2016

What's Next for Academic Publishing?

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Recommended Citation

Jarvis, Alan (2018) "What's Next for Academic Publishing?," *Against the Grain*: Vol. 28: Iss. 2, Article 11.
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.7771/2380-176X.7310>

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Alternatives to DDA ... from page 21

I calculated a hypothetical cost-per-use for four different scenarios. My conclusions were:

1. DDA (control — actual data): 170,000 books; \$10.58/use (COUNTER BR1) or \$28.27/STL
2. Buy More Print: 4,434 additional books; \$52.71/use
3. Package Purchase: 4,052 books; \$97.31/use
4. Evidence-Based Acquisition (EBA): Close to print

Buy More Print

To determine an approximate cost-per-use for our existing print collection, I focused on the books purchased in fiscal year 2011. These books have had almost five full years to reach a user. The average use is 1.15 times per book, and the five-year cost-per-use came to \$39.40.

To project forward the cost-per-use of buying more print, I assume that the extra books bought would have lower use because we buy the most-needed books already (e.g., we already purchase almost every book directly requested by a user). We also might assume that the additional books would have a higher per-unit cost because selectors would choose more expensive books if they had more money to spend. In fiscal year 2015, the average print book purchased by my library cost \$47.49. I predicted that the average cost of buying additional print books would be \$52.71 and the five-year use would drop down to 1.00 per title. (This is perhaps a trifle optimistic.) These projections, if correct, would yield a cost-per-use of \$52.71 for about 4,434 print books.

eBook Packages

To continue the thought experiment, I took actual price quotes for eBook packages received from two major players in the academic market and compared them to local use of DDA books offered by the same providers. The two price quotes I received had radically different per-book costs. I determined that for one smaller (and cheaper) provider, we could buy the whole package for a given year. We would then have money left over to cherry-pick some relevant subject packages offered by the larger publisher. However, based on our DDA statistics, I would expect at most that only about 30% of the titles would get used within five years. I concluded that we could buy 4,202 titles using this method, but our cost-per-use after five years would be a whopping \$97.31 across the two collections.

Evidence-Based Acquisition

The basic premise underlying EBA has been outlined in these pages before.¹ Once the ex-

have a lower cost-per-use compared to print, as long as the library's choice of publisher partners fits well with user demand. I did not calculate a projected cost-per-use for EBA, since there are so many unknown variables. Given our small user base, I have serious concerns about whether enough books from a single publisher would get used to make the EBA model a good choice. Should we ever enter negotiations to purchase an EBA plan, I hope the publishers would grant the smaller schools a lower required purchase amount to account for these concerns.

I also considered the penetration rate of various publishers (what percentage of their titles was used) vs. the absolute number of titles used. If we choose to buy a publisher package, I would target a publisher with the highest possible penetration, since we would pay for every title regardless of use. With an EBA model, however, we can accept a lower penetration as long as the total number of titles used was higher.

Table 1

Publisher	Titles in WFU DDA pool	Usage	Use rate/Penetration
Major commercial publisher	36,952	3,729	10%
Large academic publisher	1,836	619	34%

perimental access period ends, the library buys the chosen books at list price. If the eBook price mirrors print pricing, the total number of books acquired would be substantially similar to the number acquired in print. However, books acquired under the EBA model should

Imagine that I wanted to commit \$20,000 to either a single EBA plan or a package purchase. Table 1 is extrapolated from actual DDA statistics at my institution. If I wanted to pursue an EBA plan, I should consider work-

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What's Next for Academic Publishing?

by **Alan Jarvis** (Publishing Director, Taylor & Francis Books) <alan.jarvis@tandf.co.uk>

I recently spoke to an old friend and colleague now working at a rival publisher who said that their organization had undergone more change in the last two years than it had in the previous two hundred. A sentiment that may be difficult to verify but is indicative of a rate of change most in the industry are finding challenging.

This is manifested at both a macro and a micro level. Whilst publishers puzzle over "big picture" issues such as the impact and trajectory of things like Open Access, MOOCs, the for-profit educators, and the never-ending shift in library budgets away from books towards STM journals, on a micro level they also have to rethink their approach to deciding whether individual book projects are worth pursuing.

At the **Charleston Library Conference** I was asked how a commercial publisher can evaluate whether a monograph will be financially viable under current highly uncertain market conditions. Historically this would just be a case of comparing costs (fairly predictable) with anticipated revenues, determined by sales which, with the aid of approval plans, would also be fairly predictable.

The basics of this equation — revenues minus costs — remain the same, but the details have become much

more complex. Sales revenue might now be generated from the printed hardback book, a subsequent print on demand paperback, the eBook and from eBook rentals. It is not clear how any of these components is going to behave, or even what the split between the different parts is going to be. Perhaps the only predictable thing is that total revenue from sales in all formats is likely to be lower than what it used to be from a single hardback version. Costs associated with electronic sales ought to be lower, since you are no longer paying for printing, paper and binding or for storing and distributing physical copies. But this saving is offset by investment in platforms for selling eBooks, and can be negated entirely if the publisher has anticipated, and printed for, more hard copy sales. Many other costs have been largely unaffected by the digital revolution (for example, human inputs like copy editing or the costs of peer review). The underlying feeling, therefore, at macro and at micro level, is of sailing in uncharted waters.

What does a scholarly publisher do in the face of rapid change, with conflicting priorities, and where budgets in core library markets are flat or declining? What is next for academic publishing is some combination of developments along existing trajectories, changes which are significant in

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ing with the major commercial publisher. Their title list is so large that I would almost certainly have \$20,000 worth of worthwhile purchases with use by the end of the access period. On the other hand, if I want to pursue the package model, I would be better off pursuing a deal with the academic publisher that has seen deeper use.

Once, near the end of the fiscal year, I sent our selectors a list of DDA books that had seen use, but had not yet been triggered for purchase. I did not mandate that the selectors take any particular action, but many of them who had money left in their monograph funds chose to firm-order the eBook. Others chose to firm-order the print. Can EBA work like this? As long as many patrons still express a strong preference for print, we could use temporary e-access to indicate which specific titles are needed and then purchase print. We could even make a dual-format purchase in cases of highest demand.

So in summary, even with the recent price increases, DDA remains by far the most cost-efficient model for an institution like ours. If the DDA model ceased to exist (or if further price increases undid this cost efficiency), then my institution should probably consider re-directing our DDA fund toward a combination of print and EBA instead of pursuing package purchases. Institutions with a different budget profile and especially with a larger user base would probably reach very different conclusions. I can use the information I gathered to determine at what cost-per-use threshold I should consider dropping my DDA plan in favor of an alternative. Likewise, I can now identify my second choice in case the DDA option ceases to exist. 🌧

Endnotes

1. **Levine-Clark, Michael.** "Evidence-Based Selection at the University of Denver," *Against the Grain* 27, no. 5 (November 2015): 18-20.

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themselves but leave much untouched, and changes that might amount to a paradigm shift.

Developments Along Existing Trajectories

Publish more — Come what may, growth in published scholarly output is likely to continue. The number of universities, libraries, scholars, and students continues to increase, especially in emerging markets, and administrative and institutional exercises like the UK's Research Excellence Framework also create more pressure on scholars to publish. For **Routledge**, publishing more books is the consequence of

decisions taken some time ago, when we chose to add to our strength in established areas by pursuing new and emerging areas. As a result we have editors in areas like gender studies, environment and sustainability, and tourism, alongside editors in traditional subjects like philosophy and economics. Growth in output is also a reflection of the globalization of academic research in English. This means that publishing more does not mean lowering the quality threshold, since we are not just taking more fish from the same geographic pond. In our case growth in title output is also driven by the acquisition of other publishers and imprints.

Consolidation — Faced with declining revenues and the need to invest in digital infrastructure to compete, many small and medium-sized publishers are choosing to sell up. At the same time larger publishers

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also active in areas other than scholarly books (e.g., journals or textbooks) are downsizing or selling their books aimed at more specialist upper-level courses. Concerns that this might lead to the sort of oligopoly that supposedly exists in STM publishing are probably premature. There is far less concentration in HSS scholarly book publishing, with a multitude of small publishers and no single player owning more than 20% of the market. And even in the most unpromising circumstances there are still new start-ups and entrants to the market. Authors and customers will likely go on being able to choose and distinguish between HSS publishers for the foreseeable future.

The Long Tail — Not only will publishers publish more books, but print on demand technology and eBooks guarantee that few, if any, of these titles will now go out of print. At the same time many publishers are actively re-issuing titles that were previously out of print (at **Routledge** this takes the form of the **Routledge Revivals** and **Routledge Library Editions** programs). This activity is enabled by digital technology, and it persists because there is a small but demonstrable demand for these books.

Pricing — Not a subject publishers always choose to broach but the financial realities of the market for specialist academic content mean that it cannot be ignored. Our prices are relatively high for an HSS books publisher, but the gap between our prices and those of our competitors has shrunk, and we expect it to shrink further. Fewer units sold normally leads to higher prices. Is this a vicious circle that can be broken? It is possible that with the flexibility that digital publishing brings the answer may be “yes,” or at least a qualified “yes.” There are now multiple ways in which our customers acquire our content — in print or electronic format, outright purchase or rental, and individually or in collections. Each of these might involve a different price point. The headline price of the book is no longer the sole factor in determining how much the customer pays for it.

Change which is Significant but Not Necessarily Fundamental

Engage proactively with new business models — Clearly there have been some bumps in the road with Demand-Driven Acquisition (DDA) and, to an even greater extent, Short-Term Loan (STL). With hindsight one could argue that publishers sleepwalked into a situation in which STL was one of the primary ways in which libraries acquired new books. Before **Routledge** agreed to participate in the Kindle rental program there were extensive internal discussions about whether it would extend the market or cannibalize existing sales. There were no such discussions before we agreed to STL, and we ended up having to raise our rates because of the impact that STL was having on frontlist sales. Notwithstanding this we remain excited about the potential of STL to keep books in front of potential readers for longer periods of time. We have reduced our STL rates for backlist titles (i.e., books more than a year old), in the hope that this encourages libraries to keep titles in their portfolio for longer periods. Publishers need to accept that if they are publishing more at a time when budgets are flat, then libraries will need to pursue innovative strategies to determine what to buy and what not to buy. Flexibility around price and discounting can help influence these decisions.

Focus on Open Access — Open Access (OA) is clearly a very powerful way of connecting authors and readers, which remains the primary function of publishers. Along with most of our competitors we have a gold OA offering, and publish OA book content (either whole titles or chapters) most months. But there remain significant issues around available funding for OA monographs in HSS subjects. The UK government, for example, has been quick to mandate gold OA but slow to provide additional funding to facilitate this.

Sell more to non-library markets — Scholarly publishers operate in a “mixed economy,” selling print and eBooks to different sorts of customers (libraries, individual scholars, students, and professionals). Books which primarily sell to libraries (monographs, works of reference) account for a minority of our sales. We use digital printing to sell monographs to individuals in paperback format through our **Routledge Paperbacks Direct** program and we use differential pricing to make more specialized works available to individuals in eBook form, with

lower prices on Kindle and other eBook retailers. The wider availability is welcome to authors, but the impact is finite. Moreover as the library increasingly becomes something that is accessed 24/7 via a VPN the need for an individual to possess their own copy diminishes. The library still remains the heart of the market for scholarly publishers.

Publish eOnly — This seems to be an appropriate approach to changing technology, but we still make 70% of our sales from print and publishing eOnly might only save about 15% of our costs. Notwithstanding this, publishing models which combine eBooks and books where the hard copies are printed on demand are becoming increasingly common.

Pursue new publishing models — Technological developments in digital publishing have facilitated innovation from short-form publishing (e.g., the **Palgrave Pivot** or **Routledge Focus**) to complex digital platforms hosting multi-volume reference works or databases which can contain millions of items. But the latter are not what most scholars produce most of the time, nor are they what most scholars or students read. Projects like the **Routledge Performance Archive**, which makes extensive use of video, or **Routledge Handbooks Online**, which is our first foray into chapter level metadata, are potentially most valuable to us as they allow us to build our digital capabilities, experiment with different kinds of content such as video, and develop similar products based on accurate measurement of customer usage and engagement.

Change with Potential for Paradigm Shift

Make your books more discoverable, so they get used more, and then use that data to drive better decisions — In the contest for library budgets, slowly circulating HSS monographs find themselves consistently outgunned by easy-to-use and instantly accessible journal articles. Books have much to learn from journals if they are to make the most of the digital transition. I would highlight four key steps:

- Make books more discoverable, so they get used more. Adding metadata at the chapter level is an obvious first step but publishers must also work more closely with intermediaries like eBooks vendors and make sure that the metadata is surfaced by major discovery tools.
- Remove or reduce barriers to use such as restrictions on concurrent use, printing and copying.
- Enhanced discoverability also gives the publisher a much greater sense of which parts of their content are being read, cited and referenced. This is valuable information which can be used for both marketing and editorial purposes. Find out what is getting used, and publish more of it.
- Greater usage of metrics around citations and impact, including altmetrics.

Our experience at **Routledge** of what gets used when you have metadata at the chapter level is limited but eye-opening. We have chapter level metadata for our handbooks on **RHO (Routledge Handbooks Online)**, and we believe it is a major factor in driving use. The same title is fourteen times more likely to be used on **RHO** than it was on our standard eBook platform. There are also striking variations in the extent to which different chapters from the same title get read. Feedback at this level of granularity has implications for customers, authors and publishers. Historically the only real data book publishers have attended to has been about sales and costs, and they lag far behind journal publishers in their use of other metrics. However, I would anticipate that this gap will close rapidly and book publishers will increasingly focus on citations, impact, and altmetrics, as well as usage data. Clearly we need to be mindful of the limits of each of these measures, but if a publisher's main role is to connect authors and readers, paying attention to *what* gets read is paramount.

Summary

Book publishing: will it survive and will they still be books? — My argument is that if books' content is more discoverable to readers then books themselves have a better chance of surviving as repositories of knowledge, wisdom, argument, debate and provocation, whether in print or digital formats. If book publishers can learn from journals' use of metadata at a more granular level, books will be better able to compete for readers' attention as their empirical research and theoretical insights will be easier to discover and will therefore be accessed more frequently and engaged with more productively by readers. In a world where usage is becoming increasingly linked to purchase, and where there is stiff competition for

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The Death of a Bookworm: A Long-Winded Eulogy

by **Mark Sandler** (Novel Solutions Consulting) <mark@novelsolutions.net>

Prognosticating about the future of the book is somewhat akin to taping a “kick me” sign onto one’s own back; it’s an open invitation to be ridiculed and abused. **Google** surfaces dozens of Web (“click-bait”) and magazine articles that recount the worst/dumbest/most shortsighted predictions of all time. Some of the oft-cited examples¹ in the telecommunications sphere include:

1876: “This ‘telephone’ has too many shortcomings to be seriously considered as a means of communication.” — **William Orton**, President of **Western Union**.

1946: “Television won’t be able to hold on to any market it captures after the first six months. People will soon get tired of staring at a plywood box every night.” — **Darryl Zanuck**, **20th Century Fox**.

2007: “There’s no chance that the iPhone is going to get any significant market share.” — **Steve Ballmer**, **Microsoft CEO**.

A personal favorite of mine from the music industry is **Decca Records’** rejection of the **Beatles** after the group’s 1962 audition, saying, “guitar groups are on the way out” and “The **Beatles** have no future in show business.”

All this to say that soothsaying about books — or anything else — should be approached with trepidation. Who wants to go down in history as having said that modern day kids wouldn’t waste two weeks of their lives reading about wizards, vampires, or dystopian death matches?

To the point of the question underlying these thematic essays — “Do books have a future” — I feel on safe ground answering, “totally.” I’m told a lot of people — especially smart people — like books, enjoy reading, and have a real emotional connection to that mode of transmitting information, entertainment, or even emotive sentiments. It sounds to me like a safe bet that books will stick around, especially with supporters like **Mark Zuckerberg**.²

“My challenge for 2015 is to read a new book every other week — with an emphasis on learning about different cultures, beliefs, histories, and technologies.... I’ve found reading books very intellectually fulfilling. Books allow you to fully explore a topic and immerse yourself in a deeper way than most media today. I’m looking forward to shifting more of my media diet towards reading books.”

That’s pretty high praise from a Millennial with better than average tech skills. Books have been front and center in world culture for the past 500 years, and it is highly likely that that “booklike objects” will continue to live amongst us — both the old, extant books and newly written/produced books — for the next 500 years. The harder call is whether we expect they’ll remain, as they have been in the past, “front and center” in our education systems and leisure pursuits. Is it reasonable to expect — to predict — that books will maintain a privileged position in an increasingly cluttered landscape of infotainment options?

Disclaimers

Before wading into the uncertain waters swirling about this question of the fate of books, it should be noted that nothing clouds the vision of a so-called expert like an emotional or fiduciary interest in a particular outcome. What do the **Koch** brothers think about the future of the electric car? What does the **Walton** family think about the prospects for the shop local movement? Be assured that the **Kochs** know more about energy production, and the **Waltons** know more about retail, than those of us writing or reading this article. Nonetheless, we should remain skeptical about the analyses of those with a vested interest in one or another vision of the future. And, for that reason, readers here should be forewarned if placing their bets on book futures based on the predictions of publishers, librarians, aggregators, book jobbers, or other “experts with benefits.”

Our second disclaimer is a more general note about how large social, cultural, or technological shifts are perceived (or not), understood (or not), and ultimately accepted (or not). The march of history is not an orderly procession from then to now; it is, instead, a circuitous, ambling, unpredictable journey with pushing and shoving among competing people, ideas, systems, and technologies. Thesis and antithesis; culture and counter-culture; action and reaction — the

atoms of our created social world are smashing and crashing about in our cultural accelerator — who or what will survive and emerge victorious is anyone’s guess. Thirty years from now, **Google** may control the entirety of the scholarly information space — no more **Elseviers**, **ProQuests**, **Pearsons**, or libraries; conversely, by 2050 **Google** could just as likely be R.I.P. alongside **AskJeeves**, **AltaVista**, **Mosaic**, and **Yahoo** (the walking dead) in a graveyard of superseded search firms.

Back to the Books

Having acknowledged some trepidation about predicting the trajectory of books going forward, I’ll warm to the task by committing some column inches to a recapitulation of the book’s centrality over centuries past. Consider how a 17th-century genius like **Isaac Newton**, working, as he was in Cambridge England, might make a connection with contemporary scholars like **G. W. Leibniz** in Germany or **Blaise Pascal** in France. When **Newton’s Principia Mathematica** was published in 1687, there were no telegraph lines nor telephones; no trains, planes, or automobiles; no film clips nor photographs to “pin”; no radio or television; and no email, social media, or Internet to facilitate real time communications. And yet, these distant scholars became aware of each other and shared ideas through the miracle of the printed book. Since face-to-face connections among contemporary scholars were made scarce by the inconvenience — even perils — of 17th-century travel, and letter writing does not scale, it fell to the book to serve as the primary conveyance of intellectual life. Moreover, the limited options for sharing ideas among contemporaneous scholars were fewer still for sharing ideas across generations. If not for the book, how could 18th-century American intellectuals like **Jefferson** or **Franklin** contemplate the work of **Locke** and **Hobbes** who lived a century earlier and an ocean away? So, for centuries, the book stood as the primary — if not the only — reliable means for conveying intellectual ideas across time and space.

Accordingly, the book, as a very particular technology for transmitting knowledge, opinions, beliefs,³ etc., became the tangible manifestation of the idea of “smart.” Both authors and readers would be deemed “smart” by virtue of their connection to books. Check your **Roget’s** for “bookish” and you’ll find the synonyms “smart,” “brainy,” and “intelligent.” To own books, and better still to read them, has stood for centuries as a status marker by which we measure intellect and competence. **Austen’s** Elizabeth in *Pride and Prejudice* proclaimed that her attraction to Darcy began with excitement about the size and richness of his library (be that literal or figurative). There are numerous references in literature — fiction, non-fiction, advice books, etc. — about judging men (and sometimes women) by the books with which they associate. All this to say that for a very long

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limited library funds, this will be as essential for the future of books as the **Gutenberg** printing press once was.

But is a disaggregated book still a book? Will the scholarly book only survive if it becomes like a journal, consumed, if at all, by the chapter? Traditional fans of the book need not be alarmed. On the surface much might remain the same, with physical books still being the preferred “long-form” format for HSS scholars to delineate complex arguments, collate and analyse empirical evidence, and develop innovative methodological and theoretical insights. But alongside this familiar territory, there is a quiet revolution happening beneath the surface in a digital sphere where much publishing activity will be guided and influenced by a forensic analysis of incredibly detailed, albeit inherently imperfect, data. 🐼