



# Job Descriptions in Perpetual Evolution: A Result of “Going Electronic”

Kathe S. Obrig, MLS, Associate Director, Collections and Access Services, Anne Linton, MS, AHIP, Director, Library Services,  
Cynthia Swope, MLS, Print and Electronic Serials Librarian  
Himmelfarb Health Sciences Library, The George Washington University Medical Center, Washington, DC.

## BACKGROUND:

In 2004, Himmelfarb Library began a formal project to convert all but 150 of the print journal titles to electronic-only access. Up until this point, all paid subscriptions were in both formats.

### PRINT SUBSCRIPTIONS:

Serials Department handled all the traditional work involving print serials: acquisitions, check-in, claiming, binding, etc.

**Serials Librarian – 1.0 FTE**

**Bindery Assistant – 1.0 FTE**

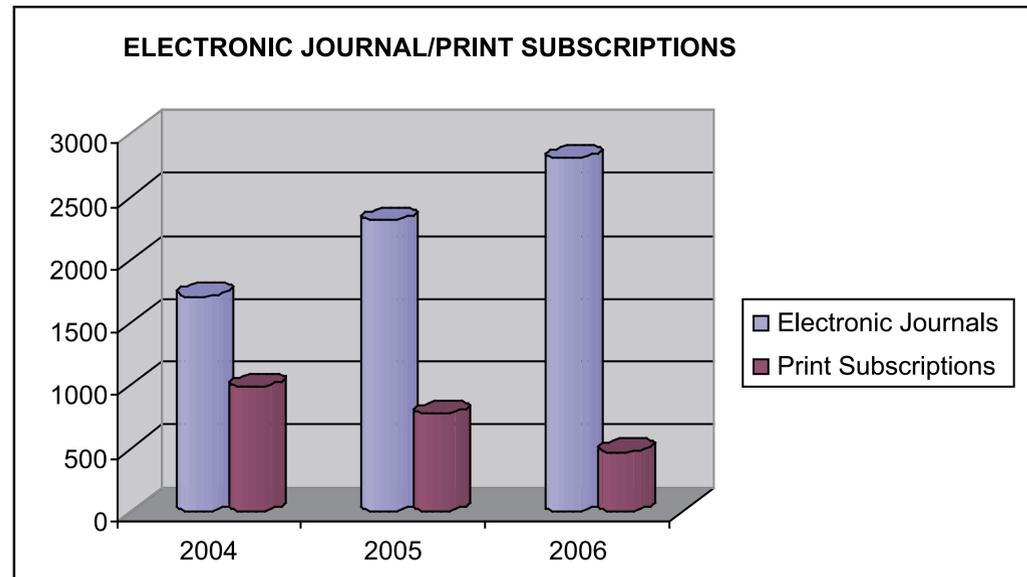
**Serials Technician – 0.66 FTE**

### ELECTRONIC SUBSCRIPTIONS:

All responsibilities associated with electronic journals as well as other electronic materials such as databases, textbooks and other Internet resources were handled **outside** the Serials Department by:

**Electronic Resources Librarian – 0.50 FTE**

**PROBLEM:** The change of the print to electronic title ratio in the collection resulted in job descriptions that no longer described actual activities required to process and manage the serials collection.



## OBJECTIVE:

All the job descriptions in the serials department needed reassessment to address the projected increase in electronic journals. The Print Serials Librarian job had already been rewritten to reflect both print and electronic responsibilities (as Print and Electronic Serials Librarian), but the revision of all jobs in the department was necessary before that change could be fully implemented.

## METHODS:

- All duties of the Serials Department staff and those considered more technical in nature from the Electronic Resources Librarian position were compiled.
- Statistics were consulted and projected to show the decrease in some activities and the increase in others due to the format change.
- Duties were then divided amongst the positions and allocated considering level, function and volume in each format.
- Both librarian positions with duties focused on electronic journals and general electronic resources were again consulted to assure the correct division of all electronic responsibilities.

## RESULTS:

The two non-professional positions in the serials department were rewritten to reflect the current serials organization.

### Increasing/reassigned duties identified:

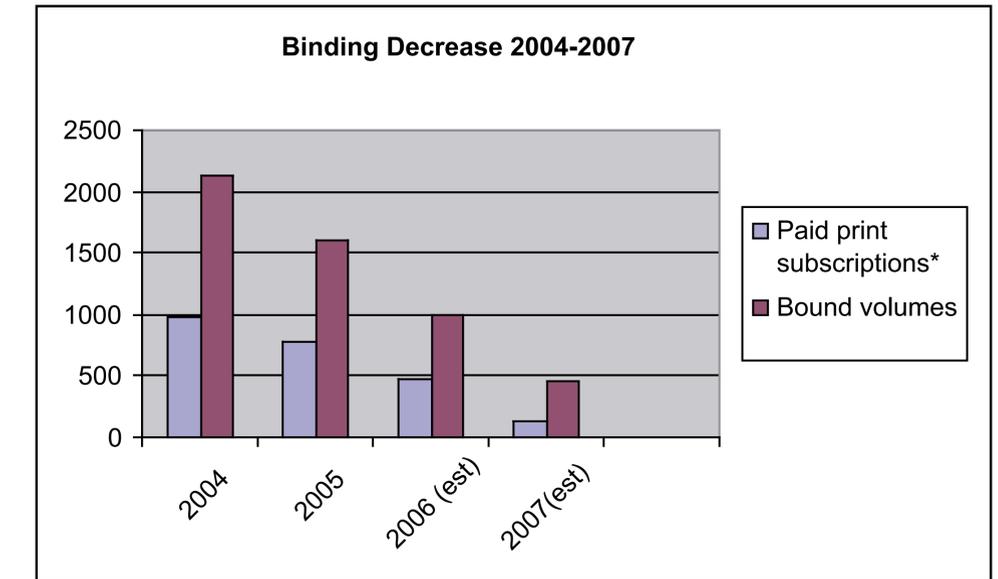
- Maintaining the electronic journals A-Z list-- data entry and link-checking
- Troubleshooting electronic journals access problems
- Creation and maintenance of: Ovid J-codes and Ovid Links; PubMed LinkOuts; SFX
- Other electronic journals management activities

### Decreasing duties identified:

- Print check-in
- Claiming for missing and damaged print issues
- Binding – all aspects

The Library Technician position, which had formerly been a 0.66 FTE became a full time position. Many of the technical duties for electronic serials that were accomplished previously by the Electronic Resources Librarian were moved to the library technician.

The Bindery Assistant became a part-time position. With a decreasing number of print journals to bind, this position does not require as much time to send off a diminishing portion of print titles for binding.



## CONCLUSIONS:

- The Serials Technician now spends time with tasks managing both print and electronic journals
- The Electronic Resources Librarian focuses on electronic databases, books, contract negotiation and general Internet-based resources.
- Both the Electronic Resources Librarian and the Print and Electronic Serials Librarian now have less time devoted to technical duties, thus freeing them up for higher level activities.
- Making modifications in all positions within the Serials Department allowed for full implementation of the changes already made in the librarian position. While these changes had been more gradually transitioning, full departmental reassessment allowed for completion.
- The Bindery Assistant can devote extra time to cataloging changes, or other similar tasks required to maintain the electronic collection at the direction of the Serials Technician or the Librarian.
- The Print and Electronic Serials Librarian will continue to assess the changes to workload which accompany the increased number of electronic journals to correctly maintain the activities mix in a changing environment.