

Faculty Luncheon: Electronic Only: Are We Ready?
March 2, 2001
Browsing Room, Knight Library

Approximate # of attendees: 50

Notes taken by Julie Palmer and Sheila Gray.

Deb Carver, Interim University Librarian, introduced the theme of the luncheon: "Electronic Only: Are We Ready?" There are two reasons for this luncheon: 1) to show appreciation to our library representatives, and 2) to establish a mechanism to receive feedback regarding electronic resources. The library spends approximately \$400,000 each year on electronic journals and databases. The library links directly to 1,000 journals and has access to 5,000 more. However, the Library has not yet relied on electronic copies as a permanent archive. The responsibility of the e-journal has been to improve access. There have been four reasons for this stance: 1) the market is unstable, 2) there is no real economic advantage, 3) there has been no commitment to provide perpetual service, and 4) there has been inadequate access to desktop computing.

In the present, however, there have been some changes. The library has been seeing publisher and 3rd party solutions. There are some guarantees for perpetual access and the long-term readability of resources. Consortial agreements can be made where one library will maintain a print copy. Publishers are unbundling products, so the libraries can buy an e-journal independently of the print version. The cost savings, however, are unsubstantial. Electronic journals cost about 90% as much as print journals.

There are four reasons that have prompted today's discussion:

1. the University's new funding model does not provide additional funding for library resources
2. we have cancelled 14% of the library's journal collection since 1992 - spending money on duplication when so many unique titles are being cancelled does not make sense
3. space is at a premium: Science & AAA Libraries are in negative territory; Knight Library is beginning to experience a shortage in shelving space
4. the campus community now has better access to desktop computing than in the past

Three people will be speaking on their personal experiences with electronic journals:

Will Davie, Associate Professor in Philosophy; Scott Monroe, Professor in Psychology; and Faye Chadwell, Head, Collection Development Department.

Speaker #1: Will Davie, Philosophy

Will enjoys having a print copy, but he is gradually using remote access more. He recounted how hesitant he was about losing the card catalogue but admitted that he is now a big fan of Janus. He has had mixed experiences with electronic resources. He sees remote access and search capability as positives while the response time can be a negative. He reported that most of his colleagues have not begun to use electronic versions. But, they would prefer electronic-only if that would prevent further serials cuts. He feels that Philosophy has been cut to the bone in past serials cancellations. People in his department have told him that graduate students are not comfortable with electronic journals. In summary, he feels that people would adapt moving to e-only if this was needed for economic reasons, but he hopes the transition will be "gentle and gradual." He suggested providing training opportunities for students and faculty to become more knowledgeable in accessing electronic material.

Speaker #2: Scott Monroe, Psychology

Scott reported that his colleagues in Psychology have mixed feelings about e-access. He spoke of several positives and negatives that they discussed:

- Availability - sometimes you are able to access exactly what you need; other times you discover an issue is missing, cannot get online, computer goes down, etc.
- Printing - color capability is very useful, rather than just black & white
- Archiving - concerned with how older journals will be maintained

- Romantics - his colleagues enjoy the library surroundings and browsing through journals and books; they do not want to trade this serendipitous experience for staring at a computer screen
- Accessibility - electronic journals can be accessed from places other than your office

Scott concluded that access to scholarly materials is what is important, whether it is obtained electronically or through print. If technical glitches occur, he hopes one could still come to the library to look something up.

Speaker #3: Faye Chadwell, Collection Development

Faye provided the following comments about the concept of electronic-only:

- 1) Electronic-only is not an entirely new path we are taking. We have been subscribing to electronic-only reference works since CD-ROMs came into being in the late 1980s. We have approximately 110-115 electronic reference titles.
- 2) It is not always the best option for every resource. Art librarians know of the less than poor quality of images on computers and the legal complications of securing copyright. Also, CD-ROM format has questionable archival capability, and it often runs on software that becomes quickly outdated.
- 3) When we talk about going electronic, it does not mean everything will be digitized all at once. We still spend most of our resources on print materials and much information is not even available in electronic format
- 4) Electronic version does not necessarily mean we will save money. The cost savings occur in the acquiring, cataloging, binding and repairing of materials.
- 5) E-access allows users to seek and find information, particularly full-text resources, more easily than in print resources.

She discussed how her job has been affected with the onset of electronic materials over the last several years. Collection Development officers no longer spend all their time selecting books, developing approval plans, and replacing lost items. She now spends a great deal of time researching the longevity and compatibility of electronic materials and consortial agreements. Her responsibility as a collection development officer is to analyze how to maximize use of our limited resources. We need to be able to measure use of e-resources. The labor costs & storage costs need to be considered. It may be less money to store printed material off-site, but we lose access. But cramming books on shelves causes damage, which forces preservation/repair costs to increase.

There is a growing concern with funding specialized collections. She feels libraries should work together to support general studies and put our scarce resources into purchasing material specific to our university. For example, most libraries in this state, thanks to consortial efforts, have access to Academic Search Elite. This provides full-text access to 1,250 academic, social sciences, humanities, general science, education and multicultural journals that users can readily find and use without going to our stacks. We don't have to replace, re-shelve or rebind any of these.

A question was asked if material could be easily digitized. At one level, it is fairly easy to move information from CD-ROM format to DVD, for example. The concern is that no one knows what the electronic version will be in 100 years.

Deb thanked the three speakers. She stated that library staff is available to meet with faculty in all disciplines to answer questions relating to electronic access versus printed material. She added that we are already addressing the issues raised here today.