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Robert Kelly and Susann DeVries, "Downsizing from the Big Deal: What's Education Got to do With It?" (2011). *Proceedings of the Charleston Library Conference*.
<http://dx.doi.org/10.5703/1288284314881>

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Downsizing from the Big Deal: What's Education Got to do With It?

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ABSTRACT

With a tightening budgetary waistline, how can you still “suck it in” and still be able to breathe? Minimizing the impact on your faculty, undergraduates, graduates, and Ph.D. students as you wean yourself off those seductive and tantalizing Big Deals can be a tricky process. Using a blended approach which incorporates multiple years of use data from both the publisher and aggregators, impact factors from the Web of Knowledge Journal Citation Analysis, and finally consultations with the discipline librarians and faculty, we developed a process to identify essential titles from Big Deal packages. This multilayer approach ensures that high use titles are considered, quality is maintained, and budget requirements are met. Presenters looked at major journal publisher and the significant content within the education discipline to use as a template for other subject areas. This session will layout strategies for evaluating journal packages with the goal of identifying and retaining core titles if and when you make the decision to terminate your Big Deal agreement.

After the low-hanging fruit is cut from the library's collection development budget, where else can one turn to ensure budgetary constraints are met in times of economic woe? With big deal packages consuming 40% of our materials budget, we determined that now was the time to analyze the cost and quality of the package's titles. The compilation of data which included cost per use coupled with quality benchmarks would be the foundation to launch a process to work with departmental faculty to ensure the most relevant titles were retained if and when we have to wean ourselves off those seductive and tantalizing journal packages. Further, we wanted to determine if the project was scalable in order to accommodate the range of collection development needs of EMU selectors working at the departmental and college level.

Analyzing the 14 e-journal packages revealed that the seven Big Deal packages expended 85% of our electronic journal budget and yet accounted for 52% of all article downloads from all 14 packages. This eye-opening statistic prompted us to investigate the intricate nuances of an individual package. In order to provide a holistic understanding, we piloted a blended methods approach to ensure that all aspects and angles were deliberated to retain the package's most relevant titles at a sustainable cost, while minimizing the impact of content loss on our students and faculty.

A multidiscipline Big Deal package was selected to obtain a general cross subject representational look

at the journal titles. Data collected for analysis of the economic and education journal titles included the number of titles in the respective discipline, usage (i.e. number of times an article was downloaded), cost per use of article downloads and the recognized impact factor to use as an indicator of journal value. We used the publisher supplied subject headings to map the journals to EMU's disciplines. Incorporating and analyzing usage and cost data in Excel spreadsheets, we identified low cost per use titles implying their importance to our community. We further wanted to refine the results by including faculty input to see if their list of titles aligned with the initial set of core titles.

The statistical data for all 88 economics titles was presented to three representatives from the 11-person Economics department. Five delegates from the 94 faculty who teach within the three departments of the College of Education were selected for participation of the 132 journal title analysis. Department level versus college level approach, as well as a subject specific discipline versus a multidisciplinary subject area, was used to identify potential problems various subject liaisons would encounter when the pilot was expanded to include all subject librarians.

The economics faculty identified five core titles from their list. They retained two original core titles and replaced the other three. The revised core package cost doubled from \$2,000 to \$4,000. They selected the core titles using the criteria in rank

order: those which support the courses taught on campus (undergraduate/graduate), how well the titles matched to their own specialty area, and finally data usage and cost. Impact factors were considered but not decisive in their rankings. As might be expected, the economics representatives were eager participants; they readily looked at all of the statistical data and offered additional suggestions for further study.

The College of Education professors were willing participants. The education title spreadsheet was reviewed to reduce its complexity prior to distribution: Core titles and titles on the fence were identified and listed in rank order; the remaining journal titles were retained for secondary consideration. Because of the interdisciplinary nature of the field, faculty initially identified core titles based on their subject specialties, then considered courses taught

on campus, and like the economics department, incorporated data usage as a third indicator of journal title importance.

The pilot project was extremely worthwhile, as it now enable us to make informed decisions about the suite of titles in an individual electronic journal package and confidently swap titles in our core list. Incorporating data with cost, we have a clear understanding of how all of our packages are being used. Coupling the data analysis with input gathered from faculty allowed us to make knowledgeable choices about which e-journal package titles to retain. Finally, the project strengthened our relationships with the departments on campus by allowing us to be viewed as trusted colleagues with the goal of how best to meet the information needs of the university community.