non-standard record delivery can lead to significant manual intervention. The technical services experts of the Ebooks Working Group, particularly Bob Thomas of WWU and Tom Larsen of PSU, have created excellent procedural documentation to support local institutions in handling the record removal and reload process, and have been available for consultation in support of these changes.

Issues with discovery

The shift to OCLC WMS for record delivery and the rematch using a new algorithm has not stopped the issue of missing links in the WorldCat discovery environment. The reverse has also been spotted: links to content will appear, but institutional holdings will not be indicated. This is likely the result of the time delay between a record for new content entering the collection in OCLC WMS and holdings being set. This will improve with an increase in record loading frequency on OCLC's side.

Looking forward

Once all Alliance libraries have migrated to Alma, many of the technical services issues mentioned above will be eliminated. Loading records and database maintenance will only need to be done once. The Ebooks Working Group in conjunction with the Collaborative Technical Services Team will need to determine how best to handle this. The major technical services issue will then become cataloging quality (not a new issue for this project or any other batch of vendor-provided records, but one which needs addressing in terms of equitable workload balance).

The technical services workflows and systems that have supported this consortial initiative have been a unique opportunity for Alliance library staff, EBL staff, and OCLC staff to work together. The Alliance's vendor partners have learned from our expertise and improved their systems, and Alliance libraries have ensured discovery of DDA content in every local system.