

Can We Get It? : An Assessment of the Effectiveness of the Suggest-A-Purchase Facility of the De La Salle University (DLSU) Libraries

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Abstract

Purpose of the Paper

With the emergence of technology as a tool to provide efficient library service to patrons, this study seeks to determine the effectiveness of the “Suggest-A-Purchase” (SAP) facility of the DLSU Libraries in terms of reaching out to the academic community for purposes of resource collection building.

Theme

With the theme “University Library Services and Resources for Research and Innovation”, this paper provides insights on the effectiveness of the DLSU Libraries’ “Suggest-A Purchase” (SAP) facility in reaching out to the academic community to solicit their participation and input on building academic resource collections. In addition, this paper aims to ascertain the number of library materials procured through the facility over the last two (2) academic years and analyze how it has contributed to the library collections. Moreover, this study will also provide recommendations on how this service could be further improved.

Design, Methodology, Approach

A survey was conducted among selected faculty and other prospective users of the library. Purposive sampling was used to determine the effectiveness of the facility. In addition, statistics were compiled on the number of requests received, orders procured, and user-friendly design of the facility to provide a more compelling rationale for this undertaking.

Findings

Based on the survey conducted, it was discovered that faculty members were the most common users of the facility in requesting materials which they needed. Moreover, they found the facility effective in reaching out to the academic community as it provides a status report on requests from the time they were received up to when the material is already available in the library for use. A significant number of materials were also procured from the requests receive from that facility. In addition, recommendation as to providing a timeline or date when will the material be available was also noted to further improve the service.

Research Limitations and Implications

This study aims to determine the effectiveness of the “Suggest-A-Purchase” (SAP) facility of DLSU Libraries based upon the requests received through this facility for the last two (2) academic years: AY 2016-2017 and AY 2017-2018.

Practical Implications

Through the utilization of technology to provide efficient library service to patrons, this study seeks to determine the effectiveness of the “Suggest-A-Purchase” (SAP) facility at the DLSU Libraries in reaching out to the academic community in terms of collection building. Pragmatic value stems from insights on how efficient and effective library service can be provided to patrons particularly in the acquisition of library materials.

Originality

There has been a dearth of literature written about library services in the acquisition of resource materials and collection building especially in the Philippine setting. This paper is unique in seeking to determine the effectiveness of having a facility where patrons can simply request materials they want the library to procure so as to make them readily accessible.

Keywords: Suggest-A-Purchase, Patron-Driven Acquisition, Collection Building, Collection Development, Inclusivity

Introduction

Collections are assets of any library. In combination with efficient library services, knowledgeable personnel, appropriate space, and suitable programs, the library holdings remain to be the ultimate strength of a library whatever type it might be. Building a well-balanced collection has always been the goal of any library and in an academic setting, the members of academe continue to be one of the primary library partners who are prominent consultants in building a relevant collection.

The emergence of technology and other developmental innovations have paved the way toward meeting increasing demands and reliance of patrons on web-based services. Library services have never been an exception. Aside from circulation and reference services, technical services such as acquisition of materials and collection development have also made some shift in providing services to their patrons. With the advent of these developments, libraries continue to reinvent themselves to be ever-increasingly relevant in changing times.

Collection Development

Collection Development is the process of building and planning a useful and well-balanced collection for the library (Reitz, 2019). Through a series of collection assessments, the library identifies the strengths and weaknesses of any given collection, creating and planning ways of how it will remain responsive to the ever-changing needs of its clientele. Selection and acquisition of materials were traditionally done by collection development or subject librarians who were able to identify and monitor the strengths and weaknesses of the collection based on the number of usage and the frequency of requests received by the librarians. The librarian’s perspective was very much necessary to properly serve the community’s informational and research needs, striking a balance between what is currently in need and what might be needed in the future (Blume, 2019).

With the idea of making the library more inclusive, patrons were now included in the selection and acquisition of materials. Patron-driven, demand-driven, or user-initiated requests were now being

implemented to include the clientele in decision-making especially in developing the library collections (Herrera & Greenwood, 2011; Hussong-Christian & Goergen-Doll, 2010; Reynolds et al., 2010; Schroeder, 2012; Sheehan & Hogenboom, 2017). Selection and acquisition of materials are now based on the demands and requests of the patrons who have been frequent users of the library. Given this current trend in collection development, the fear of having an idiosyncratic or misshapen collection cannot be ignored (Blume, 2019; Herrera & Greenwood, 2011; Hussong-Christian & Goergen-Doll, 2010).

Patron-Driven Acquisition

Patron-driven acquisition (PDA) or demand-driven acquisition (DDA) are purchasing models that allow procurement of material at the time the title is needed rather than purchasing speculatively and holding in anticipation of use; just-in-time access replacing just-in-case collecting (Swords, 2011). This model is also known as patron-initiated acquisition or purchase-on-demand (POD), which similarly enables a library to offer a wide selection of materials to its users without making a purchase until the item has been requested or used (Davis, Lei, Neely, & Rykse, 2012).

The emergence of PDA was link to some factors, allowing the library to rethink its way of collecting and acquiring materials (Swords, 2011). Factors such as prevalence and dominance of electronic resources, space problems, financial constraints, lifecycle and management cost of print materials, rise of the Web which changes user expectations, declining use of print monographs, and preservation of materials were all highlighted as having drastically affected the collection management and selection process.

Suggest-A-Purchase (SAP)

Services such as “Suggest-A-Purchase” were adopted by some libraries in order to bring their acquisition services closer to patrons, given the emergence and reliance of patrons to web-based services in modern times. Commonly referred to as “Suggest-a-Purchase” (SAP) or “Buy Request”, this library service allows its patrons to request material through a web-based or online form found at the library website (Reynolds et al., 2010; Schroeder, 2012). Once the request has been received, an email-generated message will automatically be sent to the user, acknowledging the request (Reynolds et al., 2010). To keep the requester updated with the status of their request, an email-generated message will also be sent until the material has been procured or available for borrowing. If the material cannot be procured due to some reasons or factors (e.g. unmet criteria based on library’s CPD lack of availability on the market), an email will also be sent to the requester.

DLSU Libraries’ Suggest-A-Purchase (SAP) Facility

The De La Salle University (DLSU) Libraries house around 600,000 library materials covering subjects such as: Engineering, Humanities, Science and Technology, Education, Business and Economics, and Law, among others. The libraries’ services are a direct response to the curriculum needs of a wide variety of courses within these subjects offered by the University. Known as one of the premier and state-of-the-art libraries in the Philippines, its collection is a combination of up-to-date print, non-print and electronic resources that support the institutional, curriculum, research,

and extension program through organized, relevant, and expedient delivery of information services (DLSU Library website, 2017).

To provide a more effective and efficient service to patrons that is readily available, the DLSU Libraries' "Suggest-A-Purchase" (SAP) service was offered to patrons in 2012. Powered by the iFreeTools Creator, a primary aim of this service is to allow patrons to suggest materials that they want the library to procure. The status of requests thru SAP were periodically monitored from time to time. Once the requests were received and after a series of evaluations, the Collection Development Librarian changed the status "For Evaluation" to "For Acquisition". The Acquisition Librarian would then change the status to "On Order". Once the order had been placed through book jobbers, suppliers or publishers, the "On Order" status of the request would be changed to "In Cataloging" once the material had arrived and was ready for processing. It would then be changed to the "Already Available in Library" status once the material was ready for borrowing. Other types of status such as "Not Available in the Market", "Not Purchase", "Request Denied", and "Request thru DDS" were used to identify those materials that could not be procured due to the unavailability of copies, stocks, funds, unmet standards or criteria based on collection development policy (CDP). Each time there was a change in the status of the request, an email-generated message would be sent to the requester.

The screenshot shows the 'SUGGEST-A-PURCHASE' web form. At the top, there is a navigation bar with 'Home', 'Libraries', 'Services', and 'Suggest a Purchase'. Below this are social media icons for Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram, along with contact numbers for 'TEXT LOANS' (0927.6741127) and 'TEXT YAMS' (09172020270). The main heading is 'Suggest a Purchase', followed by instructions: 'Use this online form to recommend new items to add in our collection. Note that the Suggest-a-Purchase service is for DLSU students, faculty and staff only. Before submitting a request, please check the WebOPAC to determine whether the material you want is already available. All recommendations will be reviewed and evaluated based on certain criteria. You will receive notifications on the status of your request.' Below this is a note: 'To suggest a purchase, fill out the online form below and click the Save button.' The 'Acquisition Request Form' includes fields for:

- Date: 05-03-2019 (with a calendar icon and 'clear' button)
- Name: [text input] (with 'Please enter complete name' placeholder)
- Email: [text input] (with 'Please use your DLSU email address' placeholder)
- University Affiliation: [dropdown menu]
- Format: [dropdown menu] (with a note: 'If you selected "Other", please specify details in the "Additional Information" text box.')
 - Title: [text input]
 - Author: [text input]
 - ISBN/ISSN: [text input]
 - Publisher: [text input]
 - Year: [text input]
- Additional Information: [text input] (with a note: 'You can state purpose, number of copies, etc. in keywords and other additional aspects of note here')

 At the bottom of the form are 'Save', 'Cancel', and 'Reset' buttons. On the right side, there is a 'LIBRARY SERVICES' sidebar with links to Home, Ask LORA, Bibliographic Services, Borrowing and Returning, Database Searching Assistance, Face-to-Face with RIA, Instructional Media Services, Interlibrary Loan/Document Delivery, Printing and Copying, Referrals, Suggest a Purchase, and Visiting Users.

Fig. 1 Suggest-A Purchase web form

Add New Acquisition Request

*Date: 05-03-2019 [clear]

Salutation: -Select- | How would you like us to address you?

*Name: ID No: | Please enter complete name

*Email: | Please use your DLSU email address

*University Affiliation: -Select-

Referred by: |

*College/Department: -Select- | Which department the requestor belongs to

*Format: -Select- | If you selected "Others", please specify details at the "Additional Information" text box.

*Title: |

Author: |

ISBN/ISSN: |

Publisher: |

Year: |

Additional Information: | other additional details of note here | You can state purpose, number of copies, link to webpage and

*Status: FOR EVALUATION

Status Note: | Explanation | Details of the status above

Follow up on: FOR EVALUATION

Fund: FOR ACQUISITION

Notes: ALREADY AVAILABLE IN LIBRARY

IN CATALOGING

NOT AVAILABLE IN THE MARKET

REQUEST THRU DDS

NOT PURCHASED

Fig. 2 Suggest-a-Purchase Blank form (admin view)

Edit Acquisition Request

*Date: 07-04-2016 [clear]

Salutation: -Select- | How would you like us to address you?

*Name: ID No: | Please enter complete name

*Email: | Please use your DLSU email address

*University Affiliation: -Select-

Referred by: |

*College/Department: -Select- | Which department the requestor belongs to

*Format: Book | If you selected "Others", please specify details at the "Additional Information" text box.

*Title: Journalism ethics and regulation

Author: Chris Frost

ISBN/ISSN: 9781138796584

Publisher: Routledge

Year: 2015 / 4th ed

Additional Information: https://www.amazon.com/Journalism-Ethics-Regulation-Chris-Frost/dp/1138796584/ref=sr_1_1?ie=UTF8&qid=1485329888&sr=0-1&keywords=journalism+ethics+and+regulation | other additional details of note here | You can state purpose, number of copies, link to webpage and

*Status: FOR EVALUATION

Status Note: | Explanation | Details of the status above

Follow up on: [clear]

Fund: -Select-

Notes: |

[Save] [Cancel] [Reset]

Fig. 3. Accomplished SAP form (admin view)

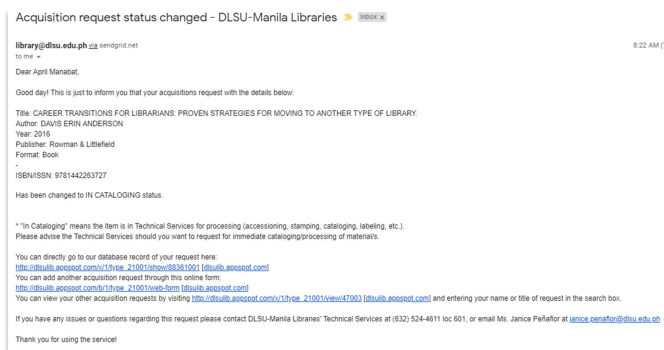


Fig. 4. Sample system-generated notification

With the emergence of technology as a tool to provide efficient library service and the reliance of patrons on web-based services that changed user expectations, this study sought to determine the effectiveness of the “Suggest-A-Purchase” (SAP) facility of the DLSU Libraries in reaching out to the academic community for purposes of collection building. In addition, this paper aimed to determine the number of library materials procured thru the facility over the last two (2) academic years and how this has contributed to the library collections. Moreover, this study would also seek to provide recommendations on how this service could be further improved.

Methodology

This paper employs the descriptive analysis approach to determine the effectiveness of the “Suggest-A-Purchase” (SAP) facility of the DLSU Libraries in reaching out to the academic community in terms of collection building. An online survey consisting of nine (9) questions was conducted among selected faculty members and patrons who had used the facility for the past two (2) academic years (e.g. 2016-2017 and 2017-2018). Hence, those who had sent their requests through email or other means were not included among the respondents. A purposive sampling technique was used to identify respondents for the study. In addition, statistics, tabulation and percentages on the number of requests received and orders procured will also be used to provide a more compelling result for this undertaking.

Findings

Respondents of the Study

The respondents of the study were selected clientele who had used the facility for the past two (2) academic years (e.g. 2016-2017 and 2017-2018) which was comprised of faculty members, academic service faculty (ASF; faculty with no or less teaching loads), co-academic personnel (CAP), administrative and professional service personnel (APSP) and students. Among the 25

respondents, only 16 respondents (64%) were able to answer the survey. The small turnout of responses was due to the method of data gathering conducted during the term break when most of the students and faculty were on vacation. The breakdown of respondents consisted of six (6) faculty members, six (6) ASFs, one (1) APSP, and three (3) CAPs. There was no recorded response from students.

On the Use of the Suggest-A-Purchase Facility

All respondents were able to borrow materials from the library. Among the 16 respondents, 7 or 43.75% reported that not all the materials they borrowed could be found at the library while all respondents signified that they would like the library to procure all materials that could not be found in their collection.

With regards to the use of the “Suggest-A-Purchase” service of the Libraries, all respondents indicated that they were able to use the facility to request material that they could not find at the library. However, only 8 (50%) were able to receive an update about the status of their request. Out of the 16 respondents, only 43.75% (7) respondents believed that their requests were procured by the library and only 5 (33.33%) respondents said that their material was procured in 1-3 months from the time it was requested. Perhaps as an anomaly, a lone respondent said that it took more than a year for the material to become available for borrowing. Despite these numbers, 13 (81.25%) of the respondents said that they were satisfied with this kind of service offered by the library.

Suggestions on the Improvement of the Service

The respondents provided some suggestions and feedback on possible improvement of the facility. While it is true that most of the respondents found the facility helpful, they indicated that it needed to further improve the service by providing a notification message to the requester about the status of their request. In addition, a provision of a list of titles requested by different colleges or departments should also be sent to the requesting unit to be included in their respective departmental or college meetings. Through this list, they would then be able to identify or determine the status of their requests and help in planning out budget allocations on preferred materials to be procured for the next academic year.

Requests Received and Procured Thru the Suggest-A-Purchase (SAP) Facility

The study also highlighted the requests received through SAP for the past two (2) academic years: 2016-2017 and 2017-2018. Based on these statistics, it was recorded that the facility was able to obtain several requests for the two AYs:

| Academic Year | Number of Requests Received |
|----------------------|------------------------------------|
| 2016-2017 | 263 |
| 2017-2018 | 398 |

Table I. Number of Requests Received thru the Suggest-A-Purchase Facility

Most of the materials requested through SAP were procured during the AY2016-17. Out of the 263 requests received, 245 requests or 93.16% were procured. These were the requests with types

of status such as: “Already Available in Library”, “For Acquisition”, “In Cataloging”, and “On Order”, signifying that the requests had been processed.

| Requests Procured | Status | Number of Requests | Total |
|------------------------------|------------------------------|---------------------------|-------------------|
| | Already Available in Library | 69 | 245 (93.16%) |
| | For Acquisition | 113 | |
| | In Cataloging | 24 | |
| | On Order | 39 | |
| Requests Not Procured | Status | Number of Requests | Total |
| | Not Available in the Market | 1 | 18 (6.84%) |
| | Not Purchased | 16 | |
| | Request Denied | 1 | |
| Total | | | 263 (100%) |

Table 2. Number of Requests Procured Per Status for AY 2016-2017

An increase in the number of materials requested and procured were highlighted during AY 2017-2018. A total of 398 requests were received, wherein 85.18% or 339 requests were procured. It was noted that despite an increase in the number of requests received, there was also a decrease in the number of requests procured. The decline was due to possible factors such as a longer procurement process and lack of an assigned librarian to do the evaluation work. An increase in the number of non-procured materials was also noted since several requests were electronic articles which could be requested through the document delivery service (DDS) of the library.

| Requests Procured | Status | Number of Requests | Total |
|------------------------------|------------------------------|---------------------------|-------------------|
| | Already Available in Library | 94 | 339 (85.18%) |
| | For Acquisition | 4 | |
| | In Cataloging | 12 | |
| | On Order | 229 | |
| Requests Not Procured | Status | Number of Requests | Total |
| | Not Available in the Market | 2 | 59 (14.82%) |
| | Not Purchased | 30 | |
| | Request Denied | 6 | |
| | Request thru DDS | 21 | |
| Total | | | 398 (100%) |

Table 3. Number of Requests Procured Per Status for AY 2017-2018

Table 4 below shows that only 3.66% of the total acquisition for AY 2016-2017 came from the

requests made through the “Suggest-A-Purchase” facility. The same is true with the acquisitions for AY 2017-2018 which indicated only a few numbers (5.71%) of requests procured through SAP as opposed to the entire acquisition for that AY. This was because most of the requests were coursed through the usual means such as email, phone or print catalogs and lists. In addition, all requests made through SAP still went through the evaluation process. Hence, not all materials would have been procured. Moreover, the community seemed to have been unaware of the existence of the service. Therefore, a strong promotion of the service should also have been done.

| Academic Year | Total Number of Acquisition | Total Number of Request Procured thru SAP | Percentage |
|---------------|-----------------------------|---|------------|
| 2016-2017 | 6,700 | 245 | 3.66% |
| 2017-2018 | 5,942 | 339 | 5.71% |

Table 4. Number of Requests Procured Per Status for AY 2017-2018

Despite the small number of requests received and procured through SAP, it was noted that the service was indeed useful in reaching out to the academic community with regards to collection building. Library clientele could freely send his/her requests to the library anytime and anywhere by just filling out a form which was made accessible online. Through this service, patrons felt a part of the selection and acquisition process. Furthermore, they became active key players in helping the library achieve its collection development initiatives.

Conclusion

With the emergence of technology, increased reliance of library patrons on web-based services, and changing user expectations towards library services, the “Suggest-A-Purchase” (SAP) facility of the DLSU Libraries was found to be effective in reaching out to the academic community with regards to collection building. The increasing number of requests received from SAP signifies that the library patrons found the service efficient and had substantially relied on SAP for their acquisition requests. The email notifications being sent to patrons kept them informed about the progress of their request. While it is true that they found it useful and effective, it is recommended that the services be improved by regularly sending updates to requesters and implementing a shorter procurement process. In addition, it was asserted that a strong promotion of this service should be done so as to encourage more patrons to make use of this service, particularly in their acquisition requests.

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