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Stock Verification of Electronic Publications: A Rejoinder

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Dr. A. K. Dhiman, in his communication, has raised certain issues regarding stock verification of electronic publications. These issues assume importance in the face of increasing digital content in libraries and in the light of various digital and virtual library projects undertaken.

1. PROBLEMS FACED BY LIBRARIES

The following are a couple of pertinent points not raised in the paper by Dr. Dhiman which if included, may provide a clear picture.

1.1 Software Locking

In the case of CD-ROM databases (as they are popularly called), a typical problem faced by the library is the software lock. Bibliographic databases like *Inside Science* of BLDSC, UK; the full text databases of Jane's Information Group (for example *Jane's Geopolitical Library*, *Jane's Defence Equipment Library*, etc.), Forecast International (for example, *Space Systems Forecast*, *Warships Forecast*, etc.), and full text standards databases from Bureau of Indian Standards, International Standards Organisation, American Society for Testing of Metals, British Standards Institution, American National Standards Institution, etc. are all having software lock. This makes CDs unusable after certain date. In some cases (for example, Jane's) this period is just one month. Although the CD is with the subscriber, it is useless due to the software key. During stock verification although these CDs are available, they cannot be 'counted' as they are unusable. One way is

weeding out such CDs leaving only active CDs (those which are usable) in the stock. But it means that no sooner the publication is subscribed, than it is being weeded out.

When seen in the light of the subscription costs of these CDs and their limited period of utility, there is a necessity to make the publishers of such electronic publications to remove the software keys and make them "usable even after stoppage of subscriptions to them, much like the back volumes of printed publications. Librarians also have to take caution while subscribing such publications.

1.2 Subscription of Online Publications

Another major issue of stock verification arises from the subscription of online publications. Although, in India as on today no library is subscribing only the online publications; however, in future there is a possibility. These can be subscribed in two modes, online only or along with print publications.

When online journals are subscribed with print publications, the library would have back volumes even after the subscription is stopped. However, when online publications only are subscribed, the library will be paying subscription charges for accessing the online journal hosted by the publisher or by an aggregator like OCLC, SwetScan, etc. In these cases, access to the publication is controlled by

password given by the vendor. If the library wishes to cancel subscription to the online journal, it cannot access the back volumes of the online journal which it subscribed earlier. This also makes the back volumes unavailable for stock verification-. Unless access fee is paid to the vendor or aggregator, the back volumes of the subscribed journal are; not available for, the library.

Also, stock verification of online journals not in the possession of the library poses problems. This is in contrast to the CD-ROM databases of cumulative nature. The subsequent 'issues' (CDs) of databases like *Aerospace Engineering*, *Compendex*, *Applied Science and Technology Index*, *Library and Information Science Abstracts (LISA)*, *Chemical Abstracts*, etc., include the

data/material of earlier CDs. Thus, the second quarter CD of LISA of a particular year-includes data of the first quarter CD (in fact, each new CD of LISA includes, data from 1969 till the current issue). So, virtually the earlier CDs of such databases can be weeded out, as the latest (current),CD has all, the data. Here a single CD will represent multiple volumes of the electronic publication for stock verification purpose.

The main objectives of stock verification, namely, to find out the actual stock of the documents available in a library and to find but: if any losses have occurred for regularisation as well as taking remedial steps to contain such losses seem to be hazy in the ease of electronic publications.

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