

Bridging the Electronic Journal Gaps: Just How Far Back Can the Collection Go?

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Objective

To assess the costs and availability of an electronic backfile collection to replace the bound print journal collection

Overview

•With 2008 subscriptions, the library completed a format conversion from fully print to predominantly electronic for years 1995 to the present

•A proposed potential decrease in library space stimulated investigations into eliminating the bound print collection –without losing content—from 1980 to the present (or whenever the electronic subscription began).

•Primary considerations included availability of the electronic backfile content, as well as the costs of purchasing that content.

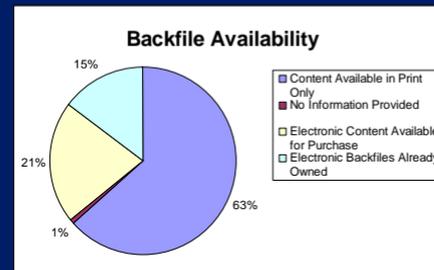
Title	Current Publisher	Current Backfile Available	Year	Cost	Package	Package Cost	Backfile Cost	Print?
Journal of the American Medical Association	McGraw-Hill	Yes	1980-2008	\$1,500	Single	\$1,500	\$1,500	Yes
Journal of the American Medical Association	McGraw-Hill	No	1980-2008	\$65,000	Big Deal (>40 titles)	\$65,000	\$65,000	Yes
Journal of the American Medical Association	McGraw-Hill	No	1980-2008	\$4,000	Small Deal (<40 titles)	\$4,000	\$4,000	Yes

Methods

Library Operations staff undertook a title-level analysis of collection using an Excel spreadsheet listing each title for which the library owned bound volumes.

Data was gathered for each title owned in print to identify:

- Electronic backfiles already “owned” by the library
- Currently available electronic backfiles
- Currently unavailable electronic backfiles
- Years represented in the electronic backfiles (from at least 1980)
- Prices of electronic backfiles when available
- Estimated prices for electronic backfiles that were not listed (derived from all available prices)



Results

Analysis of the gathered data led to the following results:

- 15% of the backfiles are already owned in electronic format
- 21% of the titles are currently available for purchase
- 63% of the titles are not available at this time

Costs were then compiled, using a combination of definitive prices and estimated prices.

- Some backfiles were only available for purchase within a large “big deal” package (>40 titles). The average cost of this type of purchase was \$65,000”
- Other titles only available in smaller packages (<40 titles) had an average cost of \$4000 for a library our size.
- Single titles had an average cost of \$1,500 for a library our size
- Estimated cost (for currently available backfiles) for a library our size: \$875,000



Conclusions

- 36% of the collection has backfile representation, 1980-present.
- Collecting electronic backfiles was not a cost-effective solution for our library and may not be cost-effective for many other library budgets at current prices.
- At this time, full electronic conversion is not a possible substitute for the bound print collection in its entirety.

Future Implications

Both availability and cost are likely to change over the next few years, so it is important for the library to:

- Continue to monitor price and availability of electronic backfiles
- Compare costs between maintaining print and electronic backfiles

Preservation issues will likely need closer attention:

- Devising an electronic collection preservation plan before converting a bound print collection to an electronic collection is essential.
- Justifying a new budget model may be necessary to support this conversion and its preservation.