time, university presses and university libraries have faced similar financial pressures. At Duke
alarming declines in print circulation and institutional subscription revenue led us to pull most
of our titles from Project MUSE. While doing so was difficult — the timing was not ideal, and
librarians regard Project MUSE highly — we felt that it was necessary for the long-term vi-
ability of the Press. Explaining the decision in a widely published “open letter to librarians”
dated August 19, 2004, Director Steve Cohn pointed out that if all of our journals stayed with
Project MUSE and print sales continued to decline at a similar rate, the royalties we received
could not sustain our publishing program.

After consulting with experts in the library community, we felt confident that because many
of our journals are key in their fields, there would be continued demand for electronic ac-
tess to them. We believed that the success of the electronic package depended on our find-
ing an excellent host for it, so we began a part-
nership with HighWire Press. Realizing that
libraries have concerns regarding print publica-
tions, including the space they occupy and the
limited use they see, and have faced increasing
demand for electronic access from their users,
we thought that an online collection offered
maximum access and pricing flexibility to the
library community. Since we were coarchitects
and key supporters of Project MUSE’s new
tiered pricing, we adopted that model in the belief that variable pricing would allow us the
broadest reach.

The “Interim” Year

With the decision to pull titles from Project
MUSE finalized just before the release of 2005
pricing, Duke worked quickly to create an in-
terim electronic package for the 2005 calendar
year. Needing a detailed pricing model that was
both fair and easy to understand, we settled on
pricing based on a percentage of what institu-
tions had paid Project MUSE in 2004; this
percentage mirrored the amount of Duke con-
tent withdrawn from Project MUSE. Our appro-
ach offered Duke content at a deeply dis-
counted rate for many institutions, inasmuch as
it honored consortial discounts; we hoped that
this pricing method made the transition for lib-
raries relatively easy. With this temporary solu-
tion in place, we began collecting informa-
tion with which to develop a sustainable pricing
strategy for the electronic package.

During the interim year we received many
questions and valuable feedback from the library
community. Librarians wanted to be assured
that the package was stable, and of course ev-
everyone wanted to know what the pricing model
would look like after the interim year. With
budget time approaching, librarians needed to
know what they would be paying in 2006, and
ideally for the next few years. Since some li-

In the future, we will offer a more substantial
package that addresses both size of institution and
usage. The base price for the e-Duke Scholarly Collection was calculated from the subscrip-
tion prices of the 20 titles in the collection that no longer have current content on Project
MUSE. The price offered to the top tier of subscribers (doctoral research extensive in-
stitutions) represented a 33% discount over the individual purchase of these titles.

We needed to address specialized institutions,
such as medical schools, schools of business,
art, music, or law, and teachers colleges, whose Carnegie Classification does not neces-
sarily reflect their size. Our approach approximates a tier equivalency by taking into account the types of degrees these institutions grant and their full-time enrollment. Although specialized institutions do
not make up our core subscribers, we wanted to
offer a reasonable price to all institutions
interested in Duke content.

We also needed to focus on the international market, a growing component of our
subscriber base. Because international institu-
tions do not have classifications similar to
Carnegie, we determined prices for them by
incorporating World Bank income classifi-
cation as well as institutional volume and se-
rial holdings.

Lastly, we capped the increase in subscrip-
tion price at $500 to reduce its impact on li-

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