

## Against the Grain

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# Biz of Acq-Print Journals at a Regional University Library

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# Biz of Acq — Print Journals at a Regional University Library

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My institution, **Eastern Michigan University**, is a typical public regional comprehensive that every state has. We are not an **ARL** member. When I started at the library 24 years ago, we were receiving over 2000 print subscriptions: this included a print subscription to every magazine in *Readers' Guide to Periodical Literature*. We had 523 microform subscriptions. My staff included three full-time clericals who did serial check-in and one clerical responsible for commercial and in-house binding. We were sending a minimum of 100 volumes to be bound twice per month. We had an entire large room dedicated to holding our print newspaper collection.

Where are we today? We spend over 90% of our acquisitions budget on electronic resources, most of that for journal content. Like our peer libraries, we subscribe to many of the “big deal” packages: **Elsevier, Wiley, Springer-Nature, Taylor & Francis, Sage, Oxford, Cambridge, Duke, Project Muse, Emerald, and JSTOR**. This allowed us to swap our print holdings for electronic access. Additionally we had a stretch of flat budgets that forced major print journal cancellations.

Still we continue to need and purchase some print journals. What is our criteria? This is what I discovered in analyzing our print subscriptions:

1) Journals that are not part of a big deal agreement. Virtually every year a few of our print titles are absorbed into one of the deals. We also have had a number of titles migrate into **Project Muse**. We will cancel the print when we have electronic access.

2) Journals that are not available in reliable aggregator. These titles come and go so it takes some monitoring. Last year a core nutrition journal dropped out of a database after a dispute with the publisher. We had to reinstate our subscription.

3) Journals where the html or pdf “text-only” aggregator versions are not adequate. Illustrations are important for some fields such as art (*Architectural Digest*) and fashion (*Vogue*).

4) Journals where the aggregator embargo periods are not reasonable. For some expensive titles a six-month embargo is not preferred but may be necessary. Almost all of the *Readers' Guide* magazines have been cancelled as they have reasonable embargos.

5) Journals that are available in print only. Print is still the only format for some culinary/art/music/education society memberships. These independent titles support niche programs that **EMU** has that may not be offered widely elsewhere.

6) Journals that include misleading “online.” One of our titles has a rolling current plus one-year access. If we didn't keep the print, we would not have anything after the second year. Others have print + “digital” access. The library market is a miniscule part of the publisher's business model: they are set up for individual, not institutional

subscribers. They offer a username and a password to log in. This is useless to us as we want IP authentication for easy access for all of our patrons. Some include supplementary electronic newsletters, but the main publication is still the print.

7) Journals that demand a print subscription in order to get online access.

8) Journals where we can't afford a site license. We do subscribe to *JAMA, Nature, and Science*. We have tried to negotiate a site-license for some other classics, but the pricing is sometimes based on our FTE as a regional comprehensive university and not the actual number of people in the program that would likely read it.

We tally all bound and unbound print journal usage: the journals must show a pattern of usage to justify their expenditure.

Print may be more relevant for **EMU** than other institutions for another reason: we are very fortunate to have an automatic storage and retrieval system device for on-site storage of our older resources. We do not have the space concerns facing many of our peers. We do need to purchase the backfiles of journals (nor do we generally have funds available to do so), so our old print will remain important.

As of 2017 we are down to 114 print only, 99 print + online (digital), and 84 individual online subscriptions. We are sending 50 volumes to be bound once per month and only have five microform subscriptions. We are down to five of the classic *Readers' Guide* titles. The newspaper room has been repurposed as we are down to four current newspapers.

Our staff now? Our one clerical staff, who did check-in plus bindery, government documents, loose-leaf services, but he just retired in August, so his duties will be absorbed within the other Technical Services staff. We migrated from Voyager to Alma this spring so we are still working on procedures. There has been the mantra by some librarians to “stop check-in, stop claiming, stop binding” print, but our collection has been manageable, even with a reduced staff.

In informal chats with colleagues at the **NASIG Conference** in Indianapolis and **ALA Conference** in Chicago this summer, none of the librarians said that they have stopped receiving print. As with books, print is still here for the foreseeable future but in much smaller quantities than in the past. 🌱



## Being Earnest with Collections from page 73

for that same time period; compare clicks from your campaign to usage. With every success, ask for a little more money. Keep your asks small, but frequent. Over time, you can build a budget. Every year I've been in marketing I fight for my marketing budget; I encourage you to devote the time to test marketing programs at your library. My experience has

shown me that a little marketing goes a long way, and the payoff in usage and outreach will be well worth the effort.

Any marketing questions or need some advice? Please don't hesitate to reach out. 🌱

