People Profile: Rickey D. Best

Editor

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No member should pay more than an individual subscription would cost. In allocating costs, NAAL utilizes five models to allocate group subscription costs to the individual subscribers in the groups. These models were developed when vendors provided a single group quote, but can be adapted for use with almost any quote if the vendor allows NAAL to allocate the costs. The models are:

- The FTE Model. The total group cost is distributed using the participating institutions’ student FTE data. Each institution pays the percentage of the cost that represents its percentage of the group’s total student FTE.
- The Equal Model. The group cost is divided equally amongst the participating institutions.
- The 50/50 Model. In this model, the participating libraries divide one-half of the group cost equally. The remaining cost is divided using the FTE allocation.
- The Bid Model. Institutions are asked to “bid” the amount they can pay to be a part of the NAAL group.
- The Vendor Model. Vendors will present quotes stipulating the price for each institution. Vendor pricing is most often linked with access controlled by simultaneous users with a set number of users assigned to each participant.

With each model, the AUM Library has benefited by being able to extend access to full-text journal coverage at a reduced cost for licensing products, particularly when compared to our licensing a product as a single institution. In negotiating the license for a product, NAAL seeks to establish a common expiration date for renewal. Any current subscribers are able to transfer an existing subscription for a resource into a NAAL group licensed subscription. Each of the models listed above has advantages and disadvantages which are listed on the background page for the Online Content Program. The advantages and disadvantages are identified as follows.

The FTE Model results in the lowest possible cost for the smallest members and the highest possible costs for the largest members. As a result, it violates NAAL’s second principle in that larger schools may pay more in this model than they would pay for an individual subscription. The FTE Model works the best when participating institutions are similar in size.

The Equal Model works best for reference type products not generally used by students, e.g., Books In Print, Ulrich’s International Periodicals Directory. It is also used when a group shares the same number of simultaneous users. The assumption in this instance would be that every user, regardless of the institution’s size, has an equal chance of accessing the database. The model is also used for online products which have a comparable print cost. The 50/50 Model is judged as being more equitable in distributing costs. Larger schools with bigger budgets are paying more than smaller schools but less than would be the case using the FTE Model. For both the larger and smaller schools, the costs are less than an individual subscription.

The Bid Model has as an advantage — the ability to allow smaller schools to join in a subscription based upon what they can pay. Larger schools will often pay their individual costs or more in order to allow as many institutions to participate as possible. Even doing so, the larger schools benefit from the lower group cost negotiated by NAAL and the resulting group does not incur the higher costs that a smaller group would be charged. Over time, NAAL works to move to a 50/50 Model for the participants in groups using the Bid Model. To accomplish this, renewal price increases are allocated to those schools paying less than 50/50 Model while holding the costs level for those paying more than the 50/50 Model. An advantage for the smaller schools is that even with the renewal price increases there is not the sticker shock of having to come up with a large amount of money to maintain the subscription at renewal.

The Vendor Model utilizes vendor set pricing linked with access controlled by simultaneous users with a set number of users assigned to each participant. This can be a problem in delaying user access to a resource because a limited threshold has been reached. However, NAAL has always been quick to react to situations where this occurs and works with the vendors to acquire additional simultaneous users for the group. Overall, the price stipulation provided by vendors does not offer a distinct advantage for the NAAL libraries.

Benefits of NAAL Licensing

NAAL licenses access to ninety-six separate databases, three of which are provided by multiple vendors. In one instance, NAAL negotiated with the database vendor for a discount based on the number of subscribers and then negotiated a separate access cost with the database platform provider so members could choose their preferred provider platform. NAAL has also negotiated deeply discounted secondary access to the same licensed content available from multiple vendors. Table I documents the number of databases and the allocation formula ascribed to each. The methods that have been used by NAAL to license databases have saved the citizens of the State of Alabama more than two million

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