

April 2003

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Recommended Citation

Jaeger, Don (2003) "The Future of the Hardcopy Journal," *Against the Grain*: Vol. 15: Iss. 2, Article 9.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.7771/2380-176X.4019>

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The Future of the Hardcopy Journal

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There are many factors that determine the format of the journal. One is profit. How do publishers derive their profit ability from their publications? Two is accreditation. Which states still only accept a hard copy count (volumes per student) for accreditation purposes? Third is space. Which libraries have the actual space to store hard copy journals?

Now, thoughts on the future of the printed journal. The electronic age, with the digitization of data, is a challenge to the printed journal. This is not the first time in the history of publishing that the printed journal has been challenged. Going back to the 40's and 50's, microfilm was used to create space by storing numerous large volumes on compact microfilm reels and fiche cards. This also continued into the 70's when other media, such as CD-ROMs, were used as an alternative to the printed copy. Unlike microfilm though, CD-ROMs offered retrievability initially starting as a substitute format for reference works and then finding its niche for actual journal copies and articles. In the early 90's, document delivery became a good alternative for the printed copy, especially when usage didn't warrant the purchase of the hard copy. Today's challenge is the digitization of journals and the capability of mass storage such as **JSTOR** and **Ideal** can provide. In addition, major publishers, such as **ISI** and **Elsevier**, offer site licensing that not only offer access to one university or library, but also to large consortia and collective purchasing groups.

I believe the paper copy will prevail at least for the next fifty years. Because publishers still derive a high percentage of their income from the printed journal subscription, and until a standard archiving method is decided not just within the United States, but globally, there will still be a need for the printed copy. As mentioned, many different formats have been derived since the 40's, however, each technology has sorted itself out and found a niche in the publishing industry. I have spoken previously about a model microfilm library formed in the Midwest based on full micro storage (no hard copy journals). Individuals that invested fully into this format had lost a fortune in time and money as they had to re-focus the collection on the hard copy journal since it was still in demand following the microfilm rage. CD-ROMs were thought to be the rage in the 80's, however, they are no longer utilized as a principle vehicle for storing information. Who is to say what the next technical advance will be in the publishing industry?

Various types of libraries have different goals for their patrons and users. For instance, many corporate and special libraries do not maintain large journal collections as was prevalent in the

past. They are now experiencing large cutbacks in corporate spending and downsizing of operations. Companies are utilizing remote reference stations in addition to local university resources to obtain the information required to do their research. This is a far cry from years ago when companies, such as **Schering Corporation**, **Ortho Pharmaceuticals**, and **Bell Laboratories** all maintained huge hard copy journal collections. Now these special libraries rely upon the Internet to provide their users updated information from resources linked through their Website. Their users often also have remote access to the **OPACs (Online Public Access Catalogs)** from these member institutions.

The university and college library market still prefers the hard copy journal, however, many do not collect back to the first volume of their hard copy collections due to space and usage restrictions. There is a trend to maintain a collection of at least three years prior to subscription, if not five, for frequently used journal titles that circulate heavily within the institution. This trend, I believe, will continue until a specific technology and access is found that will provide the ideal solutions for all types of libraries and users.

I also believe that the competition between universities, colleges and companies to be on the cutting edge of research, limits the ability of the library community to find the ideal alternative to the printed copy. Ever since **Gutenberg** invented the printing press in the 1500's there has not been an impact on publishing as great as the development of the Internet in the early 1980's. This national and international online connection through computer networks exploded onto the scene. Many different pieces of information are available through informative Websites in unlimited subject areas, all able to be linked through easy access.

There are many other factors, such as cost, circulation of material, copyright and storage of journal collections that drive demand for the printed journal.

Each situation is unique and must be addressed not only as separate entities, but also consortially with member libraries in small and large groups. Some consortial agreements allow for the bulk purchase of material electronically through site licenses. Others allow the sharing of collections, such as in the state of Florida, where only one institution has to own the hard copy journal for others to share the electronic format. Previously, the institution that subscribed to an electronic journal had to possess the hard copy of

that title for its purchase. Now the accreditation has been limited to one of the eleven state institutions in Florida. I am sure that other states, in order to ease the cost of education to individual institutions, might go to this accreditation model. Other alternatives are probably being considered by libraries across the country, each with its own goal for collection development. Federal legislation for these states might change some of these arrangements.

Currently, there are e-journals being published only in electronic format. These are very cost effective as they allow publishers to produce publications not only for large audiences, but also for limited focused groups. These journals are not only easily accessible, but are available with different pricing schemes, many times bundled with the hard copy journal. For a fee, there are also services that index these electronic journals for the convenience of the customer. Companies such as **TDNet** and **Ovid Technologies** provide this type of service to libraries.

Copyright is also an issue that is ever changing and is a gray area due to duplication and print-on-demand that exists between publishers and vendors. Also, different jurisdictions, such as the European community, as opposed to North American publishing, create different obstacles for uniform control of copyright and legislation. Perhaps the corporate model is best, where remote information kiosks are networked from the home office of the company to satellite locations around the country or the world where they can communicate electronically and print-on-demand any information stored in their database and shared by the network.

Even printing journal issues-on-demand, as offered by **Elsevier** and a few other publishers, will increase as demand dictates that a reproduced copy of an issue, or even a complete volume, would be the ideal alternative for the user. I am sure that we will be challenged again in the next few years with alternative technologies that will drive venture capitalists to produce newer technologies to handle the information explosion.

Looking at the role of the back volume vendor, we must embrace technology and listen to our client base and implement products that will serve their needs as the hard copy journal has since our inception 45 years ago. It is our responsibility as a full service vendor to offer product alternatives, such as document delivery, reprints, and print-on-demand, which are available to us and can be conveniently distributed to clients through our Website. The market is extremely dynamic and those vendors that didn't adapt to current and future trends over the years are collecting dust or just no longer participating in this exciting information age. 🌱



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