

# The Serials Librarian

## From the Printed Page to the Digital Age

ISSN: 0361-526X (Print) 1541-1095 (Online) Journal homepage: <http://www.tandfonline.com/loi/wser20>

## Exploring the Evidence in Evidence-Based Acquisition

Stephanie J. Spratt, Gabrielle Wiersma, Rhonda Glazier & Denise Pan


To cite this article: Stephanie J. Spratt, Gabrielle Wiersma, Rhonda Glazier & Denise Pan (2017) Exploring the Evidence in Evidence-Based Acquisition, *The Serials Librarian*, 72:1-4, 183-189, DOI: [10.1080/0361526X.2017.1321901](https://doi.org/10.1080/0361526X.2017.1321901)

To link to this article: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/0361526X.2017.1321901>



Published online: 01 Jun 2017.




[Submit your article to this journal](#) 



Article views: 104



[View related articles](#) 



[View Crossmark data](#) 

## Exploring the Evidence in Evidence-Based Acquisition

Stephanie J. Spratt<sup>a</sup>, Gabrielle Wiersma<sup>b</sup>, Rhonda Glazier<sup>b</sup>, and Denise Pan<sup>b</sup>

<sup>a</sup>Presenter; <sup>b</sup>Contributors

### ABSTRACT

This article explores the University of Colorado (CU) Libraries' experiences with evaluating a patron-driven (PDA) program with Kanopy and an evidence-based (EBA) program with Alexander Street for streaming videos. The article includes a thorough comparison of EBA and PDA models, workflows, and outcomes. Three separately administered libraries within the CU system support campuses of different budgets, student and faculty demographics, programs, and exposure to streaming collections. Lessons in implementing and assessing streaming videos at each library and across the consortia are shared along with details on how to implement similar analysis at other libraries.

### KEYWORDS

Consortial licensing;  
e-resource assessment;  
evidence-based acquisition;  
streaming videos

### Introduction

The University of Colorado (CU) system includes four campuses (Boulder, Colorado Springs, Anschutz Medical Campus, and Denver) and five separately administered libraries (University Libraries [Boulder], William A. Wise Law Library, Kraemer Family Library [KFL], Health Sciences Library, and Auraria Library). The libraries have a longstanding tradition of shared e-resource licensing and cooperative purchasing. These efforts are led by the Colorado Libraries Electronic Resources Team (CLERT). Early on, CLERT focused on shared licensing of single title electronic journals or online journal databases that were desired by more than one campus. This practice has proved financially beneficial over the years and has since been expanded to include an e-book patron-driven acquisition (PDA) program and, most recently, streaming videos.

After evaluating various streaming video providers, CLERT set up an evidence-based acquisition (EBA) collection of streaming videos through Alexander Street in mid-2015 as a CU Libraries consortial agreement. The libraries also considered a consortial license for a PDA program of streaming videos with Kanopy. However, Kanopy's consortial option at the time did not meet the needs of all libraries. Therefore, the Boulder, Auraria, and Kraemer Family libraries chose to participate individually in the Kanopy PDA program. CLERT members regularly participate in discussions about the benefits and drawbacks of the Kanopy program for each of their individual libraries despite it not being a consortial agreement at this time.

From the beginning of these programs, the CLERT members knew that best practices would involve developing a robust assessment plan for both the consortial EBA and individual PDA programs. As such, the libraries identified the following research questions to further assess the programs and share relevant findings with the wider community:

- How does EBA compare to PDA?
- How do the workflows compare to other resources or models?
- Do usage statistics provide sufficient evidence to inform purchase decisions?
- How will the consortia decide which titles to purchase?

**CONTACT** Stephanie J. Spratt  [sspratt@missouriwestern.edu](mailto:sspratt@missouriwestern.edu)  Assistant Director for Technical Services, Missouri Western State University, Library, Hearnes Center, 4525 Downs Drive, St. Joseph, MO 64507.

Published with license by Taylor & Francis Group, LLC

© 2017 Stephanie J. Spratt, Gabrielle Wiersma, Rhonda Glazier and Denise Pan

The answers to these research questions are explored below.

## Impetus for project

All CU libraries had interest in growing their streaming video content. CLERT was motivated by increased requests for streaming videos at all campuses, marketing efforts from streaming video providers, and a desire to further align the collection efforts and strategies across the CU campuses. After CLERT decided to work together to license streaming videos, the first step was to determine which streaming video providers work with academic libraries and then select an acquisition model. See [Table 1](#) for a summary of factors to compare when considering either an EBA or PDA streaming video program.

Selecting vendors and models was challenging because each library serves different user demographics and campuses. In addition, in contrast to the CU system e-book PDA program, each library adopted different collecting strategies that created varied sizes of collections across the consortium. For example, Boulder had little to no investment in streaming videos prior to these two projects. Boulder was specifically interested in PDA and EBA models because they allowed the libraries to provide access to a wide range of titles while simultaneously collecting data about which types of films are most needed by patrons. Prior to selecting vendors, Boulder analyzed order data and requests for DVDs to identify the types of films that are most frequently purchased for the collection. Boulder was interested in working with Kanopy because it provides content from a wide variety of suppliers such as The Criterion Collection, Media Education Foundation, First Run Features, and Kino Lorber, companies that were all producing content that the Libraries were already purchasing on DVD. Boulder was also interested in working with Alexander Street because it had received a growing number of requests for specific collections and the perpetual purchase option for videos was preferable to the expensive short-term licenses that are offered by most streaming video vendors. At the end of the program, Boulder hoped to expand its streaming video collection, but more importantly, its collection development librarians saw these programs as an opportunity to learn about user demand and preferences for streaming videos that could be used to guide collection development decisions going forward.

Auraria, on the other hand, was an early adopter of streaming video because demand for video in teaching was growing rapidly and the library wanted to employ similar purchasing models as journal collections. Since 2007 the library had purchased ten streaming collections from Alexander Street. Some of its earliest acquisitions included the BBC Television Shakespeare and Theatre in Video collections. Auraria began buying individual streaming video titles from Kanopy in 2013. While the library was satisfied with existing content and customer service, it wanted access to more titles than available from a traditional purchase model.

KFL had active subscriptions to both Alexander Street's VAST streaming video subscription product and the Media Education Foundation collection on Kanopy, so the library's users were already familiar with both platforms. Switching from VAST to the consortial arrangement for Alexander Street's EBA program had the benefit of a lower cost for KFL and increased content,

**Table 1.** Alexander Street EBA and Kanopy PDA features.

Feature	Alexander Street EBA	Kanopy PDA
Financial commitment	Requires an up front financial commitment with cost known at start of program	Library pays on quarterly invoices as videos are used; less control on amount of money spent; deposit account is available but not required
Purchasing/licensing process	Library decides what to purchase by the end of the contracted time period (up to 1 year) through usage analysis within the EBA program's set title list	Patrons' use triggers licenses (default 1 or 3 years); library can choose which subject areas/producers to activate
Records	Free MARC records for discovery	Free MARC records for discovery
Platform	Provides accessibility features; LMS integration; clip/playlist creation; citations	Provides accessibility features; LMS integration; clip/playlist creation; public performance rights

although some content, including PBS films, would not be available through EBA. Because the staff of KFL had limited experience administering PDA or EBA programs, it made sense to work with the other CU libraries to get the projects off the ground.

Based on evaluations and recommendations from each library, CLERT decided to set up a nine month EBA program with Alexander Street. Typically, an EBA runs for six or twelve months, but the team negotiated a nine month term to reduce costs from the twelve month program, while still ensuring that coverage would be available during the entire academic year. Alexander Street determined each library's cost to participate in the program that was based on its usual pricing model and factored in previous purchases. All the libraries gained access to the same content, a collection of approximately 43,000 titles, with the understanding that all libraries would retain access and ownership to a subset of those titles at the end of the EBA program up to the value of the EBA participation costs.

Kanopy was willing to work with CLERT to set up a consortial PDA purchasing program that would provide access to a shared title list, and use by participating libraries would trigger purchases. However, they were unable to provide usage reports that differentiated usage or trigger events for each campus, which was critical information that the libraries wanted to collect in order to determine local needs. Given these limitations, each library decided to enter into a Kanopy PDA program at the individual library level. Both Boulder and Auraria wanted to expand their access to streaming content and therefore elected to activate Kanopy's entire streaming video offerings. Alternately, KFL chose to turn on only The Criterion Collection. After not having any licenses triggered within the first quarter, KFL decided to activate additional suppliers and providers in early 2016, but still not the entire Kanopy collection.

## Program setup

In addition to comparing cost and content, it is also important to consider the difference between evidence-based and alternate acquisition models in terms of workflows. Implementation and maintenance of new workflows can be a daunting task for any library. Therefore, the CLERT members recommend beginning this process early and incorporating time for learning in your program schedule. See [Table 2](#) for a list of workflow steps for both the EBA and PDA programs.

The setup of the Alexander Street EBA model was particularly challenging at the consortial level largely due to the varying content that was already being provided by the libraries. Record loading was simplest at Boulder because they had no other streaming video titles against which to de-duplicate. Auraria, on the other hand, had to de-duplicate the EBA discovery records against existing Alexander Street collections. KFL had to remove the EBA records from the catalog for videos in the VAST collection, which was deactivated a few weeks prior to finalization of the consortial EBA license, and then de-duplicate them against records from other streaming video vendors. These

**Table 2.** EBA and PDA workflows.

Workflow	Alexander Street EBA	Kanopy PDA
Setup	Financial commitment and time period set at start of program Track balance in Admin Portal Establish access points: MARC records, database link, discovery layer	Library determines budget, license default (1- or 3-year)  Library can create a deposit account (optional) Establish access points: MARC records, database link, discovery layer
Maintenance	Patrons trigger metrics (30 seconds = 1 playback)	Patrons trigger metrics (4 views within 1 year of activation triggers a license)
Assessment	Add desired videos to cart and submit Purchases are perpetual access with varied prices Must spend entire commitment by program's end Can continue program for another period for an additional fee	Patrons must click to begin playback Flat 1-year license price for all videos Invoices are sent out quarterly Unused budget amount is rolled forward

technical difficulties, coupled with concerns about licensing terms, delayed the official launch of the EBA program by three months, during which time Alexander Street had activated access to content but the libraries were not able to provide adequate discovery or promotion until the license was finalized. This was particularly problematic because the EBA program could only run for nine months, and the libraries were relying on usage statistics to determine which films to purchase, but lack of access potentially decreased usage during that initial phase.

## Evaluating the evidence

Reviewing usage statistics is an integral part to managing EBA and PDA programs. Libraries make purchasing decisions in EBA programs based on the usage information. Similarly, while PDA programs ensure that content is purchased when used, monitoring that usage helps libraries determine the success of the programs by revealing which resources are popular and aiding decisions about program expansion and curtailment. During the setup phase with Alexander Street, librarians from Boulder, Auraria, and KFL libraries formulated questions about the usage analysis of the EBA program. These initial questions included:

- What types of usage metrics are provided?
- What can libraries interpret from usage statistics?
- What are the issues with the data provided in usage reports?

Each administrative portal from Alexander Street and Kanopy offers a variety of usage statistics and patron activity to allow libraries to track the progress of these programs. Many of our initial questions were answered by web-based tutorials and demonstrations from each vendor. Librarians at each campus participated in these training sessions during which experts from each vendor gave an overview of features, made suggestions for managing the program, and asked us for questions and feedback.

Alexander Street provides a usage portal with both Counting Online Usage of Networked Electronic Resources (COUNTER) statistics and Alexander Street reports available. Among those available are MR1, MR2, DB1, PR1, CR2, CR3, playbacks by subject area, title playbacks by subject area, playbacks by collection, and title playbacks by collection. The Alexander Street EBA Administrative Portal also shows playbacks at the title level as well as collections in which each title is included. The Administrative Portal is also where libraries can see the balance of their commitment and select videos for perpetual purchase.

Alternately, the Kanopy administrative dashboard does not provide COUNTER statistics, but it does provide a wealth of visual data about the usage and patron interaction with the streaming videos on the platform. Analytics available include visits, page counts, PDA plays, minutes, subjects, pages per visit, and plays by device. The dashboard also contains an area where libraries can track and manage video licenses.

## Program assessment

The CU libraries' staff were impressed by both Alexander Street's and Kanopy's customer service. Each vendor had dedicated representatives who helped with program implementation and were available to assist with technical issues and other questions. While many individual libraries have implemented PDA and EBA for streaming content, the CU libraries faced certain challenges as one of the first customers to implement these programs as a consortium.

From the start of the CU system EBA program, the team realized that the Alexander Street usage and administrative portals were not designed to provide the level of detail needed to make decisions at the individual library and consortial levels. For example, to conduct comparative analysis, all libraries needed a unique identifier for each film. In addition, the libraries wanted to avoid selecting

titles previously acquired by Auraria. Alexander Street understood our needs, and quickly incorporated a title identifier in subsequent reports.

More disconcerting, the libraries were also alarmed to discover data discrepancies between the administrative and usage portals, and within reports from the same usage system. For example, the KFL COUNTER usage report pulled in June 2016 showed playback counts on nearly one dozen video titles that appeared in the EBA Administrative Portal to have zero usage within the same time period. Representatives from each of the participating libraries reviewed the usage reports periodically through the EBA program period. Upon pulling EBA usage reports in April 2016, the Boulder library discovered that some playback counts had decreased compared to the EBA usage report pulled in January 2016. Determining this to be impossible, or at the very least inaccurate, the CU libraries requested accurate usage reports directly from the vendor. Alexander Street's technical support diligently investigated, resolved the issue, and sent updated reports. Unfortunately, this experience made us very leery of our usage statistics, which negatively impacted our ability to make confident purchase decisions based on use.

An additional challenge arose as the libraries moved toward a decision to purchase Alexander Street subject collections with the EBA funds. The usage reports do not correlate to the titles of other Alexander Street collections, so we could not rely on the "Collection" field within the reports to compile a complete list of videos we wished to purchase. Instead, we needed to request the collection title lists in which we were interested from our Alexander Street representative. Fortunately, the representatives from Alexander Street were receptive to feedback and enhancement suggestions, which CLERT provided. In addition, Alexander Street was willing to make some positive changes to our program including extending our EBA access period, based on feedback and concerns that were shared regarding the program setup delays and glitches with usage reports.

Kanopy representatives provided training on the PDA program's features and administrative dashboard, and suggested some assessment metrics based on usage statistics. The visual reporting features in the dashboard are beneficial for sharing with subject specialists and for informing collection management. However, since the dashboard statistics are only available for a limited time, the team wanted more flexibility with their data analysis, and the option to download a comprehensive usage report that combined title, usage, and subject information.

To assess the CU system EBA and PDA programs, multiple metrics were employed. A sampling of the metrics we used is listed in [Table 3](#).

The lower the average cost figures, the better the financial benefit of the program. Having a cost benefit analysis (CBA) of more than \$1.00 is a positive indicator of a successful program. If the return on investment (ROI) calculation results in a positive percentage, it represents a good return. For the entire EBA program, collectively the CU libraries did not have a positive CBA or ROI by the end of April 2016. However, both Auraria and KFL showed positive CBA and ROI within the same time period. The libraries expect that the CBA and ROI will rise to positive amounts for the entire system by the end of the program.

**Table 3.** Assessment metrics and formulas.

Metric	EBA formula	PDA formula
Total commitment	Financial commitment paid at start of program	Budgeted amount, or amount of initial deposit (if used)
Average cost per title used	Total commitment/Number of titles used	Total commitment/Number of titles used
Average cost per playback	Total commitment/Number of playbacks	Total commitment/Number of playbacks
Benefit	Sum of EBA administrative portal listed price of all titles used	Sum of license costs of all titles used
Cost benefit analysis (CBA)	Benefit/Total commitment	Benefit/Total commitment
Return on investment (ROI)	(Benefit—Total commitment) /(Total commitment * 100)	(Benefit—Total commitment) /(Total commitment * 100)

## Outcomes and next steps

Overall, the CU libraries considered the streaming video pilot to be a success. However, one of the most surprising findings from the usage analysis of the Alexander Street EBA program was that no single video was viewed across all three libraries. While many titles had significant use by one or two libraries, it appears that patron needs may be too disparate at each library to warrant continuation of a consortial EBA program for streaming videos. Nonetheless, the discovery of common interests in subjects and collections across the campuses did inform CLERT on how to proceed with purchasing streaming videos at the consortial level.

CLERT faced several challenges administering the Alexander Street EBA program. Some of the issues included lack of financial incentive to participate in a second year, staff time needed to manage the program, challenges preventing duplicate purchases across the system, and inconsistencies and lack of clarity with EBA usage reports. Despite these concerns, the libraries have all decided to replace EBA with individual Academic Video Online (AVON) subscriptions through Alexander Street in 2016 as the content continues to be desirable.

All campuses have chosen to continue Kanopy's PDA program for another year. CLERT will continue to evaluate Kanopy's consortial options and consider shared licensing options for subjects or suppliers that have consistently high use at all campuses. In the meantime, each library will continue to monitor and share individual usage data with CLERT. The assumption is that this information could provide justification for expanding the scope of the PDA video offerings over time.

## Lessons learned

One of the most important lessons that the CU libraries learned from these pilot programs is that both EBA and PDA require significant investments of staff time to set up, manage and assess. Successful implementation requires cooperation between many different units within the library. Although many librarians are familiar with loading machine-readable cataloging (MARC) records and interpreting usage statistics reports, EBA and PDA programs require additional engagement and understanding of administrative portals and managing MARC records. Otherwise, users will not have the opportunities to discover the content and their demand will not be reflected in the usage data. Ideally, there is at least one person tasked with monitoring and analyzing the data needed to make decisions and measure success.

Another lesson learned is that content must be promoted in order to be well used by patrons. This is particularly important for EBA programs if the library is only able to negotiate access for a limited time. Toward the end of the EBA program, some of the libraries expressed concerns that delays in loading MARC records and lack of promotion may have contributed to lower than expected use of streaming resources, and a negative ROI in return.

In addition to promoting new resources and collections, libraries should consider how to manage the expectations of campus faculty. Despite the fact that the programs expanded access to thousands of streaming videos, faculty continued to question why the libraries could not provide streaming access to all of the content that they needed. Similarly, libraries must consider the ramifications of providing access to thousands of streaming videos for a limited time and dealing with the consequences if the library is unable to purchase all of the content that was used and access is subsequently lost. Streaming videos, despite the growing options for perpetual access, are still a volatile part of library collections and should be described as such to teaching faculty.

Our experience with Alexander Street also showed us the risk of relying on usage statistics to make decisions. Many librarians consider usage statistics to be somewhat limited and potentially flawed indicators of actual demand and patron satisfaction. The assessment of the programs also proved challenging because EBA metrics cannot be compared to PDA metrics due to the differences



inherent in purchasing content versus licensing content. Unfortunately, vendor provided statistics are one of the most important metrics libraries employ for evaluating purchases from EBA programs.

## Conclusion

The decision to enter into a streaming video EBA or PDA program should not be made on a whim. Each program offers different benefits, challenges, and workflow management issues. The CLERT members recommend EBA for libraries with room in their budgets for perpetual access streaming videos, institutions with broad program offerings, and libraries needing patron input on which subjects have need for streaming video resources. Alternately, PDA is potentially a better option for libraries with more limited budgets and those that value licensed access over ownership of streaming videos. Both EBA and PDA programs have advantages in terms of expanding access to a wide variety of content, and allow librarians to learn about user demand. However, there are many pitfalls and limitations to consider as well. CLERT learned many valuable lessons from implementing these two pilot programs. By sharing our experiences, we hope other libraries will be more prepared and positioned for successful implementation and assessment of their own EBA or PDA streaming video programs.

## Notes on Contributors

*Stephanie J. Spratt* is Assistant Director for Technical Services, Missouri Western State University, St. Joseph, Missouri.

*Gabrielle Wiersma* is Head of Collection Development, University of Colorado, Boulder, Colorado.

*Rhonda Glazier* is Director of Collections Management, University of Colorado, Colorado Springs, Colorado.

*Denise Pan* is Associate Dean for Collections and Content, University of Washington Libraries, Seattle, Washington.