**CPSLD Survey: Print vs. Electronic Journals**

**October-November 2004**

**Conducted by Kim Isaac, University College of the Fraser Valley**

Eighteen libraries responded to my request to the CPSLD list for information on how you are handling the issue of canceling print subscriptions in favour of electronic versions of a journal. Many thanks to those of you who responded, or who had members of your staff respond on behalf of your library.

I’ve stripped away the identities of the responding libraries in most cases. If you read a comment and would find it helpful to connect with the library that made it, let me know and I’ll try to arrange that.

My original questions are in **bold**. Summaries of responses, or verbatim comments, follow each question.

**1. Does your library have a policy that addresses when you would drop a print subscription in favour of the electronic version of the journal?**

Only two libraries have actual policies: SFU and UBC. The URLs for these policies are below. Several libraries mentioned that they have guiding principles or criteria for the cancellation or retention of print titles. Several libraries, including UCFV, are trying to develop a policy.

* Simon Fraser: See <http://www.lib.sfu.ca/about/collections/duplicatecriteria.htm>
* UBC: See:

http://www.library.ubc.ca/collections/transition\_online/

http://www.library.ubc.ca/collections/transition\_online2005/

**2. Would your library consider dropping a print subscription if you had access to the fulltext electronic version of that title?**

All but one library answered yes to this question. The one library that would not consider canceling print stated:

* No, as there may embargos, and even if there aren't any embargos, we would be resistant to drop the print sub'n as we never know when an embargo may be added, or when the journal may be withdrawn and moved to a different vendor that we don't subscribe to.

**3. If you answered yes to question #2, how did/would you decide which titles to drop?**

**a) drop all print titles that were available in electronic form**

No libraries would do this.

**b) drop some print titles according to the following criteria (please indicate all criteria that apply to your situation):**

**i) low usage for the print title**

Ten libraries identified this as a possible criterion, although two stated that it’s difficult to have good usage data for in-library use materials.

**ii) content translated well into electronic (illustrations, charts, graphs etc.)**

Twelve libraries would use this as a criterion.

**iii) high cost of the print title**

Eleven libraries said yes to this criterion.

**iv) complete content of the print version (e.g. ads, classifieds etc.) is available in the electronic version**

Eight libraries identified this as a criterion they would consider.

**v) fulltext electronic content is stable & long term availability is guaranteed (e.g., the electronic version is available through a publishers' package rather than an aggregated index)**

Eight libraries identified this as a criterion.

**vi) other (please identify)**

* To date we haven’t dropped print subscriptions just because they were available electronically. We’ve dropped print for other reasons – primarily low usage compared to cost. Availability in electronic format factored in to some titles that were on the cost/benefit edge.
* Our budget has a lot to do with decisions – we cannot usually afford to pay for both
* Availability on more than one online database
* We favour Canadian titles and usually don't put them on the "potential drop" list
* Some considerations include:
  + Issued no later than the paper version
  + Archival availability - Journal content, beyond the most recent issue/year, must be easily accessible at the desktop. Content for the subscribed years must be owned by the library.
  + Server reliability - The speed of loading/accessing the content must meet our users' expectations.
  + Licensing restrictions - The license must allow the cancellation of the print journal title. The licensing agreement must not be overly restrictive regarding local use, i.e. simultaneous users allowed, printing of content allowed, Interlibrary Loan privileges, proprietary software/hardware restrictions, etc.
  + Printing capability - The content must print from personal workstations or networked printers utilized at our institution.
  + User Data - Vendors should provide regular usage data for the titles that we subscribe to.
* Because of budget constraints we have just dropped several subscriptions to

print journals.  The print journals identified for de-selection were titles that were available to us full text via an aggregator. We compared the print titles we were receiving via our subscription agent against the title list on 3 databases that offered full text access.  Our goal was to cut print subscriptions to a dollar value equal to our budget cut.  We were very fortunate in that we were able to cut print subscription to a value of about $300.00 more than our budget cut.

* Occasionally all of these might be considerations
* If the print version is a magazine rather than a journal e.g. a culinary arts magazine like"Gourmet" where it is imporant to see the colour illustrations, or where the magazine is for recreational reading like "Macleans", I duplicate in print because I feel that this title is more appropriately used in print
* When for the same "print spend" we can obtain online access to more titles from that publisher, i.e. via a package, we have done this.
* We developed a list of titles for which there was full text access. These titles were considered candidates for cancellation unless other factors intervened. These included: popularity as a browsing journal, format (i.e. visually rich art journals, cost (we were more likely to retain a subscription if the journal was inexpensive), and most importantly, embargo period. There were a number of key journals for which subscriptions were retained due to currency needs.

We also instituted a practice of reconsidering cancelled journals for reinstitution if the embargo period changed, or if the title was removed as a full text journal by the supplier.

* Criteria for ownership of print periodicals: visuals: photos, advertisements, graphs, charts; browsing: foster interdisciplinary reading; research over time: to track how scholarship has changed; long print runs of journals (most full-text starts inthe 90’s); assignments: find an experiment, find advertisements, find job ads, look at this journal/trade magazine; unique programs: need specific materials often not online; full-text coverage not available or affordable; provides a collection for new students (e.g. ACP) which is easy to access (no computer skills needed); local history titles
* Not all in formal policy, but agreed to by periodicals selection committee in minutes . General guidelines for print cancellation include:  content is easily usable online (ie. not heavily graphics, statistics or required for ads or browsing ease),  retention policy is short (under 10 years), not heavily used in print, and we have some assurance that electronic version is stable.   Major academic journals with long runs are usually not cancelled, but we plan to review that policy in close consultation with departments to identify key journals for print acquisition in the coming year.
* It would depend on the cost of the electronic title and the "quality" of the access. One of our requirements is that all electronic resources must be managed via IP filtering and be available to our users off campus. We do not manage titles that require a user name and password. If the electronic content is stable, covers a long enough time frame and does not have an embargo we would cancel the print subscription. Many of the titles in the Health area would fit into this category where price is high but the "quality" of access is important.

**4. If you have dropped print titles in favour of electronic, did you engage in any kind of publicity campaign directed at faculty? If so, how successful were your efforts?**

* Dept Head was notified that the paper copy was going to be dropped in favour of the electronic
* Mostly successful, in a few cases we have re-subscribed to a print version of the title while still keeping the electronic subscription. Embargos are a big issue.
* We discussed it with the departments specifically affected and they seemed to understand. Actually they were appalled at the cost of institutional subscriptions for some of the science journals.
* Before we drop, we send around a list to faculty. Sometimes just the department (if it's one title). A few years back, we recommended dropping quite a large number of US titles and sent the list out to all faculty. We ask for feedback - e.g. please let us know if you agree or disagree with dropping these, and if no-drop provide a rationale, we give them a more than one month deadline so nobody can say they didn't get it. We have had good responses to this.
* I presented the plan for this to our Senate Library Committee, departmental library representatives, and library user groups. I was also invited to faculty meetings in several departments to discuss it. Overall the response has been very positive. We have tried to make the financial implications very transparent so people can see that we have done this to free up money to purchase new content, and they like that outcome. As a generalization, the response from the Science departments has been enthusiastic, with almost no exceptions. The Arts and Soc. Sciences people are on board, but with some reservations (and a few holdouts).
* We did not engage in a publicity campaign. We did more of a “for your information” thing.   We let the chairs of the programs and the deans know that we had to absorb a budget cut and how we had achieved that cut in the least harmful way possible.  They got a list of the titles that had been identified for de-selection of print.  We asked if they had any concerns about a specific title to let that concern be known to us.  I got 4 email messages stating cases in favour of keeping specific titles in print.  The cases presented were solid (i.e. one of our faculty members sat on the editorial board of one journal) and we did not cancel 4 or 5 titles.  The cost of these titles fit within the $300.00 window we had to work with.  One program chair asked that I meet with him to clarify the process of de-selection. After that meeting, he seemed content with what we had done.

I don’t know if what we did was necessarily the best way to inform our clientele of changes.  It seems to have worked for us because we had few options to pick from and our choice was the least disruptive.

* When we find an item that we are satisfied with the electronic coverage in the databases we may contact faculty and explain what we are doing.  We did not get much faculty resistance if we could illustrate that the item was still available another way.  And sometimes we gave them a choice based on cost
* Generally on this campus and others I have been on, faculty are anxious to get the electronic versions. A very, very small minority object citing archival issues. So publicity isn't used to advertise the transition. The librarians in each area are expected to advise their faculty of significant changes, usually as a good news story.
* Yes - it was not very successful.  Some faculty really don't know how to use electronic resources and I don't believe that they read those titles that are now electronic only.  Some departments decided that they would rather pay for the print themselves than lose the print.  In these instances, I relented and kept the print because I don't want to create other collections across the campus.
* Each year the librarians make up a list of suggested cancellations (expensive, low use, online fulltext) and we send this to faculty who would be affected. Most of the time they agree with us. If they don't we keep it going. It's very informal.
* UBC: Yes—see URLs listed in 1). We also sent a postcard out by campus mail.
* We have contacted science faculty [regarding] the CRKN databases and they are fine to cancel. I also informed our library advisory committee, and will be meeting with science dean and chairs later this semester.
* We did send out information on this to our departmental library reps and asked for feedback. The strongest negative reaction to cancelled subscriptions was from the history department. We made a couple of compromises there as a result. While a few still mourn, the majority are happy with the increased access to articles allowed by full text subscriptions.
* No campaign, but we consult with department chair and faculty.
* The reference librarians work with faculty in their areas to develop and encourage the use of electronic resources, whether databases or electronic journals. We use announcements on Lotus Notes to alert staff and faculty to new electronic acquisitions. We also, on our webpage under Highlights > New titles in the Library > post lists of new electronic resources.

**5. If you have dropped print titles in favour of electronic, what, if any, reactions have you experienced from faculty, students and others?**

* Students are usually delighted that it is available fulltext electronically from on and off campus. Have found that age has a lot to do with faculty reaction, younger faculty have no problem as they are very familiar with the web and electronic use as with the older faculty in some cases their knowledge and skills of how to search makes it very difficult for them but the reference desk will do any searches and locate articles, print out and send.
* Mostly a positive response. Increased access (on & off-campus, plus when the Library is closed) are cited as definite pluses.
* So far, no negative reaction once we explain why and show off the journal databases online. Then they're hooked.
* Overall the reaction from faculty has been one of acceptance.  I did get a few phone calls and messages supporting the method we had chosen to absorb the budget cut.  We managed the decrease to the budget and prevent any loss of access to information or resources. We did not announce the changes to students.
* Little reaction
* Generally very positive, wanting to know when the rest of the hard copy will be made "electronic"
* We've done this now for 2 years. We received a number of responses the first time, but the 2nd year, few responses came in. Users are eager for the online access and are usually willing to sacrifice having the print issues.
* So far, no opposition.
* No big problems, since we usually keep print if they object so far.
* Students have been generally positive about electronic access, especially off campus. Faculty have been very supportive of the move in this direction as well.

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