

Against the Grain

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Assessing e-journal post-cancellation access

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Introduction

Post-cancellation access (PCA) allows for the continued ownership and access of an institution's electronic purchases or subscriptions. Ideally, the initial point of acquisition is the time to record PCA rights. In 2018, the **University of Minnesota Libraries (Minnesota Libraries)** began a project to assess its e-journal PCA rights. The **Minnesota Libraries** has negotiated for PCA rights for nearly two decades and knows, for the most part, which publishers provided PCA; yet the specific PCA entitlements for each title were not known. Investigating PCA rights for e-journals was a long and arduous task, dependent on the presence (or absence) of accurate records. An automated overlap analysis script compared print and electronic serial holdings to reduce the number of titles to review. Along the way, a post-cancellation access determination (PCAD) project uncovered various challenges unique to serial publications. The authors share their experience with determining PCA at the **University of Minnesota** and outline recommendations for other PCA projects.

Post-Cancellation Access (PCA)

PCA allows for the perpetual, continued ownership of explicitly defined electronic content. Any electronic resource content can come with PCA (or perpetual access), but it is most commonly provided with one-time purchases (e.g., eBooks, primary sources) and e-journal subscriptions. Often, PCA is provided for each year a subscription is paid.

A PCA clause in the license is critical to securing and documenting PCA rights, but knowing the specific details of PCA rights is equally important because PCA ensures continued access to content, similar to the continued access print content provides. PCA license clauses vary widely, but it is important to include specific details about the delivery or hosting mechanism and cost of invoking PCA rights.¹ *LIBLICENSE's Model License Agreement*,² the Big Ten Academic Alliance Library Initiatives' *Standardized Agreement Language*,³ and the California Digital Library's *Standard License Agreement*⁴ all have good model language for PCA. A repository, archive, publisher, or library can self-host PCA on their own servers. Invoking PCA rights is not always easy or cost-free to set up, especially if a library must self-host the content.⁵ Direct or indirect costs for setting up PCA (whether self-hosted or not) may include staff time, fees (one-time, maintenance, membership, etc.), storage space and/or integration into established delivery mechanisms.

The initial point of acquisition is the ideal time to record PCA information for each title. Libraries are good about asking for and receiving PCA rights; recording the PCA details,

however, may not be included in daily acquisition workflows.⁶ The **Minnesota Libraries** knows (or can identify) which journal publishers or licenses include perpetual access. PCA was not known for specific titles or date ranges due to complicated and convoluted licenses. Or because the **Minnesota Libraries** has never recorded serial PCA information at the title/year level. For example, the **Minnesota Libraries** knew it had PCA rights for the Wiley title *Counselor education and supervision*, but the specific years of PCA were not recorded.

Post-cancellation Access Determination (PCAD) Project

In 2018, the **Minnesota Libraries** embarked on a project to assess its e-journal PCA rights. The post-cancellation access determination (PCAD) project intended to identify electronic surrogates to print serials for possible withdrawal of the print format. Other criteria considered when determining surrogacy (in addition to PCA rights) included electronic holdings equal to, or exceeding, print holdings, interlibrary loan allowances, print retention commitments and archival copies in Portico⁷ or the Big Ten Academic Alliance (BTAA) Shared Print Repository.⁸ This article will discuss the processes used by e-resource management staff to assess PCA rights and share lessons learned.

As mentioned previously, the **Minnesota Libraries** generally has a good handle on which publishers provided PCA; however, PCA years for each title is less known. For a few bigger publishers, the **Minnesota Libraries** had negotiated uniform PCA regardless of the years subscribed. For example, all the journals subscribed through one publisher has a PCA start date of 1995 no matter what the first subscription year was for a specific journal title. For nearly all other publishers, however, it is not the standard practice to set a uniform PCA start date; typically, subscribed years determine PCA access, meaning if a library subscribes and pays for a journal during 2005-2010, the library will have PCA rights from 2005-2010. When a publisher grants PCA to the paid content only, it becomes crucial to review the payment history to determine the exact PCA years. These prior negotiations for uniform PCA rights would, in the end, be a saving grace during this monumental project; it soon became clear manually checking the payment history for each journal would be a time consuming (if not hopeless) task.

PCAD Process

Investigating each candidate e-journal for PCA was easy or hard depending on the presence and accuracy of order records kept by the **Minnesota Libraries** and/or publishers or subscription agents. This complication and a short timeline caused the PCAD project to focus on those publishers with the most PCA information: **Elsevier, Wiley, SAGE and Springer**. For these publishers the Libraries had the most comprehensive acquisitions information and, for the most part, contractual agreements providing for many PCA years. For this reason, it was decided that other publishers' PCA would be investigated later, during the regular renewal process.

The PCAD project began with the need to free up space at three library locations. An initial overlap analysis compared print (of the three library locations) and electronic serial holdings, speeding up the PCAD process. Metadata analysts from the Libraries' Data Management & Access (DMA) Department scripted the overlap analysis. The scripting created a select title list meeting all the criteria with a likelihood of PCA (the analysis excluded all titles from non-perpetual e-collections). The final output provided by DMA (in Excel) listed candidates for assessment based on print holding location,

percent (%) print to electronic holdings overlap, and existence in a print or online repository.

Additional metadata such as bibliographic record ID, ISSN (print and electronic), and print holdings/chronology range were included in the Excel file to aid in PCAD. Information about the matched and overlapping print and electronic titles were placed in a Google sheet (one worksheet per publisher), enabling simultaneous work by the six E-Resource Management (ERM)

Unit staff members (within the Acquisitions & E-Resource Management Department). The PCA determination for each title was recorded in the Google worksheets. After the scripted overlap analysis, ERM staff had 1,082 titles to review (representing over 46,000 volumes), and reviewed 80-100 titles per week.

First, ERM staff verified that the print and online records represented the same journal. They then compared the print holdings data from the sheet with the catalog, an added step to detect discrepancies in the print chronology range. ERM staff also reviewed the online holdings to confirm that they equaled or exceeded the print holdings. For each journal, the PCAD findings from the analysis were

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recorded in the sheet, including the existence or lack of PCA for the entire print holdings and any anomalies found (missing chronology data of print item records, missing online issues, etc.). In the end, 92% of the 1,082 titles reviewed by ERM staff were determined to be print surrogates and could be withdrawn based on the established criteria.

Road Blocks

Along the way, the PCAD project uncovered various challenges unique to serial publications, such as how to assess PCA for print supplements, providing proof of payment after many years had passed, tracking PCA for transferred titles, and addressing title changes in the overlap analysis process.

One issue encountered was print supplements. The biomedical journals, in particular, include many supplements containing conference proceedings or additional articles. These supplements are often not available electronically or scarcely held by other libraries. The only way to check whether online versions of print supplements exist is verifying their representation in the online version, which is time-consuming. Titles with supplements, due to their extra complications, were set aside to be assessed later.

Access entitlement reports (from the publisher), obtained by request or through the **Minnesota Libraries'** administrative interfaces, helped in the PCAD of subscribed titles. In some instances, the entitlement information provided to us did not show the correct PCA years for which the Libraries held paid subscriptions. Payment history for the years in question was provided to the publisher and the publisher updated PCA entitlements. Payment proof ranged from past payment history and order format provided by the current serial subscription agent, or screenshots of payment history from the **Minnesota Libraries'** unified library services platform.

Transfer titles (titles transferred from one publisher to another) made up the bulk of problematic journals, particularly for one publisher. ERM staff pointed out to the current publisher that the former publishers of transferred titles had included a PCA clause. The current publisher subsequently granted PCA rights when sufficient proof of payment was provided. Previously recorded order notes were helpful for gathering past payment history to request rightful PCA to the front files; some notes pertained to what year the journals transferred to the receiving publisher, and others related to the order format change from Print+Online to Online Only. The **National Information Standards Organization's (NISO)** Transfer Code of Practice section 3.2 (Perpetual Access) states, "The transferring publisher must ensure continued access to its subscribers where it has granted perpetual access rights, even if the transferring publisher will cease to host the online version of the journal after the effective transfer date."⁹ In reality, however, subscribers (libraries), not the transferring publisher, often

bear the burden of proving their PCA years to the receiving publisher, especially if the need to claim PCA rights does not surface for several years.

Another issue to be wary of is the tendency for publishers to represent the historical range of a title with only one title identifier, especially in commercial central knowledge base collections, such as **Ex Libris'** SFX and Alma Community Zone and **ProQuest's** 360. This means a title that has changed names many times can be listed *only* as the most current title. Some print titles on the shelf did not match with electronic holdings because their title and/or identifiers did not align for overlap analysis to occur.

Recommendations

Regardless of publisher, determining PCA has been a time consuming and difficult task because in most cases titles need manual checking. From this project, we have a few recommendations on immediate steps for mitigating a PCA investigation, issues to watch for during a PCA project, and next steps to ease the burden for libraries (and perhaps publishers).

Planning for a future invocation of PCA is important in reducing the amount of work and uncertainty that a PCAD project creates. Order information (along with detailed notes) may be necessary to prove payment, so order records should be maintained (or at least accessible in a flat file) even after system migrations. Record and store (if possible) PCA information in your library management system. When negotiating PCA rights, ask for a standard PCA start date to ease record keeping for both parties.

It is a good idea to obtain detailed entitlement reports and to create a process for handling anomalies. Request from publishers entitlement reports that include access date ranges *and* perpetual date ranges. Use this information for the review, but beware of discrepancies. During the process have a procedure for handling supplements, title transfers and title changes.

To ease the tracking of PCA information, each provider should make access entitlement files easily downloadable. The files should explicitly show the PCA years and complimentary back file access dates while subscriptions are active. Some publishers

provide Knowledge Bases And Related Tools (KBART) files in administrator accounts, but they only show activated access years based on current year subscriptions and lack PCA information. Even when the access entitlement files are available from publishers, the way they display the PCA data varies. A standard should be established to promote uniformity of access entitlement files among publishers and include perpetual rights information because PCA years are the true electronic holdings of libraries. Additionally, library management systems should include specific fields for recording post-cancellation access at the title level, with the option to export the information through analytics. 🍷

Endnotes

1. **Jim Stemper** and **Susan Barribeau**, "Perpetual Access to Electronic Journals," *Library Resources & Technical Services* 50 (April 2006): 91–109.
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3. Big Ten Academic Alliance Library Initiatives, "Standardized Agreement Language," May 2019, <https://www.btaa.org/library/licensing/standardized-agreement-language> (accessed June 9, 2019).
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5. **Sarah Glasser**, "Providing Perpetual Access," *Library Resources & Technical Services* 58 (July 2014): 144–152.
6. **Chris Bullock**, "Techniques for Tracking Perpetual Access," *The Serials Librarian* 68 (May 2015): 290–298.
7. Portico, <https://www.portico.org/why-portico/> (accessed June 9, 2019).
8. Big Ten Academic Alliance, "Shared Print Repository," <http://www.btaa.org/library/shared-print-repository/introduction> (accessed June 9, 2019).
9. National Information Standards Organization, *RP-24-2015 Transfer Code of Practice Version 3.0*, <https://www.niso.org/publications/rp-24-2015-transfer>, 2015 (accessed June 9, 2019).

Rumors

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Libri, Michele Casalini, has accepted an honorary degree celebrating his dedication and contribution to the field of Library and Information Science from the **University of Florence**. The ceremony on 21st May 2019 marked the **very first bestowal of the honour** for merit in modern librarianship by an Italian university; only the second time that a similar distinction has been conferred in **Library and Information Science in Italy**. Delivering the **Laudatio** of the award, **Prof. Mauro Guer-**

rini praised **Michele's** capacity to promote innovation in his business and in general among the most advanced library community: "With **Casalini Libri**, he has understood that the new factor in the digital world is not the technology itself, but close and unconstrained collaboration with other partners. **Michele** has contributed, and continues to contribute, to the advancement of librarianship in the digital age, achieving excellent results that are appreciated and recognized internationally. **Michele Casalini** is a bridge builder thanks to the diffusion of culture, knowledge and research." The honour pays tribute to **Michele's**

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