

Higher Education Focus: Collection Development - Negotiating the Future

Priya Mehta

Senior Information Assistant (Acquisitions), BPP University

priyamehta@bpp.com

This report covers the key themes from the Sixth National Acquisitions Group (NAG) Collection Development Seminar for Academic Libraries held in Birmingham in May 2016. Presentations were given by library and information professionals from academic libraries across the UK, and were focussed on negotiation and collaboration with the newest forms of library acquisition.

The theme of the seminar was negotiation in collection development and the speakers ranged from librarians, collections consultants and publishing representatives. They presented on a variety of topics including e-textbooks, [PDA](#) (patron-driven acquisition), EBA (evidence based acquisitions) and copyright.

The day began with Plymouth University's E-textbook Services Co-ordinator Tif Dickinson who spoke about negotiation for [their e-textbook programme](#). Plymouth provides most of its first year undergraduates with a personal copy of their core reading in e-textbook format with access in perpetuity. The textbooks are run on the [VitalSource](#) platform. Dickinson described the process of consultation with academics in jointly choosing the books and providing them with usage statistics to justify future choices. Dickinson was keen to highlight that negative perceptions of librarians do not help negotiations, as many publishers expect librarians to pay the asking price. She argued that libraries should use their collective buying power to obtain the best deals. For example, publishers often provide the e-textbooks in PDF format, but [ePUB](#) format is much more user friendly. Therefore she encouraged academic libraries to use their collective buying power and not to pay more for an ePUB format. The challenges for the future were:

- Maintaining a level of discount
- Reacting to changing publishing business models
- Pushing publishers to invest in better formats
- Developing purchasing models for print alongside e-textbooks

The second speaker was Stuart Dempster, Head of Information Resources at Imperial College London. He presented on empowering library staff, negotiation skills and the use

of analytics in journal subscriptions. Price rises were the driver for changing the way Imperial negotiated with publishers and Dempster highlighted the three P's in facilitating change:

- People: investing in new skills such as negotiation, influencing and team work to empower staff
- Policies: Undertaking a [Rapid Improvement Exercise](#) to improve in-house policies
- Preparedness: doing research on usage statistics and alternatives such as Open Access

He suggested that librarians need to move into more analytical roles requiring advanced knowledge of statistical software like Excel and licence interpretation and management, for example.

The next presentation moved on to patron-driven acquisition (PDA) with Jackie Harrison, Content and Collections Consultant at the University of Hertfordshire. Hertfordshire adopted PDA in 2007 as one of the first in England to take up the model. Under the auto-purchase model, if an ebook was accessed three times (for more than five minutes), it would be purchased. Using this model, the PDA budget was soon overspent and cutting into subject librarian's budgets.

Harrison cited a change of organisational culture under new management in 2014 as the reason for the realignment of PDA. Students and academics were consulted and a new library management system was implemented. Using data from [EBL](#), the three hit purchase model was adjusted to ten hits, resulting in an underspend for the first time. The benefits of the changes were lower costs, more funds to spend on print books and staff confidence to make purchasing decisions.

Further to this was an interesting presentation from Anna Sansome, E-resources Librarian (Development) at University College London, on her experiences of EBA (evidence based acquisitions). As a print book heavy institution, Sansome saw the main benefits of using [EBA at UCL](#) were finding out if students really did use ebooks, and being able to provide access to these books very quickly. The usage statistics found that half of the books in the model were viewed at least once and the highest use titles were from a range of disciplines.

The main challenge to EBA was the lack of clear information from some publishers. For example, certain items are held back from packages, there may be a delay in releasing an ebook after a print version and some may not send catalogue records or lists of your purchase selections each month. For Sansome, future issues to consider are how to address ebook acquisition long term, and how EBA fits into the wider collection strategy.

The late Laurence Bebbington, Deputy Librarian and Head of Library Services at the University of Aberdeen, gave an encouraging presentation on the [changes in UK copyright law](#). The UK's copyright reforms in 2014 have given libraries much more freedom in making resources more accessible and usable, however Bebbington argued that libraries were not taking advantage of them. For example, accessible copies for disabled users,

text and data analysis and the provision of content on dedicated terminals. He pointed out that these new reforms could be used with much more imagination to promote content and this message should be communicated to academics and senior university management.

Also included in the programme was a presentation from Sarah Logan and Nathan Turner from Cambridge University Press about their EBA services, and two group breakout discussions on negotiation skills and EBA, which bought out a variety of experiences from around the country.

I am currently working as Senior Information Assistant (Acquisitions) at BPP University while undertaking my professional library qualification part time with the University of Sheffield. The seminar provided me with a great understanding of the issues impacting on collection development in a rapidly changing environment. I took away two key themes from the day. The first was the importance of libraries working together through discussion to ensure they can negotiate the best deals and demonstrate their collective buying power. The second is the variety of skills now required to undertake a role in this area, including retail, budgetary management, negotiation skills and data analysis. I was able to attend the seminar through a grant kindly awarded to me by UKeiG, for which I am very grateful. Thanks also go to the organisers for an interesting and varied day.