

Pricing Digital Journals

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Adam Chesler, Christopher McKenzie, Tony O'Rourke, and David Stern, "Pricing Digital Journals" (2009). *Proceedings of the Charleston Library Conference*.

<http://dx.doi.org/10.5703/1288284314720>

PRICING DIGITAL JOURNALS

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Previously published in Against the Grain, Vol. 22 Issue 1

After an introduction to the session by moderator Chesler, Stern provided a detailed explanation of the method being applied at Brown University. With illustrative examples showing how determining relative value could be based on price and usage, the speaker made clear that metrics were possible and valuable. With his broad responsibility for scholarly communication, the activity spent on the analysis is worth the time. The publishers' representatives were less explicit in addressing all the factors that go into pricing plans and what influences annual increases. McKenzie discussed new journal pricing with free access and how it was used to help with pricing. He mentioned the process but not the final application to price of the Wiley profit/loss analysis, incorporating usage information gathered during the free period and comparison to anticipated demand based on historical trends and publishers projections. McKenzie discussed other factors including tiered pricing, managed deals, multiple year deals, price caps, and consortia offerings that were intended to help libraries cope with escalating prices. Following was O'Rourke on the pricing from a learned society's perspective which did show that an institution's mission, i.e. serve the members but stay in business, was a key influence to how pricing may be set. Mr. O'Rourke provided specific cost factors such as the increase of submissions, administration and the need for more customer support with more digital offerings were offsetting any decline of print subscriptions but not necessarily lower prices for the online edition. The responsiveness of the society to the market was mentioned with a "no e-only" condition being eliminated, but, again, origination cost is still the same. Ending with "Is usage based appropriate? Or is tiered pricing better?" In conclusion, the speakers, moderator and engaged audience offered an excellent session including the pertinent questions at the end. I recommend the Stern presentation which is available on the Charleston site.