

## NAVIGATING THE NEW NORMAL: CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR ACQUISITIONS IN ACADEMIC LIBRARIES AFTER THE PANDEMIC

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### Abstract :

*The pandemic accelerated the digital transformation of reading habits, with mobile devices and Google playing pivotal roles in this evolution, and the book trade and libraries adapting accordingly. During lockdowns and social distancing measures, people turned to their mobile devices as indispensable tools for accessing literature and information. E-books and audiobooks became go-to choices for many readers, further facilitated by Google's search capabilities that connected readers with digital content. This digital shift had a profound impact on the book trade, challenging traditional bookstores but also opening new avenues for online booksellers and self-publishing platforms. As libraries navigated the pandemic, they too had to pivot, expanding their digital offerings and access to e-books and digital resources, ensuring patrons could continue to read and learn from home. The overall effect on library acquisition strategies has been discussed and its effect on procuring contents to meet the evolving needs of patrons in a post-pandemic world is studied in the paper.*



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### Introduction:

According to the traditional method adopted so far, libraries were carrying out the work of book acquisition. The various options such as book request from users, obtaining booklists from publishers, getting books on approval from the sellers, and other such alternatives were used to purchase books. However, during the pandemic period, these means of book procurement were affected and booksellers were heavily impacted. Some booksellers even had to shut down their businesses. As a result of the pandemic period, libraries were also affected by the decrease in the availability of books. Online book purchase arises as an option to traditional methods, the assurance

of having the necessary books accessible online is not always guaranteed. As a result, libraries had to search for new options for book purchases. For example, visiting to the major bookshops to buy books, purchasing books paying the full amount and then submitting the bill, etc.

### **Book Acquisition:**

Acquiring books in libraries involves the process of selecting, purchasing, and adding new titles to the library's collection. The library staff will assess the library's collection to identify gaps and determine which subjects or genres need more coverage. Based on the library's needs, the staff will decide on a budget to allocate for purchasing new books. The library staff will research and evaluate potential titles to determine which books will be a good fit for the library's collection. This could include reviewing publishers' catalogues, reading reviews, or consulting with experts. Once the staff has identified the books they wish to purchase, they will place an order with the vendor or publisher. After the books arrive at the library, they need to be catalogued and processed. This involves assigning unique identifiers to the books and adding them to the library's database. Finally, the books are added to the library's collection and made available to patrons.

Libraries may use various selection tools, such as vendor catalogues, book review journals, or online databases, to help them acquire new titles. Some libraries also accept suggestions for new titles from patrons.

### **Tools used for Book Acquisition**

There are various tools that can be used for book acquisition, depending on the libraries specific needs and preferences. Here are a few examples:

#### **1. Online retailers:**

Websites like Amazon, Barnes & Noble, and Book Depository offer a vast selection of books for purchase online, with options for physical copies or e-books. These sites also often have user reviews and ratings to help you make an informed decision about which book to buy.

#### **2. Local bookstores:**

Many independent and chain bookstores offer online ordering and shipping, as well as in-person browsing and purchasing. Some also have loyalty programs or offer discounts for members.

#### **3. Library Book Suppliers:**

Book suppliers often have extensive collections of books that can be asked on approval and after selection, purchase the needed books.

#### **4. Second-hand bookstores:**

These shops specialize in used books and may offer lower prices than new book retailers. Online

marketplaces like eBay and AbeBooks also have large selections of used books available for purchase. In case, a new copy of books are not available, these places can be used for book purchase by the libraries.

#### **5. Book swapping websites:**

Some sites allow users to trade books they no longer want for books they do want, with only the cost of shipping required.

The best tool for book acquisition will depend on your specific needs and preferences, as well as the availability of the book the libraries are looking for.

#### **Book Acquisition in the libraries:**

Libraries acquire books in a variety of ways to build their collections and meet the needs and interests of their patrons. One common way is through purchase, where librarians use collection development policies and guidelines to select materials that fit the library's mission and the needs of its community. Libraries may also receive donations of books from individuals, organizations, and publishers, which can supplement their collections and provide unique titles. Libraries may also participate in exchange programs, where they trade materials with other libraries or organizations. Libraries may also acquire digital materials, such as e-books and audiobooks, through licensing agreements with publishers and vendors, allowing patrons to access materials remotely through library websites and apps.

The following are the few methods that can be used by the library to acquire books in the library:

#### **User Recommendations**

User recommendations can be a valuable source of information for libraries in book acquisition. The library can provide a suggestions box or an online form where patrons can recommend books for the library to acquire. This can help libraries identify popular titles and gauge patron interest in certain subjects. By gathering user recommendations, libraries can make more informed decisions when acquiring new books and ensure that their collections are responsive to patron needs and interests.

#### **Publisher's Catalogue**

A publisher's catalogue can be a useful tool for libraries in book acquisition. Here are some ways libraries can use publisher's catalogues:

1. **Identifying new titles:** Publisher's catalogues typically showcase new and forthcoming titles, making them a great resource for libraries looking to acquire recently published books.



2. **Evaluating titles:** Catalogues often include descriptions and reviews of the books, allowing librarians to evaluate the titles before making a purchasing decision.
3. **Discovering new authors:** Publisher's catalogues can help librarians discover new authors and identify emerging trends in publishing.
4. **Comparative shopping:** Catalogues from multiple publishers can be compared side-by-side, enabling librarians to identify the best deals and select the most cost-effective options.
5. **Special deals and promotions:** Publishers may offer discounts or special promotions for libraries that purchase books directly from them. By reviewing catalogues, librarians can take advantage of these deals and save money on acquisitions.

In addition to print catalogues, many publishers also offer online catalogues and digital resources that can be accessed from anywhere. By leveraging publisher's catalogues, libraries can ensure that their collections remain up-to-date, diverse, and relevant to the needs and interests of their patrons.

### **Book Reviews**

Book reviews can be very useful when considering which books to acquire. Reviews can provide insight into the quality of the writing, the depth of the content, and the overall appeal of the book. This can help libraries to determine if the book is worth reading or not. Reviews can also help libraries to make an informed decision about which books to acquire, particularly when there are multiple options available.

Book reviews is a valuable tool in the book acquisition process, particularly when used in combination with other resources such as personal recommendations, book previews, and sample chapters.

### **Receiving book as donations**

Receiving book donations from philanthropists can be a great way for academic libraries to expand their collections and provide more resources for students and faculty. Before accepting any donations, it's important to ensure that the books being donated fit within the library's collection development policy. This policy outlines the types of materials the library collects, the subjects it covers, and the criteria for selection. The libraries also have to ensure that the books are in good condition, free of damage, and that they have all of their pages. If the books are in poor condition, the library may not be able to use them, and they will take up valuable space on the shelves. The library also has to ensure that the books being donated align with the academic programs and research interests of the library's patrons.

The Library shall make sure to thank the philanthropist for their donation and recognize their

contribution to the library's collection. This can help establish a positive relationship with the donor and encourage future donations.

### **Acquiring Rare Books:**

Academic libraries often rely on rare and unique books to support research and scholarship. The library need to acquire rare books from individuals in the society nearby. For that, it is needed to reach out to potential donors in the society nearby. The library may start by contacting local bookstores, antiquarians, and collectors to see if they have any of the books needed or if they know of anyone who does.

Once you have acquired the rare books, it's important to ensure they are properly cared for and preserved. Consider investing in preservation materials and training staff on how to handle and care for rare books. Acquiring rare books for academic libraries requires a strategic and thoughtful approach. By researching potential donors, attending events, utilizing online resources, and offering incentives, the library can successfully build a rare book collection that supports research and scholarship at the institution.

### **Online Databases**

Online databases can be very useful for book acquisition, as they provide access to a wealth of information about books, including author information, publication details, and availability. Here are some ways in which online databases can be used for book acquisition:

1. **Research:** Online databases can be used to research books on specific topics or by specific authors. Many databases allow you to search by keyword, author, title, or subject, making it easier to find books that match your interests.
2. **Availability:** Online databases can also be used to check the availability of books, both in print and digital formats. This can be particularly useful when trying to track down rare or out-of-print books.
3. **Reviews:** Many online databases also provide user reviews and ratings, which can be helpful in determining the quality of a book. Reviews can also provide insight into the strengths and weaknesses of a book, and can help you determine if it's worth acquiring.
4. **Purchasing:** Many online databases are linked to online retailers or library catalogues, making it easy to purchase or borrow books directly from the database. This can save time and effort, as you don't need to search for the book separately.
5. **Organization:** Some online databases also allow you to create lists or reading lists, which can be used to organize your book acquisitions and keep track of books you've already read or are

interested in reading.

Overall, online databases can be a valuable tool in the book acquisition process, as they provide access to a wealth of information about books and can help you make informed decisions about which books to acquire.

### **Challenges in Book acquisition due to pandemic period**

The COVID-19 pandemic has presented several challenges for book acquisition, both for individuals and for institutions such as libraries and bookstores. Here are some of the challenges:

1. **Limited access to physical bookstores:** Many physical bookstores have closed or have limited hours due to the pandemic, which makes it more difficult for people to browse and purchase books in person.
2. **Shipping delays:** Shipping delays and disruptions have impacted the availability and delivery of physical books, particularly for those ordering from online retailers.
3. **Limited library access:** Public libraries have also been affected by the pandemic, with many being closed or having limited access. This can make it more difficult for people to borrow physical books or access library databases and online resources.
4. **Supply chain disruptions:** The pandemic has also caused disruptions to the global supply chain, which can impact the availability of books, particularly those that are printed overseas.
5. **Financial constraints:** Many individuals and institutions have been affected financially by the pandemic, which can make it more difficult to purchase new books or acquire new materials for libraries.

Despite these challenges, there are still ways to acquire books during the pandemic period. Online retailers and e-book options are still available, and many libraries offer digital lending programs. Additionally, many independent bookstores have adapted by offering curbside pickup or delivery services.

### **Challenges in Book acquisition after pandemic period**

While the COVID-19 pandemic has presented unique challenges for book acquisition, there may also be challenges in the post-pandemic period. Here are some potential challenges:

1. **Economic recovery:** The pandemic has had a significant impact on the global economy, and it may take time for businesses, including bookstores and publishers, to recover. This could affect the availability and pricing of books.
2. **Changes in reader behaviour:** The pandemic has also changed the way people consume media and may lead to changes in reader behaviour. For example, there may be a continued shift



towards digital reading and e-books, which could impact the availability of physical books.

3. **Changes in publishing industry:** The pandemic has disrupted the publishing industry, with many book releases delayed or cancelled. The industry may continue to face challenges in the post-pandemic period, which could affect the availability and quality of books.
4. **Shipping and supply chain issues:** The pandemic has caused significant disruptions to shipping and supply chains, and these issues may continue to affect book acquisition in the post-pandemic period.
5. **Changes in library services:** Libraries may continue to face challenges in the post-pandemic period, particularly as they work to adapt to new technologies and changes in reader behavior. This could affect the availability and accessibility of library materials.

There are likely to be ongoing challenges in book acquisition even after the pandemic period ends. However, with continued innovation and adaptation, it is possible to overcome these challenges and continue to enjoy access to a wide range of books and reading materials.

#### **Future of book acquisition**

The future of book acquisition is likely to involve a mix of traditional and digital methods. While physical bookstores and libraries will still play a role in book acquisition, digital platforms and e-books will continue to gain popularity.

Digital platforms such as Amazon and Barnes & Noble have already revolutionized the book industry by making books easily accessible to consumers all over the world. With the continued growth of the internet and the widespread use of smartphones and other mobile devices, digital book sales are likely to continue to increase.

At the same time, physical bookstores and libraries are likely to adapt to changing consumer preferences by offering a more diverse range of products and experiences. Many bookstores are already offering online ordering and delivery services, and some are even experimenting with new business models such as book subscription services and book-related experiences like author events and book clubs.

Libraries are also likely to continue to play an important role in book acquisition, particularly for those who prefer physical books or do not have access to digital platforms. Many libraries are already expanding their digital offerings, including e-books, audiobooks, and online resources, to meet the changing needs of their communities.

The future of book acquisition is likely to be a mix of traditional and digital methods, with consumers having more options than ever before to acquire and enjoy books in the way that suits them best.

## Conclusion

The post-pandemic world has witnessed a transformative impact of mobile devices and search engines on reading habits, the book trade, and consequently, the acquisition strategies of libraries. As the pandemic confined people to their homes, mobile phones and tablets emerged as versatile portals to the world of literature. E-books, audiobooks, and digital reading materials became the go-to choices for readers seeking solace and knowledge during uncertain times. Search engines like Google played a pivotal role in this transition, enabling users to effortlessly discover, access, and delve into a vast array of digital texts. Consequently, the book trade underwent a profound shift, with traditional brick-and-mortar bookstores facing unprecedented challenges, while digital platforms and online booksellers flourished.

For libraries, this shift prompted a strategic recalibration. Acquiring and offering digital resources became paramount to meet the evolving demands of their patrons. Libraries expanded their digital collections, forming partnerships with e-book providers and investing in advanced digital infrastructure to ensure equitable access to a diverse range of literary content. In this post-pandemic era, libraries have emerged as essential gatekeepers of digital knowledge, facilitating remote learning, research, and leisure reading. Mobile technology and search engines have not only reshaped reading habits and the book trade but have also propelled libraries into the digital age, ensuring that readers continue to have access to the world of literature, no matter where they are.

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