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Changing Library Operations: Multiyear Analysis of Library Operations

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Changing Library Operations — Multiyear Analysis of Library Operations

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This is a small case study analysis of the changes in library operations at **Western Oregon University (WOU)** over the past six to eight years. WOU is a medium-sized (6k students) master's level public university about 10 miles southwest of Salem, Oregon. The study focuses on shifts in resource expenditures, holdings, usage, cost per use, and gate count. It also looks at changes in operations and personnel.

Resource Expenditure Shift to Online

Electronic resource expenditures have eclipsed print over the past eight years. Electronic resources comprised 23% of expenditures in FY06. By FY13, online resources consumed 84% of the resource budget (see Graphic 1 – Print and Electronic Resource Expenditures FY06 - 13). Over the eight years, the total information resource budget declined by 5%.

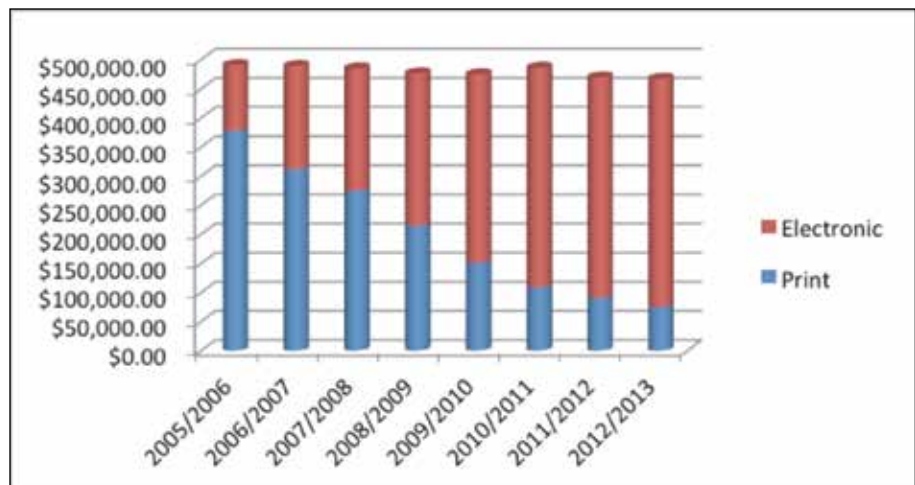
Books and Serials Expenditures

E-journal expenditures have become dominant over the past eight years. In FY06, print journals comprised 43% of expenditures, print books 32%, e-journals comprised 24%, and e-books only 1%. By FY13, e-journals consumed 69% of the resource budget. E-books claimed 8%, print books 9%, and print journals 5%.

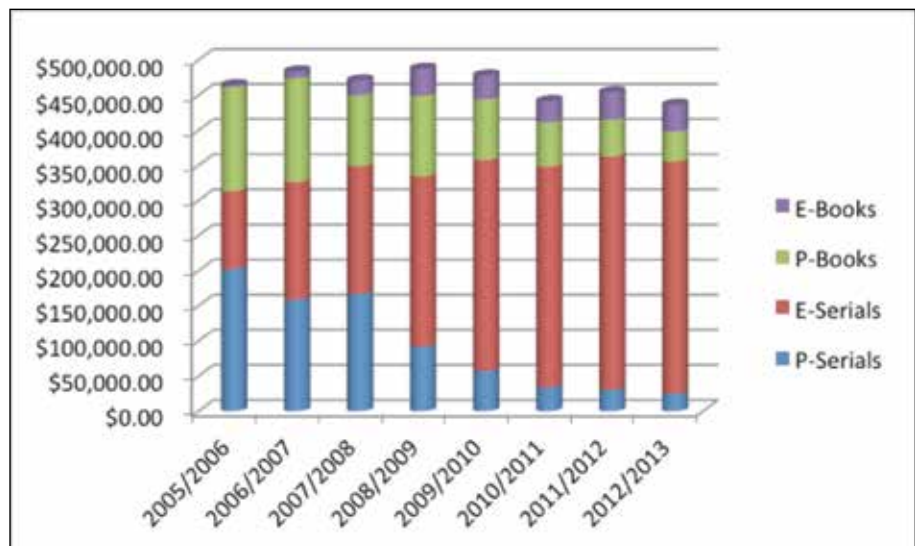
Cancellation of individual subscriptions to both print and e-journals and decreased print book purchases funded the increased electronic expansion. The transition was afforded by reduced book allocations and cancellations of individual print and electronic journal titles in favor of databases of e-book and journal titles, pay-per-view access, and PDA. Print journal titles were cancelled in favor of the least expensive way to replace it in e-format. We would also cancel e-journal subscriptions if annual usage costs via pay-per-view were lower than the e-subscription cost for a title. (see Graphic 2 – Print and Electronic Books and Serials Expenditure Trends Detail FY06 - 13).

'Holdings'

We have aggressively pursued an access rather than a holding strategy for collection development. Subscription databases, PDA, and pay-per-view permit relatively inexpensive expansion of titles. The approach increases the probability that a search term will find matches and permits access to content that we could not otherwise afford. The cost per title for access to e-journals between FY08 and FY13 averaged \$20.17 per unduplicated title. For the same time period, access to e-journal titles increased by 727% from 11,595 to 95,941 unique titles. E-book titles increased by 133% — from 42,000 to 98,870 at an average cost of



Graphic 1 — Print and Electronic Resource Expenditures FY06 - 13



Graphic 2 — Print and Electronic Books and Serials Expenditure Trends Detail FY06 - 13

\$3.56 per title. Print book titles purchased or received as gifts in the conventional manner increased the collection by 6% — from 213,717 to 226,322 volumes and cost (with gift titles included in the calculation) on average \$36.47 (see Graphic 3 – Book Volumes, E-book Title, and FT E-journal Access FY08 - 13). The average cost per title excluding gifts was just over \$80 in FY13.

Total Usage

Total physical circulation and online usage increased by 59% over the past 7 years from 148,401 to 235,007. Total physical circulation decreased by 19% — from 63,779 to 52,154.

Total full-text online usage has increased by 116% — from 84,622 to 182,853 (see Graphic 4 – Physical Circulation vs. Online Usage).

Physical Item Usage

Overall, circulation declined by 14.5% for physical items. Book usage was up while print reserves, equipment, and AV were down. Circulation of print books decreased just over 9% from FY08 through FY12, an average of about 2% per year. It increased by nearly 18% from FY12 to FY13 for a net gain over the six years of nearly 8%. An explanation for the sudden increase has not yet become apparent. Book

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borrowing through the 37 libraries of the **Orbis Cascade Alliance** saw an increase of 2.2%. Physical reserves and AV checkout dropped by 22.3% and 20.8% respectively with equipment checkout dropping 72% (see Graphic 5 – Physical Item Usage 2008 - 13). [We are no longer checking out laptops.] With the exception of the anomalous FY13 year, book usage has been steady with about 2% of the usage shifting to **Alliance** books. Physical reserves has shifted to e-reserves using Moodle instead of the library. AV is moving to streaming.

Online Usage

Library provided e-journal usage (i.e., not counting open Web access) was already established by FY08 as dominant over print journals. Nevertheless, usage rose 37.8% by FY13 at nearly 90% of e-resource usage. E-book usage has been slow to develop when looking at the usage relative to holdings. In FY08 e-books were 16% of the total book collection and only 6% of the usage. By FY13 e-books were 30% of the total book collection and 27% of the usage. There is still a preference for print books but it is now marginal. Convenience and comfort of format matters to faculty and students; and e-book formats seem to have become familiar and tolerable enough at this point to have near parity in usage relative to their portion of the collection (see Graphic 6 – Library Database Usage FY 08 - 13).

Cost Per Use

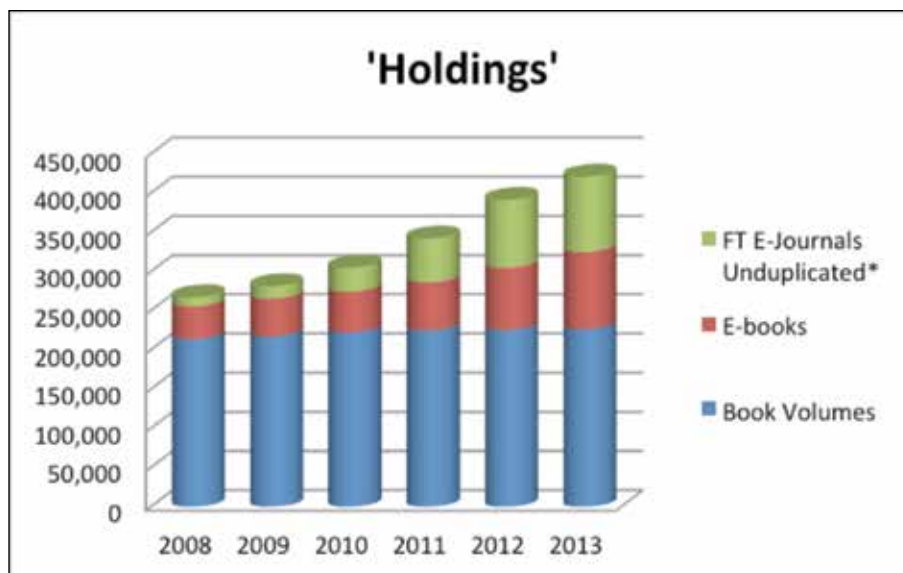
The increased volume of resources for approximately the same expenditure from FY07 to FY13 paralleled increased usage which resulted in a lower cost per use. The expanded portion of print books had an average cost per use of \$55.58 [calculated as a percent of total usage proportional to its percent of the total collection]. The cost per use of e-books was \$4.82 and e-journals \$1.85 (see Graphic 7 – Book, E-book and FT E-journal Average Cost per Use between FY08 - FY13).

Gate Count

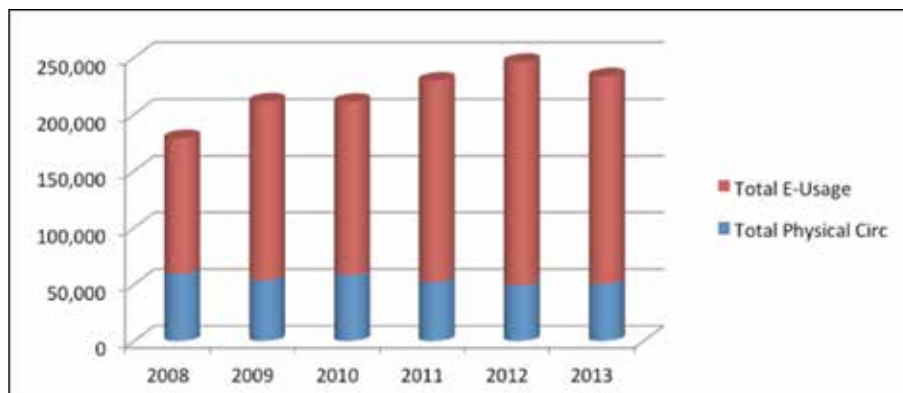
Gate count more than doubled from 222,334 in FY00 to 461,800 in FY01 when we opened the new library. The increased gate count was primarily from the enthusiasm of the new and attractive space on campus. Gate count decreased by 44% from FY01 to FY07 then stabilized. The decline from FY01 to FY07 was likely due primarily to the gradual loss of the newness of the building. Availability of online resources increased dramatically after 2006, which is when the usage of the building stabilized (see Graphic 8 – Gate Count).

The point worth noting is that the gate count has not decreased during the rapid transition to online usage. In FY00, resource usage was nearly completely physical. By FY13 total physical resource usage had declined to 21%. Print book usage garnered 12% and print journal usage less than 1% of total informational and equipment resource usage.

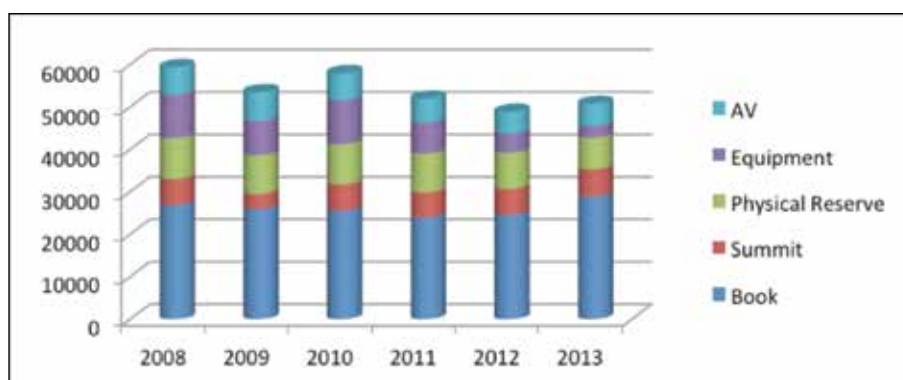
The point is further accentuated when considered in light of the increased usage by



Graphic 3 — Book Volumes, E-book Title, and FT E-journal Access FY08 - 13



Graphic 4 — Physical Circulation vs. Online Usage



Graphic 5 — Physical Item Usage 2008 - 13

students and faculty of open Web resources. Students, in a recent **Credo** survey of student information resource usage, reported that the open web was their primary resource for assignments (*ATG, April 2013*). Almost 70% of the students reported using open web resources regularly and only 46% said they used library resources regularly. Given that our usage of physical resources is 21.7% of usage compared to e-resources combined with usage reports from students that they use library resources

less than half as often as open Web resources, they are using physical library resources for only about 10% of their academic information needs. Students do not come to the library for physical resource usage other than the furniture, online access, and space. They need a place to be where they can study and work on assignments and there is access to the Internet. Given our social nature, they may also prefer a place where they are not alone.

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Operational and Personnel Shifts

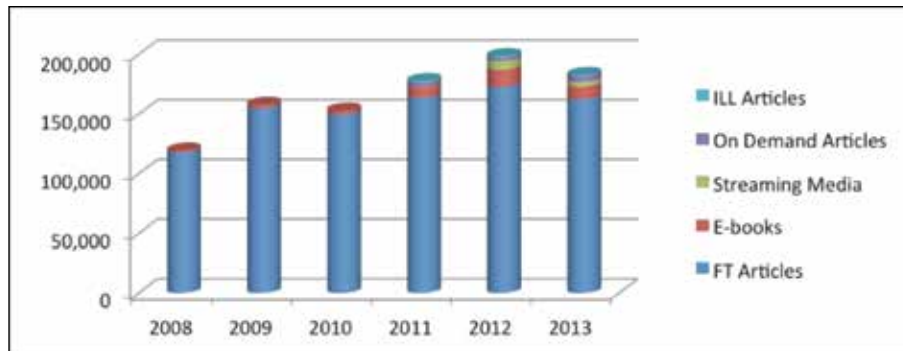
From Tech Services to Systems, Archives, IR, and Digital Commons

The shift from print collection building to online access decreased personnel needs for book processing and cataloging. The number of titles decreased but we also outsourced book processing and most of the remaining cataloging. Our technical services librarian retired in 2010. Rather than hire another technical services librarian, we hired our first archivist who was willing to manage three enterprises: a scaled down version of tech services, developing and processing our archives collections, and initiating the implementation of **Western's** Digital Commons. In hindsight, this was very cruel. The range of responsibilities was completely unrealistic. A bit of relief came from the collection development/systems librarian who agreed to assume responsibilities for technical services. We expect that the digital publishing role of the library will be on the ascendancy over the next decade and electronic and physical archives will become the primary focus of collection building that could be considered ownership and unique to **Western**.

The downsizing of technical services provided a fair amount of trauma for the staff positions because of the ensuing fluidity and uncertainty of job descriptions. One staff member is left. We are currently beginning the process of implementing the **Orbis Cascade Alliance** shared **Ex Libris** integrated library system and expect that over the next year the technical services and systems workload will be fairly consuming for many of the librarians and the staff in the library. However, after the dust settles on the system, we expect that some of the staff and library positions may be directed toward some of the emerging efforts in the library — archives, Digital Commons, open access publishing, and the development of an institutional repository for research results/data publication and preservation.

Since we had overloaded the collection development/systems librarian when she relieved the archives librarian, we hired a systems/IR librarian position to assist her by using the funding from the vacant technical services staff position. And since administration is holding firm to a zero sum budget strategy, the additional funding for the position was afforded by the differential between the salary of a departing instruction librarian and a the new instruction librarian. The increasing demands of online presence, the swift evolution and increasing utility of the technologies of interactive Web pages, and the complexity and mutability of a growing variety of competing vendor technologies and platforms made it prudent to hire assistance and backup for our systems.

We are not able to move robustly into any of the new frontiers of librarianship. They are major frontiers for small libraries like ours with very limited personnel and budgetary resources. They are nevertheless arenas in which we must make our best efforts to serve

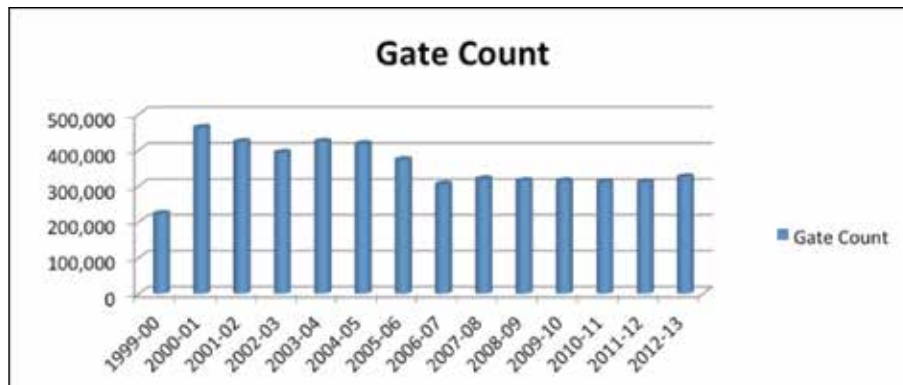


Graphic 6 — Library Database Usage FY 08 - 13

	Titles/ Volumes Added	Total Cost FY08-13	Cost per Title	Use	Ave. Cost per Use
Books	12,605	\$459,696	\$36.47	8,270*	\$55.58
E-Books	56,870	\$202,339	\$3.56	41,995	4.82
E-Journals	84,346	\$1,701,250	\$20.17	920,537	1.85

Graphic 7 — Book, eBook and FT E-journal Average Cost per Use between FY08 - FY13

* Usage calculated as percent of new titles to the total book collection



Graphic 8 — Gate Count

our institutions. The shifting parameters of publishing to open access require navigation, ramping up, and eventually support for the needs of both administration and faculty. The library must discern and articulate its role in the provision of services for the emerging needs. To what degree and in what manner are we to provide the technology, systems, information, and labor required to comply with the rising expectations and regulations for the research results/data associated with federally funded grants for open access to the public? We do not yet have a robust enough institutional repository. Should we outsource or develop an in-house alternative? What level of support are we to provide faculty in their efforts to move to open access publication? Do we explore and provide guidance on alternative publication channels in their various disciplines? Do we promote the virtues of open access?

We have initiated a Digital Commons Web publication platform using **Bepress**. We have put up a variety of collections including scanned archival material, student masters theses, and the publication of a peer-reviewed student journal. What is the extent of our obli-

gation to provide online access to unique local materials or to provide infrastructure, support, and labor for student and faculty online publication? We have recently moved the operation of a teaching resource center, its audio/video production lab, and an instructional technologist into the library. We will circulate audio video production equipment and assist students and faculty with their use. The instructional technologist is also an accomplished author of fiction and very familiar with online independent publishing channels. This arena is ripe for exploration but we have very limited resources. Where do we focus them?

Instruction and Reference

Instruction used to be an introduction to the card catalog and paper periodical indexes. Reference was also instruction. It was one-on-one instruction at point of need in the use of a complicated array of print information resources. Search technologies have become much easier for students and faculty to navigate albeit more complex and nuanced with respect to locating optimal resources. Google

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and Wikipedia provide instant access to a growing wealth of articles and information that will satisfy the demands of most undergraduate assignments.

Instruction now focuses on assisting the development of students' discovery and evaluation skills for navigating the rapidly expanding information sphere, which includes both open Web and library provided resources. The evolution of the task is toward the provision of comprehensive, point-of-need instruction across the



curriculum using a variegated combination of in-class, online, video, interactive, LibGuide, mixed, and flipped classroom protocols. The objective is to provide an experiential process of instruction closely integrated into assignments throughout their academic career that will provide skills and conceptual frameworks for later work, civil, and personal information use.

The last three years has seen a re-direction of personnel resources to instruction. Budget that was used for the ongoing coverage of sabbaticals was used to hire a permanent instruction librarian. And the replacement of a vacated reference position with another instruction position brought the instruction team from one to three librarians. 🍇

Collecting to the Core — Computing Instruction Manuals

by **Stephen Patton** (Assistant Librarian and Chair of Systems, Indiana State University; Computer Science Editor, *Resources for College Libraries*) <stephen.patton@indstate.edu>

Column Editor: **Anne Doherty** (*Resources for College Libraries* Project Editor, CHOICE/ACRL) <adoherty@ala-choice.org>

Column Editor's Note: The "Collecting to the Core" column highlights monographic works that are essential to the academic library within a particular discipline, inspired by the *Resources for College Libraries* bibliography (online at <http://www.rclweb.net>). In each essay, subject specialists introduce and explain the classic titles and topics that continue to remain relevant to the undergraduate curriculum and library collection. Disciplinary trends may shift, but some classics never go out of style. — AD

Collecting materials to support the undergraduate curriculum in computing (including computer information systems and computer science) presents several obstacles. Faculty-driven selections in computing are often skewed toward highly theoretical texts based on individual interests and research. Additionally, the library collection in computing should not only support teaching and student research, but should also help prepare students for professional work in the industry. Furthermore, collecting with undergraduates in mind requires the selector to accept that many of the most useful and vetted materials in this discipline are product manuals and certification manuals, as well as course books, textbooks, and survey texts. Though many academic libraries avoid adding these types of materials as a general selection policy, instruction manuals like certification guides and course books often provide critical foundational knowledge for computer science students and help ensure that graduates with a degree in computing will be equipped with a basic understanding of core

concepts. In "Textbooks, Leisure Readings, and the Academic Library," **Cynthia Hsieh** and **Rhonelle Runner** explain that there is no true consensus over why librarians have decided not to collect course textbooks, even though they are in high demand by students.¹ Indeed, in the domain of computing materials, certification manuals and textbooks arguably belong in a core collection. Drawing on my experience as a library selector and systems administrator, as well as graduate work in computer science, this essay outlines rationale and specific works in support of including computing instruction manuals in the library's collection.

Since many of the published monographs in computing are specific to particular topics, such as cryptography in networking, one reason to select introductory or survey materials such as textbooks is to ensure that students have access to basic information, in this case an introduction to cryptography as well as a survey of networking, before approaching more specialized works. While there are survey books that are not strictly textbooks, those which are regularly used in the classroom have typically undergone several revisions and tend to be better structured, edited, and most importantly, thoroughly vetted by a large readership body. This last point is particularly important for computing, since it is vital for students working with example code to know that there are no errors. It seriously impedes the learning process to try to learn from and work with code that is full of errors. **William Stallings** has produced a substantial body of important textbooks for computer science fields (as well as the Website Computer Science

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