Understanding Holds Ratios

The holds ratio is used to make purchasing decisions and is based on the estimated wait time for a title. It is the most important tool used in holds management. Traditionally, librarians have calculated holds ratios as *holds ÷ copies*.

Problems with Overdrive Holds Ratios

Consortium "Cons" Ratio: *total consortium holds ÷ total consortium copies*

This ratio can be useful in estimating the overall demand for a title. However, it does not factor in advantage copies, so it is not accurate for your patrons specifically.

Advantage "Adv" Ratio: *advantage holds ÷ total consortial copies*

By mixing advantage and consortial data, this ratio fails to create a consistent comparison. The following examples represent very different wait times, yet all have the exact same adv ratio:

Example Title	Consortium			Advantage			Overdrive's "Adv Ratio"
	Holds	Copies	Ratio	Holds	Copies	Ratio	
Title 1	40	10	**4**	5	5	**1**	**0.5**
Title 2	39	6	**6.5**	3	1	**3**	**0.5**
Title 3	121	12	**10.1**	6	1	**6**	**0.5**

The OD adv ratio is also on a different scale from the cons ratio. That is, a "3" as a cons ratio often means something very different than a "3" as an adv ratio. They are "apples & oranges".

How to Use Holds Ratios

First, decide on a holds ratio to act as your **purchasing threshold**. Consider the following:
1. **Wait time:** lower ratios move patron holds queues faster than higher ratios.
2. **Budget:** however, lower ratios are more expensive to maintain than higher ratios.

Try choosing a purchasing threshold between 5 and 10 to begin, and then adjust as needed.

Next, ignore Marketplace's "adv ratio", and calculate your own custom advantage ratio:

adv holds ÷ adv copies

In practice, purchase titles where both the Marketplace cons ratio and your custom adv ratio are higher than your purchasing threshold. If this adds too many titles, raise your threshold. If you can afford more titles, lower your threshold to improve wait times. Please see one of the Holds Management tutorials for detailed information on how to apply this purchasing threshold.