

A Snapshot of a Print Journal Collection

By Mindy M. Cooper

IUPUI (Indiana University Purdue University Indianapolis) University Library serves students, staff and faculty from 22 schools and academic units on its urban campus. With a current materials budget of over \$4 million, nearly 61% of that money is used to pay for serials, both print and electronic. While the dollar figures may have changed over the years, a large percentage of the materials budget has always been spent on serials. In 1998, well before the budget crises that most libraries, including University Library, have faced in recent years, librarians and staff decided to conduct a journal usage study of the library's print journal collection in order to best spend available money on serials that our patrons need and use. Longitudinal studies, such as this one, can provide large amounts of data on which to base decisions. But the data, which helps answer an initial question, can also raise more questions for those who collect it. In our case, the database helps answer how our print journal collection is being used, but it also raises the question about how the collection has changed over the years and what factors may influence that change.

After collecting print journal use data at IUPUI University Library for the past ten fiscal years and watching the collection

shrink before my eyes, I wondered if this data, analyzed by itself, could be useful for anything. In a previous article, I discussed the importance of using both electronic and print journal use data to make informed collection development decisions (Cooper, 2007). However, I have to concede that librarians can learn much about their print journal collections by doing longitudinal studies of just its use. We have been tracking use of our current print journals since October 1998 and now have use data from 1999/2000 to 2009/2010. Evaluating the data has given us insight into how use of the collection as a whole, as well as individual titles, has changed over the years. As other institutions have experienced (Duhon, 2006; Frost, 2007), University Library has had to look at making tough decisions on which titles should continue to be purchased and bound. While certainly not the only determinant, our use data has helped us make the most of our serials budget.

What Does Our Longitudinal Study Tell Us?

In addition to helping with purchasing and binding decisions, the longitudinal data highlights patterns of use for specific titles. We can see which titles are seldom or never

Table 1

Title	# Years in Top 10 Most Used
Consumer Reports	7
Economist	6
Newsweek	6
Rolling Stone	8
Science	7
Time	9

used, as well as those that are used frequently. For University Library, the most frequently used titles are not scholarly, but popular press or trade publications. These titles constitute a very small percentage of the serials budget. Table 1 lists the titles that have been among the top ten most used for the fiscal year six or more times in the last ten fiscal years.

Additionally, we can use the data to help “market” those titles, especially the scholarly (and more expensive) titles, which are rarely used, by using them or referring to them during instruction sessions with students or moving them into higher traffic areas where people will take notice of them.

Another interesting statistic that comes from our “top 10 titles” is the percentage of their use in relation to the use of the entire

collection declined, the sheer number of titles in the collection has also been greatly reduced over the years. This reduction in the number of titles also is reflected in the shelving statistics for each fiscal year. Table 2 provides data for the number of titles in the journal use study for each fiscal year, as well as the number of new issues shelved in our current periodicals area. The implication of the shrinking collection is declining cost associated with processing, binding and storing these periodicals.

Also included in this table is the number of “packages” or “bundles” of journals and the number of journals comprised in packages that University Library subscribed to in a given fiscal year. One will note that these bundles were not recognized for the first full fiscal year. This was remedied in 2000/01.

Both the number of packages and the number of titles in packages has been decreasing in the last five fiscal years. A huge drop in the number of titles in packages occurred in 2002, when we switched our subscription to IEEE (108 titles) and ACM (52 titles) from print to online only. But this situation is not unique to University Library. Karla Hahn, Director of the ARL (Association of Research Libraries) Office of Scholarly Communication, commented in 2006 that there was “rapid movement away from collecting print versions of bundled titles” due to real or perceived publisher discounts on electronic subscriptions and that publishers were “encouraging this movement” (Hahn, 2006).

Comparing Fiscal Years

While we can find helpful and interesting information about the use of our collection by looking at all the data from our longitudinal study, the comparison of the list of titles studied in two different fiscal

Table 2

Fiscal Year	# of titles	# of packages	Use of Top 10 Titles	Total Current Use	Top 10 Use as % of Total Use	Shelving: New
2000/01	3043	22	3394	24846	14%	25776
2001/02	2865	38	2093	21590	10%	24945
2002/03	2609	38	2078	14772	14%	22299
2003/04	2597	66	1925	11862	16%	21664
2004/05	2362	63	1391	9534	15%	21201
2005/06	2333	67	909	7267	13%	19877
2006/07	2245	61	933	6829	14%	19794
2007/08	2066	59	892	5197	17%	17653
2008/09	1471	51	663	4162	16%	15189
2009/10	1057	29	863	3658	24%	9955

collection. Table 2 shows that this percentage had been fairly consistent until 2009/10. Table 2 also shows the dramatic decline in the total use of our print collection over the course of our study. Other academic libraries have experienced similar declines in the use of print resources in general, both journals and monographs (Martell, 2008; Kriebel, 2008).

Not only has the use of our current

years provides a snapshot of our library’s transition from print to electronic resources and a look at the condition of the publishing industry.

Throughout the print journal usage study, for which I have been solely responsible since its inception, data has been collected on the reasons why titles are removed from the study.

Comparison of 2000/01 & 2009/10 Studies

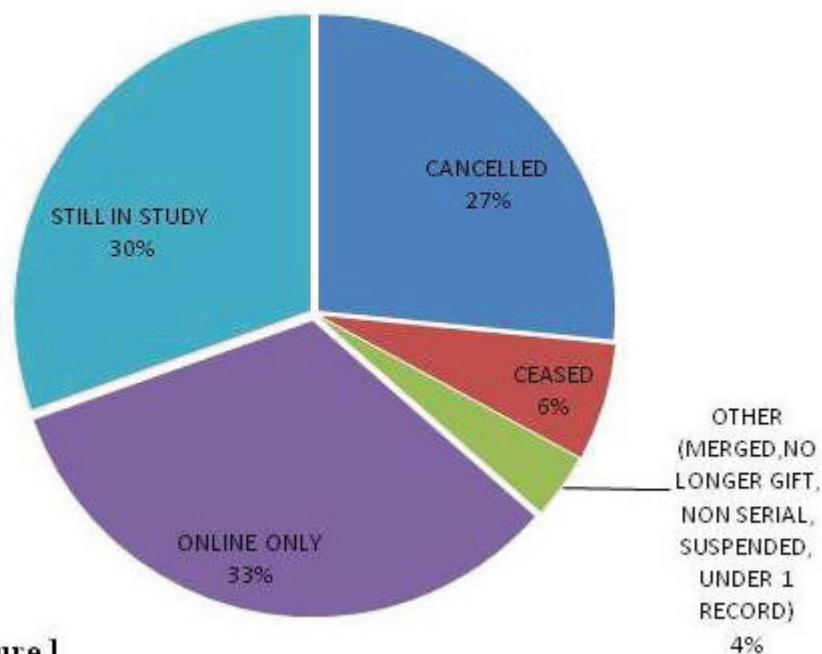


Figure 1

Tracking use of a title stops when that title merges with another title, becomes an annual publication, is no longer donated to the library, has ceased publication, has been switched to online only, or is canceled by the subject liaison. I compared the title list for 2000/01 to that of 2009/10. Figure 1 presents the findings of the comparison.

Over 2/3 of the titles that were in the journal use study during the 2000/01 fiscal year were no longer available to our patrons in print by the end of the 2009/10 fiscal year. The greatest number of these titles was switched from print to online only. According to David Lewis, Dean of University Library, academic libraries will benefit from moving from a print to an electronic journal collection in terms of processing time and collection management (2007). One could argue that University Library is making strides in shaping our print journal collection to fit the vision of Dean Lewis. A future study could be done to compare how many subscriptions we still have to those titles that have been switched to online only and the use of this electronic collection.

The State of Print Journal Publishing

Another noteworthy statistic to come from this study is the percentage of ceased titles. Six percent of the titles from the 2000/01 study had ceased publication by the end of 2009/10. October Ivins writes that in the scholarly

publishing industry, "Competition is heating up, not only for STM [scientific, technical, and medical] titles, but also for those in the social sciences and humanities. The market is becoming more and more monopolistic with fewer independent publishers, and few societies published by nonprofit presses" (Ivins, 2005). But not all of the ceased titles from our collection were scholarly. University Library has always had a mixture of popular press and academic titles in its collection. During economic difficulty, smaller publishers and companies that publish newspapers, popular and trade magazine, which rely heavily on advertising revenue, may find it difficult to continue to publish these resources. Glenn S. McGuigan asserts that "advertising generally accounts for 80% of revenues for newspapers, 60% for popular magazines and even up to 100% for business trade magazines" (2004). Competition and declining ad revenue may be contributing factors to the number of ceased titles University Library has had over the last 9 fiscal years. This is certainly another area where more research could be done.

Conclusion

Although libraries should look at both print and electronic journal use to get a clear and complete picture of their collection's use, a longitudinal study of the print journal collection can provide an interesting and

helpful snapshot. Analysis of our data provides evidence of our move from print to electronic format, helps determine our workflow in terms of processing and shelving, influences our binding decisions and highlights titles that are in need of further “marketing” or promotion. As libraries’ print journal collections, such as ours, continue to shrink, so will the number of use studies of print collections. For those libraries that continue to conduct such studies, the resulting data can prove useful.

Journal of Business & Finance Librarianship, 10(1), 13-26.

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