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# Heard on the Net: One Byte, Two Bytes, Three Bytes for Dollars. All for E-Books, Stand Up and Holler!

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## ADVISOR REPORTS FROM THE FIELD

# Heard on the Net

## One Byte, Two Bytes, Three Bytes for Dollars. All for E-Books, Stand Up and Holler!

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In a recent article published in the July 2010 issue of *Collection Management* (vol. 35, nos. 3 and 4: ISSN: 0146-2679), Dracine Hodges, Cyndi Preston, and Marsha Hamilton outline some of the basic problems occurring with e-book acquisitions in academic research libraries. Their article, entitled: “Resolving the Challenge of E-Books,” outlines a number of the issues concerning e-book uptake in the academic market such as the lack of simultaneous publication with print versions, the academic budgetary crisis, and the lack of an e-publication standard that works on multiple devices. It is a very thoughtful overview of where the academic library market stands at the dawning of a vital and expanding e-book marketplace, and it considers some of the basic issues that need to be addressed before full adoption can be met in the library marketplace. In addition to this article, some really thought-provoking e-mail exchanges occurring on the major electronic discussion lists regarding e-book provision and uptake by libraries have reached some of the same conclusions.

Alongside these discussions, new e-book pricing models are beginning to emerge for libraries to explore. In a patron-driven (demand-driven) model, catalog records are entered into a library’s OPAC; a patron “selects” a title by clicking on the 856 links in the MARC records and spending a specified amount of time looking at or reading the electronic copy. In other models, content starts out Open Access and a library can opt to buy limited branded access with metadata records to load into an OPAC; upgraded purchasing options allow for perpetual access and more refined selection. Last but not least, a model referred to as evidenced-based selection is now available and is discussed later in this article.

Patron-driven models have moved beyond the early adoption into the early majority stage with numerous libraries now experimenting with different publishers and providers. To read a bit more on patron-driven models, please see Eric Hellman’s blog from 21 June 2010 <<http://go-to-hellman.blogspot.com/2010/06/patron-driven-e-book-acquisition-crab.html>>.

This column will explore the last two purchasing models, which I was introduced to at the 2010 American Libraries Association Annual Conference in Washington, D.C. Both hold promise as new ways to purchase e-books in libraries and provoke interesting questions about the future of e-book purchasing.

Bloomsbury Academic is a scholarly imprint that publishes researched books across the humanities and social sciences. Their researched titles all carry a Creative Commons license allowing readers non-commercial use. Given this, what would a library need to purchase? To begin with, Bloomsbury is offering a basic membership model that would be a low annual subscription providing a library with the ability to brand the site, include pre-established MARC records in a library OPAC, and access to usage statistics on the titles provided. A library can choose this model and it would be akin to paying an

annual access fee for content records and services. However, a library can also opt for what is being referred to as a research membership. That option offers the services of basic membership along with a set list of approximately 50 titles deemed research provided for perpetual access as both e-pub and PDF downloadable e-books; that material is made available through a library’s authentication system (IP, Shibboleth/Athens). The cost of this membership/subscription would be the basic membership fee plus a surcharge based on the number of titles included for perpetual access. A third institutional sales model would include the basic membership services along with an option to purchase individual e-textbooks titles; libraries would choose the number of concurrent users who have access to these e-textbooks. This model, referred to as the teaching and learning membership, would entail an annual subscription based on the print book price multiplied by the number of concurrent users and minus a discount for any multiple title purchases. If a library selects unlimited access to any of the e-textbooks then downloadable files in e-pub and PDF are made available. If a library chooses concurrent usage of the e-textbooks then the access is available only online. Lastly, Bloomsbury also offers a print membership; that option allows a library that has chosen the research membership or the e-textbook membership to pay for printed copies of the titles in the collection at a substantial discount on the standard retail price. These would be one time purchases, more like a standing order than an annual subscription charge, and would, of course, provide perpetual access to the content.

Libraries are used to paying surcharges or access charges for set content provision, so depending on the set price of the basic membership, it is very likely that this model could be readily adopted by libraries in the U.K. and the U.S.A. The research membership with the perpetual access for 50 titles each year also could be a readily adopted model given the content provided and the cost associated with this membership level. The biggest question here is whether the humanities and social sciences faculty and libraries are ready and willing to commit their budgets in e-books along with how much uptake Bloomsbury achieves with their imprint and branding in these disciplines. Given the recent shuttering of Rice University Press’s open scholarship model (*Chronicle of Higher Education*, 19 August 2010: <<http://chronicle.com/blogPost/Rice-U-to-Close-Its-Digital/26342>>), which was almost primarily humanities and social sciences digital texts, this is not a question to consider lightly.

In the U.S., the e-textbook model could potentially be a harder sell. Academic research libraries in the U.S. have tended to shy away from the direct purchase of textbooks in print. However, given the public outcries regarding the costs of textbooks, this model could perhaps become one that helps solve the concerns over the escalating costs of this content stream. It really depends on how well integrated a library becomes with courseware and other services provided on a campus. If an overall campus information architecture platform is implemented

along the lines of the Kuali open library environment, then e-textbook provision could become a more integrated part of library services. In this case though, the technological infrastructure would need to come before the adoption of the purchasing model could become fully successful on a large scale in the U.S.

The next model to explore comes from Elsevier and is called Evidence-Based Selection (EBS). Elsevier is promoting EBS as a new and flexible pricing model primarily for e-book titles in the sciences. The basis of this model is for back-content starting in 2009 with annual costs and going back to pre-2007. A library selects which of the e-book collections they would like to access from broad subject categories such as agricultural and biological sciences, chemistry, energy, mathematics, etc., and then pays an upfront access fee that has been calculated based on the net value of the chosen e-book collection(s). Unlimited access is provided to the collection(s) selected for a twelve-month time period. When the twelve-month period is up, the library then chooses which titles to purchase and keep in perpetuity. These selections can be made on the usage seen during the twelve-month period and the cost for all retained e-book titles can be up to the value of the initial year-long fee. Once a purchase is made for titles in perpetuity, there are no annual maintenance costs associated with the purchase and no requirements for digital rights management software.

For a library that has shown consistent use of scientific monographs, this model provides a way to capture the most used resources, provide them more conveniently online, and continue to provide ready access to them on a regular basis. Some librarians have mentioned that for scientific research monographs, especially monographs that are at least a year old, the usage in print has been minimal and it was felt this would not necessarily provide them with a worthwhile return on investment for the initial upfront twelve month access fee or in continued perpetual access. While it is good to hear there are not any set digital rights management software applications with these collections, one is still left wondering if there really isn't some type of page limitation set on printing or number of downloads that is outlined in the contract for this model of purchase. In the end, it will need to be decided by individual libraries if this is a model worth experimenting with or pursuing locally.

In both cases of e-book pricing, it is obvious that library acquisitions models are changing to be more supportive of both library services and evidence-based selection. There are sure to be more variations on both these models in the near future from other providers and publishers. It is an exciting time to be involved with exploring these purchasing models and determining which ones will work best in our local environments. ■



### ▼ From Your Managing Editor: Tenth Annual Readers' Choice Awards

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dying the waters for how JSTOR was originally envisioned. No longer does the "moving wall" for older materials simply apply <<http://www.jstor.org/>>.

#### **Lemon Award**

**Predatory Open Access Publishers** In our twelve years of publishing, the worst rankings ever given to a suite of publishers has been given to about 10 vanity Open Access publishers. The author of the review, Jeffrey Beall, noted:

These publishers are predatory because their mission is not to promote, preserve, and make available scholarship; instead, their mission is to exploit the author-pays, Open Access model for their own profit. They work by spamming scholarly e-mail lists, with calls for papers and invitations to serve on nominal editorial boards.

Check-out these "bad boys" in our review at <<http://charleston.publisher.ingentaconnect.com/content/charleston/chadv/2010/00000011/00000004/art00005>>

**Wiley Online Library** What a long and winding road from Blackwell Synergy (itself an amalgam of Blackwell Science and Blackwell Law and Humanities), through Wiley Interscience, and now all rolled up into the most prosaic of brand names. Along the way everything got more expensive and it's little more than a house of PDFs. ■