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Electronic Books and the Approval Plan: Can They Work Together?

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Introduction

Most academic libraries have acquired a variety of electronic books from a hodge-podge of vendors. In this regard, the **University of Denver** is fairly typical. Our first eBook purchases, in cooperation with the **Colorado Alliance of Research Libraries**, were of **netLibrary** books. Since then, we've purchased reference eBooks as part of the **Gale Virtual Reference Library**, various handbooks from **CRC**, and a range of eBooks from smaller vendors and publishers. We've also subscribed to packages of technical manuals from **books 24x7** and a large set of eBooks in all subjects from **ebrary**. This does not include the various retrospective packages we've purchased such as **Early English Books Online**, **Early American Imprints**, or the **Eighteenth Century Collection Online**.

At the same time we have continued to purchase print monographs as we always have, with our primary means of acquisition an approval plan with **Blackwell Book Services**. Lately we have also been piloting a consortium-wide shared purchase plan in a few subjects with **Blackwell Book Services** and **YBP Library Services**.[1] Our experience thus far, also typical, has been to purchase most new books at or near their publication date, in a fairly systematic fashion, while our eBooks acquisition has been somewhat haphazard. In some cases we duplicate our print monographs, in others we do not. In some cases we purchase a book in print that might be better to own electronically, in others we do the opposite.

The ideal situation would be to blend acquisition of eBooks and print books into one process, allowing better control over which sorts of books arrive in either format, and allowing for less duplication or for a substantial discount in price for libraries opting to purchase a print and electronic bundle: eBooks should be brought under the control of the approval plan. This is an issue that is particularly pertinent for the **Colorado Alliance** as we explore our shared purchase plan. This project, designed to decrease duplication of monographs across the consortium, would be well-served by the addition of eBooks to the mix. In the current system, a mix of approval plans and firm ordering, a particular book might be purchased by all of the **Alliance** members. Based largely on usage statistics, the pilot project puts a cap on the number of books that will be sent, so this book might be received by only three libraries. It would be wonderful to supplement the print copies, now going to fewer libraries in the state, with an eBook accessible by all.

With these concerns in mind, I interviewed representatives of three approval vendors (**Blackwell Book Services**, **Coutts Informa-**tion Services, and **YBP**), three eBook vendors (**ebrary**, **MyiLibrary**, and **netLibrary**) and two publishers (**Elsevier** and **Springer**) by email and telephone to determine the possibilities of integrating eBooks into the approval process. The results of these conversations are reported here.

Barriers

When eBooks were first introduced by **netLibrary** in 1998, much of the content consisted of publisher backlist titles.[2] Libraries had likely already purchased print versions of these books by the time they were made available electronically. It seems that there has been some progress made lately toward developing frontlist eBook collections. **Bob Murphy**, Senior Public Relations Specialist for **OCLC**, estimates that 85 percent of the 21,000 books being added annually to the **netLibrary** collections are frontlist.[3] **Michael Zeoli**, Director of Content Product Management at **ebrary**, notes that some major publishers, including **Oxford University Press**, **McGraw Hill**, **Springer**, and **Taylor & Francis**, are providing **ebrary** with most frontlist titles, holding back some titles because of rights issues or because of a desire to host them on their own platforms. Other publishers are less likely to provide frontlist titles. Overall, **ebrary** probably gets less than 50 percent of publishers' frontlist, but they recognize the need to push for more.[4] **Mark McQuillan**, Senior Manger of Sales & Content Development at **MyiLibrary**, echoing **Zeoli**, points out that **MyiLibrary** is actively seeking frontlist content.[5] Some publishers clearly recognize the need to make frontlist titles available to eBook vendors in a timely manner. **Elsevier**, for instance, makes all eBooks available to all of the major eBook vendors as they become available.[6] If libraries are to integrate eBook content into the approval process in a meaningful way, we need to be reasonably sure of what frontlist titles are being released electronically. Though we do not need publishers to make all titles available in eBook form, we do need to understand the patterns they are using to make these decisions in order to write eBook coverage into our approval plans.

A related problem with eBook content is that many publishers tend to embargo their electronic titles for a period of time after publication. If the print version of a book is published several months or more before the electronic version is released, it becomes very difficult to integrate eBooks into the approval process. As with paperbound books being released simultaneously with clothbound, "simultaneous" can mean a period of a month or so and still work within an approval plan. A delay of several months or more will not work. This has been reported as a problem by most of the approval vendors. However, **Murphy** points out that the majority of the publishers with which **netLibrary** works are now providing their electronic titles "concurrently or in advance of the release of print versions."[7]
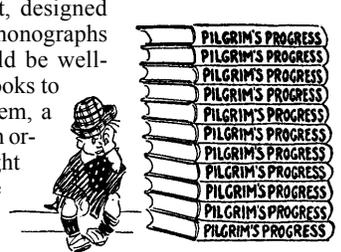
A third potential barrier to integrating eBooks into the approval process is the lack of a sustainable pricing model.[8] Though some eBook vendors offer discounts for consortial pricing, there are no formal discounts available

> *"In order for eBooks to be successfully and meaningfully integrated into the approval process, approval vendors need to have a significant amount of frontlist eBooks available to them at the time of publication."*

for print plus electronic purchases. Other than reference books (and books such as computer manuals which operate like reference books), as well as a few subjects (such as business, law, and medicine, in which researchers seem comfortable with the electronic format), there are few genres that libraries would want only in electronic format. However, most libraries could make use of a dual-format collection. eBooks and print books can complement each other quite well, with the eBook collection serving as a finding tool and extension of the reference collection, and the print volumes being used for immersive reading. Few, if any, libraries can afford to pay for the same book twice. A much more acceptable model would allow libraries to receive a substantial discount on one format or the other when purchasing both. eBook vendors have indicated that they have some flexibility in this regard, but without consistent rules about pricing for a print and electronic bundle (and something as simple as an ISBN for the bundle), it would be difficult to effectively implement a dual-format approval plan.[9]

A final barrier to full integration of eBooks into approval plans is the multiplicity of eBook vendors and the seeming reluctance of some publishers to make their content available to all. Though some publishers, including such major entities as **Springer**, **Taylor & Francis**, and **Wiley**, make much of their content avail-

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Michael Levine-Clark

BORN & LIVED: Born in New Haven, Connecticut. Grew up in Branford, Connecticut. I've also lived in Iowa City, Iowa, Champaign, Illinois, and Denver, Colorado.

FAMILY: Wife, Marjorie, and daughter, Isabel.

EDUCATION: B.A. in history, **Wesleyan University**; M.S. in LIS, **University of Illinois**; M.A. in history, **UNIVERSITY OF IOWA**.

FIRST JOB: Cashier at **Waldbaum's Food Mart** — before there were scanners. First good job: Clerk at **Atticus Books** in Middletown, Connecticut.

PROFESSIONAL CAREER AND ACTIVITIES: I've been a documents librarian, a reference librarian, and now a collection development librarian. I'm an active member of the Collection Development and Evaluation Section (CODES) of the Reference and User Services Association (RUSA). My research interests focus broadly on the acquisition and use of library materials.

IN MY SPARE TIME I LIKE TO: Spend time with my family, ski, run, and read.

FAVORITE BOOKS: The list is always changing.

HOW/WHERE DO I SEE THE INDUSTRY IN FIVE YEARS: I think that we will have figured out eBooks. Most books from most publishers will be available in both print and electronic formats. Pricing will be structured to allow libraries to get both formats or one or the other as needed. But the print book will be around for a long time. We're still many years away from people wanting to read eBooks for pleasure.

able to multiple eBook vendors, at least one major publisher has provided separate content to **EBL**, **ebrary**, and **netLibrary**.[10] Obviously, this requires a library to work with multiple vendors to get complete coverage of subjects. Further complicating this is the fact that some publishers have decided to push their own eBook platforms. **Thomson Gale**, for instance, makes their reference titles available only on the **Gale Virtual Reference Library (GVRL)** platform. **Springer**, though cognizant of the need to make books available as individual titles through the eBook aggregators, also believes strongly that their **SpringerLink** platform is a valuable tool that allows multiple books to function as a database.[11] Just as it is impractical to work with multiple approval vendors to get coverage of books from different publishers, it would be impractical to work with multiple eBook vendors unless they could all be integrated into the same approval plan.

Solutions

All three of the major approval vendors have begun to work with eBook vendors to some extent. **Coutts** seems to have the strongest integration at this point by virtue of their partnership with **MyiLibrary** under common ownership. **MyiLibrary** provides access to 60,000 titles from over 200 publishers, all of which are fully integrated into the **OASIS** ordering system.[12] **OASIS** allows customers to develop approval plans for print and electronic books and to examine the eBook content prior to purchase of either format. Within **OASIS**, eBooks are simply another format type, allowing them to be easily integrated into the approval process. In September, **Stanford University** announced that it was working with **Coutts** and **MyiLibrary** to develop an approval plan covering both formats.[13] Many other libraries have begun working with **Coutts** to receive slip notification rather than automatic delivery of eBooks. This is partly because of the concern about duplicating print holdings and partly because there is often still a delay in publication of the electronic version of a book.[14] **MyiLibrary** is only a few years old and continues to grow at a fast rate. Currently they are adding over 1,000 titles a week, "most of it new and much of it unique to **MyiLibrary**."[15] However, given the facts that many titles are still unavailable through **MyiLibrary** and that **Coutts** works only with this one vendor, **Coutts** may not be the best solution for full integration across all publishers and subjects at this time.

Blackwell works with **ebrary** and **EBook Library (EBL)** as well as selling some books directly from the publishers.[16] At this point, though eBooks are not part of the approval process, **Blackwell** has integrated many perpetual-access titles into **Collection Manager**, their acquisitions system, through their new **ECHO** platform.[17] **ECHO** uses **ebrary**'s technology but provides access to books from sources additional to **ebrary**. Some of the eBooks available through **Blackwell** are not available on **ECHO**, primarily because the publish-

ers wish to maintain their own platforms.[18] Though **ECHO** is a useful tool for eBook acquisition, it is not yet incorporated into the approval process for print books. **Blackwell** is well into the development of a new **Selection Services** system that will allow full integration of eBooks into the approval process. At this point, perhaps as early as the summer of 2007, eBooks will simply be another format that can be selected as a non-subject parameter.[19]

YBP has integrated eBooks from **netLibrary** into the approval process and has plans to do the same with **ebrary** and **EBL**, as well as publisher-specific titles over the course of 2007. The **netLibrary** titles are non-returnable, so libraries have generally chosen to receive slip notification of these eBooks rather than automatic receipt. **Ann-Marie Breaux**, Vice President for Academic Service Integration at **YBP**, notes that many libraries have adjusted their approval plans to eliminate print coverage for series available electronically.[20] For example, libraries with an online subscription to *Lecture Notes in Computer Science* have blocked coverage of this title in approval plans or have canceled standing orders for the print version.

Conclusions

It is clear that the approval vendors are making significant headway toward integration of eBooks into the approval process. All three

of the major vendors have already incorporated some eBooks into the process or will do so by the end of the year. And the major eBook vendors have indicated that they recognize the need to supply frontlist coverage and work with at least one of the approval vendors.

It is not so clear that all publishers recognize the need to supply their books electronically in a way that makes them fit easily into the library acquisition process. **Matt Naumann**, Director of Publisher Relations for **Blackwell**, points out that "We have heard over and over that publishers will maybe provide out-of-print titles to an eBook aggregator to see how it will do."[21] It appears that many publishers have been concerned that eBook sales would erode print sales so have been reluctant to make new eBooks available. However, some publishers are beginning to see that it makes sense to make frontlist content available. **Oxford**, for instance, will make all 2007 titles available to **ebrary** as they are released. In some cases, this may be before the print version is available.[22] If this is any indication of future trends, publishers may have figured out the need to supply this current content electronically.

In order for eBooks to be successfully and meaningfully integrated into the approval process, approval vendors need to have a significant amount of frontlist eBooks available to them at the time of publication. It does not

matter whether this is through one or multiple eBook vendors, as long as the eBook vendor can work with the approval process. Publishers need to realize that libraries do not want to add additional steps to the book purchasing workflow. Integration of frontlist eBook titles into the approval process makes the most sense for libraries since it will allow decisions to be made in a rational way about preferences for print, electronic, or both for various call number ranges and non-subject parameters. Publishers must realize that libraries will only purchase their non-reference eBooks in significant amounts if there is a reasonable discount for print-online bundles. They need to develop consistent and fair pricing models for these packages, allowing libraries or consortia to duplicate print and electronic versions of some titles. This pricing structure has evolved successfully with electronic journals to a point that seems to make sense for most libraries and most publishers. There is no reason that it can not do the same for monographs.

bad boy **Tom**!) Anyway, he is well and has some new catalogs on his desk that need our attention. Coming up in the next issue? *libr.stedwards.edu*

Seems like April has been the month for visitors to Charleston. Just had a delightful visit with **Michael Moss** <M.Moss@hatii. arts.gla.ac.uk> from Scotland. **Michael** is an archivist and former colleague of my husband, **Bruce**, from **Oxford University**, **Worcester College**. **Michael** recently attended a meeting

Endnotes

1. **Michael Levine-Clark**, "Building a Consortial Monographic Purchase Plan: The Colorado Alliance of Research Libraries Experience," **Hugh A. Thompson**, ed. *Sailing into the Future: Charting Our Destiny: Proceedings of the Thirteenth National Conference of the Association of College and Research Libraries*, March 29-April 1, 2007, Baltimore, Maryland. Chicago: Association of College and Research Libraries, 2007: 39-45.

2. For information on the history of **netLibrary**, see **George S. Machovec**, "**netLibrary** Revisited," *The Charleston Advisor* 4, no. 4 (April 2003), available from *http://www.charlestonco.com/review. cfm?id=147&CFID=1594434&CFTOKEN=95241428*, accessed February 5, 2007; For comments on the lack of currency of the early **netLibrary** titles, see **Machovec**, "netLibrary," *The Charleston Advisor* 2, no. 1 (May 2000), available from *http://0-charlestonco.com.bianca.penlib.du.edu/review. cfm?id=14*, accessed February 5, 2007.

3. **Bob Murphy**, Senior Public Relations Specialist, **OCLC**, email to author, February 12, 2007.

4. **Michael Zeoli**, Director of Content Product Management, **ebrary**, email to author, February 5, 2007.

5. **Mark McQuillan**, Senior Manager, Sales & Content Development, **MyiLibrary**, email to author, January 12, 2007.

6. **Tom Rosenthal**, Senior Manager, Electronic Product Sales, **Elsevier Science & Technology Books**, email to author December 18, 2006.

7. **Murphy**.

8. For information on eBook pricing, see **Cris Ferguson**, "Technology Left Behind – eBook Rollout," *Against the Grain* 18, no. 5 (Nov. 2006): insert.

9. The idea of a bundled print-electronic ISBN was suggested during a telephone conversation with **Jay. G. Henry**, Director, Business Development, **Blackwell Book Services**, and **Matt Naumann**, Director of Publisher Relations, **Blackwell Book Services**, January 16, 2007.

10. **Matt Naumann**, "Ebooks in the Academic Library Supply Chain," paper given at the 27th International Supply Chain Specialists Meeting, **2005 Frankfurt Book Fair**.

11. **Kim Zwollo**, Global Director, Special Licensing & Rights, **Springer**, telephone conversation with author, January 3, 2007.

12. **MyiLibrary** *http://www.couttsinfo.com/econtent/myilibrary.htm* (accessed February 5, 2007); See also **Ferguson**.

13. "Stanford University to Integrate Ebook Acquisition with Print Approval Plans in Partnership with MyiLibrary," *http://www.myilibrary.com/company/pdfs/MiL%20Stanford.pdf* (accessed February 5, 2007).

14. Email from **McQuillan**, January 12, 2007.

15. Ibid.

16. **Blackwell Book Services: eCommons** *http://www.blackwell.com/library_services/ecommons/* (accessed February 5, 2007).

17. **Blackwell ECHO: The Library eBook Hosting Platform** *http://www.blackwell.com/downloads/ECHO_FSNB.pdf* (accessed February 5, 2007).

18. Email from **Henry** February 5, 2007.

19. Telephone conversation with **Henry** and **Naumann**, January 16, 2007.

20. Email from **Ann-Marie Breaux**, Vice President, Academic Service Integration, **YBP Library Services**, January 31, 2007.

21. **Naumann**.

22. Email from **Zeoli**.

The Conundrum of eBooks and Interlibrary Loan

by **William Gee** (Interlibrary Loan Librarian, East Carolina University) <GEEC@ecu.edu>

With the tremendous amount of material available on the open Internet and in research databases some of my friends, family, and even some librarians I have met seem surprised that interlibrary loan is still used as heavily as it is, especially to borrow books. While physical loans continue to represent over half of **Joyner Library**'s nearly 30,000 annual interlibrary loan requests, eBooks are emerging as a major library material type,[1] with predictions that the eBook will be the leading format for nearly all new academic monographs by 2020.[2] Little seems to have been written specifically on the relationship between eBooks and interlibrary loan, though.[3] So, what exactly is this relationship? What could this relationship be in the future?

Benefits

On the positive side, eBooks certainly can reduce the demand for interlibrary loan services and quickly and cheaply satisfy patron needs. Distance education patrons, in particular, can have instant access to eBooks that in their print form would require nearly a week to arrive. Since many times academic patrons only need to read a section of a book, finding eBooks in institutional repositories, on Websites, and in **Google**'s or **Microsoft**'s book projects can save the delay and expense of traditional interlibrary loan for all patrons. **Joyner Library**'s interlibrary loan (ILL) borrowing service workflow takes this into consideration by checking for the availability of eBooks when we think the full text of a requested book would be online, usually for older works that fall outside copyright; if titles are found, we ask the patron if the eBook will suffice. Electronic dissertations and theses are especially useful to ILL departments because print copies of these documents are frequently difficult to borrow or copy.