



# CASE STUDY

EXPERIMENTING WITH DOA  
AT KALAMAZOO PUBLIC LIBRARY



save**TIME**



save**MONEY**



improve**PERFORMANCE**



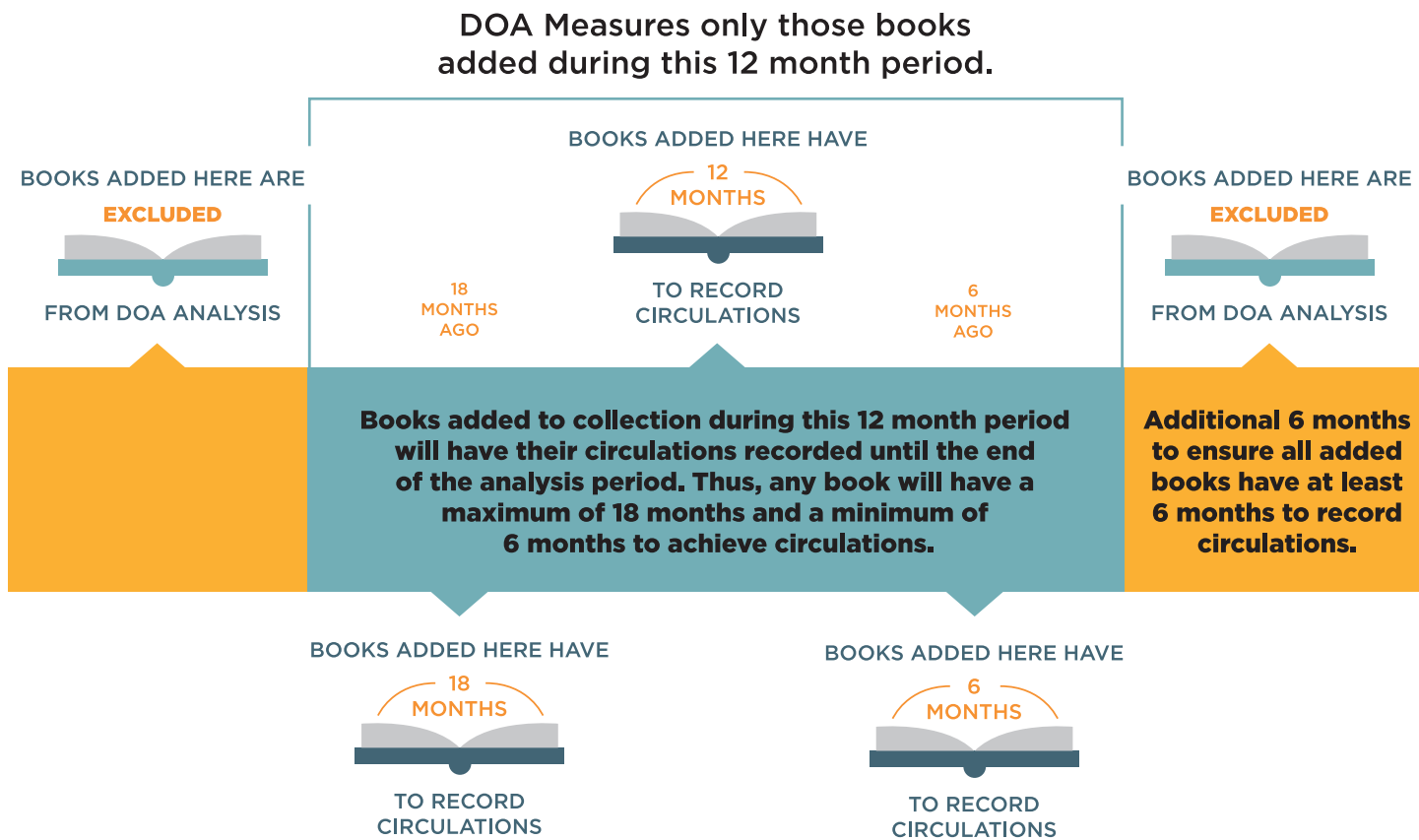
Kalamazoo  
Public Library

# BACKGROUND

*Kalamazoo Public Library, MI, is a 5 branch library system serving a population of more than 119,000. collectionHQ has been used at the library since 2010 to support the use of data in collection development.*

## DEAD ON ARRIVAL (DOA)

Dead on Arrival, or DOA, is a metric used to report material added to a library's collection over a 12 month period which subsequently does not achieve more than one circulation in the following 6 months. DOA was introduced to collectionHQ's Dashboard in 2016 to show customers the percentage of their collection falling into this category and to help them take action to reduce dead items through more informed, evidence-based selection.



# DOA AT KALAMAZOO PUBLIC LIBRARY

Matt Smith, Collection Development Specialist at Kalamazoo Public Library, was initially surprised on discovering the collection's DOA score. He shared: "On first glance, I was worried about the Teen and Juvenile Dead on Arrival numbers (25%, 17%) and fairly happy with adult material's (7%). We clearly overbuy Teen and Juvenile books, more so Non-Fiction; I wouldn't be surprised if this was a national trend." However, by using the collectionHQ Dashboard to delve deeper into the numbers behind the DOA score, Matt discovered variations within collections and locations where some of the smaller branches scored higher. He continued: "On second glance, I realized that DVDs had virtually zero DOA items, which was hiding the fact that Adult Non-Fiction was a bit high (15%). In other words, it's important to break these numbers up by audience and format, in order to figure out how to go forward with selection."

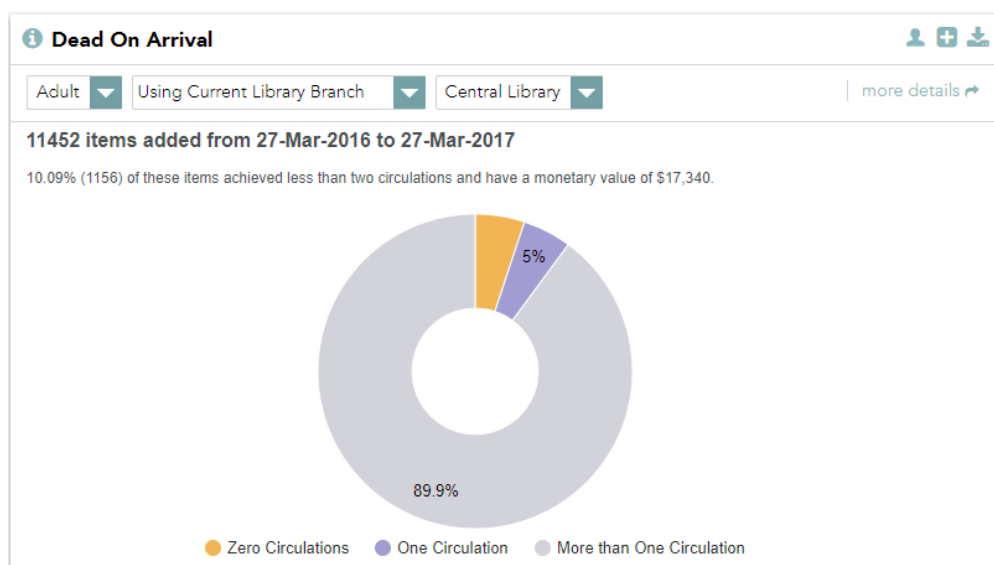
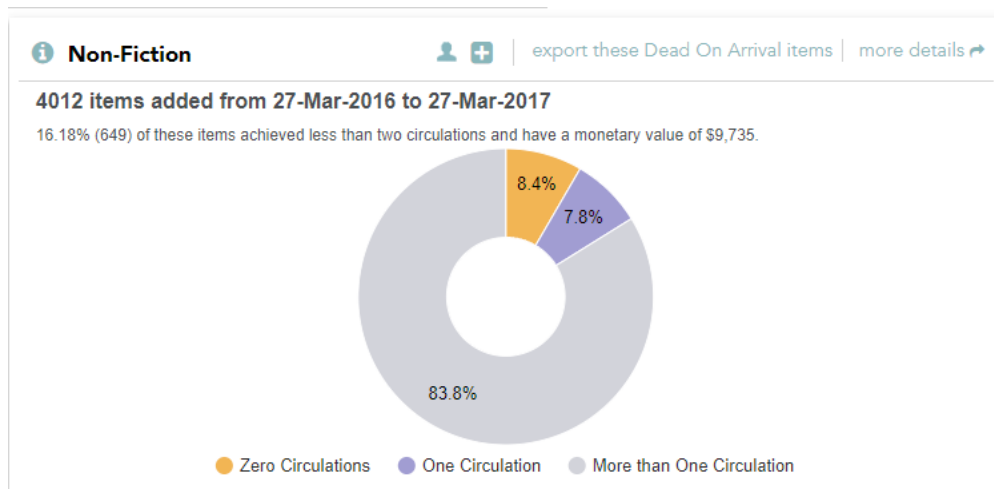
## EXPERIMENTING WITH DOA

Given the collection nuances, Matt decided to investigate DOA further by applying an experiment with collectionHQ's Marketing module. From the experiment, Matt hoped to discover whether items classed as DOA went on to circulate after the 6-18 month time period measured by collectionHQ. In particular, he wanted to give DOA books an additional 6 months and see how much they circulated, meaning books added would have between 12 and 24 months to achieve circulations. Matt explained: "Our library weeds books 3 or 4 years after not circulating, so 6 months is a small window.

In other words, what is the "afterlife" of DOA books? Are these books really "Dead on Arrival"?"

## SETTING UP THE EXPERIMENT

Adult Non-Fiction books that had been identified as DOA were entered into a new Experimental Placement, a tool intended to track the impact on circulation of an item's position in the library. Matt described: "I simply uploaded the barcodes into an experiment. I didn't physically touch them, or promote them in anyway. It's a passive experiment." While this method of experimental placement is unconventional, the concept allowed Matt to track subjects of the experiment at regular intervals over a 6 month period.



# Non-Fiction Experimental Placement

Region Kalamazoo Public Library

| 1<br>Library Name | 2<br>Subject Description | 3<br>Placement Code | Quantity | Initial Circulation | Experiment Circulation | Months Elapsed | Avg. Monthly Experiment Circulation | Tgt. Monthly Experiment Circulation | Experiment Duration (months) |
|-------------------|--------------------------|---------------------|----------|---------------------|------------------------|----------------|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|------------------------------|
| Central Library   | 2nd Wind Display Sept    | 2nd Wind            | 248      | 5683                | 323                    | 0.70           | 455.13                              | 200                                 | 3                            |
| Central Library   | DOA Barcodes             | DOA Afterlife       | 337      | 161                 | 150                    | 3.58           | 41.89                               | 350                                 | 4                            |
| Central Library   | Patron Requests          | Patron Requests     | 40       | 24                  | 39                     | 0.06           | 604.46                              | 20                                  | 8                            |

## FINDINGS

The results revealed that 60 of the 339 DOA books (17.7%) entered into Matt's experiment circulated at least once within the first 2.6 months of the experiment. It's important to note this number does not include renewals of those books, which would boost the number to 116 books having additional circulations (34.2%). Matt shared: "This would drop our overall DOA score by about 2 percentage points, roughly from 15% to 13%." Matt's experiment has therefore proven that a number of factors can

influence a library's DOA score including audience, format and time elapsed since entering the collection. His findings emphasize that when it comes to buying new material, getting the quantity right and displaying those items in a way that will be noticed by patrons are of great importance.

## NEXT STEPS FOR DOA

On discovering the DOA percentage at Kalamazoo Public Library then using the Dashboard to break that number down, Matt was able to take immediate action by selecting less biographies and 300's. The findings also prompted Matt to adjust the quantity of newly selected Non-Fiction material distributed to smaller branches where DOA was higher.

It is the goal of Matt and the team at the library to reduce the overall DOA percentage to 7%-10%, although Matt admits that they don't aim to reach 0%. He explained: "After all, we still need to select some poetry, literature, and low circulating books that have lasting value to the community. We are not merely bookstores."

## Experimental Placement Item Performance

Library Central Library  
Placement Code DOA Afterlife

| Author                      | Title   | ISBN          | Barcode       | Initial Circulation | 1<br>Experiment Circulation | Avg. Monthly Circulation | Library Name    |
|-----------------------------|---|---------------|---------------|---------------------|-----------------------------|--------------------------|-----------------|
| Murray, Albert              | Collected essays & memoirs                          | 9781598535037 | 0202412176986 | 0                   | 7                           | 1.76                     | Central Library |
| Dunbar-Ortiz, Roxanne       | An indigenous peoples' history of the United States | 9780807057834 | 0202412165054 | 1                   | 5                           | 1.26                     | Central Library |
| Bancroft, Lundy             | Why does he do that?                                | 0425191656    | 0202412186092 | 1                   | 5                           | 1.26                     | Central Library |
| Colgrove, Kathryn Cadenhead | Med-surg success                                    | 9780803644021 | 0202412216881 | 0                   | 5                           | 1.26                     | Central Library |
| Keithly, David M            | The USA and the world                               | n/a           | 0202412126155 | 0                   | 5                           | 1.26                     | Central Library |
| Fitzgerald, Michael         | The genesis of artistic creativity                  | 9781843103349 | 0202411938097 | 0                   | 5                           | 1.26                     | Central Library |
| Fabre, Josie                | Fast peyote stitch jewelry                          | 9781627002394 | 0202412057020 | 0                   | 4                           | 1.01                     | Central Library |
| UNKNOWNAUTHOR               | Make pillows  | 9781617452512 | 0202412032767 | 0                   | 4                           | 1.01                     | Central Library |
| UNKNOWNAUTHOR               | The Best American short plays                       | n/a           | 0202412181408 | 0                   | 4                           | 1.01                     | Central Library |
| Hacking, Juliet             | Lives of the great photographers                    | 9780500544440 | 0202411908579 | 1                   | 4                           | 1.01                     | Central Library |
| Maxwell, John C             | The 360° leader                                     | 9781400203598 | 0202411975461 | 1                   | 4                           | 1.01                     | Central Library |
| Cousens, Gabriel            | Spiritual nutrition                                 | 9781556434990 | 0202412240113 | 0                   | 3                           | 0.76                     | Central Library |
| UNKNOWNAUTHOR               | Discover Germany                                    | n/a           | 0202412034698 | 0                   | 3                           | 0.76                     | Central Library |
| UNKNOWNAUTHOR               | Standard catalog of world coins                     | n/a           | 0202412063671 | 0                   | 3                           | 0.76                     | Central Library |
| Sercarz, Lior Lev           | The spice companion                                 | 9781101905463 | 0202412208706 | 1                   | 3                           | 0.76                     | Central Library |



## **KEY BENEFITS**

**Optimize selection**

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**Plan shelf  
allocation**

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**Guide promotional  
activities**

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**Focus weeding**