Collection Development Policy

In an age of increasing demand for cloud-based materials, along with diminishing budgets, a Library's acquisitions model must be focused and financially expedient. The Mercer University Libraries Collection Development plan relies upon a patron-driven acquisitions model (PDA) which meets these demands.

Given that the Mercer Libraries have two major geo-physical locations in different cities, the print model becomes inefficient for those students who are not located near a campus, and cost-prohibitive when multiple copies of items must be purchased. As such, the purchase of print materials is no longer the first option. Wholesale print collections are also no longer purchased as a general rule, with rare exceptions. Rather, the emphasis is placed upon cloud-based resources when available.

Per the University Libraries' previous collection development policy, required textbooks were not to be purchased, but only books within or adjacent to the discipline of the offered course. These items were largely procured through print-based approval plans from academic book vendors. The Libraries' strategy was based upon a print-based collection and required the physical presence of students within the geo-physical library. This model has been obsolete for well over a decade. In 2019, the current Vice Provost for the University Libraries terminated all print-based approval plans citing inaccurate purchases and inefficient spending, and adopted the PDA model, which enabled the purchasing of all materials requested by Mercer faculty and students, including required textbooks. Purchasing textbooks in eBook format (when available) eases the financial burden on students, and allows for greater access to course resources, especially for those students enrolled in cloud-based courses. In the case of required textbooks only available in print, the Libraries will purchase copies, and place them on course reserve in the appropriate campus library as a courtesy to faculty and a service to students.

The patron-centric, demand-driven acquisitions model allows for students and faculty to articulate their needs directly to the Library through (1) Syllabi and (2) Direct requests, along with other means. University faculty are the experts in their respective fields, and along with input from graduate and undergraduate students, the information relayed to the Libraries is both accurate and representative of requests for materials that patrons will more readily utilize. Employing the PDA model, Librarians are no longer required to approximate the academic needs of faculty and patrons, but rather serve as information and method guides for those who submit resource requests. In addition, with a streamlined approach to purchasing processes implemented in 2019 by the Vice Provost for University Libraries, resource budgets have never been exceeded, and the Libraries have rarely denied a request (with the exception of cost-prohibitive databases), marking significant change from previous years.

Given Mercer's commitment to online programs, along with the fact that resources must be shared by the two major libraries within the library system, electronic, cloud-based resources are the preferred medium. Moreover, many library users prefer materials that can be viewed online whether accessed from home, on-campus, or even within the library buildings themselves. Today's students enjoy visiting the Tarver and Swilley Libraries for their comfortable and active learning spaces, but recent usage statistics demonstrate that many of these patrons prefer accessing eResources online, with 95% of all collection use involving electronic resources.

Thus, the Libraries' collection development policy emphasizes a preference for purchasing and subscribing to eBooks, online research databases, eJournals, and streaming media. These materials are cloud-based and available 24/7 to all Mercer users, regardless of location and time. The resources are accessible through the library website for those with Mercer credentials. Electronic collections expand the serves of the Library beyond the 20th century concept of a brick-and-mortar facility and provide a readily accessible service to the Mercer community.

The PDA collection development model utilizes the following methodology:

- Direct Request via the website: All patrons are encouraged to submit requests via the Library's "Request a Purchase of Library Materials" link on the Library webpage, https://libraries.mercer.edu/
- Direct Request via email: All requests may be sent to the Acquisitions team, located in the ERL: library_acquisitions@mercer.edu
- ILL requests from Mercer patrons: if requested volumes are determined to be necessary for procurement, the Library will purchase a copy (electronically if available) rather than borrowing the print title from another Library.
- Faculty bibliographies: Mercer University faculty sit at the leading edge of research in their respective fields. They are highly encouraged to share lists of recommended titles with the Library via email, through Research Services Libraries, through Library Directors, or through the "suggest a book" link on the Library webpage.
- Course syllabi: The courses taught by Mercer faculty also represent current scholarship, and faculty are encouraged to forward the required materials/readings for each course to the Library for procurement. The Library will then purchase these materials electronically (if available) and in print (if necessary) thus providing free access to course materials for students, whether electronically, or in print (through course reserves).
- Each Research Services Librarian serves as a liaison to one or more Mercer schools or programs, and as a result of their interactions with faculty and students in those programs, they make recommendations for purchases based upon in-class teaching session feedback, one-on-one consultations, and faculty conversations and requests.

In addition to the manual PDA model, the University Libraries subscribe to an automatic demand-driven eBook acquisitions platform (DDA) initiated in 2016. The DDA service allows users to select eBooks from a vendor's catalog (displayed in the Library's catalog) and view each title up to five minutes, after which an automatic purchase is triggered, and the title added to the Libraries' owned collection.

An emphasis on faculty and student requests as the driving force behind the Acquisitions process ensures that the Libraries' collections are being developed within the scope of the various disciplines offered by Mercer schools, and congruent with the research interests of Mercer University faculty.

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