

Discussion Paper on the Removal of Print Journal Back Runs

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Background:

In March 2006, it was noted that the University of Lethbridge Library was at 80% shelving capacity, optimum capacity in terms of maintenance being up to 75%. At that time, the possibility of relying on electronic backfiles for journal back runs was raised. In September 2006, potential space savings were calculated as being 672 shelves if print back runs prior to 2000 and available in JSTOR were removed. At that point, there was a sense that the Library should seriously consider removing print back runs in stable electronic form to storage.

Subsequent events prevented a co-ordinated response to this issue. The issue of collection space remains.

An email sent to the COPPUL Collections Group in Summer 2008 resulted in a phone conversation with Gwen Bird (Simon Fraser University). Gwen reported that, to her knowledge, there were libraries working on exactly the same issue, some together in a co-ordinated fashion and some individually. This issue was also raised at the September 2008 meeting of COPPUL Directors and subsequently, a summary of what was happening nationally was forwarded to the Directors by Sandy Slade:

- CREPUQ (Quebec): priority for discussion, Fall 2008.
- OCUL (Ontario): meeting to discuss print repository solutions for OCUL members.
- CAUL (Atlantic Provinces:) actions taken have been local to individual members.

This topic is on the agenda of the COPPUL Collections Group Meeting scheduled for 2008 November 19.

What follows is a synthesis of the published literature dealing with the de-selection of print journal back runs. Although an attempt was made to limit the literature included to the primary topic, there is relevant overlap of issues within the literature related to the question of an electronic-only approach to collecting journals since it is assumed that a library would not retain non-current print issues if they collected the print equivalents at all. Additional information gleaned from discussions with Charlene Sorensen at the University of Saskatchewan, where such a project has already taken place, has also been incorporated.

Summary of the literature:

1. Reasons for removing print back runs:

It seems that many libraries are deciding that the time has come to evaluate the retention of print journal back runs relative to the use of resources (e.g., space, staff, funding) for other purposes. In some cases, library collections have outgrown available space necessitating some evaluation of the place and future of the print journal collection. (Bracke & Martin, 2005) In other situations, there is some motivation, intrinsic or extrinsic to the library, to re-purpose the space currently occupied by print journal collections. (Cooper & Norris, 2007; Sorensen, 2008)

At Seton Hall University Libraries, the decision was made to de-dupe the print journal collection where an electronic version existed. In this case, Kaylan (2002) spotlights flat or diminished funding in the face of continued increases in serials costs and the pressure on libraries from users to move to more electronic full-text databases as rationale.

2. Basis for print back run removal:

The removal of print journal back runs tends to be based on JSTOR and/or Project Muse and/or publisher-based electronic journal packages where the pricing is not contingent on retention of the print equivalent. The Imperial College Library considered using open-source journals as a basis for removing print journal runs but found these unsustainable, regardless of agreements, because some publishers never actually delivered on perpetual access to their titles. (Cooper & Norris, 2007)

3. Criteria for de-selection of print back runs:

The criteria used to guide the de-selection of print journal back runs are, as one might expect, similar to the criteria used to select electronic journals.

Some practical considerations, in no particular order, were:

- a. **Permanency.** What is the publisher doing about archiving? Kansas State University Libraries (Kansas State University Libraries, 2008) offered this advice to their subject librarians regarding the commitment of the publishers to archiving:
 - If the publishers demonstrated no commitment, selectors may decide archival commitment is not required to justify acquisition; use only for peripheral journals.
 - If the publishers demonstrated an expressed commitment and if the commitment seems credible as defined by publisher's mission, commitment to the scholarly marketplace, and general reputation for following through on commitments, then selectors should consider this expressed commitment in light of core journal titles.
 - If the publishers' current plans are either in progress or through arrangements with LOCKSS or Portico, then selectors should consider this acceptable for considering any journal, core or peripheral.

At the University of Maryland Libraries (University of Maryland Libraries, 2007), they made a specific statement that electronic journals, or more specifically, the archival rights to those journal should be "owned" as per a JSTOR subscription. Imperial College Library also worked to ensure that content was stored with a trusted service, "trusted" being characterized by a track record of stability and continuity of titles from year to year as well as a history of and reputation for affordability and value (e.g., JSTOR, ACM digital archive, or a JISC-funded archive). (Cooper & Norris, 2007) A commitment to digital archiving was also an important criterion in the decisions of the University of Arizona Science & Engineering Library. (Bracke & Martin, 2005)

Roger Schonfeld (2007) reminds us that, in a licensed electronic environment, new subscriptions are not owned; therefore, formal and collaborative arrangements for archiving are important. He advises that each library ensure the availability of appropriate electronic archiving solutions.

He goes on to acknowledge that the cost of holding the print may be greater than the benefit. At the 2008 Library Assessment Conference, however, he expressed his concerns regarding the preservation of print collections. For example, he noted the benefit to JSTOR of having access to a print copy in order to re-scan an original as technology evolves and, therefore, allow for better digital copies (e.g., colour, higher resolution, etc.) over time. In his paper (Schonfeld, 2007), he notes that one response to this challenge has been the development of formal frameworks around paper repositories. One example is the Orbis Cascade Alliance in Oregon which has “embarked upon a distributed print repository project ... pursuant to which it will arrange for certain of its members to store and archive, on behalf of the Alliance, various academic journals and other research materials so that copies of such materials can be retained and preserved for the benefit and use of students and faculty in perpetuity.” (Orbis Cascade Alliance, 2008)

- b. **Perpetual access:** Campbell (2003) mentions the LACK of perpetual access as a reason to retain the print. Sorensen (2008) did not give great detail about how aggressive the University of Saskatchewan had been on this issue aside from mentioning that the reliability of the online source was important and advising that a membership in Portico was worth the investment. The University of Saskatchewan has already had to switch to Portico for two or three titles. (Sorensen also mentioned that some subject librarians at the University of Saskatchewan were ruthless enough to put print journal back runs into storage whether an online equivalent existed or not!) Other libraries seemed to go to great lengths to evaluate their licensing agreements and to challenge the publishers and vendors to establish rights to perpetual access for those electronic journals collected. (Bracke & Martin, 2005; Cooper & Norris, 2007; Kansas State University Libraries, 2008; University of Maryland Libraries, 2007)

The Imperial College Library looked for perpetual access over the web (rather than some other format such as CDROM) and decided to afford the requirements of such perpetual access whether that meant remaining a subscriber or paying an additional fee. That said, they did note the loss of some content either through discontinuation of a journal or due to journal transfers between publishers. (Cooper & Norris, 2007) This experience reinforces the idea of having access to some separate permanent archival access to the electronic journals.

St. Lawrence University requires the provision of long-term, uninterrupted access to library users meaning that:

- i. The site’s license provide for permanent library retention of the content purchased during the license period, along with any necessary access mechanisms (interfaces, database rights, and so forth).
- ii. The university participates through a library consortium that has the resources to ensure that the content provider adheres to the legal provisions for long-term access, noting that, the provider may itself be a library consortium.
- iii. If the resource is a collection of journals, the provider demonstrates a commitment to the long-term provision of each journal title included in the collection. (Walters, 2004)

- c. **Licensing for access:** The University of Maryland articulated specific criteria that requires a subscription directly to the electronic journal rather than through an aggregator or “free with print” before the print back run can be removed. (University of Maryland Libraries, 2007)
- d. **Completeness of the electronic resource** (Bracke & Martin, 2005) or more specifically that:
- the electronic version is the equivalent of the print version (Kansas State University Libraries, 2008; University of Maryland Libraries, 2007)
 - the online contents are not less than the print (University of Maryland Libraries, 2007)
 - there are no missing issues (Sorensen, 2008)
 - The online resource provides complete page images and includes the complete content of each issue: all figures, tables, book reviews, letters to the editor, and so on—assuming the print copy is the authoritative copy. (Walters, 2004)
- e. **Currency** or specifically that:
- the electronic version is at least as current as the print version (Kansas State University Libraries, 2008)
 - each article appears online at the same time or before it is available in print assuming the print copy is the authoritative copy. (Walters, 2004)
- f. **Quality** (Bracke & Martin, 2005) or specifically that the quality of the images and graphics, especially colour, are sufficient for intended use (Kansas State University Libraries, 2008; Sorensen, 2008; University of Maryland Libraries, 2007)
- g. **Access (in general)** or specifically that:
- access is provided via campus-wide IP address (Kansas State University Libraries, 2008; University of Maryland Libraries, 2007)
 - there is authorized off-campus use (University of Maryland Libraries, 2007)
 - there is no history of unannounced or protracted downtime (University of Maryland Libraries, 2007)
 - there is no history of lost access at subscription renewal (University of Maryland Libraries, 2007)
 - a vendor can answer questions regarding the reliability and stability of access to the electronic version (Kansas State University Libraries, 2008)
 - day-to-day access is reliable—quick server response, stable URLs, and provision of backup servers. (Walters, 2004)
- h. **Print use statistics:** Documented use of print volumes is considered. (Sorensen, 2008; University of Maryland Libraries, 2007). Although much is written and discussed about the preference for electronic journals, there still remains reluctance among some faculty to remove print altogether. As an example, a mention to a faculty member at that the University of Lethbridge that removal of its print journal back runs would be considered prompted a deep philosophical discussion about the changing use patterns of such resources. As well, on occasion, faculty members assign students the task of finding the paper version of a particular article (e.g., UofL Archeology class in the Fall 2008 semester).

- i. **Pricing:** This criterion relates not so much to the removal of print back runs but to the issue of deciding to continue print and/or electronic holdings. Kansas State University Libraries (2008) cautions its subject librarians to investigate the pricing of a journal for cost-savings in terms of receiving it :
 - In print
 - In print with electronic access
 - Solely in electronic format
 - As part of a bundle, either the database as a whole or as individual titles within a database.

- j. **Licensing concerns:** In considering whether to acquire electronic access for a journal title, Kansas State University Libraries (2008) outlined various licensing concerns to be considered, including:
 - Whether the vendor can provide a license for the selector to review
 - The issue of licensing versus purchase
 - Omission of certain content
 - Delays in online publication (i.e., embargos)
 - Restrictions relating to use (e.g., interlibrary loans, electronic reserves, course packs)
 - Restrictions relating to downloading, printing and viewing of articles.

Specific criteria for RETENTION of print journal back runs, as opposed to electronic acquisition, included the following:

- Titles for which no electronic version exists . (Kansas State University Libraries, 2008)
- Only journals for which perpetual access can reasonably be expected (Campbell, 2003; Kansas State University Libraries, 2008)
- Only titles which have a demonstrated stability of online access, unrestricted to the campus community, should be migrated to online access. (Campbell, 2003; Kansas State University Libraries, 2008)
- Any journal for which an online version is an inadequate substitute. Examples of this drawn from Campbell (2003) include:
 - Missing content
 - Content that is not reproducible from the electronic format (e.g., sensory-based materials)
 - Oversized inserts that cannot be easily viewed via electronic format
 - Content (e.g., maps, coloured illustrations) that require special tools for reproduction
- License agreements for online subscriptions are restrictive in such things as interlibrary loan, course packs, electronic reserves (Campbell, 2003; Kansas State University Libraries, 2008) or require you to maintain the print. (Campbell, 2003)
- Monographic journals and “read much” journals where print is the easier format to use (Campbell, 2003)
- Titles for which the online version does not include materials needed to support user needs re assignments requiring advertisements, classifieds, reviews, letters to the editor, etc., . (Kansas State University Libraries, 2008)

- Standard, glossy general-interest serials, such as Time and Vogue, will continue to be received in print. (Kansas State University Libraries, 2008)
- Unanticipated use by the faculty (Campbell, 2003)
- There is a judicial requirement to retain the print as an “official copy” (Campbell, 2003)
- Titles for which K-State Libraries can be considered the library of record, or holding the final copy should always be retained in print (Kansas State University Libraries, 2008)
- Any journal for which an online version does not meet accreditation standards. (Kansas State University Libraries, 2008)
- Geographic (i.e., local or regional) specialization with a given title (Campbell, 2003)
- The Library should retain in print titles which are obscure, have limited circulation, or have ceased. (Kansas State University Libraries, 2008)
- Maintaining a collection of excellence (Campbell, 2003)

Methodology:

Where described, methodologies for carrying out the removal of print serial back runs in favour of electronic access seemed similar.

Bracke and Martin outline the process followed at the University of Arizona Science & Engineering Library:

- Create a database of backfile titles and years available
- Determine which titles are held in print and the extent of those holdings
- Count the number of volumes of print equivalents and the shelf space occupied
- Check for a complete sequence of issues and volumes, although only for the range of years owned in print
- Randomly assess the quality of the images and illustrations between the print and electronic formats

This library decided on a tiered system where titles were classified as:

- Tier 1 = few or no problems (i.e., 0-3 missing issues), ready for removal
- Tier 2 = some problems (i.e., 4-20 missing issues), delay removal, share problems with publisher
- Tier 3 = severe problems (i.e., 21+ missing issues), delay removal, share problems with publisher (Bracke & Martin, 2005)

Coincidentally, Imperial College Library (Cooper & Norris, 2007) and the University of Saskatchewan (Sorensen, 2008) each developed a tool that demonstrated the print-electronic overlap by drawing information on print holdings from their respective integrated library systems and information on electronic information from their respective link resolvers. However, more is known about the University of Saskatchewan tool.

Sorensen (2008) describes the University of Saskatchewan's Serials Analyzer tool (formerly called the 5K Run tool) as:

- Written in Drupal¹
- Draws information from ILS (Innovative) and link-resolver (SFX) together into one interface to facilitate review of the journal titles by subject librarians
- Shows print-electronic overlap based on ISSN
 - She advises that users should be prepared to do database cleanup in order for the tool to work properly.
- Organizes by call number (the project was collection-wide)
- Allows for filtering of the information. Filters were added as the project proceeded and include:
 - Interest code (e.g., history, education) to facilitate multi-disciplinary review
 - Access provider (e.g., JSTOR, Elsevier, etc.)
 - Format (e.g., print, microform, electronic)
 - Status/relevancy (i.e., current, not current)
 - Location (e.g., branch library)

Librarians then recorded their recommendation (repatriate to the branches, send to storage or discard) and the rationale for this decision (e.g., quality of illustrations, missing issues). In addition, each journal's print back run was measured so there was feedback to the subject librarian on the shelf-space recouped. The subject librarians liked the tool and it has become a permanent part of the systems tool-kit at the University of Saskatchewan libraries.

Figure 1 (next page) presents a screen shot of the Serials Analyzer tool. Sorensen is currently working on refining this tool and has agreed to share it with the University of Lethbridge Library.

In our conversation, Sorensen (2008) emphasized the importance of involving faculty in the decision making since they direct students to specific resources in the library. It was up to the subject librarians to consult and educate their respective faculty on the project. She noted that some chose to promote the initiative as a de-duping of the collection while others simply chose to inform the faculty that the library was evaluating the print journal back runs for removal. All feedback was considered but subject librarians were the final arbiters of the decisions made. Bracke and Martin (2005) noted the University of Arizona Science & Engineering Library received little resistance from faculty which they attributed to the preference for electronic access and the perception that physical visits to the library are barriers to access. A previous project using JSTOR had also helped to prepare faculty for the project reported on in their article.

Sorensen (2008) was the only source to go into detail about timelines. At the University of Saskatchewan, they conceived of the idea in Spring 2006, developed the tool over Summer 2006, made decisions on titles over the fall semester of 2006 and then removed selected print back runs to storage and shifted the collection in Spring 2007 while the academic term was still in session. Entire process from conception to completion was one year.

¹ Drupal is the open-source, content management system adopted by the University of Lethbridge for use with the university's website.

My bookmarks

- [Biology](#)
- [open](#)
- [Womens studies](#)

[quick link](#) | [manage](#)

ces730@usask.ca

- ▼ [5K Run](#)
 - [Completion Tool](#)
 - [Help Sheet](#)
 - [Non-Subscribed](#)
- ▶ [create content](#)
- [my bookmarks](#)
- [Resource Management](#)
- [my account](#)
- [menus](#)
- [log out](#)

5K Run - Recommendation Tool

Call No: DF10 .H58
 Title: Hesperia (0018-098X)

Shelf Space (cm)	To 1990	1991 to 2000	Post 2001	Current Year
MAIN	228	51	16	3

Bib Record	Interest Codes	Status	Print Holdings			
b10902004	clas2,hist0	keep	MAIN LIB-1TH FLR DF10 .H58 1932- v.1 -- Currently received (Latest issues are on Main Library Current Journals shelves)			
			History	Selector	Comments	Date
		keep		dac026@usask.ca	Keep vols. for 2003 to present.	2006-10-23 12:51:44
		discard		dac026@usask.ca	Discard volumes for 1932 to 2002 only.	2006-10-23 12:51:04

ISSN	Full text available from:	Coverage
0018-098X	JSTOR Arts and Sciences 2	Availability: from 1932 to 2002
0018-098X	Extenza	Availability: from 2002 volume 71 issue 1
0018-098X	GaleGroup InfoTrac Expanded Academic ASAP	Availability: from 2004
0018-098X	Project Muse Arts and Humanities Collection	Availability: from 2005 volume 74 issue 1
0018-098X	Project Muse Standard Collection	Availability: from 2005 volume 74 issue 1
0018-098X	GaleGroup InfoTrac OneFile	Availability: from 2004

ISSN	CISTI	Cdn Loc	US Loc
0018-098X	0	22	422

Figure 1: Screen shot of the University of Saskatchewan's Serials Analyzer tool (reproduced with permission).

Questions:

1. Is the issue of legacy print collections an issue to be concerned about? If yes, where does the responsibility reside (i.e., local? consortial? a bit of both)?
2. Is the issue of electronic archiving (in the event of a journal publishing “mishap”) an issue of concern? If yes, then what solution do we want to put in place (e.g., Portico, LOCKSS, local)?
3. Do we have perpetual access to the electronic journal equivalent of a given print back run? What is the form of perpetual access (i.e., online via the Web or locally loaded CDROM)? Is the Library willing to commit to the continuing cost of retaining this access in perpetuity either through an annual fee (most likely scenario in the case of Web access) or in local delivery of journal back files (to be mounted locally)?
4. Considering issues of stability of access, currency, quality and completeness, what electronic sources of journals are we the most comfortable using as the basis of de-selecting print back runs? Should this judgment be made on a title by title basis or on the basis of, for example, all JSTOR titles? Are there other factors that should be considered? What are these?
5. Are there journal titles or types of journals where print delivery best serves the needs of our users?
6. Do we continue to receive current issues of the print equivalent for those journals whose print back-runs are removed from the active collection?
7. What is the role of faculty and others in the user community in this process?
8. Other questions?

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