



ALA Core e-Forum December 20-21, 2022

Topic: eBook Acquisition and Licensing Issues in Public Libraries

Moderators: Will Stuivenga and Lisa Sallee

First Day: Question 1: What is the approximate balance between budgeting for new content for your OverDrive collection vs. money used to fill holds, reduce wait times, and to replace expired licenses?

Please explain the thinking behind these types of decisions. If you would like to share how your budget breaks down, please first introduce yourself and tell us a little about the population and number of libraries your site serves.

Response 1.1: Ocean State Libraries has one site and all titles purchased are available to all RI library cardholders. We have Advantage libraries who purchase only extra (not new and unique) content to satisfy holds for their patrons a bit more quickly and when their patrons' holds are satisfied those licenses immediately become Shared and fill any patron's holds. We have a population of about 1.1M with about 350,000 cardholders and about 42,000 of those cardholders using our digital site in any given month.

In FY21 with our budgeted spending (not additional member/Advantage spending)

- Holds Management: 30%
- Expired MA replacements: 22%
- New Content: 47%

In FY23, our goals for breaking this down have been replaced with a need to manage holds and this is how we are trending with our budget:

- Holds Management: 35%
- Expired MA replacements: 30%
- New Content: 35%

Obviously, this is a troubling change in less than 2 years.

Response 1.2: I'm the administrator for the Digital Downloads Collaboration, a group of 18 library systems in central and west central Ohio. Our population served is around 1.6M with 83,000 active monthly digital collection users with OverDrive. Like Ocean State, our partner libraries rarely buy new content and focus most of their Advantage budgets on reducing wait times with additional copies.

We don't have our budget broken out by holds management versus new content, but I do know that we spend about 80% of our budget on fulfilling holds. This is somewhat skewed because we buy just one

copy to start with of all titles and then buy copies to meet our 6:1 ratio either on release day (for pre-orders) or the day after I buy other new content. I love it that I can rely on the Holds Manager to do the work for me.

I re-buy expired MA titles weekly and base that spending on the Current Holds report. I buy adult and teen titles with 4 or more holds and Juv with 3 or more holds. Here and there I'll buy additional copies of super popular series (lookin' at you Diary of a Wimpy Kid audiobooks, Lord of the Rings, Outlander, Harry Potter and, well, you get the idea) when I see just one of the titles needs more copies in the Holds Manager carts.

Moderator2: One quick comment, in that we're like you in one sense, selectors just buy one copy of new titles, and then I handle additional copies to meet our holds ratio using our central funds. But unlike you (it sounds like), our selection is decentralized, with all of our larger systems making decisions individually on what to add to the shared collection.

Moderator1 Question: I want to clarify one thing you said. You purchase Expired MA titles only when there are 4 or more holds on those licenses and 3 or more if they are for a Juvenile audience? And you strictly adhere to a 6:1 holds ratio regardless of price/lending model?

Answer: The 4 or more holds is a carry over from when our ratio was 4:1 which ended in late summer of 2020 when we went to 5:1. I feel that if 4 customers took the time to place a hold on something they know has zero copies then they're committed. I think it would be very hard for a title to get 6 holds when we don't advertise that it's the number of holds that generates a re-purchase. Of course there are some heavy hitters out there that slip past me from Macmillan, for example, so the report is a good safety net.

Yes, we're at 6:1 no matter the format or price. We moved from 5:1 to 6:1 this past September specifically to address the super high pricing on some audiobooks and rising prices in general.

Moderator2: We've never applied our holds ratio (which is currently at 7.1:1—that's the best we can afford—to replacing expired content. Only to the titles that are active in our collection. There will be a more specific question about expired content tomorrow.

Moderator1: We used to repurchase with just 1 hold on an Expired MA title. Then we limited that to any license that is \$39.99 and under and now we limit that to any license that is \$30.99 and under unless it is now OCOU. Otherwise we require 2 holds and 3 or more in the case of titles over \$65. Your approach would save us money and also a lot of holds would linger. We also take all the expired titles with 1 hold and see if they are available Cost Per Circ CPC (like Norton) and add them if they are and then revoke once filled. Sometimes they are never filled. Then again if the title had just recently been checked out and is clearly a high demand author, we are likely to purchase it even with 1 hold.

Response 1.3: I am at a State community college, and our ebook access is not managed using a digital content provider like OverDrive. Currently the vendors we use (Salem and Gale mostly) provide access through our catalog and concurrent users are allowed. We did need to negotiate concurrent users for our StatRef nursing ebooks.

I'd be interested in hearing from other college libraries about how they do manage their ebook access and if they offer a queue as in patron holds? It may be something that as we move to more electronic collections, we will need to explore further.

Moderator1: Thank you for sharing your experience in a college library. It's very different than our purchasing experience with OverDrive and I invite anyone from other college libraries to share their process/practices for ebook access.

Response 1.4: I'm Principal Cataloger at Arizona State University. While I don't work with eBooks or eAudiobooks, I do use the former from several local libraries. I've read about how vendors/publishers are raising prices and changing models for public libraries, straining budgets, so am looking forward to hearing from those of you who work with them.

Because I am totally unfamiliar with eBook management, though, I wonder about some of the terms and acronyms in the posts. What is "Advantage spending"? What do these acronyms refer to: MA (e.g., "expired MA replacements"), OCOU, CPC (cost per circ, perhaps?)?

Moderator1: Advantage Libraries are libraries that purchase titles for their patrons. These titles can either be used by only those patrons or can be shared with the larger collection in which they participate. The sharing is called Advantage Plus Shared.

MA indeed stands for Metered Access licenses. Licenses are metered by either time (example 12 months, 24 months, 48 months, 60 months) by checkouts (26 checkouts, 52 checkouts are the most common) and there is an either/or whichever comes first (example 24 months or 52 checkouts whichever comes first)

OCOU is One Copy One User, the license can be checked out by one user at a time and remains in the collection forever or until/unless it is weeded by the library.

MACU is Metered Access Concurrent Use—these licenses generally allow for a maximum number of circulations but can be used by multiple users at the same time.

CPC is indeed Cost Per Circ and can be priced between pennies per checkout and \$8 or more per checkout.

Moderator2: "Advantage Plan" is an OverDrive function for consortia. In a consortium, there is a shared collection that all members can contribute to, but individual member libraries can also create "Advantage Plan" accounts and any content they purchase using those accounts are available to that specific library's patrons ONLY. In many consortia, the primary use of Advantage Plan accounts is for members to lower the wait times on popular titles for their patrons, by purchasing additional copies for the exclusive use of their patrons. There is also "Advantage Plan Plus" which allows members to eventually share their Advantage Plan titles out into the general collection, but still retaining priority (in any holds queue) for their patrons.

MA is "Metered Access" meaning titles that expire based on either the number of checkouts per license, or after a specified period of time (typically 12 or 24 months) or some combination, like 24 months or 50 checkouts, whichever comes first.

OC/OU is the traditional (originally!) One Copy/One User license, and these normally didn't expire, were theoretically permanent licenses. Although a publisher can always pull a license later on and sometimes do. CPC is indeed Cost per Circ.

Response 1.5: I'm the manager for the Washington Digital Library Consortium (WDLC), with 45 public library members (out of 60 systems) around the state. The WDLC comprises mostly the smaller and mid-sized libraries. Our largest system is about 126,000 pop served, and our smallest is under 300. Total pop served is a bit over 840,000. Washington is almost exclusively an OverDrive state, where public library eBook and eAudiobook collections are concerned, although we're just starting to implement the Palace Project. That's an entirely different topic! The WDLC also has an elected 6-member Executive Committee, which is the official governing body, and they assist by any making decisions for the day-to-day management as needed, and also decide which issues should go to the entire membership for a vote.

For the most recent federal fiscal year, the 12-month period from Oct. 1, 2021 through September 30, 2022, of the funds spent on the shared collection (in other words, excluding Advantage Plan spending), 34% was spent on new content, and 66% was spent on added copies to maintain the holds ratio, and to replace expired titles with holds on them. So basically a 1/3 2/3 split.

I don't believe there was any conscious decision making behind those specific percentages. That's just the way it worked out. The consortium members vote on a budget every year, agreeing on the amount they can afford, and that budget is then divided out to cover the various expense categories. Some of our larger members typically overspend their official shared collection allocations significantly, so while that increases the percentage of funds spent on new content, it also places additional pressure on the Added Copy Fund when folks place holds on those titles.

In the "official" budget for calendar year 2022, 79% of the voted budget was allocated to the Added Copy Fund, which also pays for replacing expired content, 19% was allocated for new content, and 2% paid OverDrive's platform fee. So that was closer to a 1/5 to 4/5 split.

However, the consortium also voted to add a trial subscription to OverDrive's magazine package in 2022, and that was handled as a separate budget item. If we add that into the collection allocation, the percentages become 72% for the Added Copy Fund, and 26% for new content. Even so, that's only barely just over ¼ of the budget for new content vs. ¾ for what you might call collection maintenance, maintaining the holds ratio and replacing expired content. Although, as I mentioned at the beginning, if you also account for libraries overspending the official budget, the percentages become slightly over 1/3 on new content vs. 2/3 for filling holds and replacing expired content.

I guess the important point behind all of that number crunching is that we spend a LOT more on maintaining the existing collection than we do on expanding it. And that over the years, that division has become more and more unbalanced, with less for new content, and ever more for added copies (to reduce wait times on popular titles) and especially over the past several years, MORE and MORE for replacing expired licenses. Especially as the big publishers also started selling audiobooks with metered access licenses that eventually expire.

Response 1.6: We are in a 16-library community college academic OD consortia group. As an advantage library we do not purchase additional copies for holds but focus on building new collections and

content. We do not purchase expired titles using the expiry as a weeding method. In the web interface, users can recommend title purchases (not yet a Libby function) so if a title expires, we can repurchase upon request. We are also magazine subscribers, attempting to move to consortia purchasing but this does require some finagling.

As a single library, not yet in the shared catalog, we add the marc records for all titles (except single issue magazines) which can be messy but valuable for discovery.

Moderator2: Question: That's very interesting! I wasn't aware of any academic OverDrive consortia. What kind of content are you looking for from OverDrive? Are you primarily focusing on non-fiction (or fiction) to support your curriculum, or are you also investing in fiction for recreational reading? And by "you" I suppose I mean both the consortium's shared collection AND your own Advantage purchasing?

Answer: As an advantage member we use it primarily for nonfiction and fiction "popular collections", and were able to be responsive to user needs during the pandemic. Other consortial members purchase course content which then is available to our users, works great.

Response 1.7: Responding about academic libraries using Ebooks. I am at the University of Kentucky, and we use several ebook platforms but not Overdrive. We do not use Overdrive due to the pricing model, preferring to lease or outright purchase content. Other platforms such as JSTOR, EBSCOhost, ProQuest have some have the ability for a hold to be placed and then the next person notified which works for us unless we run into a large class needing the book for an assignment. At that point, depending on availability we try to upgrade to unlimited access or at least buy multiple copies. We have not run into many complaints. We are beginning to get requests for audiobooks and have not found a source that is cost effective and has the content we are looking for. We do refer our users to the local public library for current fiction and popular titles.

I am also a heavy user of our local library and their Overdrive collection, so I am contributor to the problems our public library colleagues are facing. For myself, I would be fine waiting longer to get a book if that increases the availability of more content. I generally use holds for a few favorite authors but am occasionally dismayed when I go looking for an author or title that has been suggested to me and find out it is not available via the Overdrive collection.

Moderator2: Question: I'm interested in your experience as an OverDrive user via your public library. I'm wondering if, when you're dismayed by a title or author not being available in the public library's OverDrive collection, if that is simply because the library hasn't selected that particular author or title, or if it's because OverDrive itself doesn't have the title available? There are a few prominent titles that OverDrive has been unable to offer. Apparently the E.B. White estate is currently unwilling to sell Charlotte's Web and other E.B. White titles to libraries (as eBooks; they are available to libraries in audio and print formats). And Amazon and its audio subsidiary Audible have only just recently begun to offer their unique content to libraries, and that via the Palace Project and the DPLA marketplace, NOT through OverDrive or other commercial aggregators.

Answer: I suspect it is both that either our public library has not selected that title or it is not available via OverDrive. I am not sure as a user I would be able to see the difference.

Response 1.8: I'm a nonfiction selector at the [Iowa City Public Library](#). You can find some basic facts about our services from the FY21 Quick Facts graphic on our About Us page. Iowa City is a town-gown city, and we have a lot of active readers. We are also the home to the Iowa Writers Workshop and a UNESCO City of Literature. We are a single branch library with a bookmobile, and along with our neighboring libraries, the North Liberty Library and Coralville Public Library, we serve a population of around 150,000 residents. The three of our libraries jointly purchase e-books, e-audio, and digital magazines through OverDrive. For digital services from Kanopy and hoopla, we go solo. Three different library boards, three different budgets.

Regarding the collection budget of the Iowa City Public Library, our Collection Services Manager budgeted about 20% of our e-book and e-audio monies to repurchasing expired content. We don't have a way to split holds spending from new items. If anyone has a cheat sheet for how that's done, I'd be glad to learn!

Our holds ratio hovers around 10:1 for digital content. As the nonfiction buyer, I often have leftover money in my OverDrive selection area. I have taken those holds down to 5:1 or even 3:1 if the money's there. We've followed the "something for everyone" theory of collection development and purchase those nonfiction titles that are not going to give us as much bang for our buck as fiction titles.

Moderator2: In a consortium, perhaps it's easier to split the budget; I don't know. But in our annual budget, once we've decided the total amount, usually based on a flat or percentage increase over the previous year, decided by vote of the membership, we allocate a set amount to cover the OverDrive platform fee, the magazine package subscription, and a set amount for new content, which is called the Collection Allocation. How it works in our consortium is that the larger libraries (those serving a population of 30K or more) are REQUIRED to purchase for the shared collection. Those in the middle (from 30K down to 8K this year, at least) have the choice of purchasing new content or contributing their entire share of the cost to the Added Copy Fund (ACF).

We calculate out each library's share of the collection allocation (for those that are purchasing) and they are informed of their Collection Allocation, which they spend directly with OverDrive during the year. The balance of their cost is invoiced, and for the smaller libraries, their entire cost is invoiced, and paid into the central "Added Copy Fund" which is then used to purchase added copies to maintain the holds ratio, and to replace expired content.

So that's how the division is handled in our consortium. In a sense, it's kind of arbitrary, but basically, once the set costs (platform fee, magazine subscription cost, collection allocation) are accounted for, whatever's left goes into the ACF. And this year, at least, it's not going to be enough to cover our current holds ratio, and so we're in the process of deciding on additional cost-saving measures.

More from Response 1.8:

Let me elaborate more about what I meant by "three different library boards, three different budgets." I think that phrasing may have confused what we do. Our three libraries have a contract that outlines the percentages we each have to spend of the OverDrive collection each year. The percentages are based on each city's portion of our combined population served. Each library sends in their orders individually and pays their respective invoices. We use the same percentages to split the digital magazines cost.

We do have contracts with service areas outside these 3 cities, which allow the people who live in those towns to use our OverDrive collections as an Iowa City “resident” cardholder. Ah, tax bases and jurisdictions!

Moderator2: Question:

So how do you handle holds purchasing? Does each selector decide when to purchase more copies of their titles to fill holds? Do you have a set holds ratio for the collection? Or is it based on individual decisions? Are you (any or all of the selectors or someone on behalf of the entire library) using OverDrive's Holds Manager to create carts?

Answer from 1.8: Yes, it is up to the individual selectors and their budgets. The ICPL fiction buyer will be more conservative with repurchasing for holds than I have to be for my less popular nonfiction titles. He also has to buy the audiobooks that are \$100+ due to their popularity, while I will only buy a title at that rate if it’s absolutely pertinent to the collection.

We do have a person in our Collection Services department who is in charge of repurchasing expired content. If an expiring title as a hold, we repurchase it. Just 1 hold suffices in our current protocol. For items with no holds, here’s two repurchasing requirements:

If the title is to be repurchased, it must have checked out within the last # of months:

<i>Collection</i>	Last checked out date
<i>Fiction/YA/Comics</i>	1.5 months
<i>Nonfiction</i>	3 months
<i>Children’s Collection</i>	1.5 months

If the title meets the following circ per year threshold, repurchase.

<i>Collection</i>	Circs Per Years Owned
<i>Fiction/YA/Comics</i>	10 per year for Fiction/Comics; 8 per year for YA Fiction
<i>Nonfiction</i>	8 per year
<i>Children’s Collection</i>	8 per year

I know when I did the math to suggest the 8/year for nonfiction, that got me a price per circ of under \$5, I believe. HOWEVER, when I pulled a sample set to see what a graph of checkouts over time for those MA titles, I might see 100 circs in the first year only to see 2 in the last. Think about those titles that we may have reupped once or twice. Average usage gets skewed when the time frame expands.

Regarding the question about series gaps—Yes, we let them go. Not all series require reading them in a specific order.

Response 1.9: I am the digital selection librarian for the Sonoma County Library system serving a population of just under 500,000 in northern California. We have multiple eBook avenues for our patrons including Libby, Hoopla, enki and the California State Library eBook collection. Our Libby instance is shared by three counties with SCL as the administering library and main purchaser.

We have shifted our digital buying in the past year to have specialized audience selectors, so our budget is portioned out by audience area with a general hold's ratio fund, a cost per circ fund and simultaneous use fund.

The focus of the purchase alert fund is to keep us to our 4:1 holds ratio. Currently we are set at about 44% of the funds going to keeping up with the holds ratio.

We buy lucky day titles at 1 lucky day copy for every 20 holds with a limit of 5 copies.

We utilize the concurrent use licenses and CPC options (less than \$2 per circ) to help reduce holds lists and wait times.

In general, we replace MA by use titles weekly when there are less than 3 circulations left and MA by time titles from review carts every two weeks rebuying titles that still have holds and/or recent and high circ in the last 12 months. However, there is a balance between MA by time rebuys and new titles that each selector handles as they come from the same fund. There is no defined percentage to break out replacements from new though a majority of purchases are new titles. We buy 1 copy of each new title or up to holds ratio based on patron requests.

Moderator2 Question: Thanks so much for chiming in! It's so useful to hear different perspectives on what's working and why and how you manage these issues.

Some questions that come to mind:

- Is your "purchase alert fund" the same as your "general hold's ratio fund" or is that yet a fourth fund?

Answer: Yes this is the same fund. One general purchase alert fund that is used for the holds ratio, MA by use rebuys and Lucky Day titles since they are also triggered by holds.

- How do you divide the budget by audience? I mean, do you have preset percentages for the J, YA, and Adult purchasing? And how were those determined?

Answer: We started with a review of circulation from the previous year and looked at what percentage each audience area contributed to our circulation and split up the amount we had that way initially. We also use this when we get grants or extra funds to spend, to determine allocation. We had to adjust a couple of funds as some areas seem to have a bit higher cost like Adult Nonfiction and others where we want to build a collection in hopes of future use like world languages. The biggest part of the budget goes to adult fiction. We have separate budgets for AF, ANF, JF, JNF, YA, Spanish and world languages. Then a streaming budget, CPC budget, Sim Use Budget and the Purchase Alert Budget.

- Are all of the selectors at your library? Is there an agreement that only the person in charge of the added copies and filling holds will buy CPC titles?

Answer: Yes, all of the selectors are at our Library in our Collection Development department. Most select the same area in print as well as digital. The two counties we share with are much smaller and buy what they can and are really good at filling in the gaps. I handle the more general budgets like the CPC and purchase alert as well as AF and JF. The other selectors handle the new titles in their area and any rebuys for the MA by time licenses, weeded requests and regular patron requests.

- And how do you manage the business of determining which titles would benefit from CPC? Do you have to look up each title individually? Isn't that a lot of work? I'm really interested in how to make this a practical tool, because it has just seemed like it would be too time-consuming to be practical.

Answer: I have a saved search looking for titles with a holds ratio in the CPC catalog, so its just a button press and then limit price to \$2 or less, or whatever the budget indicates. I run that before I process a purchase alert cart and it's really only a handful or so that show up in that catalog for \$2 or less. I then look at the cost of a second copy vs clearing the holds with CPC. Simon and Schuster is great for having low CPC cost in relation to high license cost for their titles so I keep a keen eye on them. Once the CPC is set I clear any titles with CPC enabled from the purchase alert carts. This is especially good for backlist where you really only need one copy most of the time.

- Finally, do you think the Lucky Day collection helps manage patron expectations and/or in the cost of maintaining the holds ratio? Or is it just regarded as an added bonus for patrons?

Answer: We just started Lucky Day this FY and so far it is often one of our top circulating carousels in Libby. That being said, we did have to adjust our purchasing down from 1 LD copy for every 10 holds to 1 copy LD for every 20 because it can suck up budget. I think overall its a great addition if it can be afforded since we do offer the same in print. That would put it in the bonus realm. Thought I do think the chance of getting a hot title does relieve a bit of frustration on the patron end, no hard evidence on that just my take on it when seeing how it is used and works in our collection.

First Day, Second Question:

What holds ratio (or ratios) does your library use for your OverDrive collection and why?

Have you experimented with, or made use of varying holds ratios for different publishers, different license models, or different price points?

If not, why not? And if so, what seems to work effectively, what doesn't, and why?

How difficult is it to manage these kinds of decisions?

Response 2.1: The Washington Anytime Library used a 7:1 holds ratio this year from January through June. On July 1, the ratio was raised to 7.1:1. This merely means that instead of 7 holds triggering purchase of another copy, it takes MORE than 7 holds to trigger that purchase. This reduced costs a little, but probably not as much as we had hoped.

And while I use the expression, "trigger a purchase" what I really mean by that is it triggers another copy to show up in my weekly Holds Manager cart(s). I run 2 Holds Manager carts each week, one for eBooks, and 1 for eAudiobooks. I don't purchase either of them automatically but review them first.

On top of our 7.1:1 holds ratio, we have a 20-copy cap on added copies, so I don't purchase more than 20 copies of any title using our centralized "Added Copy Fund." Occasionally a member library will purchase an additional copy or 2 of a title for the shared collection, which takes us over the 20-copy limit, but increasingly, they are more likely to buy Advantage copies for the exclusive use of their own patrons.

To encourage this, often, for a new "hot" title, when multiple copies show up in my holds cart, I'll knock off a few copies for the first week or two, and I usually send out a weekly "Holds report" to the membership, letting them know which titles are generating the most volume in the holds manager that week. I mention when I'm buying fewer than needed to match the official holds ratio and encourage folks to consider an Advantage copy or two which will help take pressure off the central funding. Then I buy more copies the next week, if we're still over the holds ratio (which we generally are).

Response 2.2 (Rhode Island): We currently have several ratios for managing holds, and almost all have exceptions.

- We use 13:1 for titles costing \$40 or more but under \$60
- We use 20:1 for titles costing over \$60
- We use 6:1 for titles costing under \$40 unless we have a sense they are popular for some short term and surprising reason and those titles won't be circulated
- We use 3:1 for very inexpensive titles that are OCOU and under about \$10
- We use 1:1 for titles with 1 or more unsuspended holds that cost under \$3.99/book

When a very expensive new title reaches a hold limit like 13:1, we purchase 2 copies more and put one in a Lucky Day swim lane allowing 1 week rental, one Lucky Day license at a time for a patron, no holds, no renewals. After that we wait for 20:1 before purchasing another license and overall we have a 10 consortium level cap on total licenses.

Right now, the Stephen King audiobook for \$129.99 has a 16:1 ratio but only because 2 libraries purchased for their Advantage collections and it becomes Shared and considered as part of the overall collection. We purchased 5 at the consortia level and 1 is in Lucky Day and there are 96 holds on the title in that format.

Response 2.1 continued: So far, up to now, the Washington Anytime Library has not used multiple holds ratios for different situations. However, for 2023, the budget that was adopted by the Washington Digital Library Consortium (WDLC) membership is clearly insufficient to maintain the current 7:1 or even the 7.1:1 holds ratio. Consequently, one of our Executive Committee members, Carmi Parker, the ILS Coordinator for the Whatcom County Library System, our largest member, who is really good with detailed numerical analysis, analyzed the expected effect of various scenarios involving using different holds ratios for different titles, based on their price, license models, and so forth.

Ultimately, the Executive Committee decided to put two different possible approaches out to a vote of the membership. That vote is currently underway, and I'm going to be getting a preliminary data dump later today, but members still have another week to cast their votes. Here are the two approaches we're considering:

Option 1: Change the holds ratio by format and median price:

Our median price for eBooks is \$40 and for eAudiobooks is \$66. In this model, items less than the median will retain a holds ratio of 7, while items above the median will have a holds ratio of 9.5.

Estimated patron impact:

60% of holds will have a 36% increase in wait time. Our average wait time now is approximately 21 days, so that average would likely increase to 29 days for 60% of our holds. The other 40% will experience the same wait time.

Option 2: Set the holds ratio proportional to price:

This option roughly uses print-like prices and print-like holds ratios as a starting point and increases the holds ratio proportionally by price. For example, if we consider up to \$40 a reasonable price for a 24-month license on an eBook or eAudiobook, then we can set our holds ratio for those items to a print-like holds ratio of 5. And items that cost \$80 will have a holds ratio of 10. Here are the terms we propose for this option:

<i>Price</i>	<i>Holds ratio</i>
\$0 - \$40	5
\$40-\$60	7.5
\$60-\$80	10
> \$80	15

Estimated patron impact:

- 23% of holds will have a wait time that is shorter by 28%
- 42% of holds will have a 7% longer wait time
- 27% of holds will have a 42% increase in wait time
- 8% of holds will have a 100% increase in wait time

Lucky me, I will have the privilege (and task) of figuring out just how to implement whichever approach is decided upon! So I would be VERY interested in hearing from any other libraries that might have previously implemented something (anything!) along these lines. Am I really going to be on the bleeding edge of "praxis" here?

Response from 1.2 respondent:

There is some good news about managing your Holds Manager Carts based on price. There is an option when setting up a cart to exclude titles over a certain price point. In the example below you'd get anything with a price point of \$40 or lower.

* Do you want to exclude titles based on price?
Enter a whole value (ex: 20 not 19.99).

No; include all titles.

Yes; exclude titles priced more than USD.

Another cart could be set up to contain titles that are \$60 and lower, but you'd have to remove all titles that were \$40 and lower. You'd have to set up several carts but it is doable. I know Cuyahoga PL does this and it works well for them. There's probably others out there too.

It's also an option to exclude titles that have reached a certain number of copies. We have a cap of 100 copies and I employ this option in all of my Holds Manager carts.

Do you want to limit the copies purchased for a given title?

- Yes; I don't want to own more than copies of any title.
- No; include as many copies as needed to satisfy this plan.

Because I mentioned multiple carts I thought I'd share one of them. I have a Holds Manager carts for Penguin Random House only. When they went to offering the 12 month model I wanted to track how much we "saved" by buying the cheaper option to fill holds. Fingers crossed that PRH never takes this option away but if they do I'll have some data to back up how much benefit we gained from this flexibility.

I love seeing how other libraries and consortia manage their holds.

Response from 2.1: Yes, I've looked into this option before, and the lack of a "floor" for setting Holds Manager carts is a potential problem, but can presumably be dealt with by dumping the cart into a spreadsheet, or by just sorting by price and manually deleting everything below the desired floor. With big carts, it might be faster to dump to a spreadsheet, delete them out, then recreate the cart using ISBNs or probably OverDrive Title or Reserve ID numbers. I have mentioned to OverDrive that having a price floor as well as a price cap, would be a useful enhancement for the Holds Manager, but I'm not holding my breath for that. I'll probably mention it again, once I start actually doing it.

Response 2.3: Ascension Parish Library is a public library in a community of about 130,000. (We use the term parish instead of county here in Louisiana.) We have about 89,000 cardholders. We have 4 branches and a bookmobile and are currently building a 5th branch.

We use a 4:1 holds ratio across the board for eBooks and eAudios and don't have a price limit. Our holds ratio is based on our print copy holds ratio. The reasoning is that we don't want patrons to wait too long for their books and get frustrated. We decided to place priority on the titles that we know people want in digital format. So holds purchasing and patron recommendations take priority over metered repurchase and new title purchases.

The only time I've had to put a limit on the number of copies to purchase of a particular titles is for Colleen Hoover titles. I set the max at 15 copies and haven't purchased above that yet.

When we have the option, we manage high holds with CPC titles. And I always check the Suspended Holds numbers before purchasing to make sure that the ratio is actually 4:1 based on holds that are not suspended.

So far, I haven't found it difficult to manage decisions about holds and patron recommendations. The decision that I find more difficult is managing metered repurchases. Are people going to continue reading expired titles at a rate that makes it worth it to buy another two year license? Or should I wait and allow them to recommend the title again if they want to read it? After all, they may only use the Libby app and get frustrated by what they don't find. I ask myself these and other questions pretty often when dealing with repurchases.

Moderator2 Question: I have a question regarding the use of CPC. What is your workflow for those decisions? How do you determine which titles might be good CPC candidates?

Answer: With regards to CPC titles and workflow, I decide on those titles based on titles that have high holds. I also set CPC titles that I predict will end up having high holds to get ahead of the buildup of holds. I have some learning to do with regards to revoking CPC titles in OverDrive.

Question from previous respondent: We also have a 4:1 holds ratio for many of the same reasons. I have a question about this sentence, "So holds purchasing and patron recommendations take priority over metered repurchase and new title purchases."

Does that mean you would purchase requested backlist over new titles that are not requested? We do prioritize new titles and new titles with requests being top of the list. Backlist is usually only newly purchased when we have available budget and then it has to have multiple requests. However we also use Hoopla to fill in the backlist gaps too, since we rely on multiple vendors.

Answer: Yes, that's correct. We purchase requested backlist titles over new titles. That being said, we also supplement with Hoopla and cloudLibrary, so that reduces those requests.

Question: What is CloudLibrary? We use Hoopla and Overdrive.

Answer: cloudLibrary is an eBook platform for libraries, but I think of it as a mash-up of OverDrive and Hoopla. It's a recent addition for us. We added it in August, mostly in order to take advantage of their cloudLink group.

cloudLibrary offers the following options in a single, seamless platform. Libraries can choose which services to add to their platform. The services with asterisks are the ones we are currently using. We have been very pleased with the customer service and patron response to the new offerings. We chose to migrate all of our eAudiobook content from OverDrive to cloudLibrary to make us eligible for cloudLink without a big up-front purchase cost.

- Purchasing model similar to OverDrive with licensing options determined by the publisher.
- Pay-per-use model similar to Hoopla with limits set by the library. When I'm searching for new titles to purchase in their version of Marketplace, I can see if a title is in the PPU collection and know that I don't have to purchase it.
- Participation in the cloudLink group for your state. Libraries pay a yearly fee to have access to the collections of all of the participating libraries. Patrons don't have to follow a link or go elsewhere to search for the titles. They show up in a search if they're available. Our patrons can't put holds on other library titles, and other library patrons can't put holds on our titles.
- Magazine subscription similar to OverDrive, which will be integrated into the app with the new platform release anticipated in January.
- Comics Plus subscription, which will also be integrated into the app with the new platform release anticipated in January.
- Biblio+ streaming movie subscription, which will also be integrated into the app with the new platform release anticipated in January.

Moderator1: Question: I am wondering when you say "Our patrons can't put holds on other library titles, and other library patrons can't put holds on our titles" does t mean that a patron should be logged in first and they will not see content that they are unable to access or are they denied access (a checkout

or hold button) when they login. I would think there would be a frustration with seeing content that you don't have access to and just wanted to clarify that point. Thank you for explaining CloudLibrary.

Answer: In cloudLibrary, if a cloudLink-owned title is not currently available and not owned by my library, it will show in the search results with a Suggest button when searching with the Suggestions filter on. It will not show up in the search results if the Suggestions filter is off.

Libraries control whether they allow patrons to make suggestions. If allowed, patrons control their search results by choosing to turn on the suggestions filter in order to suggest titles not owned by their home library.

Moderator2 Question: You mentioned checking for suspended holds before making your added copy purchases, which is certainly wise. Do you use OverDrive's Holds Manager to create holds carts for you? The Holds Manager has a setting to exclude suspended holds from your holds ratio, so I just turned that option on to "Yes, exclude suspended holds" and then I don't have to worry about that any more.

Answer: I don't use the Holds Manager cart in the way that you've asked about, but will probably start to do that. I've already learned several management/workflow tips from this forum that I'm not familiar with, so am excited about that!

Response 2.4: Ascension Parish Library is a public library in a community of about 130,000. (We use the term parish instead of county here in Louisiana.) We have about 89,000 cardholders. We have 4 branches and a bookmobile and are currently building a 5th branch.

We use a 4:1 holds ratio across the board for eBooks and eAudios and don't have a price limit. Our holds ratio is based on our print copy holds ratio. The reasoning is that we don't want patrons to wait too long for their books and get frustrated. We decided to place priority on the titles that we know people want in digital format. So holds purchasing and patron recommendations take priority over metered repurchase and new title purchases.

The only time I've had to put a limit on the number of copies to purchase of a particular titles is for Colleen Hoover titles. I set the max at 15 copies and haven't purchased above that yet.

When we have the option, we manage high holds with CPC titles. And I always check the Suspended Holds numbers before purchasing to make sure that the ratio is actually 4:1 based on holds that are not suspended.

So far, I haven't found it difficult to manage decisions about holds and patron recommendations. The decision that I find more difficult is managing metered repurchases. Are people going to continue reading expired titles at a rate that makes it worth it to buy another two year license? Or should I wait and allow them to recommend the title again if they want to read it? After all, they may only use the Libby app and get frustrated by what they don't find. I ask myself these and other questions pretty often when dealing with repurchases.

Q from previous respondent: I have a question about this sentence, "So, holds purchasing and patron recommendations take priority over metered repurchase and new title purchases."

Does that mean you would purchase requested backlist over new titles that are not requested? We do prioritize new titles and new titles with requests being top of the list. Backlist is usually only newly

purchased when we have available budget and then it has to have multiple requests. However we also use Hoopla to fill in the backlist gaps too, since we rely on multiple vendors.

Answer: Yes, that's correct. We purchase requested backlist titles over new titles. That being said, we also supplement with Hoopla and cloudLibrary, so that reduces those requests.

Moderator2 Question: I have a question regarding the use of CPC. What is your workflow for those decisions? How do you determine which titles might be good CPC candidates?

Answer: With regards to CPC titles and workflow, I decide on those titles based on titles that have high holds. I also set CPC titles that I predict will end up having high holds to get ahead of the buildup of holds. I have some learning to do with regards to revoking CPC titles in OverDrive.

Moderator2 Question: You mentioned checking for suspended holds before making your added copy purchases, which is certainly wise. Do you use OverDrive's Holds Manager to create holds carts for you? The Holds Manager has a setting to exclude suspended holds from your holds ratio, so I just turned that option on to "Yes, exclude suspended holds" and then I don't have to worry about that any more.

Answer: I don't use the Holds Manager cart in the way that you've asked about, but will probably start to do that. I've already learned several management/workflow tips from this forum that I'm not familiar with, so am excited about that!

Response 2.5 Re: Day One, Question 2: Holds Ratio(s)

cloudLibrary is an eBook platform for libraries, but I think of it as a mash-up of OverDrive and Hoopla. It's a recent addition for us. We added it in August, mostly in order to take advantage of their cloudLink group.

cloudLibrary offers the following options in a single, seamless platform. Libraries can choose which services to add to their platform. The services with asterisks are the ones we are currently using. We have been very pleased with the customer service and patron response to the new offerings. We chose to migrate all of our eAudiobook content from OverDrive to cloudLibrary to make us eligible for cloudLink without a big up-front purchase cost.

- Purchasing model similar to OverDrive with licensing options determined by the publisher.
- Pay-per-use model similar to Hoopla with limits set by the library. When I'm searching for new titles to purchase in their version of Marketplace, I can see if a title is in the PPU collection and know that I don't have to purchase it.
- Participation in the cloudLink group for your state. Libraries pay a yearly fee to have access to the collections of all of the participating libraries. Patrons don't have to follow a link or go elsewhere to search for the titles. They show up in a search if they're available. Our patrons can't put holds on other library titles, and other library patrons can't put holds on our titles.
- Magazine subscription similar to OverDrive, which will be integrated into the app with the new platform release anticipated in January.
- Comics Plus subscription, which will also be integrated into the app with the new platform release anticipated in January.
- Biblio+ streaming movie subscription, which will also be integrated into the app with the new platform release anticipated in January.

Moderator1: Question: I am wondering when you say “Our patrons can’t put holds on other library titles, and other library patrons can’t put holds on our titles” does t mean that a patron should be logged in first and they will not see content that they are unable to access or are they denied access (a checkout or hold button) when they login. I would think there would be a frustration with seeing content that you don’t have access to and just wanted to clarify that point. Thank you for explaining CloudLibrary.

Answer: In cloudLibrary, if a cloudLink-owned title is not currently available and not owned by my library, it will show in the search results with a Suggest button when searching with the Suggestions filter on. It will not show up in the search results if the Suggestions filter is off.

Libraries control whether they allow patrons to make suggestions. If allowed, patrons control their search results by choosing to turn on the suggestions filter in order to suggest titles not owned by their home library.

Day 2: Question 3: Handling Expired Licenses

Are expired licenses routinely weeded, or allowed to remain in your OverDrive collection? What criteria are used for deciding when or whether to replace expired licenses? Has the cost of replacing expired licenses increased over time (especially as more and more audiobook licenses now also expire), and how has this affected your purchasing decisions?

Response 3.1: (From 1.9 respondent):

We have the weeding tool set up to run every 24 hours to remove expired licenses. So, our collection should show titles with copies only. Weeded titles can be suggested for purchase again, and I run a monthly report of titles that were previously weeded and have been suggested for the collection. Those are treated more as rebuys than new purchases.

We review the MA by use licenses weekly and replace any with a hold or less than 3 circulations left. Most of these are backlist series and see regular use. We review the MA by time licenses every two weeks by audience area and the selector decides. Usually, items with holds are an automatic buy and recent regular use (more than 12 circulation in the past 12 months) are considered for repurchase if the budget allows. I also look at cost per use based on price so higher priced titles with middling use have less chance of a rebuy unless requested or there are holds.

The addition of eAudio to the MA licensing scheme was something we were worried about 2-3 years ago when it started. For the first year we would only buy MA audio upon request and stuck to OC/OU for regular purchases. I often find the MA audio titles when up for renewal don't meet the cost per use parameter and hoopla often has the inventory to cover much of the backlist. They have not really driven up the rebuys due to those factors, I often just don't rebuy them. The addition of the concurrent use model, which is mostly applied to eAudio is a more attractive way to spend funds with a better return on investment over time.

Moderator1: Thank you, this is an interesting approach. In our consortium, Hoopla is not available across all libraries. I am curious if you put MARC records in your ILS for ebooks and do you also weed the MARC records when weeding from your digital library site? We bring in and fully catalog records for ebooks including sending them to an authority processing vendor so we feel there is additional costs built into the initial purchase. We do not have the Recommend to Library feature turned on our

OverDrive site, we have a separate system allowing for that among all material types. Thank you for your contribution to this discussion.

Moderator2: At the Anytime Library in WA State, we don't use the "Recommend to Library" feature either. A couple of reasons for this: 1) we don't want to create false expectations among our users, if we're not going to be able to buy everything that they might recommend. 2) Since we're a consortium of 45 different libraries, many of them have their own systems set up for receiving and processing patron recommendations, often tied in with their ILL request system, and they don't want another parallel system running just for the OverDrive collection.

For our smaller member libraries, that don't typically purchase content directly from OverDrive, they are encouraged (I often have to remind them) to submit any patron requests for eBook or eAudio titles to me, via e-mail, and I "farm them out" to the larger libraries that are purchasing from OverDrive. Our Consortium Agreement has a clause providing for this, ensuring that requested titles will be purchased barring exceptional circumstances.

Response 3.2:

I'm the ILS admin and e-resources coordinator for a small public library consortium.

We have an active automatic weeding plan with Overdrive that will weed any MA titles that have no holds once they reach their expiration date. Over the last couple of years, we've had to create and solidify standards for when to repurchase licenses, as publishers changed their licensing rules. Right now, we tend to repurchase if a title was checked out more than 10 times in the previous year. If the title is rather expensive (cough .. Hachette .. cough), we may look for even higher usage before repurchasing. These repurchasing costs have risen dramatically for us the last several years - about a 300% increase in MA repurchasing costs since 2018, if my spreadsheets are to be trusted.

We are also more likely to repurchase an MA title if the license is based on checkouts rather than time, or if the title is part of a series. I sometime find myself frustrated when I want to let a series .. sunset itself, but there's one title whose timeline means I'd have to manually weed something with a valid license. I'd be curious to hear how others handle that - if, for example, you'd let book 3 in a series stay in the collection, even after books 1 and 2 have expired. Would you preemptively weed, for consistency, or let it stay in the collection and risk a patron being frustrated by the incomplete series?

Moderator1: Thank you, addressing having a complete series is something I have not thought about too much. The Patrick O'Brien series would be an example of a series that we usually have to repurchase and some titles might see one or two checkouts in a year but others, double digits. We definitely wait for at least that first hold before re-purchasing and since we do not have the Recommend to Library feature turned on (we use a different form to receive RTL's for any format) we would never really know when patrons wanted those titles if we also weeded them from the collection.

Moderator1: Question: I am curious of those that weed expired licenses, do you also weed the MARC records in your ILS or do you not add those records to begin with? We add and fully catalog them including sending for authority processing so we are not inclined to weed licenses unless they are something like an old travel guide or test book.

Answer from 3.1 Respondent: We use an API instead of MARC records for the digital collections so no record management to speak of.

Response and Question from 2.4 Respondent: I have only just started using the automatic weeding tool in OverDrive and being more selective about which titles to repurchase. That decision was made because of the increasing cost of repurchasing. Even so, we still need to analyze costs and reduce the amount of repurchases. All of your experience is helping me think through all of that, so thank you!

I have been basing weeding vs repurchasing on number of checkouts and date of last checkout. Titles had to check out within the last two years. I am considering only repurchasing titles checked out in the previous year to help reduce repurchase costs.

Which API do you use? What have you liked/disliked about it?

Answer: Our ILS is Sirsi Dynix and we use ERC so the API works between them and the vendor. Not all vendors have APIs set up for all ILSs. The drawbacks are the limited metadata attached to the records and sometimes the syncing isn't correct, so we watch for titles that are not showing in our catalog within three days. That being said when it runs smoothly there is very little staff time dedicated to inputting our digital collections into the catalog.

Response 3.3: The Anytime Library in Washington State currently doesn't weed expired titles but leaves them in the collection and repurchases licenses weekly for any expired items with holds. I also monitor OverDrive's automated carts for titles that are ABOUT to expire. But for the "less than 5 checkouts remain" cart, I only buy those titles that have fewer checkouts remaining than holds. And for the time-based about to expire cart, I purchase ONLY those with holds that have less than one week to the last copy expiring. Since I check these carts weekly, there's no need to purchase those with further out expiration dates. Also, since I run Smart carts each week for titles that have already expired, with holds, I hopefully catch all of them one way or the other.

We simply can't afford to replace expired titles unless they have holds on them. But if they're still in the collection, then anyone CAN place a hold on them at any time, and we'll purchase another license. Part of the reason for this approach is that about half-a-dozen or so of our member libraries load MARC records for the OverDrive titles, and if we weeded expired titles, they'd have to pull those MARC records, which would be more work. Increasingly, more of our libraries are implementing the OverDrive APIs to integrate Anytime Library titles into their catalogs, and that way they don't have to mess with loading MARC records.

In calendar year 2021, 76% of the added copy fund went to maintaining the 7:1 holds ratio; 22% went to replacing expired licenses, and the remaining less than 2% went to purchasing MARC records for the use of those members that load them into their local catalogs.

So far THIS calendar year (2022), with only 2 weeks to go, the cost of replacing expired licenses has risen to 29.4% with 68.7% for maintaining the holds ratio, and 1.8% for purchasing MARC records. Which indicates a definite trend towards spending MORE on replacing metered access titles, and less on maintaining the holds ratio.

Moderator2: Day 2: Question 4: Do you know your OverDrive collection’s average wait time? Does it vary over time, or remain more or less constant? What other measures do you track or monitor regularly?

I'll mention that OverDrive's average wait time is found on the "Current holds" report, in the header data above the listing of specific titles.

The way OverDrive calculates “average wait time” is a little odd, in my view. They use the start date for every active hold in the system, and measure the length of time that all of those holds have been in place, and calculate the average. My problem with this measure is that when a new best-seller hits the collection, if LOTS of people immediately place holds, then the average wait time could actually go DOWN, because you have lots more 1-day holds being calculated into the average. This, in my view, is counter-intuitive.

While this number IS useful, I’d also like to see a measure in which all holds placed during a specified time are tracked from the date they were placed until the date they are filled, (or the current date, if they haven’t yet BEEN filled), and calculate THAT average, which I think would give you a better idea of how long people are actually waiting for their holds. I have requested this from OverDrive as an enhancement, at least a couple of times.

Also, there's no method (to my knowledge) of tracking this wait time after the fact. So I currently run the Current holds report once a week, and note the listed average wait time in a spreadsheet, so that I can see if it is going up or down throughout the year. I can then include a summary of this information in one of the annual reports I provide to our consortium membership each year.

Response 4.1: For the Washington Anytime Library, our average wait time was at 21.48 yesterday. Our average since July 1 (when we raised our holds ratio from 7:1 to 7.1:1) is 20.96, so just a hair under 21 days. The highest it's been all year is 22.36, and the lowest is 18.83.

Response 4.2: (From Response 1.8 respondent) Current average wait period: 42 days

And I agree that averaging the wait time like that obscures the bigger story. I would love to see the data disaggregated to see what fiction wait times look like vs nonfiction and whatnot. We don’t track that regularly because we don’t have the staff time to pay such close attention. But I’ve seen wait times greater than 6 months for the most popular stuff.

Moderator2: Day 2: Question 5: How did the Covid lockdown, and all of the resulting changes in library operations over the past 2 ½ years or so, affect your library’s digital vs. print purchasing patterns, budgets, and selection policies?

Response 5.1: (Also from Response 1.8 respondent) I grabbed these numbers from a document that our Collection Services coordinator put together. It doesn’t portray the full picture, but does sum up the overall balance between adult print and adult digital collections.

7/8/2022	<i>Allocated</i> <i>FY20</i>	<i>Allocated</i> <i>FY21</i>	<i>Allocated</i> <i>FY22</i>	<i>Budget</i> <i>FY23</i>	<i>% of</i> <i>budget</i>	<i>% Change</i>
<i>Adult</i> <i>Print</i>	\$218,600	\$194,700	\$197,200	\$196,550	26%	0%

<i>Adult</i>	\$172,100	\$238,750	\$278,100	\$297,041	39%	7%
<i>Digital</i>						

It's important to compare the budget to usage, which I don't have the time to do right now. Having a realistic picture of what a book is "worth" helps us selectors be responsible with our budgets. As a library, we're interested in figuring out how much of these significant digital book prices is simply price-gouging.

<https://ala.org/core>