MIGRATING FROM A PRINT TO
ONLINE PERIODICAL COLLECTION

by Kevin F. Petsche

The IUPUI (Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis) Library, like most academic libraries in Indiana and the United States, has seen a dramatic decrease in the use of its print periodical collection over the last decade. Parallel to this decrease has been an exponential increase in electronic journal usage. Statistics illustrate that all sources of e-journals (aggregators, vendors, and third party platforms) have increased at such a rapid rate that the library has been relatively slow to react to this change in user behavior. The verdict as to whether library patrons will choose electronic journals or print journals has been delivered in resounding fashion. The question for academic libraries such as the University Library is, "What do we do with our print collections?"

THE CURRENT SITUATION

In 2007, the University Library received issues for approximately 2,300 periodical titles in print. Of these, an ongoing journal re-shelving study found that 56% of the titles were re-shelved zero times and over 87% of the titles had five or less re-shelving counts. The re-shelving study also tracked bound volume usage for each subscribed title for the previous three years, and the study found similar results. 71% of the currently received titles had zero statistics for bound volumes and 94% of the titles had five or less recorded re-shelves. (See figure 1.)

At the same time that the print periodical collection was being unused by patrons, the recorded uses of the electronic journal collections was growing exponentially. In 2006, statistics for large aggregated packages such as JSTOR, Project Muse, and Wiley, as well as full text aggregator databases such as LexisNexis, Gale, and EBSCO, reveal that University Library patrons had downloaded over one million full text articles.

It is recognized that this use assessment of print and electronic journals is not comparable for many reasons—the most important of which is that the same titles are not being evaluated. Other problems concern the nature of the statistics themselves and the drawbacks of comparing a single re-shelf of a print journal with a download of a full text article. What the statistics do show, however, is that strong evidence exists that patrons, while using library resources, are not using the print periodical collection.

In 2007, each area of the library was asked to thoroughly examine its operation because the non-materials budget could possibly be cut by 1%. The Acquisitions Team examined several parts of its operation, including the non-subscription costs of maintaining the print periodical collection. The team looked at costs associated with checking-in and binding (as well as related human resources). It was determined that the checking-in process was very efficient and that stopping was not worth the consequences. The team then looked at the binding and preservation operation.

The cost involved in binding had already been greatly reduced since 2000. In these previous years, subject librarians had either cancelled many print titles or had switched them to online. This trend continued in 2008 when 60 titles were switched to online only. But there were still many titles that were using important resources with questionable return on investment. The team determined that the best way to save costs was to cease binding print journals where it made sense—but where did it make sense? In the library, subject librarians have the responsibility for retention and binding decisions. Thus any cost savings for

Percentage of Currently Received Periodical Titles Re-Shelved Five Times or Less				
	2004	2005	2006	2007
Current Periodicals	84%	86%	88%	87%
Bound Periodicals	99%	99%	99%	94%

Percentage of Currently Received Periodical Titles Re-Shelved Five Times or Less

binding periodicals was not going to be the Acquisition Team's responsibility alone.

STANDARDS FOR SELECTION OF JOURNALS TO MIGRATE FROM PRINT TO ELECTRONIC

The University Library's Collection Development Coordination Group (CDCG) has membership which includes affiliates from the Bibliographic and Metadata Services, Acquisitions, Access, Special Collections, and Reference Teams. It also has a member from each of the three client-based teams, the two Associate Deans, and from the Herron School of Art and the Columbus libraries. This group is charged with overall steward-ship of the library collection, including the electronic collection.

Even before the possibility of a budget cut, the CDCG had tasked a subgroup to construct standards to guide librarians in moving journals subscriptions to print when appropriate. The document, University Library Policy Statement on Periodical Collection, directs subject librarians to choose an electronic version for new journal subscriptions instead of a print version as long as it meets five criteria. The document describes five additional criteria that should also be considered.

While this document was intended to instruct the library on new subscriptions, the CDCG found that the criteria offered sound parameters to subject librarians as they made decisions about migrating current print subscriptions to electronic versions and to not bind combination titles.

The criteria:

1. Access is available from an IP-authenticated site.

2. The journal is available from either a publisher's site or a 3rd party platform such as JSTOR, Project Muse, IngentaConnect, Scitation, Metapress, Extenza, Informaworld, etc.

3. Titles available only from full-text aggregators such as EBSCO, LexisNexis, Proquest, Gale and WilsonWeb are not deemed to be trustworthy versions because of volatility in availability of content and the difficulty in determining whether the online version is consistently the same as the print version.

4. The publisher belongs to Portico, in which the University Library participates. Portico guarantees the availability of online content in case of catastrophic event. For more details, see http://www.portico.org.

5. The library maintains perpetual access to all content published for the years subscribed.

The most critical aspects of the criteria have to do with the assuredness of access to subscribed titles. Full-text aggregators, which are described in number 3 above, have no contractual agreement with libraries to maintain access to a given title. The short history of these databases shows that publishers pull title and content all the time. Moreover, even when aggregators claim that titles are fully present in database, it is not uncommon for there to be missing content. Libraries should trust only publisher Web sites or third party platforms which provide licenses. Criteria numbers 2 and 3 may seem obvious to some, but it is surprising how often librarians fail to distinguish among the online sources described. This is often the result of the near seamless interoperability of online resources, OpenURL linkers, and federated search engines.

It is important to make sure that when a decision is made to select the online version of a journal, that access to purchased issues are maintained into perpetu-ity. Some libraries have chosen to participate in LOCKSS initiative (Lots of Copies Keep Stuff Safe— http://www.lockss.org/), which requires some reason-able effort on the part of libraries to set up and main-tain access to purchased issues of online content. This may be a reasonable path for some libraries.

In 2006, the University Library took another path and decided to join over 400 participating libraries and 50 publishers in the Portico initiative. Essentially, Portico serves as an insurance policy to ensure per-petual access to purchased online content. As with any insurance policy, there is an annual premium which each library pays to participate. Publishers also pay a premium to participate. In the case of financial failure of a publisher or if a publisher simply stops carrying a journal, participating libraries will continue to have access through the Portico site. The latter situation took place in late 2007 with Sage's decision to drop the title *Graft: Organ and Cell Transplantation* from its site. For more information on this, go to http://www.portico.org/news/112807.html.

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At the beginning of 2008, it was apparent there were several steps which could be taken to maintain an underused print periodical collection. While subject librarians will ultimately decide if continuing current subscriptions is necessary, the Acquisitions Team took on the task of trimming the binding budget. The team identified 548 titles for which there are currently both print and online versions available. These titles have even a higher rate of non-use than the total print collection as 70% of these titles had zero record re-shelves and 99% of them had five or less re-shelves.

For each title, the team identified how it matched against the five criteria outlined in the library's periodi-cal collection policy. Currently, these titles have been given to the appropriate subject librarians to decide a

temporary retention policy for the print issues. While this process has just begun, it is already apparent that some librarians do not want the print issues sent to the Current Periodicals area and will instruct serials check-in to throw away these issues. The library must continue to receive some of these titles in print because online access is only possible if there is a print subscription. A goal of this project is for subject librarians to cancel the print versions where possible and go with the online version only. Exceptions to the policy are allowed for selectors—mainly if the online version is prohibitively more expensive than a print or print plus online subscription.

CONCLUSION

Libraries have watched for a decade as users have resoundingly chosen online access over the paper periodical collection. While viewing this change in user habit, we have found ourselves stuck in a transitional period where we continued to cover the costs of maintaining the print periodical collection but also were bearing the maintenance costs for significantly larger online collections. Up to now, it was difficult to see our way through this transition, primarily because we could not place "enough trust" in the archival ability of parties we could not control. This was completely understandable and appropriate. But the situation has changed with the advent of Portico and other efforts to insure perpetual online access to our valuable periodical collections. It is time to move forward and intelligently identify and, where appropriate, to cease outmoded processes which use increasingly scarce resources for services our users no longer require. It appears that the turbulent and volatile waters of the online environment have begun to calm for online periodical collections, and it is getting safer to immerse ourselves in the online environment.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Kevin Petsche has been a librarian at the IUPUI University Library since 1999. He has served as the Electronic Journals Collection Manager since leading the implementation of SFX in 2000. In July 2007 he became the Head of Acquisitions. He is currently managing the library's migration to a print periodical collection as well as leading the campus effort to implement an electronic resource management system.