Purdue University

Purdue e-Pubs

Charleston Library Conference

Do Libraries' Needs Still Match Publisher Offerings? "The Truth Is Rarely Pure and Never Simple" (Oscar Wilde)

John Banionis
Future Science Group, j.banionis@future-science-group.com

Nadia Lalla
University of Michigan Taubman Health Sciences Library, nadia.lalla@mail.mcgill.ca

Don West
ACCUCOMS, don@accucoms.com

John Banionis, Nadia Lalla, and Don West, "Do Libraries' Needs Still Match Publisher Offerings? "The Truth Is Rarely Pure and Never Simple" (Oscar Wilde)" (2014). *Proceedings of the Charleston Library Conference.*
http://dx.doi.org/10.5703/1288284315565

Do Libraries' Needs Still Match Publisher Offerings?
"The Truth Is Rarely Pure and Never Simple" (Oscar Wilde)

John Banionis, Key Account Manager, Future Science Group
Nadia Lalla, Assistant Director of Collections & Information Services, Taubman Health Sciences Library,
University of Michigan
Don West, Sales Director, ACCUCOMS

Abstract

Given the continued state of strained library budgets and increasing content offerings from publishers, the authors set out to investigate this current environment from the perspectives of both library and publisher. After reviewing the array of publisher offerings as well as ongoing collection development issues faced by libraries, the authors moderated an open discussion with their peers to determine if any new models and solutions offered by publishers help to address these concerns, and if not, what the library community would like to see as an ideal acquisitions model.

What Do Libraries Need Today, and What Factors Shape This Need?

Libraries have emerged from the Great Recession with leaner funding and clearer missions. Most have become experts at doing more with less and recognize that the financial future will be a continuation of this practice. At the same time, the e-resource landscape has changed. This was helped by the explosion of mobile device use (primarily tables) , some significant changes in the type of e-resources offered by publishers (e.g., streaming media, data sets), legal decisions, and the open access movement. These changes present challenges to collection development. Acquisition decisions are essentially the same as before: they are driven by user demand or library priority. What has changed are the questions and issues surrounding access, discoverability, use, and retention as they pertain to e-resources.

A Brief History of E-Resources

From the birth of scholarly literature, publishers have offered journals in a print format with Issues set at regular intervals within each volume of publication. These print volumes were available for purchase on a title-by-title basis, or if a publisher carried multiple titles, these could be purchased by libraries in a single bundle if desired. However, when publishers began offering their journals electronically via the internet in the early 1990s, the types of content offerings grew substantially. With electronic journals, titles were still available individually, but publishers were now able to offer packages of titles with either perpetual or leased access, individual article purchases via Pay Per View (PPV), as well as digitized backfiles of their earlier print content available for subscription or outright purchase. Additionally, many large STM publishers began offering "Big Deal" packages to libraries, which typically allowed for leased access to the full body of that publisher's journal content for a fixed fee in exchange for a library's commitment to maintain their current subscription list with that publisher. The pros and cons of the Big Deal have been debated at length elsewhere, but the inherent inflexibility of limited cancellations has caused a strain on library budgets, which has in turn prompted some publishers to develop new, experimental models for content acquisition.

One such model includes the Journals Paid Trial, which was developed for the 2011 Subscription Year by John Banionis on behalf of Future Science Group. The Paid Trial is a patron-driven or data-driven acquisitions model for journals, in that it offers leased access to the publisher's full journal collection for 12 months at a deeply discounted rate, after which the library can review a year of usage data to make an informed collection development decision in the following years. For example, libraries might decide to convert one or

more titles to perpetual access subscriptions while having the option continue the leased component depending on their evaluation of institutional usage trends. In this way, the Paid Trial is more flexible and customizable than the Big Deal. The University of Michigan was an early adopter of this model, and it continues to be a useful acquisitions model for the library.

Another model being considered by libraries and publishers is a PPV Ownership Model, or article-level acquisition. In this scenario, a library would prepurchase a package of article downloads from a customer, but instead of being single-use, the library would locally load the article on its network and catalog it for future use by its researchers, thereby eliminating the need to pay for an article more than once. When the library depletes their package of downloads, they can simply purchase another set to fulfill the ongoing need for the publisher's articles by their researchers.

Furthermore, aside from new models from individual publishers, smaller publishers have also banded together to create packages of content spanning multiple publishers offered at a discount, thus providing a greater value proposition for libraries. This has been successfully implemented in the ALJC Model, and is also being offered at the consortia level by publisher service companies such as ACCUCOMS.

Last, aside from direct offerings from publishers, third-party aggregators also offer journal databases to libraries. These databases provide access to most journal titles across each subject area at a fraction of the cost of a direct subscription to each title. However, the access is leased and includes an embargo of 12 months or more, which precludes the most current research articles from being included. Also, when subscribing to multiple databases, libraries will experience a great deal of overlap and duplication of many titles. Still, this is often a reasonable option for libraries trying to fill any gaps in specific areas of their collection.

Moving beyond journals, a vast body of e-books have been made available to libraries over the past decade. While publishers initially offered a limited number of "born digital" books while also digitizing older volumes, most current e-books are available as a fully searchable and dynamic product for the end user. Also, because e-books were a more recent offering of larger publishers who had received negative feedback about the Big Deal model for journals, most publishers make their e-books available via a more flexible patron-driven acquisition or demand-driven acquisition rather than offering a monolithic collection of their entire e-book portfolio. These PDA or DDA Models are often available through third-party e-book aggregators, but libraries can usually also opt to purchase e-books directly from the publisher as well.

Finally, there are a variety of multimedia resources that have been made available to libraries, such as music databases, video products, lectures, and other nontraditional materials. These resources provide important content for researchers not otherwise available in a text format, and more flexible licensing models similar to the Paid Trial have become available in recent years.

Ongoing Issues With E-Resources

Licensing language continues to be a primary issue for libraries. What trips librarians and vendors/publisher is not the standard legal language that's evolved about liability or ownership of vendor-developed content, it's all the "other stuff":

- Who is an "authorized user."

- Taxpayer-funded libraries that are required to provide walk-in access to the public.

- Confidentiality and nondisclosure clauses vs. Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) requests.

- Interlibrary loan use (who, what, when, how).

- Access by location (e.g., remote vs. building use only vs. dedicated workstation) or format (tablets only or tablet inaccessible).

- Fair use and digital rights management (DRM).

- Perpetual access rights.

In addition to the licensing language, there is a rising trend in academe away from library ownership of content and an increasing reliance on only leasing the same content. This is particularly problematic in some disciplines where the high-demand content is controlled by a few key publishers and locked into packages (e.g., health sciences and engineering). For many libraries, it is initially the most cost-effective means to provide the largest amount of content to their primary audiences. The flip side of that coin is that libraries do not retain any tangible property when the leasing is discontinued. How does a library justify the ongoing expenses?

If the answer to that question is usage stats, those same statistics come with their own problems. Libraries have been greatly aided by publisher acceptance and implementation of COUNTER-compliant statistical reporting. These reports give libraries tools to evaluate use of products and make some comparisons. But even in 2014, not everyone counts usage the same way. Some new disturbing trends/issues are the promotion of major new products without concurrent support for usage statistics and the tug of war that ensues when library-collected usage statistics differ from vendor-supplied usage statistics. Libraries are no longer accepting the numbers that are pushed out by publishers. Our inbred critical questioning is provoking some very difficult conversations about what should really be counted. The conversation is further complicated when one considers all of the different kinds of e-resources that libraries acquire: streaming video and audio, image databases, raw data. How do you count usage of this in a meaningful and consistent manner? The bigger publishers have figured this out; the smaller publishers are challenged to demonstrate the usefulness of their products.

Another issue is the definition of simultaneous or concurrent users. This is of particular interest to libraries that provide vast quantities of e-books in a course reserves capacity or have a DDA program in which purchases are triggered by use. When is

use counted? How is use counted? How should libraries interpret those usage statistics? What if usage is seasonal—can access be purchased or rented on a temporary basis?

Open access (OA) content is changing the conversation between libraries and publishers regarding the financing of scholarly communication. OA authors are approaching libraries for assistance in paying or subsidizing publication fees. Concurrently libraries and institutions are feeling pressure/responsibility to support OA initiatives via memberships that underwrite publishing costs. Where can libraries find this funding? Should collection monies previously allocated for traditional subscriptions or one-time purchases be channeled towards the OA efforts? How can libraries support both publishing options? How does OA change what a library collects?

A library has a responsibility to consider the overall end user experience. That experience raises its own set of issues for e-resources. Users continue to be frustrated by the myriad ways an e-resource behaves on a laptop versus a tablet versus a mobile phone. Users want to access content wherever and whenever is convenient for them with minimal changes from one platform to another. Mobile apps, mobile websites, and responsive web design are not equal methods of access. Our users want it all. Libraries are quick to inform publishers about the need to have those access methods now; we are less willing to pay for those expensive enhancements. Related issues include

- Discoverability—We all have cataloguing backlogs in e-resources. Not every resource comes with that perfect record that effortlessly uploads to an OPAC.

- Accessibility—For some libraries, a substantial amount of e-resources are unavailable to people with disabilities. This is not an insignificant problem and has legal implications.

- Privacy—Libraries continue to see a trend from publishers for personal customer accounts to manage individual profiles. Who sees that information? Should/can a

publisher share details with the library that pays for access? Should libraries have access to that information?

- Security—How secure is patron information on nonlibrary supplied platforms?

The newest and potentially greatest issue is one of e-resource storage. What does a library do with the journal supplement of conference proceedings that arrives on CD but isn't included online in the paid journal subscription? If a library owns the streaming video content from database, how and where does it capture and store that content. These ongoing concerns surrounding storage are only going to increase as libraries grapple with "million dollar drawers" filled with content helpfully provided by publishers or harvested as part of an agreement. There is a plethora of preservation needs that requires strategy, human resources, expensive computer storage, and lots of money. At this time, there is no best practice.

Panel Discussion Results

After presenting this overview to our Lively Lunch audience at the Charleston Conference, some overarching themes arose out of our discussion. One area of agreement was that experimental models can indeed be helpful as an acquisitions tool, so long as they remain flexible enough to fit the needs of individual libraries. Also, while an article PPV ownership program would have substantial theoretical merits, the management of such a program may prove too cumbersome for large libraries, but may work at hospital or corporate libraries.

An ongoing issue for the librarians in our discussion was the reliability of usage data, particularly with regard to drilling down to subgroups of users. Knowing more about who is using what at an institution is helpful for collection analysis, but at the same time, individual privacy must be protected in any sort of data reporting.

Last, we posed the question as to whether there might be a way to integrate journals and e-books within in a single acquisitions model. Our initial suggestion was a single PDA model allowing for journal article acquisition and e-book title-by-title acquisition for each publisher. While there may come a time in which all content is treated equally, there are still significant challenges regarding library workflows and publisher revenue models that would prevent this unification across the industry in the near term.

Conclusions

Following from the robust discussion from our session, it is clear that there remains an ongoing need for flexibility and innovation in content acquisition models. Libraries and publishers will continue to be partners in delivering specialized research content to the end user, and as such, they must continue to operate in a way that is mutually sustainable. If the cyclical economic trends and technological advancements in recent years are any indication, each stakeholder must strive to be nimble if they are to thrive in their common mission.