

Nexus

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Now you own 'em now you *don't* e-journals and the academic library

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IT HAS BECOME CLEAR that the rapid growth of scholarly publications available in electronic formats has allowed libraries to better meet the needs of patrons. In many cases, electronic content is received faster than its print counterpart and libraries are able to provide their users in remote locations with access to this information. In addition, many journals are now being published electronically only, which significantly enlarges the resource base. While these developments have brought a number of widely recognized benefits to the scholarly communication process, researchers should be aware of the challenges related to the dynamic nature of access to the resources. This article will address some of the issues of permanent archiving and ownership of electronic journals.

Libraries are at the mercy of vendors and publishers for a variety of reasons. Libraries normally purchase subscriptions to electronic resources either directly from publishers, who license access to all or part of their catalogue of serials, or from aggregators, who have negotiated full-text rights with publishers, and then disseminate that content to subscribers.

Vendors and publishers have a vested interest in encouraging consortial purchases, with attractive prices, because only a select group of libraries could otherwise afford the products. Consortial purchases of journal databases have given libraries greater purchasing power, and many have acquired

access to numerous databases previously unavailable through one-on-one licensing agreements. However, while these advantages are enormous, libraries often surrender choice, and will have to consider long-term costs, especially if print subscriptions are cancelled to pay for these resources.

Change in electronic content

Aggregators routinely lose and gain rights to full-text journals and some companies may merge or go out of business. Subscribers welcome new content, but the loss of journal titles is a serious problem, especially if a library has cancelled the print subscription to journals offered in full-text databases. Libraries may never be able to acquire the missing issues in print or have room in the budget to subscribe to additional databases offering the titles in question.

Harvard Business Review

A recent case in point is the Library's loss of access to the *Harvard Business Review*. Formerly available in full-text from Proquest's ABI/Inform, *Harvard Business Review's* electronic content had become exclusively available via EBSCO, another aggregator. In order to gain full-text access to this title, Ryerson Library would have had to subscribe to EBSCO's Business Source Premier¹. The problem of exclusive titles is worrisome for libraries. It is feared that if an aggregator negotiates exclusive rights to titles, at higher than average fees, a bidding war may ensue among aggregators, and more content could vanish from databases,

forcing libraries to subscribe to more and more databases to maintain access to core resources. Fortunately, Ryerson did not cancel its print subscription to this journal. Decisions about hard-copy retention (cost and space criteria) are complex indeed.

Embargo

One other major problem is that most of the major aggregators of full-text journals are forced to embargo recent content — from a few days to one year or more — because they are concerned about losing print subscriptions to their journals. Embargoes have an impact on document delivery and interlibrary loans departments, and, perhaps, even on user perceptions of the library. What's worse is that embargoes can conceivably be applied to any title at any time in the future. In dynamic fields such as molecular biology and chemistry,

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e-journals continued

where researchers require access to the most recent literature, this is a serious problem.

Rolling back-files

Similarly, access to some serials is limited by a rolling back-file. This means that access is granted to, for example, the most recent five years' articles, with older content dropping off as new content is added. In dynamic areas such as consumer health, such a practice may be appropriate, but in other areas this practice impedes research.

Guaranteed archival rights

Early agreements on electronic subscriptions often contained no provision for continuation of the purchased content. In most cases, content vanished when access was severed (with print subscriptions, we retained those issues on the shelves). One

of the positive outcomes for all partners in consortia is the model for guaranteed archival rights to the content that had been licensed or purchased. The Canadian National Site Licensing Project (CNSLP), an initiative of 64 Canadian universities including Ryerson, has made advances in this area. A key component of the CNSLP-negotiated agreements required the content of the 700 journals we acquired in the project to continue to be available to us, regardless of whether the agreement is carried forward. Ryerson Library's Web site at www.ryerson.ca/library/info/databases/cnslp_dbs.html lists the components of the CNSLP and provides links to journal lists for each of them.

Research institutions and libraries worldwide have developed bold initiatives such as the CNSLP, SPARC (Scholarly Publishing and Academic Resources

Coalition), JSTOR and other partnerships to anticipate and address emerging issues of scholarly communication and mitigate the power of commercial vendors to control the information market. As one Director of Libraries advises, we should consider the lessons learned and the strengths gained through partnerships and "find ways to improve those business relationships with publishers and vendors who are most committed to quality service and the academic enterprise."²

¹ *Harvard Business Review* has subsequently become available in certain products not purchased by Ryerson.

² Frazier, Kenneth. (March, 2001). The Librarians' Dilemma, Contemplating the Costs of the "Big Deal." *D-Lib Magazine*, (7) 3. Retrieved April 10, 2002, from <http://www.dlib.org/dlib/march01/frazier/03frazier.html>

E-journal publishing terms

aggregator

Aggregators gather together at one site numerous electronic journals from different publishers. Proquest and EBSCO are two of the major vendor/aggregators from which the Ryerson Library acquires several thousand journals.

consortium

An association of independent libraries and/or library systems established by formal agreement, usually for resource sharing, coordinated acquisition or licensing advantage.

embargo

In the context of this article, the withholding of the full-text content of the most current issues of a journal, temporarily, for a period of 2 months or more. In some cases the unavailable content is indexed.

vendor

A company/entity in the business of selling electronic information (including one or more databases, journals or other information product) in multiple formats, through licensing agreement or on a per search basis. (Adapted from Reitz, Joan M. (2002). *ODLIS: Online Dictionary of Library and Information Science*. Retrieved April 13, 2002, from <http://vax.wcsu.edu/library/odlis.html>).

Examples of embargoed* e-journals

Journal Title	Embargo Period
Media Culture and Society	2 yrs
Journal of International Business Studies	1056 days
Administration & Society	1 yr
Clinical Nursing Research	1yr
Journal of Family Nursing	1yr
Journal of Environmental Sciences	3 mos
Archives of Physiology & Biochemistry	6 mos

*At this writing

Some e-journal archiving initiatives

Canadian National Site Licensing Project

<http://www.uottawa.ca/library/cnslp/cfi/index-e.html>

Ontario Council of University Libraries.

(Ontario Information Infrastructure: Strategic Programs)
<http://www.ocul.on.ca/OIISstrategicprograms.html>

Science's Next Wave

Science's Next Wave is a weekly online publication that covers scientific training, career development, and the job market. The Ryerson Library has recently acquired access to this website/portal. Published by *Science* magazine and the American Association for the Advancement of Science, *Science's Next Wave* seeks to prepare graduate students, postdocs, junior faculty and other early career scientists to be more competitive in today's employment market. Next Wave Canada is available as a subset of this portal. Free access to *Science's Next Wave* is generously sponsored for all Canadian universities by Merck Frosst and can be accessed at

<http://www.nextwave.org>