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One by One or Bundle by Bundle: Evaluating the Landscape of eBooks

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Dramatic changes have taken place in the landscape of collection development over the past 15-20 years. With the increase in electronic resources, it is no longer as easy to make selections for the collection that fit the needs of a research library. It was never easy, but now there are even more choices for selectors to consider when making decisions about purchasing materials for research collections. Selectors must debate the merits of electronic editions vs. print editions as well as subscription based packages vs. purchased packages. We must, however, address the complications as well as the opportunities for adding electronic resources to our collections. This is particularly important with eBooks. In this article I will discuss the pros and cons associated with adding eBooks one by one or bundle by bundle based on my experience as a Collection Development Librarian at two institutions. Each library had slightly different needs and addressed the question in different ways. The heart of the issue remains the same, however. Particularly with electronic resources, there is an increased need for evaluation procedures and policies and for marketing the items we purchase. Coordination and cooperation across divisions also becomes more important in an electronic world. There must be a greater level of understanding on everyone's part to coordinate the efforts of selection, acquisition and access for digital resources.

eBooks are nothing new. Free eBooks entered the Internet world with **Project Gutenberg** back in the 1990s. At your finger tips, you could scan, read, search an entire text created by an army of volunteers. Much has changed since the early days of **Project Gutenberg**, however. In the early 1990s "developments in IT began to allow convenient and cost-effective production, storage and dissemination of electronic texts."[1] These advances allowed publishers and a whole host of other eBook developers to enter the market and compete for our collection development dollars. In the past year almost every major publisher and vendor and several smaller publishers and vendors have announced or increased their offerings of electronic books. Some vendors, like **Springer**, continue to provide access to their electronic books only in bundles. If a library wants to purchase title by title, they have to do so through a third party like **NetLibrary**. There are minimum numbers affiliated with some packages. **Wiley** requires a 20 title minimum purchase to start your subscriptions or purchases. Publishers like **ABC-Clio** have added individual titles which can be added to collections. Some vendors and publishers distinguish between online and eBook, a fine line that is generally one of semantics and not always entirely clear.

How we purchase eBooks influences our budgets as well as our acquisitions and cataloging workflows, creating new challenges across the organization. The impact on the budget cannot be ignored. Simultaneous users, which most of us desire, generally cost at least 1.5 times the list price for each eBook. Increasing the number of eBooks, therefore, decreases the potential for buying other materials.

There are a number of considerations when deciding whether to buy eBooks one by one, as we have usually bought print volumes, or to buy eBooks in a bundle. **Anthony Ferguson** states that "we have maintained the myth that selectors have the time and means to discern the needs of hundreds, if not thousands or individual students and faculty. We have claimed that we can defend every title purchased as meeting the needs of these users."[2] In both the electronic and print environment, we must rely on recommendations and on collections assembled by subject. Selecting in the online environment appears more difficult because we do not have the traditional selection tools, like catalogs, to choose resources. We must rely on lists from Websites or Excel spreadsheets to evaluate the titles in packages or select individual titles. Selectors need to learn how to work smarter in an increasingly digital environment and to rely on the tools provided as well as recommend ways to improve the tools for efficiency.

The truth is that we can't predict if anyone will check out a book that we bought. We can hope and think that they may. We should consider the differences in research behavior. Though we hear the anecdotes about not wanting to read a 300 page book online, we should consider whether researchers need or want to read print books in their entirety. The truth is that most do not. They are searching for chapters, facts, or salient information for their research. That generally does not require reading entire texts, but rather searching through texts and journals, making eBooks an attractive option. We have more information about how people are searching and using electronic texts than we do for print texts. We can tell what researchers are accessing, when and where they are coming from to do so, and if they are downloading full text or just searching. As with everything else, some publishers and vendors provide better information than others. This step, of course, comes after the fact of purchase or lease. But it is a consideration that we can factor into purchase decisions and we can consider past use to see where we might want to add to the collection. We can also

use the options from some of the vendors to buy eBooks after patrons access the title. The advantage of bundles is that we can generally buy a subject collection of many books quickly and add depth to a collection where there were gaps. During 2006, **Grand Valley State University** added several centuries' worth of material that we could not have added any other way. As a young institution we did not own the rare books, or even many of the 19th century texts, that larger research institutions have in their stacks, on microfilm and special collections. By adding *Early English Books Online (EEBO)*; *Early American Imprints, Series I, Evans, (1639-1800)*; *Early American Imprints, Series II, Shaw-Shoemaker, (1801-1819)*; and *American History and Culture Online, Sabin Americana, (1500-1926)*, we added thousands of full text titles and several centuries of texts to our collections. The money was well spent for the resources for our students and faculty. This was a positive purchase decision for

> *"In the past year almost every major publisher and vendor and several smaller publishers and vendors have announced or increased their offerings of electronic books."*

bundles of books, albeit historical texts rather than current texts which we predicted will be used in many courses across the curriculum. The decision to purchase these texts came from faculty recommendations, needs of the collection, and an evaluation process which I will describe a bit later.

At **Florida State University** we have been evaluating bundles and individual titles of current eBooks. **FSU** is part of a state wide consortium that frequently negotiates prices for the whole state system. We also have a deeper collection of print materials since the university is much older than **GVSU**. While **FSU** has purchased most of the packages mentioned above, our needs are greater for current materials and the decisions are more complex. In a recent consortial deal, we were offered 3000 electronic books for an average of $55.00 each. This is certainly comparable to purchasing the same number of texts one by one in printed form allowing analysis of the collection to be based on titles in the package and available funding. We brokered local partnerships on our own campus to create packages of eBooks which would be more manageable and affordable. By combining our needs for certain subject areas, we have been able to purchase packages on a smaller scale to meet needs of many user groups. These

packages have, in fact, combined the process for buying bundles and titles one by one. In both instances a minimum number of titles had to be purchased before titles could be added one by one.

Recently we have started adding more titles one by one. The criterion for eBooks continues to be developed and we have been adding titles from several publishers where we have not had access before. Access, space and cost have been among the main considerations for adding eBooks to reference, in nursing and in the sciences. Like many institutions, we are adding reference titles in electronic format for easier access and because we are running out of space in our current building. For example we added 95 reference titles, which provided new titles as well as updated titles. In addition we added over 20 specialized eBooks for our health related programs where students are primarily accessing books online or on PDA's. We have been careful about disciplines for which we have selected eBooks and remained conscious of the publisher's formats for eBooks and the disciplinary habits for research. Most of our decisions have been made based on faculty requests or curricular needs. I expect this to be an evolving process as publisher's tweak formats to respond to the market and as more disciplines become comfortable with accessing and using eBooks. At a recent conference, representatives from eBook companies spoke about the missteps in early models for eBooks as well as their awareness that these models can change and are changing. Librarians need to continue to tell the publishers and vendors what we need and how our faculty and students are using the resources, which will require observation and analysis.

At **Grand Valley** we made a conscious decision in 2004 to begin going e-only for journals if the option was available. The decision was also made not to purchase books in print form if we already had a copy available electronically through **NetLibrary** or **ebrary**. Some exceptions were made for specific faculty requests for print editions. The questions we had to ask that related to the format included access issues. Could students who were off campus easily access electronic materials? Would the materials we selected be of use to students and faculty who were teaching away and on campus? What was the trade off for purchasing the electronic edition vs. purchasing the print edition? The large distance education program influenced many of our decisions, as did the fact that **GVSU** draws many of its students from the local area that access materials from home. Serving students and faculty where they are and when they need information added support for the e-only options.

The basic questions remain the same for print or electronic format. Does this fit the curricular needs of our students and faculty? Beyond that question, we needed to consider how the resource would be used and how it would be accessed. There were debates about needing to add MARC records to the ILS

against the grain
people profile

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BORN & LIVED: Born in Traverse City, Michigan. I lived several places in Michigan including Bay City, Mt. Pleasant, East Lansing and Ann Arbor. I've also lived in Stillwater, Ok, Virginia Beach, VA, Jonesborough, TN and Tallahassee, FL.

EARLY LIFE: I was the youngest of five and spent most of my young life reminding my parents that I wasn't one of the grandchildren, who were the same age.

FAMILY: Four older sisters, a number of nieces and nephews who also have a lot of children. And my cat, Pete.

EDUCATION: Ph.D. in English from **Michigan State University**, MILS from **The University of Michigan**, MA in Storytelling from **East Tennessee State University**. B.S. in Ed. from **Central Michigan University**.

FIRST JOB: Typing building permits for the city.

PROFESSIONAL CAREER AND ACTIVITIES: I've worked in Special Collections, Cataloging, Serials and Collection Development. I am currently Head of Collection Development at **Florida State University**. I spent ten years at **Grand Valley State University**. I am on **ACRL's Literature in English Section Executive Committee**.

IN MY SPARE TIME I LIKE TO: Go to movies, read, walk and talk to my friends.

FAVORITE BOOKS: Jane Yolen's *Favorite Folktales from Around the World* and **Shirley Brice Heath**'s *Ways with Words*.

PHILOSOPHY: The worst it can be is awful (which I was told the day before I began teaching 9th grade for a very good reason).

MOST MEANINGFUL CAREER ACHIEVEMENT: Recently, leading a team at the first **ARL/ACRL Institute on Scholarly Communication**.

HOW/WHERE DO I SEE THE INDUSTRY IN FIVE YEARS: We will continue to add electronic resources and digital content. Librarians will be figuring out better ways to deliver the increased amount of electronic content to users. Collaboration and innovation will be necessary to move away from the way we have always done things to the way we need to do things to serve our communities. 🌲

or if the searchable database was sufficient. Evaluating the MARC records and the ability to easily obtain, update and download these records factored into decisions about adding them to the catalog. These questions have become far more important in the electronic world than they are in the print world. While we certainly think about whether or not a book will be checked out of the library or a reference resource will be used, we do not seem to ask all the questions of print that we ask of electronic resources. There are some good reasons for this, but I wonder if we agonize a bit too much over use. How many of us track every instance a reference book is used once it is cataloged and on the shelf? While reference statistics are kept, I doubt the level of concern is there in many places as they are in the e-world. Cost is one obvious reason for this concern. Often an electronic edition costs far more than a print edition. I am seeing that shift, however, and when we consider the access issues associated with a print book on the shelf (one user at a time in the building) vs. the availability of a resource 24/7 to our community via Internet access, then the thinking has to shift.

Coordination is essential in eBook purchases. While this has always been true, the virtual book does not show up on a book truck to be cataloged, labeled and shelved. This requires collection development librarians understanding more about the technical services side of the library than they may have had to in an entirely print world. Are MARC records available and how will they be loaded in the ILS? These conversations need to take place to coordinate workflow. Who in the organization reads and interprets the licenses and pays for the eBooks? Where else will the eBook be available? The resources that we use to make e-journals available in A-Z lists do not yet provide the capability to provide access to eBooks. This would be a step in the right direction. Are we going to create lists or are they available easily through the publisher's Website? This varies and is not consistent. How many clicks are students going to tolerate to access the content? And will they tolerate a proprietary reader? Should they have to?

At **Grand Valley State University**[3] we developed checklists for evaluating e-resources

which allowed librarians to claim ownership of the electronic resources they discovered and wanted added to the collection. Checklists were divided into three sections, an initiation section, one for technology and collection development, and one for the point person. While primarily meant for databases, these checklists were also used for full text resources and can be adapted to eBooks. The most useful application would be for packages or bundles, rather than an individual book. In that case the publisher or vendor should be evaluated for the criteria to see if adding books one by one over a period of time would be worthwhile.

The evaluation begins with the librarian, at the grassroots. These are the people working with students and faculty and who discover a need and often a new product, either through their own professional reading or through a faculty recommendation. The initiation phase evaluated current holdings and collections to evaluate the need for additional resources. At this phase a small group was also formed to evaluate a trial and evaluate the curricular needs for the resource. If it was decided that the resource was a good fit, then the next phase began. At this stage, the Collection Development Librarian and the Electronic Resources team examined funding and all the technical issues involved in obtaining the resource. If a positive outcome occurred, a recommendation was made for funding or the resource may be placed on a tiered list for consideration. The final phase took place after purchase and was titled the point person phase. This involved selecting a librarian to serve as point person to market the resource to faculty and students and to teach other librarians and staff about the resource. If the resource is subscription based, a review takes place prior to renewal time.

The final phase of implementation for eBooks is marketing. As **Robert H. McDonald** and **Chuck Thomas** have pointed out, "Research libraries have done little to embed themselves and their resources into the everyday tools, spaces, and activities important to today's learners."[4] Promoting eBooks requires more than a link on a Website and a record in the catalog. While these two components are vital for discovery and use, they are not the only way that our users will know about a resource or discover how to use it. Creating links in online teaching sites, posting information to wikis or blogs, sending out messages to faculty in subject areas when new resources are available are all easy and obvious ways to promote new resources. Tracking the usage and finding ways to observe students and faculty using the resources can also provide insight into how and why certain electronic books may be more useful than others.

Collection development policies and procedures for electronic books encompass more issues than buying print resources and the level of complexity will grow in the coming years. As electronic books and resources continue to evolve, I think the issues will continue to evolve and become more focused. We need to continue to develop seamless interfaces to make resources useful and discoverable by our communities. This will require the efforts of many people across the organization and profession working together. Paying close attention to how our resources are being discovered will lead us to creating better access points, whether those are through portals for all resources, Websites that are focused on subject areas or through the catalog. The important thing is to keep the discussion open with one another, with vendors and publishers, and with our end user communities so we can serve the needs of those who ultimately use our resources. ❦

Endnotes
1. "7 things you should know about… E-Books." *Educause Learning Initiative*. November 2006. *www.educause.edu/eli*
2. **Ferguson, Anthony W.** "Digital Library Selection: Maximum Access, Not Buying the Best Titles: Libraries Should Become Full-Text Amazon.com's." *Journal of Library Administration* 31.2 (2000): 27-38.
3. **Jeffrey Daniels',** Electronic Resource Manager, assistance was invaluable in creating the checklists and implementing the process.
4. **McDonald, Robert H.** and **Chuck Thomas**. "Disconnects Between Library Culture and Millennial Generational Values." *Educause Quarterly* 4 (November 2006): 4-6.

Evaluating Engineering Reference eBooks

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A funny thing happened on the "Road to Damascus." I set out to write an article detailing the **University of Arizona**'s experience with **ENGnetBASE**, an electronic database of engineering handbooks. However, by the end of the process, it had become clear that the real story is the importance of getting quality user feedback and using it to make sound renewal and cancellation decisions. Ultimately, based on information we gleaned from our users we chose to cancel **ENGnetBASE**.

Library users want access to electronic content anytime and anywhere. In our assessment of **ENGnetBASE** we learned that cultivating better-informed patrons results in more realistic expectations around the selection and request for electronic resources. Our journey of enlightenment clearly demonstrates that librarians must continuously engage users in a scholarly communication dialogue. When library users understand the implications of the various cost and pricing models, they, too, see the light.

About a year after I arrived at the **University of Arizona**, I discovered that the majority of users from the departments for which I am the library liaison had little understanding of the actual costs of the resources they use. I began the practice of opening my library instruction sessions with a challenge: "Guess how much the library's combined opera-

tions and information resources budget is." Hesitantly, participants called out numbers while I repeated "higher, higher" until someone yelled out an astronomical amount. I would then reveal the true figure. No one (including the instructors) ever came close to the actual figure of \$18M. This sixty-second activity would then evolve into a meaningful scholarly communication conversation and ultimately, led to the inclusion of several specific information literacy learning objectives in several chemical engineering course syllabi.

The **Accreditation Board for Engineering and Technology** programs has a criterion that states, "Engineering programs must demonstrate that their graduates recognize the need for, and have an ability to engage in lifelong learning." The **College of Engineering's Accreditation Committee** at the **University of Arizona** has adopted the position that information literacy forms the basis for lifelong learning. The Chemical & Environmental Engineering (ChEE) Department has integrated information literacy skill-building into its curriculum as one pedagogical approach to teaching the acquisition of lifelong learning skills. Assignments in core courses ChEE 201 & 326, and elective courses ChEE 455 & 555, require students to develop information literacy skills as part of the course objectives. One objective specifically calls for the ability to effectively evaluate information resources. Therefore, students in the courses cited above were targeted to evaluate the functionality and general usefulness of **ENGnetBASE**.

The **Engineering Libraries Division (ELD)** of the **American Society for Engineering Education** established a **Best Practices for Electronic Resources Task Force** to compile a list of issues to consider when evaluating electronic products. Their top issues are: Ac-