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ATG Special Report -- How to Beat the Serials Crisis

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ATG Special Report — How to Beat the Serials Crisis

by **Helle Lauridsen** (Head of Serials Services, State and University Library, Aarhus, Denmark) <hla@statsbiblioteket.dk>

There are a few rock solid facts in a serials librarian's life: journals increase with a considerable percentage every year; there are more journals out there than ever — due to the pressure to publish; and for most of us, our yearly budgets are decreasing more often than increasing.

The **State and University Library** was founded by law in 1897 as the second **Danish Legal Deposit Library, Centre for the Danish Public Libraries** and the **University Library for Aarhus University**. With so many diverse tasks on our plates, it is no surprise that our stacks — reaching 17 floors above the University and for miles of subterranean rabbit warrens below — are filled to bursting. New stacks are being built,

but also these have a very definite number of shelves, all reserved for the **Danish Legal Deposit** material.

The hard facts of budgeting and storage problems made it high time to take a very close look at the library's strategy as stated in our contract with the Danish Government, which is to strengthen our digital procurement of text, pictures, and sound on the Internet. Roughly translated: Go online if at all possible!

I took the word "online" a little bit further and decided to take a closer look at e-only. Not just by canceling present print journals, but — I am sad to say — discarding older non-Danish print journals. This took quite some consideration from the entire management, as we are fully aware of the archival problems in online publishing. But, as the pressure was on to save money, save space, and still provide even more information to our students and faculty, we decided that the Danish print collection was the library's primary preservation obligation — NOT the journals printed outside Denmark.

The decision was clear:

- First to cancel subscriptions to all unused print titles as well as all print journals having a reliable e-access.
- Later to go through our entire print collection and discard all journals with secure e-access and archiving.

This was a daunting task and would not have been possible just a few years earlier.

First I needed to weed out the print subscription of all e-journals with a license including perpetual access, which is all our "Big Deal" licenses, as well as a few more giving a total of 5,712 "secure" online titles. This list had to be checked against our total list of subscribed journals (3,872 titles); the total overlap was 1,165 titles representing a value of almost 900,000 USD. As all of these journals are part of Big Deal packages and the online editions still have to be paid, the actual savings after cancellation is about 10 percent.


This left just over 2,700 print titles, including titles where the electronic access is less secure and print has to be maintained.

I then started looking at the usage of these current subscriptions. Because our stacks are closed, all journal articles must be photocopied by a member of staff and handed to the user, and a new automated system keeps track of orders. Thus it is possible to extract comprehensive usage stats giving number of copies per journal title, current as well as cancelled. This "print copy" statistics list has altogether 3,496 titles from which

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words would be welcome, to say how vendors and librarians and publishers can work together better. Perhaps those words have been trashed earlier and can now be recycled into the present day effectiveness of our work. I will explore and get back to you with some different slants on our everyday tasks. If you have some ideas, don't delete — just post them to me and I will study them further. Thanks. 

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articles have been copied more than five times in the past three years.

After comparing the remaining print titles with the printed copy usage stats, we were left with just under 2,000 titles for which we had little or no use. The rest of the usage had been in older volumes of current electronic journals, in already cancelled journals, and in our **Danish Legal Deposit** journals.

I had now, one way or the other, shifted through almost 10,000 titles, and I am happy to say I did not need to do it by hand or by heavy involvement of my already overburdened IT department.

By using **Ulrich's Serials Analysis System (USAS)** — a new analytical tool created by **Bowker** to evaluate serials collections — I was able to load all the different lists into the system and in less time than it takes to write the procedure down, I had total comparisons between the lists and could subtract and add to my heart's content.

My final list of 2,000 "not used" print journals gave not just title, ISSN, and usage, but also provided subject headings, information on whether the journal was available electronically (E) (another feature in USAS), and approximate price (also from Ulrich's). I quickly sorted out the titles tagged with E — they had to be dealt with by hand to see if we already had them online (print with free online, part of an aggregated package, etc.), or if we had missed opening for online access where possible (with print).

The rest of the print journals had to be evaluated by our subject librarians.

I downloaded the reports for each subject and forwarded them to their respective subject specialists. It was a very difficult process for all; the actual workload was not insignificant and agreeing to cancel any subscription is a very painful process. No one wants to look at a list of serials they have specifically selected for their area of expertise and choose to let go of a number of them.

I did, however, have criteria that would let them keep a journal even though it had low usage. For example, some of the University departments have their own special libraries. On occasion they drop a subscription when they know that we have it in the main library. If this was recently done, that could mean the usage had been in the departmental copy and thus be a reason to keep the subscription. Another reason might be if it was a very obscure but high impact factor title that was not available by inter-library loan. The subject specialists had a six-week deadline for this project. There was a little back and forth, as you can imagine, but the job was done on time, and between August 2004 and December 2004 we identified about 500 journals that we could cancel. This, on top of the titles already made e-only, helped us to realize approximately 90,000 USD in savings. We also were now able to provide a much better service to our users and give our much burdened check-in staff a little less work.


When the actual cancellations of journals were done, we started looking at our older holdings, as the second part of my project was to take a little pressure off our stacks. We started out with the titles in **JSTOR**, as we deemed it the safest archive of them all. This time I matched the complete **JSTOR** package against our entire holdings — not just the current. As you can imagine, these lists were huge and it *did* take more than a few minutes to compute the overlap.

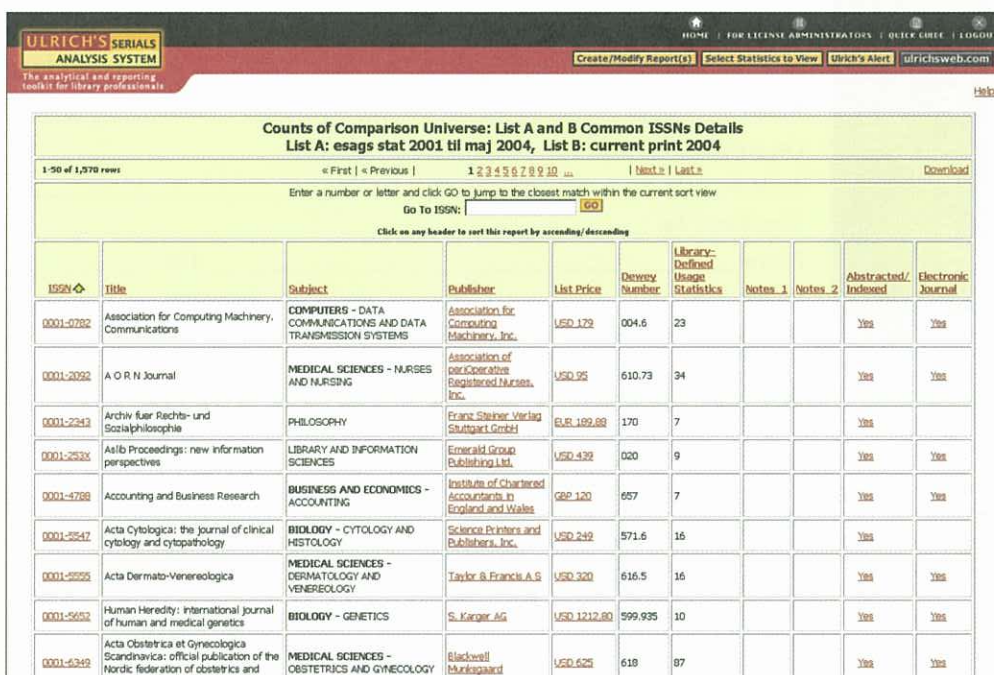
I think throwing perfectly good journals out is painful and extremely worrisome for all involved, so we contacted **JSTOR** to ask if they had hard copies of the titles we wanted to discard. We got a list back with quite a few titles that they did not have, which we subsequently packed and shipped to Ann Arbor, discarding the rest.

All these savings meant that we actually had a little air in our budget and therefore were able to buy more online journals, journal backfiles, and databases. It was important to me to investigate how the individual backfile packages com-

pared to our current holdings. Would we cover weak areas, lighten the load on our photocopy center? For this I had several tools: as a subscriber to **Serials Solutions** I used their **Overlap Analysis** tool for quick results as well as **Ulrich's** for more precise answers.

I could also have made an **Excel** macro to compare the different files and holdings, but since the large dataloads tie up my PC for long periods of time, I decided not to; also the added benefit of **Ulrich's** subject data eases the decision process.

Our current project is to examine our databases. Do we need new ones? What are they indexing? Many bibliographic databases have coverage resembling each other and it can be rather difficult to see what the actual difference is, but by loading the coverage for each database and comparing them, it is quite easy to see not only which journals they index and where they overlap, but also to see within which subjects the strengths and weaknesses are. 



The screenshot shows the Ulrich's Serials Analysis System (USAS) interface. At the top, there's a navigation bar with "HOME", "FOR LICENSE ADMINISTRATORS", "QUICK CHECK", and "LOGOUT". Below that, there are links for "Create/Modify Report(s)", "Select Statistics to View", "Ulrich's Alert", and "ulrichsweb.com". The main content area is titled "Counts of Comparison Universe: List A and B Common ISSNs Details" and "List A: esags stat 2001 til maj 2004, List B: current print 2004". It shows a table with columns for ISSN, Title, Subject, Publisher, List Price, Dewey Number, Library-Defined Usage Statistics, Notes 1, Notes 2, Abstracted/Indexed, and Electronic Journal. The table lists several journals, including "Association for Computing Machinery, Communications", "A O R N Journal", "Archiv fuer Rechts- und Sozialphilosophie", "Aslib Proceedings: new information perspectives", "Accounting and Business Research", "Acta Cytologica: the journal of clinical cytology and cytopathology", "Acta Dermato-Venerologica", "Human Heredity: international journal of human and medical genetics", and "Acta Obstetrica et Gynecologica Scandinavica: official publication of the Nordic federation of obstetrics and gynecology".

ISSN	Title	Subject	Publisher	List Price	Dewey Number	Library-Defined Usage Statistics	Notes 1	Notes 2	Abstracted/Indexed	Electronic Journal
0001-0702	Association for Computing Machinery, Communications	COMPUTERS - DATA COMMUNICATIONS AND DATA TRANSMISSION SYSTEMS	Association for Computing Machinery, Inc.	USD 179	004.6	23			Yes	Yes
0001-2092	A O R N Journal	MEDICAL SCIENCES - NURSES AND NURSING	Association of per Operative Registered Nurses, Inc.	USD 95	610.73	34			Yes	Yes
0001-2243	Archiv fuer Rechts- und Sozialphilosophie	PHILOSOPHY	Frank Steiner Verlag Stuttgart GmbH	EUR 199.88	170	7			Yes	
0001-253X	Aslib Proceedings: new information perspectives	LIBRARY AND INFORMATION SCIENCES	Emerald Group Publishing Ltd.	USD 439	020	9			Yes	Yes
0001-4768	Accounting and Business Research	BUSINESS AND ECONOMICS - ACCOUNTING	Institute of Chartered Accountants in England and Wales	GBP 120	657	7			Yes	Yes
0001-5547	Acta Cytologica: the journal of clinical cytology and cytopathology	BIOLOGY - CYTOLOGY AND HISTOLOGY	Science Printers and Publishers, Inc.	USD 249	571.6	16			Yes	
0001-5925	Acta Dermato-Venerologica	MEDICAL SCIENCES - DERMATOLOGY AND VENEREOLOGY	Taylor & Francis A S	USD 320	616.5	16			Yes	Yes
0001-5652	Human Heredity: international journal of human and medical genetics	BIOLOGY - GENETICS	S. Karger AG	USD 1212.80	599.935	10			Yes	Yes
0001-6349	Acta Obstetrica et Gynecologica Scandinavica: official publication of the Nordic federation of obstetrics and	MEDICAL SCIENCES - OBSTETRICS AND GYNECOLOGY	Blackwell Munksgaard	USD 625	618	87			Yes	Yes

ATG Special Report — A Pennsylvania Library Collaborative Celebrates its Past and Plans for its Future

A Forty-Year Commitment to People, Service and Collection Development

by **Doug Cook**, **Steve McKinzie**, and the **ACLCP 40th Anniversary Planning Committee**¹ <dlcook@ship.edu> <mckinzie@dickinson.edu>

Organizations come and go it seems, more quickly than we can bookmark them on our Web browsers. However, one library organization, the **Associated College Libraries of Central Pennsylvania (ACLCP)**, has withstood the test of

time. **ACLCP** is celebrating its **40th Anniversary**. It is an organization with both a rich history and the promise of a robust future — a consortia with a shared vision of service, people and collection development.

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