

A growing eBook collection based on confirmed usage

Indianapolis-area libraries let users help decide which eBook titles to acquire



Situation

Forecasting user needs and selecting the right titles to meet them is a challenge for any library staff. Add in users from multiple academic, public and school libraries and those decisions are even more complex. But, according to David Lewis, Dean of IUPUI University Libraries, that situation was an opportunity to try things that individual libraries couldn't do.

"In 1999, we decided to do some experimenting with eBooks," Lewis says. The "we" he refers to is a group of libraries in the Indianapolis area that together created the Marion County Internet Library. This project initially provided databases to member libraries, but as eBooks emerged, the group decided to explore how it could leverage grant funding to develop a shared collection. NetLibrary was the first place it looked.

Solution

A program was established so that member libraries could offer a large eBook selection through NetLibrary, and purchase just the titles that have broad appeal. The plan (known as the Patron Driven Acquisition or PDA model), allows users to access more than 30,000 titles, and when a title is viewed more than once, the group purchases it for its collection. "Once a title is purchased, we load it into as many (group member) catalogs as we can." The arrangement, says Lewis, means **"we can provide exposure to a large collection without spending money we don't have."** More than 18,000 of the available titles have been viewed at least once; per the PDA model, the group has purchased the 10,000 eBook titles that have been viewed at least twice.

AT A GLANCE

Marion County Internet Library

- 250 academic, public and K-12 libraries in the Indianapolis area serving 900,000 residents
- Collection size: 10,000 NetLibrary eBook title
- Average accesses per month: 2,500
- Most accessed eBook: Encyclopedia of Indianapolis
- Most accessed series of eBooks: Complete Idiot's Guides

"NetLibrary has a really rich collection. When needs come up, something is there."

"NetLibrary has a really rich collection. When needs come up, something is there," says Lewis. The diversity of titles in the group's collection is apparent at first glance—from romance novels and computer manuals to college course books and financial self-help guides.

Many books, says Lewis, are ideal for the eBook format. One of the more popular series in the group's collection is the Complete Idiot's Guides. Because of frequent use and soft-back covers, the physical books are hard to maintain. As eBooks, they are easy to access and can be viewed over and over without worrying about durability.

Results

The Marion County Internet Library eBook collection averages 20 page views per access, which is better than Lewis and others expected. "We thought it would be more like three to five pages per access—similar to how a person might use a reference book," says Lewis.

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Continued



Users can locate eBooks through catalogs, links on library Web sites, through the NetLibrary Web site (www.netlibrary.org) or by asking librarians. And because of the group's arrangement with OCLC, users can always access a title that appears in the list of 30,000 eBooks even if the group doesn't own it.

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For more information about NetLibrary collections, visit www.oclc.org/NetLibrary/, or call 1-800-848-5878, ext. 6251 or send e-mail to libservices@oclc.org.