Patron Driven Acquisition: A Long Term Solution or Short Term Gain?

Tom Vause – Information Services Librarian

Leeds Beckett University

Abstract: This article investigates the long term usage of Patron Driven Acquisition (PDA) purchases with the aim of discovering whether purchased titles have a high level of long term usage. The article describes which PDA profiles are present at Leeds Beckett University and how they are implemented. Long term usage of PDA titles bought more than one academic year ago is analysed to see whether high usage levels are maintained after purchase. Also investigated is interest in specific titles from academic staff via the addition of titles onto reading lists. The article makes a number of comparisons to identify if there are any significant differences in long term usage. These include comparing the different PDA suppliers and evaluating the usage of titles selected by academic staff. From this analysis, recommendations have been given on how PDA can be further developed in the future, and if the purchasing methods provide a large return on investment.

Background

Patron Driven Acquisition (PDA) is a model of purchasing eBooks which is driven by library user interaction with the title. eBook records are selected by library staff to be part of a profile; this is usually done by subject or Dewey range. Once completed the titles are made available to users via the library catalogue. The titles are then purchased once they have reached a certain trigger. Depending on the supplier, this can be the eBook being accessed for a certain period of time or a set number of accesses. Once the purchase point has been met, the title becomes a permanent part of the library collection. When the budget has been spent the unpurchased titles are removed from the library catalogue. This purchasing method for eBook titles has proved popular as it makes available to users a wide variety of resources without having to buy a large number of titles outright. PDA can be used to develop a library's collection in a quick and simple manner.

The first PDA profile was launched at Leeds Beckett in 2011. There has been substantial financial investment in this purchasing method over the following years but until now there has been no analysis of PDA's return on investment in regards to long term usage. Does an eBook title selected by one user have a high level of long term usage to make it a worthwhile expense? Now that Leeds Beckett PDA profiles have been running for a significant period of time there is enough usage data to analyse. This data is collected from COUNTER usage statistics which show the number of accesses an eBook receives in the form of a BR2 report. The BR2 statistic measures the "number of successful section requests by month and title" (COUNTER, 2017) which is normally a chapter for an eBook.

PDA at Leeds Beckett

Leeds Beckett University has used two different suppliers for its eBook PDA profiles; Askews and Holts and Coutts. The first PDA profiles analysed were the profiles supplied by Askews and Holts. This was due to the fact that there was a greater amount of analytics and usage data available from this supplier. The first Askews and Holts profile was created in March 2015 and was titled "History Dissertations". This profile was created with the aim of improving access to resources for history students in response to feedback from the National Student Survey, in particular the need

for resources for students' dissertations. This profile was closed in November 2015 after 735 titles were purchased. PDA with Askews was then expanded with two new profiles in February 2016; "Super Profile" and "Law". The Super Profile covered a wide range of subjects while the Law profile focused on expanding the library's law collection. These profiles ran until September 2016 after 398 titles were purchased. The two profiles were refreshed with new titles in October 2016 and ran until November 2016 after which another 227 titles were purchased.

Selecting titles for the PDA profiles involved working with the Academic Librarians to select certain Dewey ranges to include within the profiles. This ensured that the profiles contained relevant titles for the users which the profiles targeted. Other exclusions included removing all single user titles, certain publishers and limiting the profile to titles published in either the United Kingdom or United States. These restrictions ensured that what was in the profile should not have any access limits. The trigger to purchase a title was 5 minutes, after that the user would be asked whether they wanted to continue to access this title. If they said yes the title was purchased. The user was also asked three questions to help the library understand who was accessing these titles. The questions were:

1.   What level of study are you?

2.   What is your school?

3.   What is the reason you wish to access this title?

The results from these questions have helped to further develop the PDA profiles.

Leeds Beckett has had PDA profiles with Coutts since 2011. The PDA profile focused on three main areas: culture, health/politics and sport. The profiles have run annually and the title selection parameters have not changed except that newer titles have been added to the profile. The Coutts profile is via the Myilibrary platform. This platform does not support the purchasing analytics which Askews has; therefore it is not possible to know who triggered a PDA purchase from this supplier and why. The trigger to purchase a title is different as a purchase requires two separate accesses to the title. This should mean that these eBooks should have broader

appeal as it requires more user interaction for the titles to be purchased.

Askews & Holts PDA long term usage analysis

Since the PDA profiles on Askews and Holts have now been running since 2015 there was now enough data to analyse long term usage. This was done by collecting COUNTER BR2 usage data from Askews. The BR2 usage data measures the number of section requests on a particular title; in the case of eBooks this can be a page or chapter. The first data collected was BR2 usage for all titles supplied by Askews via PDA profiles.

BR2 usage for all Askews titles
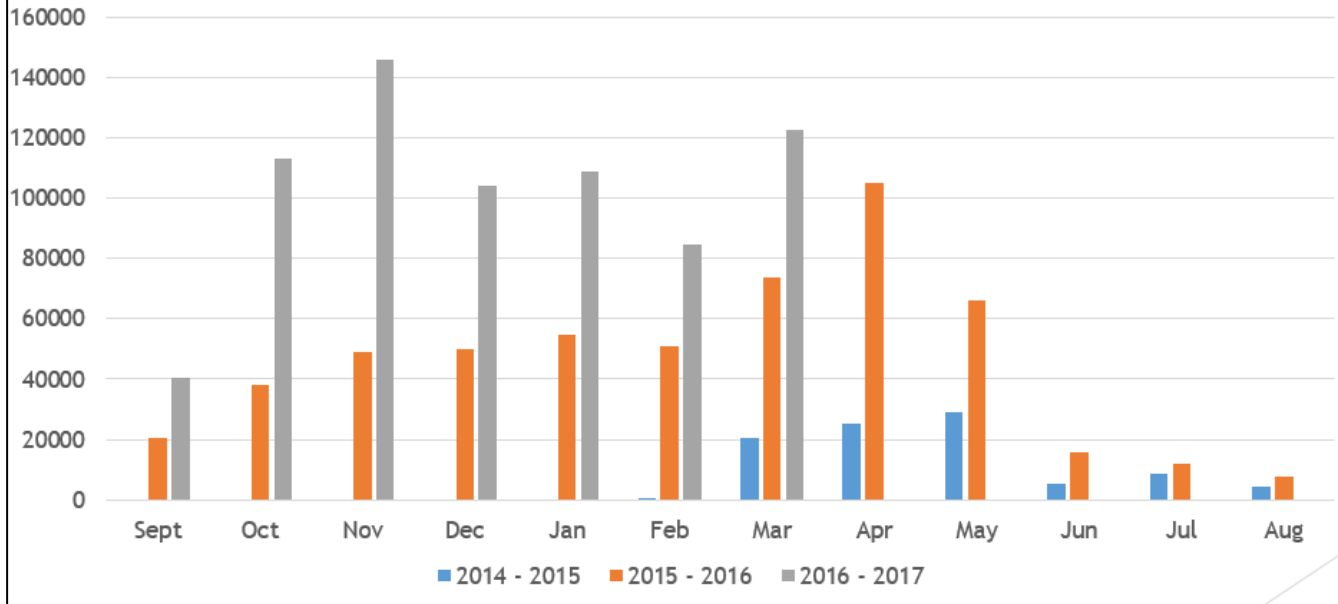
The graph shows expected results as usage is increasing month on month compared to each year. This is due to the fact that more titles continue to be purchased via PDA so the collection size is increasing. However, this data does not actually give any information in regards to long term repeat usage.

To investigate long term usage, it was decided to analyse only titles which had been purchased between March – August 2015. These are titles which have been available to users for two academic years. This selection is a total of 443 titles which is large enough to spot any trends that may be present. From the BR2 usage data it is anticipated that it would be possible to see if these titles still have a high level of engagement and usage from users.

# Total BR2 usage for Askews PDA titles purchased before Sept 2015
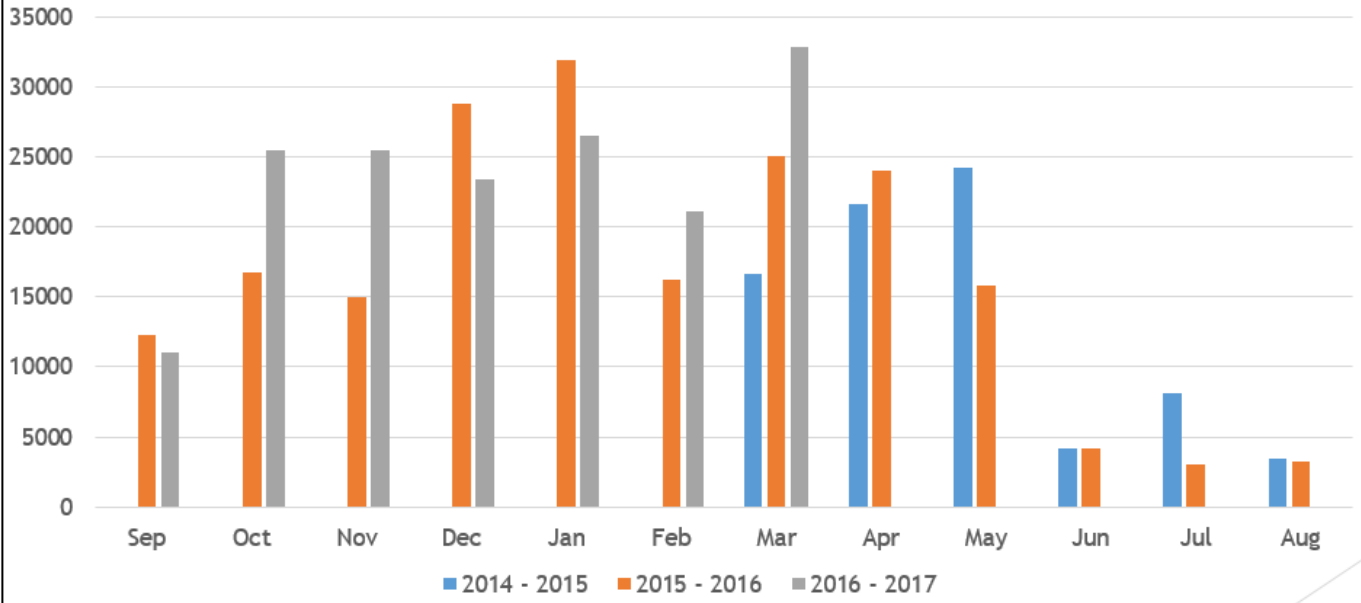
This data produced some unexpected results. The blue columns show the usage when the titles were being purchased. It would be expected that this would provide the highest level of usage when the titles were new and usage was required for purchases to be triggered. However, it appears that usage is increasing year on year. This demonstrates that as a collection the PDA titles are providing a strong return on investment by providing a high level of long term usage. What needed to be investigated next was whether all titles were having a high level of usage or whether there was a small selection of outlier titles which accounted for the majority of usage.

When looking at individual title usage it became apparent that a high amount of the collection was continuing to be accessed. During the current academic year (September 2016 - March 2017) 276 titles had been accessed, this is 62% of the whole collection. The most popular title "Sports marketing : a strategic perspective" had 13,601 accesses over this period and the average number of accesses for the whole collection, including titles which had had no usage at all was 375.

This usage data demonstrates that interest in the titles was still high two years after the original purchase. What needed to be discovered next was whether academic staff viewed these eBooks as a valuable part of the library's collection and useful for their teaching. To measure this, reading list data was analysed. Leeds Beckett University uses Rebus as its electronic reading list management software and from this software data was able to be collected as to whether the purchased PDA titles were on module reading lists. It was discovered that 69 titles were on a least one reading list which is 16% of the total collection. The most listed title was "Childhood: services and provision for children" which was on 21 different reading lists. The relatively high take up rate of these resources was surprising as academic staff had had no input into the purchase and selection of these titles.

BR2 usage for all Coutts titles

Chart legend: 2014 - 2015, 2015 - 2016, 2016 - 2017
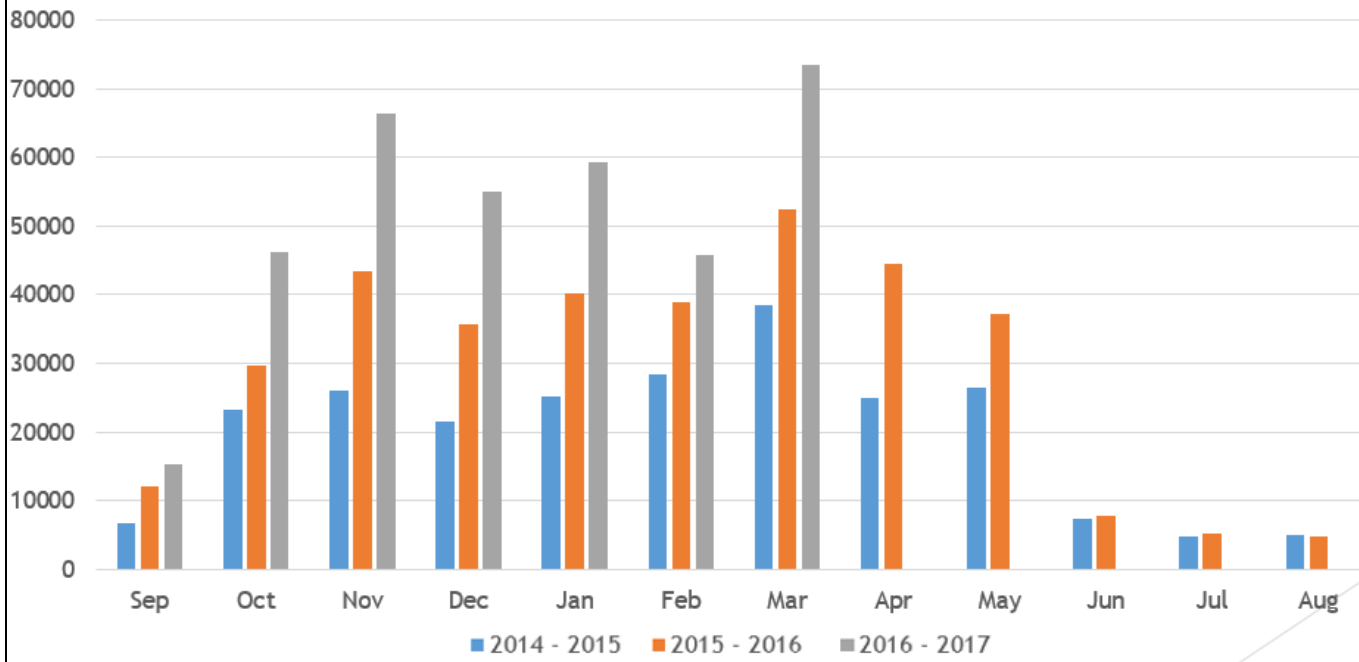
Coutts PDA long term usage analysis

To compare usage for Coutts the same data was collected for Coutts' titles. However, as well as running a PDA profile with this supplier Leeds Beckett University also purchase eBooks on a title by title basis from Coutts. This means that the total usage is not a complete picture of PDA usage. As you would expect eBook usage to increase month on month as the supplier's collection size increases.

As stated previously, more meaningful usage data can be found when only counting the usage of PDA titles purchased before September 2015. For Coutts this was a collection of 170 titles which is a smaller sample than Askews & Holts but is large enough to provide enough data to be analysed.

BR2 usage for Coutts PDA titles purchased before Sept 2015

Legend: ■ 2014 - 2015 ■ 2015 - 2016 ■ 2016 - 2017
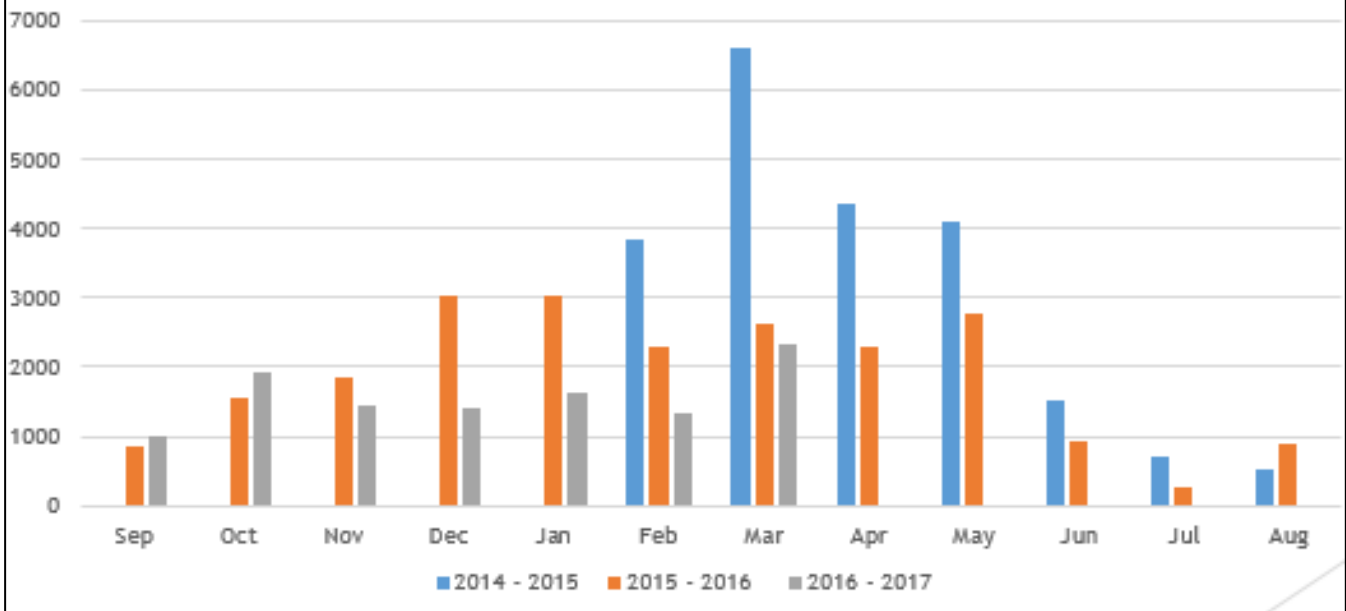
This chart presents very different results in comparison to the Askews & Holts PDA titles. The blue bars on the chart show the usage during the period when the titles were being purchased. For the Coutts titles this is the highest level of usage they receive. Over the following two academic years' usage of these titles continues but not to as high a level as when the titles were new. This demonstrates that the return on investment in terms of long term usage is not strong compared to Askews & Holts titles.

When analysing the individual title usage 107 of the titles (63% of the collection) had been accessed at least once this academic year (September 2016 – March 2017). This is actually a higher percentage than the percent of Askews & Holts titles accessed which was 62%. This means that more titles are being accessed by users but are not being viewed as in depth when compared to the Askews & Holts titles. The highest used title this academic year was "Attachment and interaction: from Bowlby to current clinical theory and practice" which had 956 accesses. The average number of accesses for the whole collection, including those with 0 usage, was 65. Both of these figures are significantly lower than

the Askews and Holts results whose average use was 375.

This usage data demonstrates that users are at least accessing Coutts PDA titles, but they are not using them at the same level as Askews & Holts titles. Part of the reason for this difference may be as Leeds Beckett University already order individual titles from Coutts the more popular eBook titles would have already been purchased and not be part of the PDA profile. Therefore, the Coutts collection can be seen as being more supplementary than the Askews & Holts PDA collection. The Coutts PDA collection was also analysed by take up from academic staff via addition of the titles to reading lists. 9 titles were on reading lists which is 5% of the collection. The most listed title was "Youth cultures in the age of global media" which was on 3 different reading lists. The low adoption of these titles onto module reading lists could be seen as demonstrating the academic staff's lack of interest in the titles.

Total Dawson BR2 usage
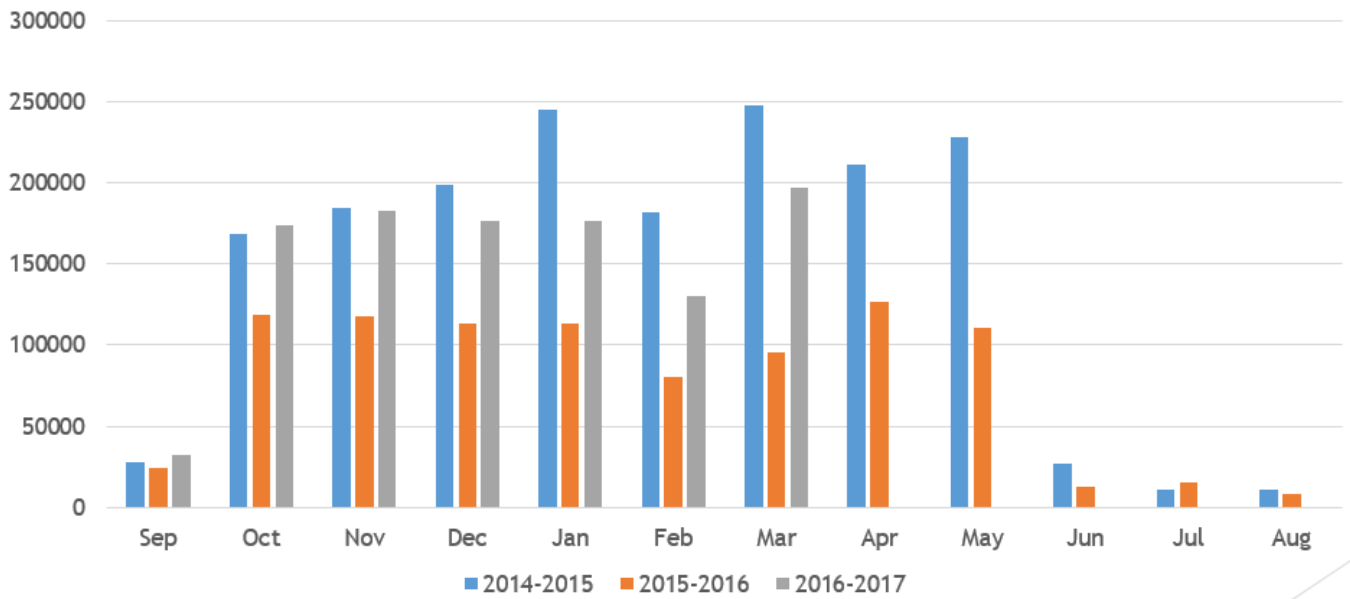
Looking at the COUNTER BR2 usage for all Dawson titles raises some issues which need investigating. It is clear that the usage for 2014-15 is significantly higher than the following year. This is concerning as usage should increase year on year as investment increases and the collection becomes larger. However, after discussions with Dawson, it became apparent that the way in which usage statistics were collected and reported had changed after 2014-15 and that usage was reported at a higher level than was actually occurring.

The usage figures from 2015-16 onwards therefore show a more realistic picture and usage is actually increasing year on year as would be expected. What needs to be compared though is long term usage of titles bought over two academic years ago so it can be compared to long term PDA usage.

BR2 usage for Dawson September 2015 Purchases
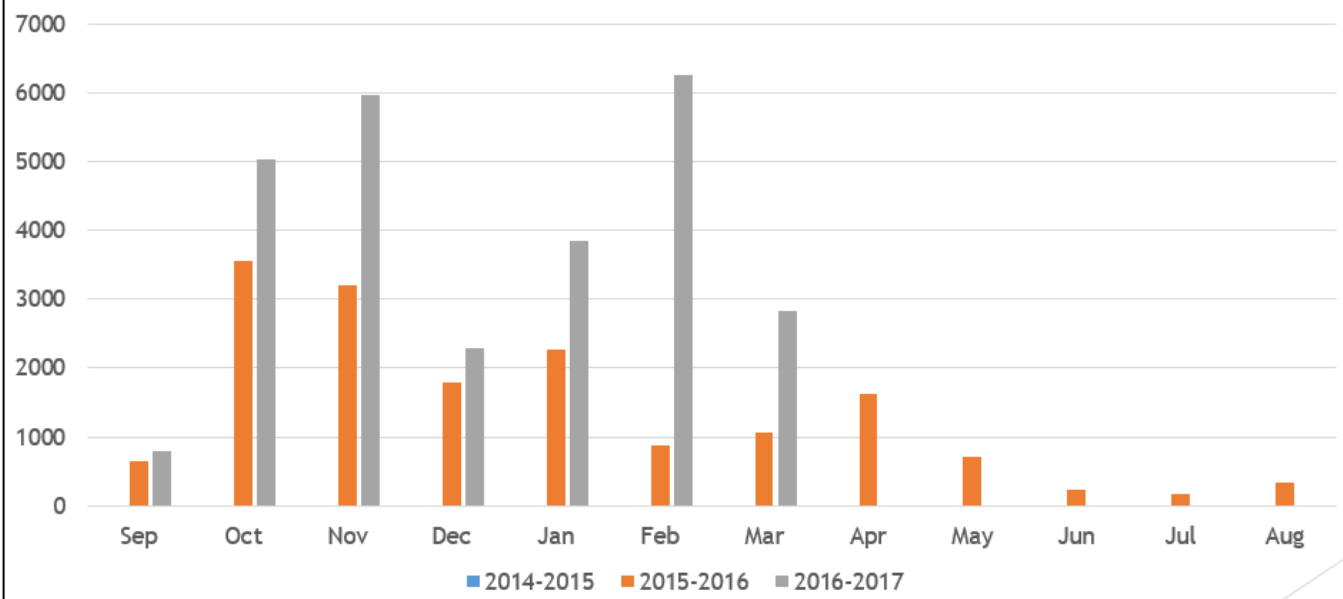
Due to the fact that the majority of eBook titles are purchased via Dawson it was decided that investigating the usage of one month's purchases would provide a large enough collection to analyse. Purchases during September 2015 were analysed for long term usage via BR2 COUNTER usage reports, this was a collection of 149 titles. The chart shows that usage increases dramatically each year. Users are finding these resources valuable to their learning. This result is to be expected as these eBooks have been selected by academic staff so are viewed as being relevant and appropriate to users.

When looking at the individual title usage of this collection, 88 of the titles had been accessed at least once this academic year (September 2016 – March 2017). This is 59% of the collection which is actually lower than the percentage for both Coutts and Askews and Holts PDA titles. Users have accessed a smaller proportion of these titles in comparison to PDA titles. The highest used title this academic year was "Introduction of forensic and criminal psychology" which has had 3497 accesses. The average number of accesses for the whole collection, including those with 0 usage, was 181.

These usage figures put Dawson titles in between the two different PDA profiles from Coutts and Askews & Holts with the latter receiving the highest level of usage. As expected the Dawson collection had a far higher number of titles on reading lists with 83 titles appearing on a least one reading list which equates to 56% of the collection. As these titles were selected by academic staff this is to be expected. The most listed title was "How to read a paper : the basics of evidence-based medicine" which was on 14 different lists. This usage data demonstrates that there is little difference between individually purchased titles' long term usage and the usage of PDA profiles. However, if titles are not viewed as relevant in a PDA profile then it does not provide a strong return on investment in terms of long term usage.

Conclusion

From investigating the usage statistics of PDA titles it appears that there is little difference between the performance of the PDA collections and the individual title purchases in terms of long term usage. When comparing the percentage of titles accessed this academic year from the historic purchases there is very little difference between Dawson at 59%, Coutts at 63% and Askews at 62%. This demonstrates that PDA titles attract a higher level of interaction from users than the individual title supplier. When comparing the average use of long term PDA titles and title by title purchases it becomes clear that there is once again little difference. Dawson titles have an average BR2 result of 181 in comparison to 65 for Coutts and 375 for Askews. This demonstrates that there can be a large difference in terms of usage between different PDA profiles. This is perhaps due to the greater involvement of the Academic Librarians in creating the Askews PDA profile thus producing a more relevant profile of titles for the university's users which will therefore receive a higher level of usage.

One other caveat which should be considered is that currently Leeds Beckett University does not currently buy individual eBook titles from Askews & Holts. This means that any PDA profile created with them will include all of their available titles. However, with Coutts, Leeds Beckett University do currently purchase individual titles, therefore what is included in a PDA profile can be viewed as being "the best of the rest" as the titles within the PDA profile would have already been purchased if academic staff viewed them as a required title.

The research shows that expanding the scope of PDA profiles is likely to affect access to and usage of eBooks. It is worth therefore considering expanding PDA profiles to include individual title requests from academic staff as a way to supply eBooks. This would help libraries in the current financial climate where spending is closely regulated and would not affect the provision of eBooks and quality of service to library users.

References

COUNTER (2017) The Counter Code of Practice [Online]. Winchester: COUNTER. Available from:< https://www.projectcounter.org/code-of-practice-sections/usage-reports/> [Accessed 10th July 2017].