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Trusting Digital Preservation for Print Collection Management, Or How Librarians Should Learn to Stop Worrying and Love the "E"

by **Wm. Joseph Thomas** (Head of Collection Development, Joyner Library, East Carolina University)

About seven years ago, the Head of Serials at **East Carolina University's (ECU) Joyner Library** came to me to make a decision about the level of preservation attention to give to volumes of the *North American Review*. I had recently begun serving as liaison librarian for the English Department and was concerned about what we should do. On the one hand, the nation's longest-running literary review deserves a place in every library's collection. But, on the other hand, **ECU** owned online backfiles of the title in **JSTOR**, **Periodicals Archive Online (PAO)**, and **American Periodical Series**. At that time, my decision was that we should retain the volumes in the library's print collection but provide only minimal treatment, including boxing. I wanted to avoid over-expending resources on physical items that were accessible online and widely held by other libraries, but I could not bring myself to withdraw the bound volumes.

ECU no longer owns those volumes of *North American Review* in print. We finally learned to stop worrying and love the "e" — that is, we withdrew our print volumes because we started acting like we trust our electronic purchases. Our library, like many others across the country, is confronting two situations requiring us to step out of the dusty stacks that make up our comfort zone: we face increased pressure on campus for use of library space, and we have been making significant investments in online archives of journals.

Space concerns are, of course, related to changing perceptions of libraries as service points rather than warehouses. Thankfully, we do continue to hear from professors who need the library to provide "fine and private places" dedicated to slow reading — and I believe this portion of our user community provides balance to our conceptions of libraries these days.[1] But we also hear from others who express different needs for library space. The space squeeze has affected **ECU** just as it has other institutions: over the last five years, for example, the library has reallocated space for exhibits, offices, and student study areas. The most recent changes required us to "displace" at least 90,000 print volumes, which constitute about 10 percent of our general stacks holdings, to create office space and group study rooms for a new campus partner. Because of the location selected for construction, we had to shift our entire general collection to open up the space needed. Although we were able to retain most volumes in the general stacks (with reduced growth space per shelf), we did have to withdraw many volumes while sending others to a closed shelving storage area.

The sheer amount of space and number of volumes we had to deal with in a nine-month period forced us to focus our attention on serials. Fortunately, **ECU** has been able to acquire a wide variety of archival journal packages, including not only aggregator packages like **JSTOR** and **PAO** but also publisher packages from **Elsevier**, **Springer**, **Wiley-Blackwell**, **Taylor & Francis**, and others. Our investments in these packages have helped us meet our patrons' preference for online access. Beyond that, they provided an opportunity to help solve our space problem as long as we were willing to make difficult decisions based in large part on how much we trusted the continued access to electronic content. Other factors also came into play to help us step out on faith — membership in **Portico**, for instance, and our first steps toward participating in a shared print repository.

So, is this article only about weeding print? No. Maybe it's easier to start with what this article is not. It is neither a philosophical statement on library responsibilities for ensuring continued access to scholarship, nor is it a treatise on how e-resource preservation will permit us to jettison our print wholesale. Instead, this article is a call for librarians to demonstrate their confidence in e-journal preservation by taking action. I advocate removing print duplicates for which the library has purchased online archival access, participating in shared print repositories, and, when possible, supporting electronic preservation activities like **Portico** and **LOCKSS**. Ultimately, this article is also a call for librarians to develop formal plans directing their collection management strategies to address the pressures to give-up stacks space and the ever-increasing user preference for electronic materials.

As the Ithaka S+R Faculty Survey 2009 shows, faculty members rely less every year on the library catalog and the physical library building. Concurrently, faculty members are becoming more comfortable every year with the idea of libraries substituting electronic for print journal content: more than 70 percent of faculty would be satisfied with electronic-only current issues, and 50 percent — half of all faculty across disciplines — responded "at least somewhat positively" to the idea of replacing print copies entirely with electronic journal backfiles.[2] This replacement is contingent on the qualifier that the electronic collections of journals are "proven to work well and are readily accessible."

In a separate survey, Ithaka researchers found that library directors don't consistently translate the evolving preferences of faculty members into well-developed strategies to manage their physical collections. Only 13 percent of directors said that their libraries would need to maintain print archives; and, remarkably, fully one third of the respondents were unsure of their libraries' needs within the next five years to maintain print journal collections![3] Fifty-four percent of responding directors agreed that their libraries need not retain print archives, but 82 percent of their libraries have already begun either withdrawing print serial volumes or sending them to offsite storage. Despite these bold actions, only 35 percent of directors reported having a formal plan for their deaccession decision-making, and only 47 percent felt they had all the information needed to guide these decisions. What this disjuncture means is that libraries have a pressing need to codify their strategies for managing print serials collections in the relatively near future.

Of the libraries that have withdrawn journal volumes or moved them to storage, many more have done so because of access via **JSTOR** than any other provider. Libraries have withdrawn print titles available in **JSTOR** because of an established level of trust in this not-for-profit, academically-oriented enterprise. In fact, libraries can view the "What to Withdraw?" guidelines and use the "Print Collections Decision Support Tool" to consider which **JSTOR** titles to deaccession.[4] **Long** and **Schonfeld** report that 67 percent of the libraries surveyed have removed **JSTOR** journals from their shelves (withdrawn, moved to storage, or both), while being much more cautious about withdrawing titles based on publisher-level access. Only 22 percent of libraries report removing **Elsevier** titles, and even lower numbers act on other publishers: **Sage** (19 percent), **Oxford University Press** (16 percent), **Wiley** (16 percent), and **Cambridge University Press** (11 percent).[5]

While publisher packages offer the advantage of seamless integration between archival and current content, they also present additional concerns. How does the quality of the digital product compare to the print? Can we (librarians and our departmental faculty) trust publishers to continue making their offerings available? One of the most frustrating concerns is that publishers occasionally transfer titles — including the rights to the backfiles — to other publishers. What's the library to do if it loses access to purchased archival content due to its transfer from one publisher to another? At **ECU**, we have experienced this situation already, and it does give us pause when considering whether to withdraw print titles from publisher packages.

We have proceeded, though, to consider bound journals for withdrawal or storage based

continued on page 26

Trusting Digital Preservation ...
from page 24

on a number of publisher packages. We begin by checking the license for ownership and access provisions, and, if the license proves acceptable, we look up print holdings and check samples. What are we checking? First we verify that all volumes and issues we hold are available online. Next, we pull sample volumes from every title to review tables of contents, checking that all their articles are online before we start a side-by-side comparison of sample articles. We try to choose articles with images, tables, graphs, fold-outs, or other unusual features, to see how well they're rendered in the online archive. For most of our publishers and for most of their titles, this process has proven that the publisher package is adequate to replace our print. There have been a few titles that are incomplete online or that have scanning problems requiring us to keep the print. For these, we enter a note in our tracking documents and, if we have room, move the volumes from the general stacks to storage.

All in all, **Joyner Library** has found online archival publisher packages suitable for replacing print volumes. We have made the decision that the online format is a true substitution and we should treat it as such by removing print volumes whenever feasible. To help reassure ourselves and our faculty that this strategy remains compatible with our duty to preserve the scholarly record, **ECU** has agreed to participate in the Collaborative Journal Retention Program Agreement proposed by the **Association of Southeastern Research Libraries (ASERL)**.[6] We are currently identifying titles we can contribute to this distributed print repository and following what titles other universities are contributing.

Print repositories are not a new phenomenon. They were described at the **Janus Conference** as one means to "ensure the coordinated, long-term maintenance" of the scholarly record by having libraries contribute print materials to shared facilities in order to reduce the cumulative shelving required and collective burdens of preservation.[7] In the last few years, though, more libraries are working together as they recognize that "the interrelated problems of collection management and preservation are moving steadily to the community level from the local level."[8] The Orbis Cascade Alliance first proposed a distributed print repository (DPR) in 2005 and recently uploaded its "Final DPR Title List."[9] Recently, the **Pennsylvania Academic Library Consortium, Inc. (PALCI)** described its shared print repository project, which focuses on 52 titles published by the **American Chemical Society**, **American Institute of Physics**, and **American Physical Society**.[10] Another of the better known repository agreements is the **Western Regional Storage Trust (WEST)**, which **Emily Stambaugh** describes as a network-level solution to help "preserve the scholarly record, provide access, when needed, and manage reallocation of space."[11] These projects demonstrate libraries' commitment to working together to preserve the scholarly record with a paper backup.

In the short term, print repositories do provide libraries with the option of deaccessioning many volumes from their little-used titles in exchange for committing to preserve other titles. Another level of reassurance that we can offer ourselves lies in directly addressing the issue of preserving electronic materials. *E-Journal Archiving Metes and Bounds*, a report published by the **Council on Library and Information Resources (CLIR)**, traces a dozen e-journal archiving initiatives and tracks their organizational issues, stakeholders and designated communities, content, access and triggers, technology, and resources.[12] While **Portico**, **CLOCKSS**, and **LOCKSS** are among the most widely known in the United States, there are other programs in which libraries can participate. Some libraries have been reluctant to join an electronic preservation initiative, but I would encourage all to do so. As the **CLIR** report persistently points out, libraries cannot afford to digitize and curate electronic copies on their own, especially given the attention they need to devote to local digital collections and materials deposited to their institutional repositories.

The library collections management planning I have discussed so far focuses on bound journals to the exclusion of books. There are a couple of reasons why this is the case. For one, scholarly monographs aren't as far along the electronic adoption continuum as journals. Also, the time we spend making retention/preservation decisions yields more space for journals than books. The **OCLC** report *Cloud-sourcing Research Collections*, though, suggests that eventually libraries will be able to embark on these same steps with monographs that I suggest for journals.[13] Already some regional groups are discussing shared storage of books, and publishers are beginning to deposit their eBooks to **Portico** and other online archival services.

What should librarians do next? For starters, they should lay out the elements of a print collection management plan, including the following three components. First, (continue to) buy online archival packages — including publisher packages — and weed from them. Second, join a regional shared print depository; and, third, join one or more other preservation initiatives if at all possible.

At **ECU**, we no longer hold the print copies of older volumes of *North American Review*, the journal I discussed at the start of this article. We have withdrawn these volumes after thoughtful efforts to evaluate the license for the archival online product replacing our print, to evaluate the online content and its display against the bound volumes, and to verify that a nearby university retains its print volumes. We are managing our print collection like we trust electronic preservation, and are learning to stop worrying.

endnotes on page 28

against the grain people profile

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BORN AND LIVED: North Carolina, with a brief stint above the Mason-Dixon line.

EARLY LIFE: BA in Education at **UNC-Chapel Hill**, MA in English at **UNC Greensboro**, and MSLS at **UNC-Chapel Hill**.

PROFESSIONAL CAREER AND ACTIVITIES: I started out as a reference and instruction librarian, then moved into collection development. After about a year as an electronic resources librarian, I became head of collection development here at **Joyner Library**.

FAMILY: Wife and two sons.

IN MY SPARE TIME: A two-month-old leaves no spare time!

FAVORITE BOOKS: Generally, I like thought-provoking books, including *Ceremony* by **Leslie Marmon Silko**, *Jude the Obscure* by **Thomas Hardy**, and *Mere Christianity* by **C.S. Lewis**.

PET PEEVES: When overthinking leads to inaction.

PHILOSOPHY: Yes, you really can build this airplane while you fly it.

HOW/WHERE DO I SEE THE INDUSTRY IN FIVE YEARS: Pre-selection of materials for patron-driven acquisitions will continue to be more important, and more difficult. The disparities between meeting professors' and students' research needs will continue to grow, straining library budgets and librarians' time even more.

Trusting Digital Preservation ...
from page 26

Endnotes

1. See the article elsewhere in this issue from my colleague **Tom Herron**, titled "Fine and Private Places: An English Professor's Perspective on Evolving Library Collections."

2. **Roger C. Schonfeld** and **Ross Housewright**, "Faculty Survey 2009: Key Strategic Insights for Libraries, Publishers, and Societies," Ithaka S+R. Retrieved online on May 26, 2011: *http://www.ithaka.org/ithaka-s-r/research/faculty-surveys-2000-2009/faculty-survey-2009*.

3. **Matthew P. Long** and **Roger C. Schonfeld**, "Ithaka S+R Library Survey 2010: Insights from U.S. Library Directors," Ithaka S+R. Retrieved online on May 26, 2011: *http://www.ithaka.org/ithaka-s-r/research/ithaka-s-r-library-survey-2010*.

4. See **Roger C. Schonfeld** and **Ross Housewright**, "What to Withdraw? Print Collections Management in the Wake of Digitization," Ithaka S+R. Retrieved online on May 27, 2011: *http://www.ithaka.org/ithaka-s-r/research/what-to-withdraw*, and also see "Print Collections Decision-Support Tool," Ithaka S+R. Retrieved online on May 27, 2011: *http://www.ithaka.org/ithaka-s-r/research/what-to-withdraw/print-collections-decision-support-tool*.

5. **Long** and **Schonfeld**, "Ithaka S+R Library Survey 2010," 32.

6. **Association of Southeastern Research Libraries**, **ASERL** Collaborative Journal Retention Program Agreement, **ASERL**, January 2011. Retrieved online on May 31, 2011:*http://www.aserl.org/documents/%21ASERL_Journal_Retention_Agreement_DRAFT_Jan_2011.pdf*.

7. See 5. Archiving in "The Six Key Challenges of Collection Development," Janus Conference, Cornell University Library. Retrieved online on May 15, 2011:*http://janusconference.library.cornell.edu/?p=49*. A revision to this Challenge, posted by **Karen Schmidt**, ("Revision for Area 5 Archiving" Janus Conference, Cornell University Library, available at *http://janusconference.library.cornell.edu/?p=62*) encourages research libraries to develop a national model for print archiving while supporting regional programs already underway.

8. **Roger C. Schonfeld**, "What to Withdraw? Print Collection Management in the Wake of Digitization," *The Serials Librarian* 60, nos. 1-4 (2011): 143.

9. For the Memorandum of Understanding, title lists, and other documents, see Orbis Cascade Alliance, "CDMC Current Work" Orbis Cascade Alliance. Retrieved online on June 6, 2011: *http://www.orbis-cascade.org/index/cdmc-current-work*.

10. **Sharon Wiles-Young** and **John Barnett**, "No Substantial Penalty for Withdrawal: Investing in a Different Collaborative Model for the Shared Print Archive." Paper presented at the North American Serials Interest Group 26th Annual Conference, St. Louis, MO, June 2-5, 2011.

11. **Emily Stambaugh**, "Heading West: Circling the Wagons to Ensure Preservation and Access," ***Against the Grain*** v.22#5 (November 2010): 18.

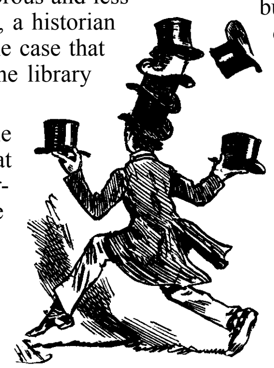
12. **Anne R. Kenney**, **Richard Entlich**, **Peter B. Hirtle**, **Nancy Y. McGovern**, and **Ellie L. Buckley**, E-Journal Archiving Metes and Bounds: A Survey of the Landscape, CLIR Report 38, Council on Library and Information Resources (September 2006). Retrieved online on May 27, 2011: *http://www.clir.org/pubs/abstract/pub138abst.html*.

13. **Constance Malpas**, "Cloud-sourcing Research Collections," OCLC Research (January 2011). Retrieved online on May 27, 2011: *http://www.oclc.org/research/publications/library/2011/2011-01.pdf*.

Mortgaging Our Future on Ownership, or, the Pleasures of Renting

by **Steven R. Harris** (Director of Collections and Acquisitions Services, University of New Mexico)

I was browsing the shelves of **Google Books** recently and came across *Libraries in the Medieval and Renaissance Periods*, a lecture given by **John Willis Clark** at **Cambridge University** in 1894. The first sentence of that work states that "[a] library may be considered from two very different points of view: as a workshop, or as a Museum." This seems very relevant to our current considerations of what libraries do. **Clark's** succeeding paragraph continues, appropriately, "…mechanical ingenuity…should be employed in making the acquisition of knowledge less cumbrous and less tedious; that as we travel by steam, so we should also read by steam, and be helped in our studies by the varied resources of modern invention."[1] Aside from pleasing the steampunks among the ***ATG*** readership, this introduction strikes us with the similarities between 19th- and 21st-century concerns. We might as easily replace the interest in steam power of that age with our own preoccupations with digital information — and make similar assessments of the library's goals and aims: to make learning "less cumbrous and less tedious." Of course, **Clark**, a historian himself, goes on to make the case that we not forget or abandon the library as museum.



I would like to make the opposite encouragement: that we have spent too much energy, too many resources on the library as museum, especially in large academic libraries. It is time for us to focus on the library as workshop. It is time that we give priority to the immediate information needs within our communities rather than to some predicted or speculative needs of the future.

It often seems that the fulcrum around which this question of "workshop" versus "museum" turns is the preservation of objects, or more to my point, the ownership of objects. The objects in question here are containers of information. Throughout the early history of libraries, physical containers were the only means of transmitting and preserving information: books, newspapers, DVDs, journal issues, and volumes. We have now moved well beyond that point, technologically, but librarians are still obsessed with ownership of containers. **Meredith Farkas**, for example, expresses concern in the March/April 2011 issue of *American Libraries* about the long-term health of her collections: "I feel the weight of that — especially when I'm making decisions about eBooks."[2]

Assuredly, ownership of containers makes a whole suite of traditional library practices possible, most especially lending to individuals in the user community and to other libraries. But as we develop more and more digital collections, one has to question whether the function of ownership has outlived its usefulness. Containers are no longer the immutable and tangible things they once were. When we retrieve an eBook or e-journal article, we are no longer physically transmitting one of a limited number of manifestations of that work. A copy is produced (as it were) instantaneously and transmitted electronically. The owner or vendor of that content does not suddenly have a diminished supply onhand. Digital information is the very definition of "on-demand publishing." What is the point of ownership in such a world?

Ownership has been a safe harbor in the physical world; we feel secure in maintaining the materials sitting on our shelves (perhaps a misplaced sense of security), but no such certainty exists in the digital world. Even materials for which we hold perpetual access rights feel contingent and provisional. Those feelings might suggest that we do still need ownership of materials, but I think we need to adopt a completely new set of principles in the mostly digital library world. These are, I'll admit, principles that neither libraries nor publishers are quite ready to embrace. We don't even know, in fact, what those principles should be. Librarians and publishers have taken to eying one another with great suspicion regarding digital materials. Each, at turns, would like to cling to an ownership model that was defined in an era of physical objects, or abandon that model, as it is convenient.

The **HarperCollins/OverDrive** eBook dust-up is a recent case in point. Both libraries and publishers have eagerly accepted the notion of owning an eBook. **HarperCollins**, however, got it in their brains that, if a library owned an eBook, then there would be less revenue generated because libraries would never be replacing worn-out copies, as eBooks don't wear out in the usual sense. Thus, **HarperCollins** decided that any of their titles on the **OverDrive** platform would only be good for 26 uses before the

continued on page 30