

Who's At the Wheel?

Expert Selection and Monograph Usage

ALCTS Publisher-Vendor-Library Relations IG

ALA Midwinter 2009



R2 Consulting LLC

Rick Lugg, Partner

R2's Focus

- Library workflow analysis and redesign
- Organizational redesign
- Product analysis & development for the academic library market
- Accelerated Strategic Planning
- Sustainable Collection Development



Is the print collection this...?



Or this?



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If the latter...

- Does it matter whether that storage and fulfillment is
 - In the library?
 - On Campus?
 - In the Vicinity?
 - At the vendor?
 - At the publisher?



EXPERT SELECTION: HOW WELL HAS IT WORKED?



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The Kent Study

- Kent, Allen. *Use of Library Materials: The University of Pittsburgh Study*. Books in library and information science, v. 26. New York: M. Dekker, 1979.



The Kent Study

- Hillman Library, University of Pittsburgh
- Chapter II: “*Circulation and In-House Use of Books*”: Stephen Bulick, William N. Sabor, and Roger Flynn
- Focused on the 36,892 monographs acquired in Calendar Year 1969
- Followed their circulation history through CY 1975 (6-year period)



Kent Study Findings

- 14,697 (39.8%) had never circulated during the first 6 years
- 22,1772 (60.2%) circulated 1 or more times



Kent Study Findings

- If a book did not circulate within the first 2 years of ownership, its chances of ever being borrowed were reduced to 1 in 4.
- If a book did not circulate within the first 6 years of ownership, its chances of ever being borrowed were reduced to 1 in 50.



Kent Study Findings

- If a minimum of *2 uses* were established as a criterion for a cost-effective acquisitions program:
- 54.2% of the titles purchased in 1969 would not have been ordered.



Kent Study Findings

- If a minimum of 3 *uses* were established as a criterion for a cost-effective acquisitions program:
- 62.5% of the titles purchased in 1969 would not have been ordered.



1969-1975

- Print-based collections
- Approval plans and blanket orders largely undeveloped
- OCLC and union catalogs in their very early stages
- Growth in higher education funding
- Many new academic libraries built



1969-1975

- Common goal: increase collection size
 - ARL Rankings
 - Accreditation
- Materials budgets massively expanded
- Raw volume counts critical to prestige
- Collection Management emerges as specialty
- Emergence of vendors, approval plans, standing orders, blanket plans: Mass Gathering techniques



Kent Study: Comments

- In 1969, most selection was done title-by-title, by faculty or expert selectors.
- Electronic content barely existed
- Resource sharing was difficult and rare
- Study was criticized for not counting in-house use
- Still... a best-case scenario for expert selection



Expert Selection: 1975

- 37.5% effective if 3-use minimum
- 45.8% effective if 2-use minimum

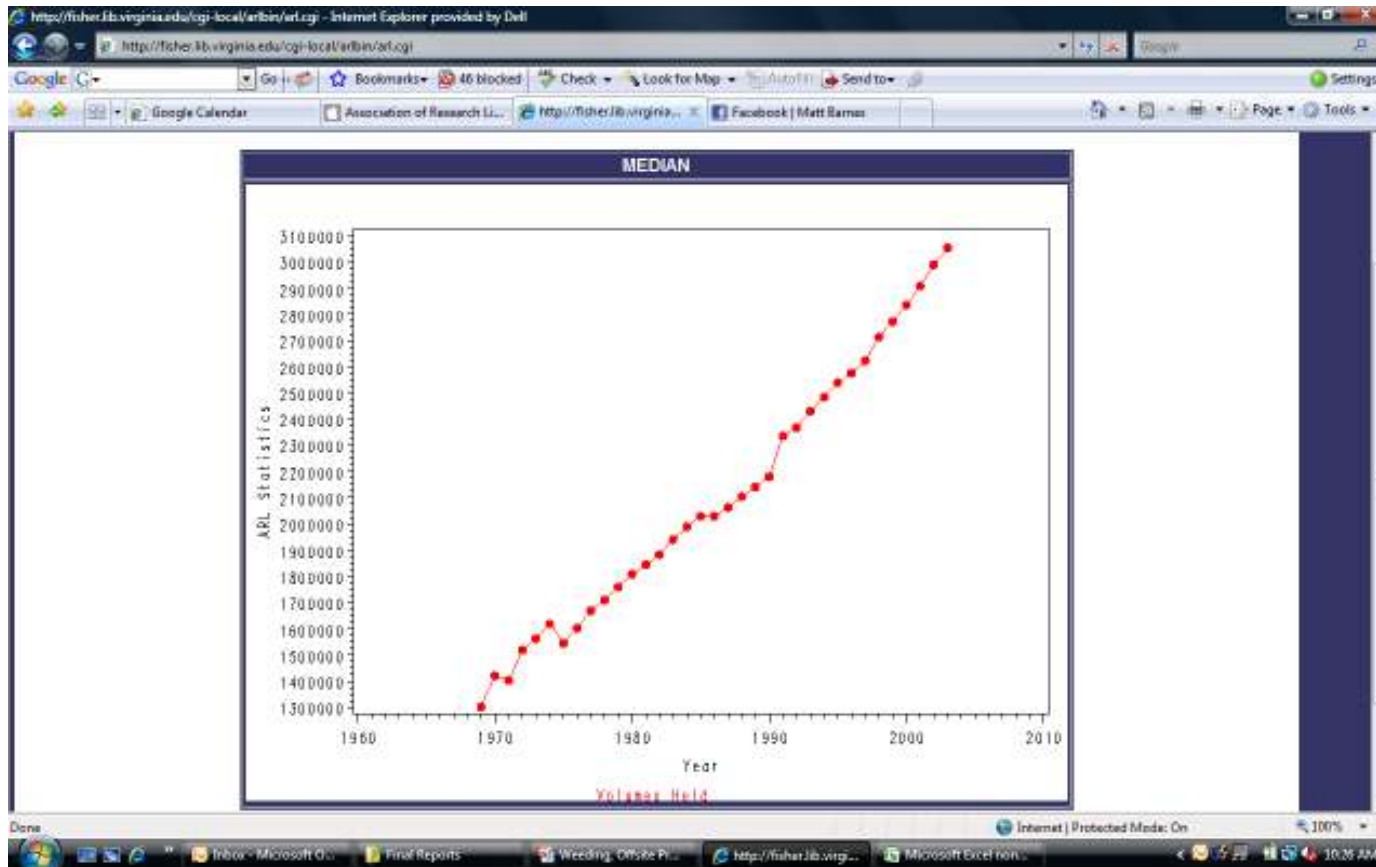


USERS AND COLLECTIONS CONTINUE TO CHANGE



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ARL Volumes Held, 1969-2006



Collection Development is Changing

- Bibliographer model has nearly vanished
- Selection competes for priority with instruction, liaison work and other duties
- More selection time devoted to e-resources, media, and non-print source
- Space issues drive increases in collection analysis, de-selection



Users Are Changing

- NetGen Students
- Conditioned by: Amazon, Google, NetFlix
- Undergraduates: course-centered research
- Strong preference for electronic
- Strong preference for full-text, multimedia
- Interactivity, visual cues, tutorials
- Naiveté about resource quality
- 2% of library users begin search from library Web site



Studying Students

The Undergraduate Research Project at the University of Rochester



edited by
Nancy Fried Foster and Susan Gibbons

So...

- What do print book use and expert selection look like now?



R2's Informal Circulation Survey

For circulating monographs in your collection with an imprint date of 2006 or earlier:

- what percentage has never circulated?
- what percentage has circulated once?



Never Circulated

	High	Low	Average	Samples
ARL	64%	53%	56%	4
Non-ARL	48%	20%	33%	6
Four Year	73%	40%	53%	6



Circulated Once

	High	Low	Average	Samples
ARL	17%	13%	15%	4
Non-ARL	20%	12%	16%	6
Four Year	20%	11%	18%	6



Expert Selection: 2006

- 32% effective if 1-use minimum

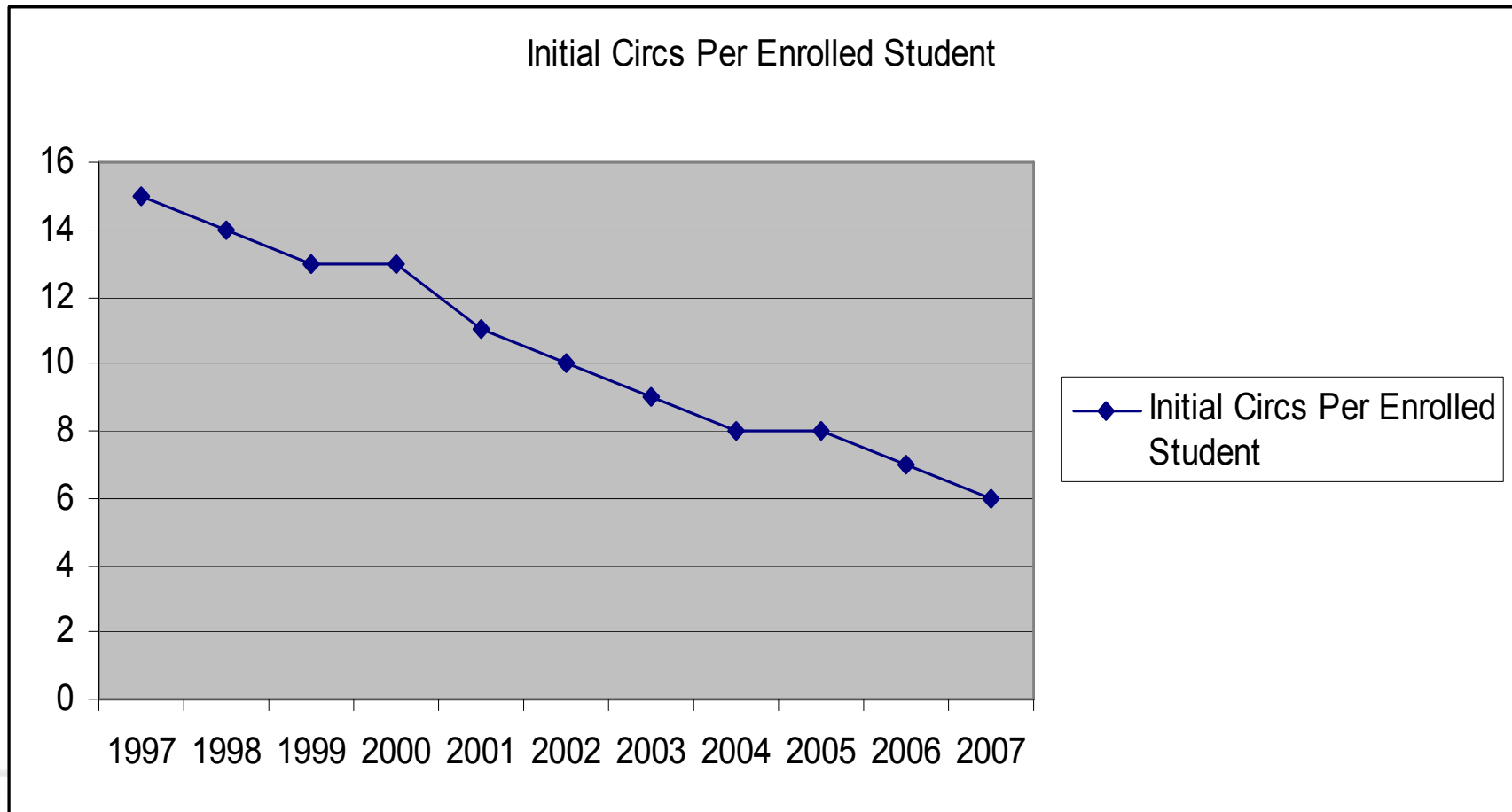


Other thoughts on use

- Raw circulation numbers are increasing in some institutions, but...



Circulations Per FTE Are Declining



Other thoughts on use

- Breadth of use increases as discovery improves (the long tail effect); i.e., more titles are used...



Is Use the Only Criterion?

- “Research libraries are the ‘in case’ in “just in case” collecting
- If use is not the criterion, then what is?
- Can patrons do a better job?



Limitations of Listening to Users

- Users have a limited frame of reference
- Users focus on past and current experience
- Users tend to offer incremental, rather than bold, suggestions
- Users are less familiar with potential of future possibilities
- Innovation is the responsibility of staff



Stanley J. Slote, Modified

“[Selectors] are torn between [selecting]...
the books people want and the ‘good’
books”



Patron-Initiated Selection

- At least one use guaranteed!
- Users may not be better than experts at selection, but the bar is not high.
- E-Book models make this more possible, but it can work for print; e.g., University of Vermont
- Give users a fund of their own?



THE EFFECT ON PUBLISHERS



Potential Drawbacks

- Reduced frontlist sales
- Reduced sales per title
- Less predictable sales – disruption of established approval plan/new title streams
- Institutional market is critical to scholarly monographs
- Will reduced/delayed sales per title render more titles non-viable?



Publishing Costs

- Editorial and marketing costs are amortized over the number of units sold
- Physical production costs are a surprisingly low % of the cost of a book
- Fewer sales per unit = higher prices



Changing the Publishing Model?

- Still smaller print runs?
- Increasing delivery in electronic format?
- Increasing opportunities for print on demand?
- Are micro-payments a viable alternative?



Potential Benefits?

- Improved discoverability of more titles
- Broader exposure for more titles
- Long tail: backlist sales persist longer
- Use-based transactions provide income in cases where a sale may not have occurred



Deciding and Acting

- “Purposeful Abandonment”: Strategy means saying no to some tasks
- “The necessary outcome of strategic planning is not analytical insight but resolve.”

--David Maister, in *“Strategy and the Fat Smoker: Doing What’s Obvious But Not Easy”*, Boston: The Spangle Press, 2008.

