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Blurring Lines: Demand-Driven Access to Journal Articles

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From Publisher Token Systems to Aggregation Plays: eBook and Journal Article Access is Converging

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If you read my November column in *Against the Grain* you know that I believe demand-driven acquisition and metered-usage models will grow in both degree and importance for university library collection development strategy and in terms of providing a fertile pathway for new business models. In “The Blurring Line” I am especially interested in emerging business models and the people and companies behind these efforts to innovate. In this column I will explore demand-driven models in the delivery of journal articles. It has always struck me that the book publishing world can learn much from the journal publishing world in terms of open access and the journal publishing world can learn much from the book publishing world in terms of demand-driven access. Of course much book and journal publishing goes on under the same roof, but frequently the respective publishers struggle with incorporating the advances from the world of their counterparts.

In journal publishing all too often the discussion around new business models is confined to explorations of open access versus the traditional publishing model. Open access is a critically important topic, especially for scholars seeking the broadest dissemination of their ideas and the broadest access to research. But open access will inevitably be constrained by its funding models and/or business models,

whether they be state/university-driven or publishing company-driven. I suspect I will be writing a future column on new publisher business models to fund open-access in journal publishing, but that is for another day.

The same pressures that are pushing open access forward are behind the growth of demand-driven models. Declining state and university budgets coupled with better data analytics and data sources combine to simultaneously force and empower librarians to look harder at the big deal and broad-based subscriptions. I believe that the big deal will slowly but inevitably unwind as a primary business model for acquiring journals and most second- and third-tier journals will face increasing pressure to experiment with demand-driven models. Of course, top-tier and very high-usage journals will be somewhat insulated from these pressures, but the drive to maximize revenue generation will compel the savviest publishers to strike the right balance between a variety of business models to meet the most possible customer segments. And librarians and scholars will use a mix of content acquisition methods to get the needed research in scholars’ hands as fast as possible, so we are sure to see a healthy mix of open access, subscriptions, ILL, rentals, and peer-to-peer sharing.

In the remainder of this column I want to stay true to the mission of The Blurring Line and look at some

examples of where demand-driven is heading in the journal world with a specific focus on aggregation players in the space.

The forerunner to demand-driven models in journal article access was the token system introduced by publishers such as **Wiley**, **Nature Publishing Group**, and **Future Science**. This is a very straightforward model dating back to the late 1990s. The publisher offers a package of tokens for a fixed fee, and the library and its patrons draw down on a fixed account of tokens as they access individual articles and at their leisure with no period or term of usage. Depending on the degree of control the library is seeking over token usage, regimes can be put in place. For example, **Wiley’s** token system offers a “Super User” through whom requests must pass before a token is dispensed and an article is accessed. The token system looks and functions like PDA, but was the construct of individual publishers seeking a controlled and tightly monitored system to dispense single articles for unsubscribed journals. The token system, however, suffers from a lack of scale in that it is confined to single publishers. The recent introduction of aggregation schemes for demand-driven access to journal articles offers new and interesting opportunities. Here I will focus on three stand-out examples: Deep Dyve, Get it Now, and ReadCube.

DeepDyve is a professionally-oriented service that has aggregated nearly 10 million articles across thousands of peer-reviewed journals sourced from 100+ scholarly publishers. DeepDyve is focused on selling memberships to individuals and organizations in the professional/corporate space. This is not a PDA model, but rather a rental model predicated on access for a term of use/access to an individual article. The DeepDyve story is compelling as it represented the first aggregation scheme oriented toward delivering affordable, real-time access to journal articles with an emphasis on marketing to professionals and researchers outside of the university. And DeepDyve’s membership model opened up new spaces for thinking about how content could be monetized, not only in terms of distribution channels, but also in terms of revenue generation models.

The **Copyright Clearance Center’s** (CCC) service, Get It Now, provides a similar service to that of DeepDyve, but aimed at the scholarly researcher in the university library. If the library selects an unmediated service, access to articles is provided via an open URL search and the library is billed on a monthly or bi-monthly basis and articles can be shared across users if the library has an annual copyright license from CCC. A medi-

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graduate students, have low attention spans as a result of heavy Internet usage. This is just an impression. I haven’t done any side-by-side comparison between textbooks of different eras. Otherwise, with regard to physical quality of the scientific reference and scholarly books I reviewed in the **PROSE Awards** judging, I saw no evidence that corners were being cut. I had the impression that color was being used more freely than in the past. Some trim sizes struck me as extravagant. Expense wasn’t spared on paper and cover stocks. (Heavy glossy paper stock is needed to support color, of course.) Many books were as heavy a lift physically as they were intellectually.

This situation strikes me as remarkable, not only in light of the replacement of print by electronic, but also in the face of declining unit sales for the kinds of books I’m talking about

here. So what’s going on? Well, it must be cheaper to print and bind these books that it used to be, no matter how much color is used, or the weights of paper and covers. Short print runs can’t be as much of a problem as they once were. Because the major STM publishers are global, I suppose that they can easily get print books produced wherever it’s cheapest to do so without sacrificing quality in any respect.

These points were reinforced for me during the **PROSE** judging when I looked at a table laden with massive piles of multi-volume reference works. And here’s where my thinking took a turn. I love physical books, but these piles looked wasteful. So here’s one question I had, among others: are there still overseas markets for these behemoths, even though searchable electronic versions are far more useful? Answers to such questions are beyond my pay grade these days. But I do wonder whether such questions are keeping any publishers up these cold winter nights. 🐼

ated service is also available where purchase requests are first approved by a librarian. Get It Now, in its unmediated form, functions as a demand-driven purchase model but does not necessitate an upfront commitment of dollars toward a purchase pool as with most DDA programs. The greater flexibility in the Get It Now methods of payment, coupled with the broad aggregation of publisher journal content represents a significant advancement over the single-publisher token system.

The most recent entry into the demand-driven space for journal articles is ReadCube Access. ReadCube has taken the model as far as the most progressive eBook publishers in terms of access and payment models. The demand-driven component of ReadCube Access launched last year with journals from **Nature Publishing Group** and is looking set to grow (they also have an individual purchasing system that accepts credit card payment that is available for **NPG** and **Wiley** articles). ReadCube Access offers a variety of payment models ranging from rentals to outright purchases and supports a demand-driven model based on single institution or consortia-based purchasing pools that are pre-set and metered, as with eBook demand-driven models. And ReadCube offers a PDF download option with no digital rights management or associated restrictions on usage.

As the models and companies described here attest to, we are moving in the direction of more strategic and creative thinking about how libraries obtain non-OA content. As **Phil Jones** of ReadCube notes, "For high-use, low cost-per-download titles, subscription and even the Big Deal will continue to be highly cost effective for quite some time into the future. For low-use, niche or higher cost-per-download content, however, patron-driven acquisition will often provide the best value."

Thoughtful and creative publishers, librarians, and researchers will lead the way in demonstrating how usage models can be converted into business models. We will see more convergence in how book publishers and journal publishers implement open access and demand-driven models. And aggregators of content, like ReadCube and CCC, will provide the impetus to implement these new models across wide swaths of content. Ultimately, the measure of value in eBooks and journal articles as either high volume usage or deep but limited usage, as revealed through better data analytics, will inform new business models. There is little room left to hide and mediocre content will come under pressure and may, counter-intuitively, also be a fount of innovation in business models as mediocre content will be the first content to be unsubscribed. Either way, the library and the researcher will win through faster access and better return on dollars spent. 🌱

Random Ramblings — Mourning the Passing of the Print Edition of College & Research Libraries

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Isometimes learn about changes that concern me in unexpected ways. In a recent article on "Arguments Over Open Access" by **Carl Straumsheim** from *Inside Higher Ed* (January 6, 2014), **Mary Ellen K. Davis**, Executive Director of the **Association of College and Research Libraries**, reported that *College & Research Libraries* will no longer appear in print. "The ACRL made its scholarly journal, *College & Research Libraries (C&RL)*, open access in 2011, and the publication will this month go online only after members 'begged' the organization to end its print edition," **Davis** said." I certainly am not one of the "beggars" and will give two personal reasons plus an organizational worry to explain why I'm mourning the disappearance of the print edition. I will add that I've been a member of **ACRL** for over forty years.

My first reason springs from the advantages that print still maintains for me as a reading format. Please don't accuse me of being anti-digital. I teach online, answer email online, and do most of my research online. I stopped printing out documents years ago because I put them in folders and never read them. Then why do I feel differently about *C&RL*? To begin, I consider it to be a treat to read this publication in the evening in my easy chair, most often with a glass of wine, after I'm completely sick of looking at digital screens. I have wireless access for my easy chair; but I don't want to look at yet another digital device whether it be a netbook, tablet, or smart phone. (I don't have any special love for the feel or smell of paper.) In addition, I want to look at the whole issue as expeditiously as possible. I scan print for content much more easily than I can scan digital even if digital includes abstracts, summaries, and tables of content all hyperlinked to the correct spot in the journal issue. I started my career as a subject cataloguer and have retained the skill of flipping through non-fiction works and being able to summarize the content in less than ten minutes. I dare anyone to do this with a substantive e-document. When the latest issue of *C&RL* arrives, I scan the articles quickly, often reading the abstract, first paragraph, and conclusion to see if I'm interested in reading the complete article later. I also pay particular attention to the book reviews for reasons that I'll explain later.

Finally, as I've written elsewhere, I believe that the basic unit of scholarly

communication is becoming the article rather than the journal. I still, however, consider *C&RL* to be a coherent entity because of its focus on an area of great interest to me. I would not say the same about *American Libraries*, which, while appealing to a much more diverse audience with a great variety of library news, includes some content of less interest to each individual member of its audience. I would also contrast reading *C&RL* with much of my digital reading where each short item is self-contained and usually not related to other parts of any digital document in which it is contained. I consider these documents comparable to newspaper articles and quite different from substantive documents. For longer texts, including books, I still prefer print. My other option is to read lengthy digital documents at my peak energy levels, usually in the morning fortified with several cups of coffee, when I have greater patience for sustained digital text.

The second reason I'm mourning the print edition of *C&RL* is the serendipity factor. Most of my professional reading and research focuses on precise topics where I use resources like *Library Literature Online*. I'm searching for a known item, most often discovered elsewhere, or for a specific subject. While complete issues of many library science periodicals are available, I seldom if ever take the time to look at an entire issue. I often feel guilty about no longer scanning important journals such as the *Journal of Academic Librarianship* but not guilty enough to make doing so part of my regular routine. With the physical copy of *C&RL*, I sometimes find myself reading articles that I would have otherwise paid no attention to but find interesting enough from the abstract to read in their entirety. I pay particular attention to the book reviews — first, because they are relatively short, and, second, because they keep me up-to-date on scholarship in library and information science. I'd also suggest that scanning *C&RL* is the journal equivalent of browsing the stacks for related physical books of potential interest — another loss from the increasing focus on e-resources.

The third reason for mourning the physical edition of *C&RL* is that I believe that dropping the print edition of *C&RL* may pose some organizational risks for **ACRL**. I can certainly understand the decision to do so from a fiscal perspective. Providing a print copy and mailing it to 11,944 members (2013) must be a substantial cost for the division. On the other hand, the print version is one of the few tangible benefits of paying \$58 annual dues as a full member. I have long thought that the policies of the **American Library Association** offer

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