

Back to the Future: Re-examining the need for Shelf-Ready Processes in the E-Book Environment

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Introduction

Texas Woman's University is a Doctoral/Research university, and is one of four independent public institutions of higher education in the State of Texas. It is the nation's largest university primarily for women. With campuses in Denton, Dallas, and Houston and a total student enrollment of over 15,000, TWU offers both traditional and online degrees from the Bachelor's through the Doctorate in the liberal arts, nursing, health sciences, sciences, business, and education. TWU Libraries hold 686,588 volumes, subscribe to over 2,000 journals and databases, and have a collections budget of \$1.6 million.

Texas Woman's University Libraries has used shelf-ready services since March 2012. After a reduction in staff, the Libraries looked at ways to save staff time and money. We assumed that routine copy cataloging and processing took up a large portion of staff time and was not cost effective, and shelf-ready services was viewed as an economical means of accomplishing this task. By receiving the bulk of our firm order books shelf-ready, cataloging staff would be free to do other tasks and projects.

Three years later we prepared to expand shelf-ready services to another vendor, and various questions were raised. We had seen a drop in print materials, and a growth in electronic. In addition, we had specific questions and concerns about cost, speed and workflow. We wanted to compare the two workflows, in-house copy cataloging and shelf-ready before making any additional outsourcing commitments. A two month study tracked all print books received from order to shelf, and a complete cost analysis of the entire acquisitions and cataloging processes was done.

Questions

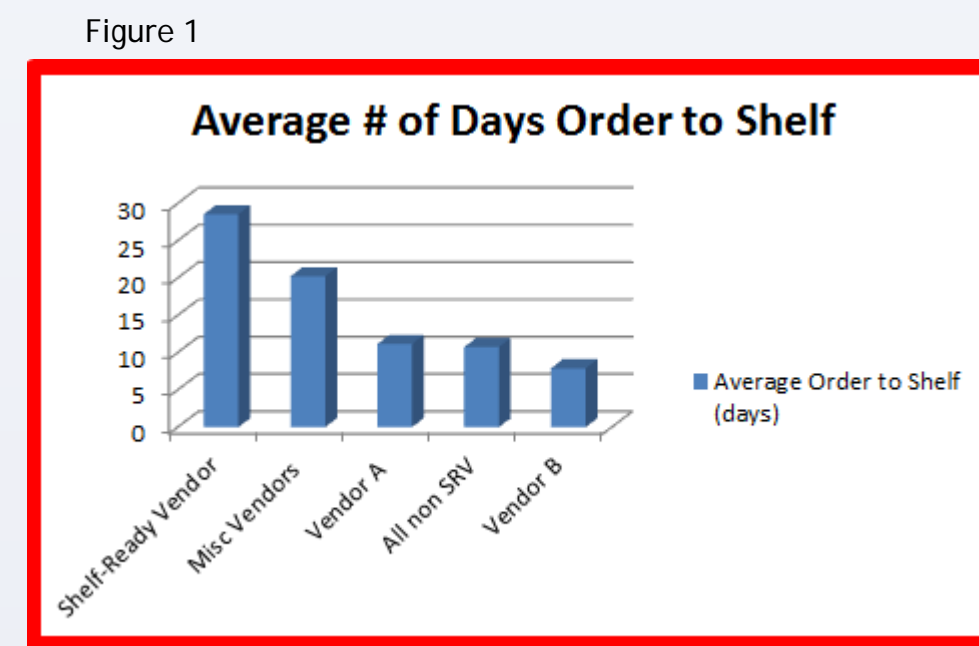
1. How many days from order placement until the item is available?
2. What is the true per book cost?
3. What other efficiencies or technologies could we capitalize on?
4. Is the quality of the cataloging and physical processing acceptable?
5. How many and what sort of changes are staff needing to do with these books?
6. Do we purchase enough print books that outsourcing still makes sense?

Methodology

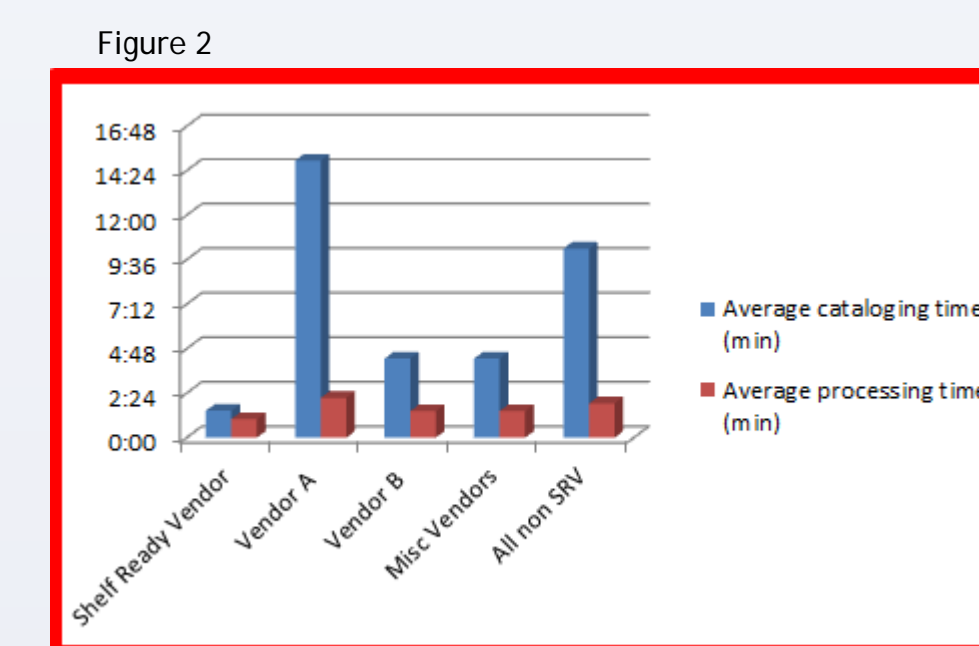
Inspired by a study done at Brigham Young University.

1. Tracked 355 firm order print receipts April - May 2015 using one of two forms
2. Noted down dates/times received in each area of workflow (acquisitions, cataloging, processing, circulation)
3. Noted down any corrections made to MARC record or physical book (shelf-ready items only)
4. Entered all data from the forms, along with financials into an Excel spreadsheet for analysis
5. Gathered historical data on print and e-book receipts

RESULTS



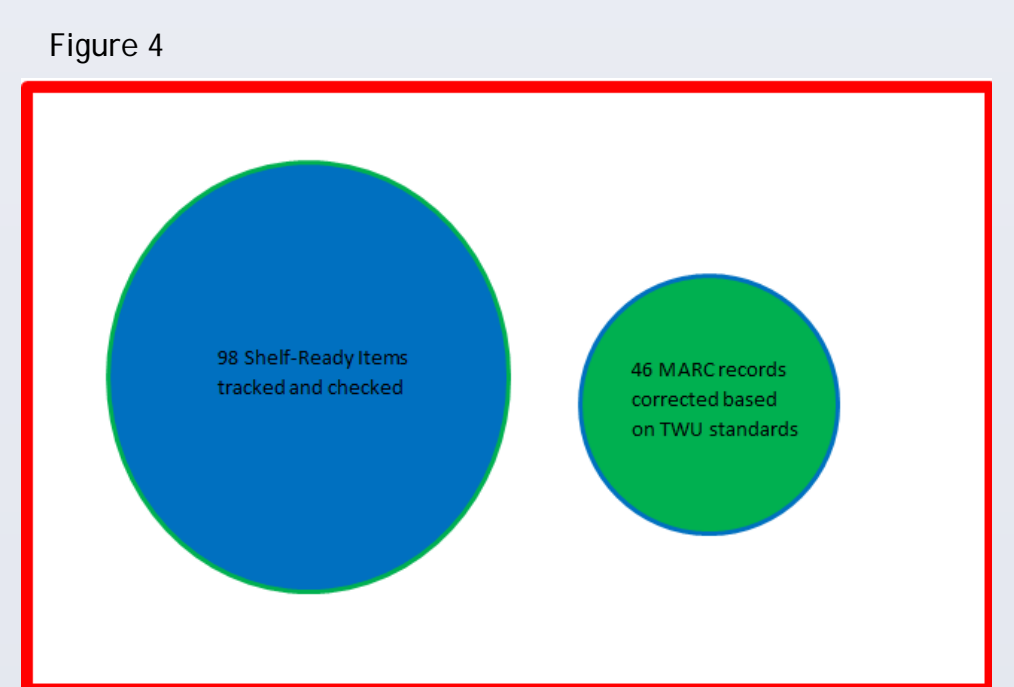
Shelf-ready items averaged 28 days from order to shelf, whereas in-house processed materials took as little as 8 days, and an overall average of 11 days. Shelf-ready materials took 154% longer to get on the shelf than their in-house catalog counterparts.



Quality control checking shelf-ready items is fast. Our staff needs 1-2 minutes per item. In-house cataloging and processing comes in around 10-15 minutes per book.

Category	Shelf-Ready Vendor	Vendor A	Vendor B	Misc Vendors	All non SRV
Average cost for Shelf-ready services (cataloging and processing)	\$5.99				
Average cost for Shelf-ready services (Ordering System)	\$4.77				
Average processing cost (TWU)*	\$0.48	\$2.85	\$2.85	\$2.85	\$2.85
Average staff cost (ACQ)	\$7.25	\$8.75	\$7.25	\$8.75	\$8.25
Average staff cost (CAT)	\$0.42	\$0.89	\$0.72	\$0.97	\$0.82
Average staff cost (PROCESS)	\$0.12	\$0.22	\$0.18	\$0.27	\$0.21
Average staff cost (TOTAL TWU)	\$8.68	\$10.20	\$8.20	\$9.88	\$9.27
TOTAL COST from order to shelf (not including cost of the actual item)	\$19.92	\$13.05	\$11.05	\$12.73	\$12.12

Shelf-ready items cost significantly more to order, receive, pay, catalog and process. Staff costs calculated using the average salary of the primary staff member involved in the task. At \$19.92, shelf-ready items cost at a minimum \$6.87 more than in-house processed materials.



Each shelf-ready MARC record is checked and corrected if needed. Out of the 98 title sample, 46 MARC records received some sort of correction based on TWU cataloging standards and practices. 47% correction rate

Order to Receipt	MARC record corrections
1. Downloaded all receipts available in Alma by vendor for 3 fiscal years.	1. From the downloaded receipt data, selected 98 random titles between September 2013 and March 2015
2. Calculated out order to receipt dates and found averages.	2. Using the "View Versions" in Alma's metadata editor, checked to see if any edits were made to the MARC record after receipt of the vendor supplied record.
3. Shelf-ready materials averaged 42 days order to receipt.	3. Out of 98 records, 37 were edited. A 38% correction rate
4. Non-shelf-ready materials averaged between 9 and 36 days	

Shelf-Ready Services	Catalog all in-house
Shelf-Ready Services: 4 use	Catalog all in-house: 4
Receipt times for shelf-ready: range between 10-26 days	Number of print receipts per year: 664-18,000
Correction rate for shelf-ready items: 1 library estimated close to 50%. 3 libraries estimated it to be low, but no quantifiable numbers	Cataloging and processing FTE: 2-6

Inspired by St. Edward's University and Columbia Gorge Community College who have ceased using traditional library vendors in favor of Amazon with Prime for print materials, we checked our study sample to see if materials purchased through our traditional library vendors were available via Amazon. Out of 203 titles, 201 were available in Amazon with Prime. 2 were available, but not Prime eligible.

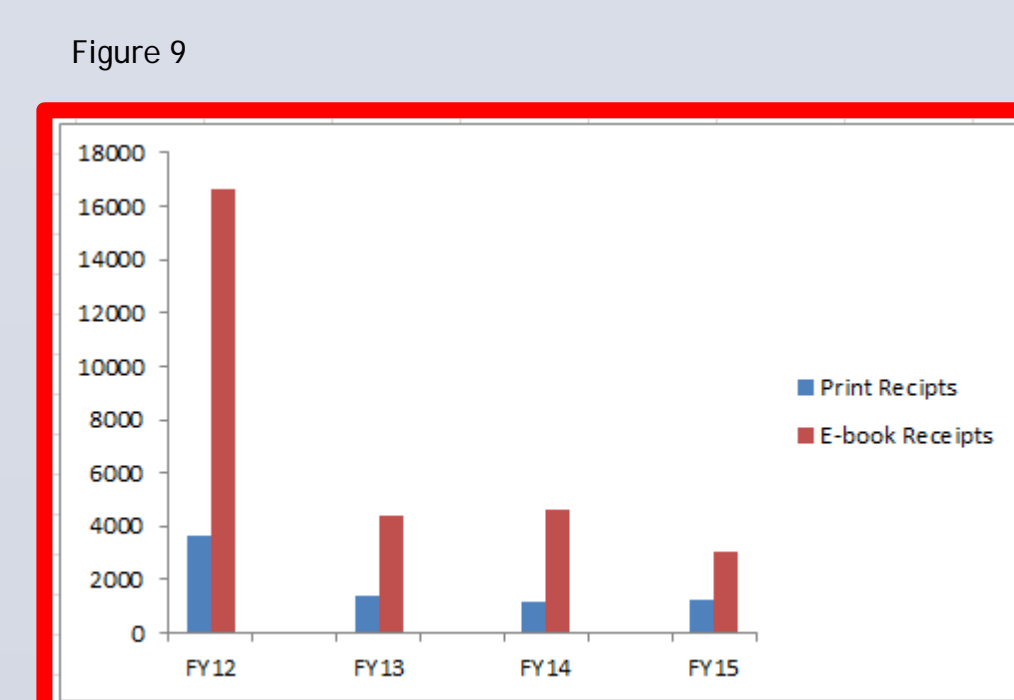
ANALYSIS

Category	Shelf-Ready Vendor	Vendor A	Vendor B	Misc Vendors	All non SRV
FY15 estimated costs 1200 firm order items	\$23,904.00	\$15,560.00	\$13,260.00	\$15,275.00	\$14,544.00
Cost savings		\$8,244.00	\$10,644.00	\$8,628.00	\$9,360.00
Cost for 1200 items with Kapco (student)		\$17,100.00	\$14,700.00	\$16,716.00	\$15,984.00
Cost savings		\$6,804.00	\$9,204.00	\$7,188.00	\$7,920.00
Cost for 1200 items with Kapco (Staff)		\$18,660.00	\$16,260.00	\$18,276.00	\$17,544.00
Cost savings		\$5,244.00	\$7,644.00	\$5,628.00	\$6,360.00

Figure 7 outlines the total staff and processing costs per vendor for 1200 print items. We could save \$5,244.00 - \$7,644.00 by processing in-house.

Category	Shelf-Ready Vendor	Vendor A	Vendor B	Misc Vendors	All non SRV
FY15 523 SR total cost	\$10,418.16	\$6,825.15	\$5,779.15	\$6,657.79	\$6,338.76
FY14 787 SR total cost	\$15,677.04	\$10,270.35	\$8,696.35	\$10,018.51	\$9,538.44
FY13 804 SR total cost	\$16,015.68	\$10,492.20	\$8,884.20	\$10,234.92	\$9,744.48
TOTALS	\$42,110.88	\$27,587.70	\$23,359.70	\$26,911.22	\$25,621.68
Cost savings		\$14,523.18	\$18,751.18	\$15,199.66	\$16,489.20

Figure 8 shows the total cost of our shelf-ready service over the past 3 fiscal years. It also shows the total cost if we had used another vendor and processed in-house. The cost difference is significant -- \$14,523.18 is half the salary of a Library Assistant III.



We made a significant investment in e-books in FY12 by purchasing some large collections. The number of e-book purchases dropped in subsequent years as we opted to rely on Demand-Driven Acquisitions as well as placing individual e-book firm orders. The e-book has become the predominant format for us for monographs, and we expect that to continue. Print receipts have dwindled from 3656 in FY12 to 1211 in FY15 -- a 66.87% decrease.

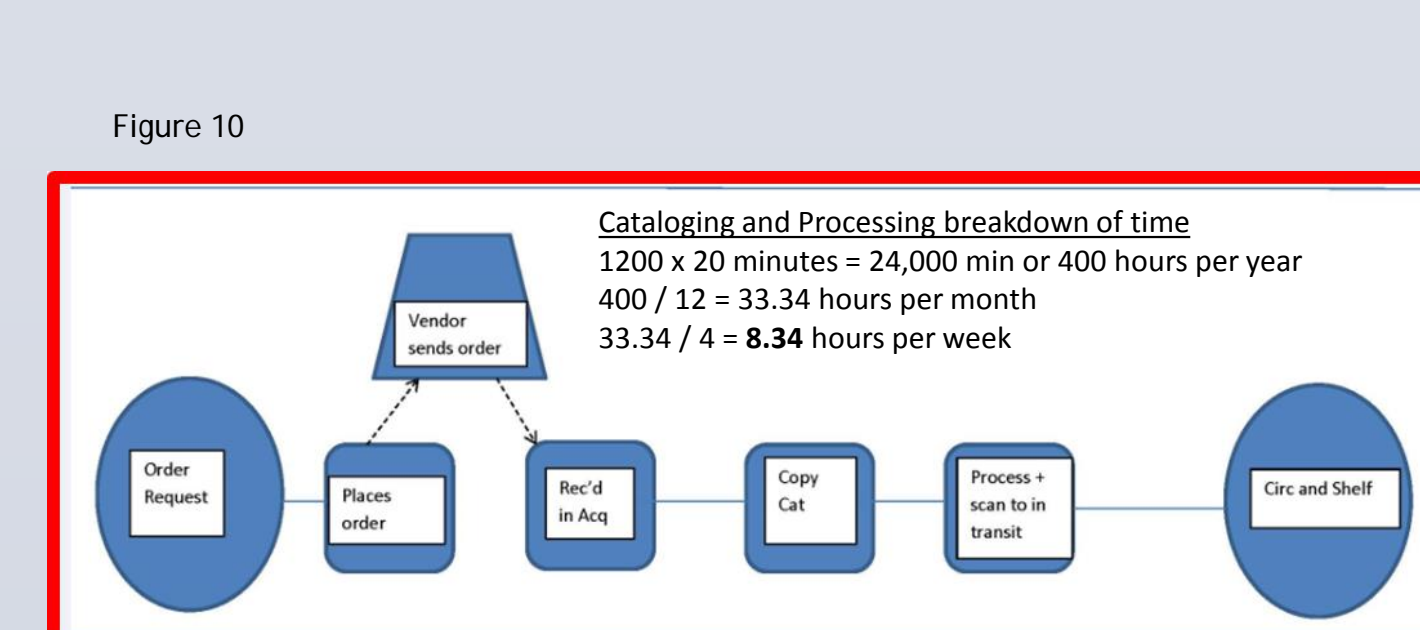


Figure 10 shows the break-down of cataloging and processing time if we opted to catalog all our print receipts in-house. Divided evenly, we would need 8.34 hours of time per week, leaving almost 32 hours for e-book cataloging and other projects. Receipts do not come in evenly -- April and May are our busiest months, and almost nothing is purchased during the summer. Large projects may have to be saved for the slower period. The library will save significant staff costs by eliminating the duplicated workflow. Additional savings could be accomplished by re-tooling the processing workflow to use student workers and moving some of the processing into acquisitions.



We examined the possibility of using Amazon as our primary vendor. The discounts offered by Amazon are comparable, and the large inventory, fast shipping make Amazon an attractive option. The drawback is the amount of staff time needed to manually key in orders and invoices. If Amazon develops API ordering and invoicing with Alma, we will seriously consider Amazon as a primary vendor.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Discontinue shelf-ready services.
2. Return all firm order cataloging and processing to utilize our in-house expertise.
3. Focus on quickly obtaining print materials which will build in a cushion of time for cataloging and processing.
4. Use Vendor B as our primary vendor for our print materials.
5. Purchase an Amazon Prime membership to utilize their 2 day free shipping for rush orders.
6. Reassess in 2017.

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