Back to the Future: Re-examining the Need for Shelf-Ready Processes in the E-Book Environment

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Raw dataset
https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1niQFeegQozRHwdAhdo1H7hCK4Pw3SAU4ODbqWeRXQD4/edit?usp=sharing
**Introduction**

Texas Woman’s University is a Doctoral/Research university, and is one of four independent public institutions of higher education in the State of Texas. It is the nation’s largest university primarily for women. With campuses in Denton, Dallas, and Houston and a total student enrollment of over 50,000, TWU offers both traditional and online degrees from the Bachelor’s through the Doctorate in the liberal arts, nursing, health sciences, sciences, business, and education. TWU Libraries hold 686,588 volumes, subscribe to over 2,000 journals and databases, and have a collections budget of $1.6 million.

Texas Woman’s University Libraries has used shelf-ready services since March 2012. After a reduction in staff, the Libraries looked at ways to save staff time and money. We assumed that routine copy cataloging took up a large portion of staff time and was not cost effective, and shelf-ready services was viewed as an economical means of accomplishing this task. By receiving the bulk of our firm order books shelf-ready, cataloging staff would be free to do other tasks and projects.

Three years later we prepared to expand shelf-ready services to another vendor, and various questions were raised. We had seen a drop in print materials, and a growth in electronic. In addition, we had specific questions and concerns about cost, speed and workflow. We wanted to compare the two workflows, in-house copy cataloging and shelf-ready, and see if it would save staff time and money. We assumed that routine copy cataloging was slow. By receiving the bulk of our firm order books shelf-ready, we could catalog and process books in less time. We assumed that shelf-ready would be fast.

**Questions**

1. How many days from order placement until the item is shelf-ready?
2. What is the true per book cost?
3. What other efficiencies or technologies could we capitalize on?
4. How many and what sort of changes are staff needing to accomplish this task. By receiving the bulk of our firm order books shelf-ready, cataloging staff would be free to do other tasks and projects.
5. How many and what sort of changes are staff needing to accomplish this task.
6. Do we purchase enough print books that outsourcing still makes sense?

**Methodology**

Inspired by a study done at Brigham Young University.

1. Tracked 355 firm order print receipts April - May 2015 using one of two forms.
2. Noted down dates/times received in each area of workflow (acquisitions, cataloging, processing, circulation)
3. Noted down any corrections made to MARC record or physical book (shelf-ready items only)
4. Entered all data from the forms, along with financials into an Excel spreadsheet for analysis
5. Gathered historical data on print and e-book receipts

**RESULTS**

- **Figure 5**: Enter all data from the forms, along with financials into an Excel spreadsheet for analysis

- **Figure 6**: We made a significant investment in e-books in FY12 by purchasing some large collections. The number of e-book purchases dropped in subsequent years as we opted to rely on Demand-Driven Acquisitions as well as placing individual e-book firm orders. The e-book has become the predominant format for us as monographs, and we expect that to continue. Print receipts have dwindled from 3656 in FY12 to 1211 in FY15 – a 66.87% decrease.

- **Figure 7**: Quality control checking shelf-ready items is fast. Our staff needs 1-2 minutes per item. In-house cataloging and processing comes in around 10-15 minutes per book.

- **Figure 8**: Shelf-ready items cost significantly more to order, receive, pay, catalog and process. Staff costs calculated using the average salary of the primary staff member involved in the task. At $19.92, shelf-ready items cost at a minimum $6.87 more than in-house processed materials.

**ANALYSIS**

- **Figure 9**: Figure 2 outlines the total staff and processing costs per vendor for 1200 print items. We could save $5,144.00 - $7,644.00 by processing in-house.

- **Figure 10**: The drawback is the amount of staff time needed to get on the shelf than their in-house catalog counterparts.

**REFERENCES**