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"No One Uses Them So Why Should We Keep Them?" -- Scenarios for Print Issue Retention

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needs to be readily available to a variety of persons involved in a serials cancellation project, including subject specialists making decisions and acquisitions staff members who actually implement cancellation or non-renewal decisions. A related issue involves how broadly the knowledge of these commitments should be disseminated. Should this information be available only to the member universities of the consortium, or should it be made publicly available on a Website?

There are several impediments to a viable collaborative print retention program. Assuaging users' fears and gaining their acceptance could be difficult. Some journal publishers prohibit e-only subscriptions, and others have pricing schemes and agreement terms that make the continuation of dual print and electronic subscriptions attractive. National initiatives are relatively easy to conceptualize, but very difficult to implement and sustain. **Reilly** (2002) suggests that a national print retention program could be modeled on the national energy grid that "does a surprisingly effective job of balancing local or self-interest against the broader public good." **Kaufman** (2002) cautions, "To succeed, a national system for distributed preservation of artifactual materials must be incremental and scalable, risk-averse, voluntary, transparent, and economically sustainable."

Several unanswered questions remain. When will the lion's share of journals become electronic-only publications? How long do these coordinated print retention agreements need to be in place? **Reilly** (2002) suggests that the grid of commitments and agreements should be formalized, strengthened, and lengthened gradually.

Conclusion

Evidently, the laws of thermodynamics apply as well to hot topics as to hot objects. The diffusion of heat—cooling—is inevitable. The **CIC** proposal notes, "As changes occur in digital archiving standards and print production the need for retention of print copies of journals may decrease or not be necessary at all." This raises an interesting challenge for collaborative efforts. While most consortial projects focus on opportunities that are emerging and issues that are heating up, in the case of print retention the value of what is being retained may decline over time. Can consortia collaborate in an orderly retreat from print? The challenge with print retention is not necessarily to preserve in perpetuity precious artifacts, but to manage a large, redundant, distributed corpus of printed information that appears to be losing value to the user population at unknown—and probably varying—rates. 🍁

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"No One Uses Them So Why Should We Keep Them?" — Scenarios for Print Issue Retention

by **John McDonald** (California Institute of Technology)

Serials and acquisitions librarians suffered through the serials crisis in the 80s, have struggled with electronic journals and "the Big Deal" in the 90s, and are now faced with a new dilemma that seems to be contrary to all that we learned in library school. Print issue retention is a subject that touches on all areas of expertise in librarianship, including acquisitions, collection development, reference, public services, preservation, and archives. The issues associated with print retention are varied and complex and each library will have a unique position to consider when developing institutional policies. This brief piece will attempt to outline the considerations that each library should take into account when debating retention of print journal issues.

The very first assumption that a librarian must confront in this issue is that the electronic version of the journal is preferred over the print by your users. For most users and most libraries, this is undoubtedly the case due to the format's increased accessibility and added functionality. Most libraries experience a sharp decline in use of print issues when electronic access is provided. But if this is not the case, and particular journals, disciplines, or user groups need the print copy as much as, or more so, than the electronic, then the library must do all it can to retain the print copy.

But assuming that your users do prefer the print or use it almost exclusively, what else do you need to consider to conclude that you can forego the purchasing and housing of print volumes? There are three basic benefits to not retaining the print issues of journals that are available electronically: **Money**, in the form of savings associated with subscription, processing, storage; **Time**, in the form of savings in processing, renewals, binding, check-in, and associated serials tasks; and **Space**, in the form of savings on current shelves,

bound volume shelves, and storage areas.

Overall, the most obvious benefit for most libraries is the monetary savings associated with the subscription. Not all publishers have subscription models that allow libraries to take online only, but those that do often offer substantial price savings, at least in the near term, if the library moves to online only. In addition, associated costs in processing and storage are saved as well — libraries no longer need to spend money on bar codes, security strips, binding, circulation, and the associated staff time and training.

In addition to these direct and indirect monetary savings, libraries that choose to forego print issues entirely or retention of issues at some point can see time savings in the form of processing, invoicing, renewals, binding, check-in, circulation, and reshelving. All of these are less immediate and obvious savings, but each allows an institution to reallocate staff and resources to other tasks.

Lastly, non-retention of print issues can save space. All libraries eventually have space management problems due to constantly expanding collections. Reducing the amount of material received when non-space absorbing formats are available allows a library to free up space for monographs or public and staff areas.

So now that we know non-retention of print issues can save us money, time, and space, there are still a number of considerations to take into account before making the leap. There are four basic scenarios that a library can embrace, with most libraries utilizing a variety of them depending on their local situation.

- **Scenario 1:** Provide access to both formats: retain, process, and store print while managing electronic subscriptions.
- **Scenario 2:** Provide limited print access, but reduce staff processing and/or accessibility (check-in, binding, indefinite storage, and accessibility).
- **Scenario 3:** Provide electronic access but continue to purchase print for archival purposes only.
- **Scenario 4:** Provide electronic access only and take no print.

What considerations will a library need to address before decid-

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ing on one or more of the scenarios above? Each institution will have different situations when they may feel they fall into one of the scenarios, but specific issues to consider for each of the scenarios focus heavily on budgetary concerns, archival responsibilities, and access requirements.

Many libraries may have no choice — budget cuts and serials inflation may dictate that they forego print copies in order to shield the collection from further cancellations. The eventual bottom line of balancing a declining budget and providing continuing access to materials that increase in price by more than 5 times inflation will dictate moving from Scenario 1 to Scenario 4. Libraries may save direct subscription costs of anywhere from 5% to 25% depending on the publisher. In addition, libraries may realize substantial saving on associated costs like sales taxes, postage, or shipping and handling charges.

Furthermore, indirect costs can be significantly reduced if print issues are not purchased or retained. A not unsubstantial amount of our staff time is devoted to making sure print issues get to the shelf. Mail handling, issue check-in, security taping, barcoding, stamping, and shelving the issues are labor intensive activities that absorb entire job descriptions or multiple clerk hours every day. Reducing the material that is receivable and processing heavy will allow a library to devote more staff resources to other tasks, or reduce staff overall. Other indirect costs savings include claims, replacement issues, storage, and binding.

Aside from strictly monetary concerns, the second most important consideration is archival responsibility. Many libraries consider themselves or are considered by a consortia or regional group to be the archive of record for all or a portion of their collective print collection. It will continue to be their responsibility to maintain print issues for those items that are their archival responsibility. Libraries who either determine that they are not archival conservators for print journals or who have cooperative archival agreements with other institutions can safely move to electronic only subscriptions where appropriate. Archival responsibilities may also be shifted to publishers through permanent archiving clauses in site license agreements for electronic journals or through third party providers who can maintain print and electronic archives for other institutions. Furthermore, a library may feel safe enough to discard print issues if they are guaranteed archival electronic files from the publisher and have the technical infrastructure in place to utilize that option. I suspect that large, comprehensive, academic research libraries will continue to archive print issues either individually, through cooperative subject or publisher based agreements, or collectively at regional depositories. Small, specialized, and less well funded institutions will have to choose wisely what journals they wish to retain in print and which ones they can safely assume are needed only electronically.

Closely related to monetary and archival considerations are space considerations. Library

shelves have been packed full for many years and library building proposals are not as well received as in the past. Previously, libraries could alleviate space problems in a few ways — weeding the collection, microfilming, remote storage, or installing compact shelving. The first three methods both reduced access to some degree while the third preserves access but is a finite solution to the problem. Now, libraries can maintain access, albeit in a different format, while conserving the dwindling physical space that they do have or more radically, creating new space by discarding print volumes that are held electronically. Libraries can remove print volumes, especially for journals produced electronically through projects like JSTOR, and convert that space to monographs storage, computer workstation use, or reading space for patrons. We are now at a junction in library science where we can alleviate space constrictions in a thoughtful and positive way while promoting other values like physical space and increased computer locations that our users desire.

Other issues that libraries will have to contemplate include personnel, electronic costs, reputability, and restorability. Undertaking a large de-accession project for removal of print issues requires a large amount of staff time including selecting the items, training for the procedures, and evaluation of the results. Even if a library just chooses to no longer receive print issues for selected items, a not inconsequential amount of time must be committed to new policies and procedures as well as informing the library clientele. Electronic costs can also be a large hurdle to climb — does the library have the infrastructure to serve increased amounts of electronic information in computer equipment, training, patron assistance, and direct subscription costs associated with archival back files. In addition, libraries must have a secure sense that the publisher or the project is reputable and likely to retain their electronic publishing program at a reasonable cost in future years. The purchase of *Academic Press* by *Elsevier* has laid a heavy economic burden on many libraries and future purchases of commercial publishers by others can wreak havoc on the informa-

tion resources for any library. Increasing the library's dependence on electronic journals in general, and specific publishers in particular, can often result in reduced flexibility in regard to new purchases or cancellation decisions.

And finally, and most importantly, a library must weigh its future ability to restore collections that have been cancelled if there is future need for those items. This issue cannot be taken lightly by any library. Each institution must decide on a policy to follow when the electronic journal or site license becomes non-viable in the future. Libraries that long ago cancelled print issues of journals from *Academic Press* in favor of electronic only access are now faced with huge cost increases when renewing these licenses through *Elsevier*. Similar instances will no doubt appear in the future with other publishers. An institution must decide if faced with this situation can they return to print only access, forego some other aspect of the collection to continue the site license, and how they will fill in the print archive that was not retained previously if the need arises.

All of the issues surrounding print retention of journal issues are complex and therefore must eventually be decided at the institutional level. Electronic journals do not come into the library without creating their own problems. In addition to sometimes astronomical costs, journals are not always accessible due to problems associated with the publisher, the customer, or the medium of the Internet. Renewals and subscription management are still poorly performed by publishers and subscription agents, while librarians continue to bring their own technical skills up to a level that can ensure uninterrupted access. Users are getting more and more comfortable with the format but continuation of reference and instruction services will be increasingly important if an institution moves to electronic only subscriptions. And disaster preparedness, in the case of economic hardship, is still being developed on a case by case basis. The decisions will not be easy and most libraries will be navigating uncharted territory when developing a collections policy addressing print retention.

The Hybrid Environment: Electronic-Only Versus Print Retention

by Mark Rowse (Chief Executive, Ingenta)

Introduction

We exist in a hybrid print-electronic environment and will continue to do so for many years to come. However, with libraries purchasing increasing amounts of electronic resources and on-going pressure on acquisition budgets, the feasibility of sustaining duplicate print and electronic collections has come under review. Many institutions are choosing to reduce print budgets in order to sustain and expand electronic purchasing.

The factors influencing decisions about print retention policy and e-only collection development are various and complex. Issues of cost, space and storage are key drivers for change, while new ways of publishing, packaging, and purchasing electronic content are having a decided impact on collection development and print cancellation/retention.

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