Plan for Serials Cost-Reductions and Efficiencies

As discussed in the library’s annual report for 2009/2010, the costs for print serials are significantly higher than the costs for electronic serials. Not only do the direct costs for print serials (subscription prices) out-pace the cost for electronic serials, the indirect costs (claiming, shelving, binding, etc.) are many times greater for print serials. In addition, usage differs as well; print serials are used significantly less than online serials. This results in an average cost per use for print serials of $279, while the average cost per use for the electronic serials we track is only 74 cents. To address this problem the library plans to investigate the following cost-saving initiatives. It is hoped that some of these changes will also result in efficiencies that make print serials more accessible and used more frequently so as to reduce the cost per use from the current, staggering amount to a more acceptable amount.

Print Serials Cancelations

- As part of its plan to relocate its current subscriptions to the second floor to make room for the creation of electronic classrooms on the lower level of the library (for developmental Math courses), in 2006 the library canceled its subscriptions to print journals that were also available electronically in the OhioLINK Electronic Journal Center (EJC). Since the EJC is a permanent repository, it made sense to discontinue paying for duplicate content freely available online. However, since that time other titles have been added to the EJC. The library will cancel any current print subscriptions for journals added to the EJC.
- Without a professional contact at Stark State College of Technology, communicating concerns over the potential for canceling their journals duplicated in the EJC has been a problem. Now that there are professional librarians, a list of journal titles to be considered for cancelation has been sent to their Library Director. Although Kent State is reimbursed for the subscription costs and the cost to bind their journals, some indirect costs (claiming and shelving, for example) are not recovered. The library will reduce these costs through these cancelations.
- To prepare for future cost-reductions, the library will prepare a list of serials to be canceled that are available online but not in a permanent repository. The problem is that if such a database containing a canceled print journal is no longer available to Stark Campus users, the online content goes away and will not be recovered. Titles to target might include popular magazines, whose content is less critical over time (like Newsweek or US News and World Report).

Print Serials Not Needed for Preservation (Binding)

- Another permanent repository of serials is JSTOR. Unlike the EJC, JSTOR journals have a “moving wall” of content. For some titles, content is complete up until the last 5 years, for example. Users will have access to every volume except the last 5 years. For those titles, it may not make sense to cancel the subscription. However, there is no need to preserve (bind) those titles. Individual issues can accumulate for 5 years and then be discarded once the content is available via JSTOR. The library will evaluate all of its current journal subscriptions and identify all JSTOR titles. The library will cease
• The library has already investigated the possibility of coordinating its serials binding with the Kent Campus Main Library. Discussions have lead to a plan that will solve two problems. The first is the cost of using a commercial binder. Although the Stark Campus and Kent Campus use the same commercial binder (H.F. Group), because the volume of binding is so much higher for Kent, they pay less per volume than Stark. In addition, Stark has a minimum shipment size of 50 volumes. This makes it difficult to send frequent, regular shipments of print serials to be bound. Combining shipments with Kent eliminates that requirement and allows the Stark Library to send fewer materials out on a more frequent basis. So overall costs for binding are lowered. The second problem is that the current process at Stark creates a long time period between when a set of “bindable” issues is removed from public shelves and returned as a bound volume, once again available for use by the public. A recent shipment was calculated at more than 2 months. Kent ships issues to be bound on a bi-weekly schedule. Accounting for the extra time to collect the issues, package and send them to Kent via the regional campus courier, unpack, process, and shelve bound volumes returned from the binder suggests that the content will be inaccessible to users to a period of about 3 weeks, easily reducing the time by at least half. The plan is in place. Once the binder’s automated system is coordinated with KSU’s library system it will be implemented.

• Perhaps the most difficult indirect serials cost to calculate is personnel costs. Currently, those duties are performed by the Serials Librarian. One of the advantages in coordinating binding with the Kent Campus is that the tasks relegated to Stark Campus staff could be performed by student assistants. This will free up the Serials Librarian to pursue other professional activities and reduce indirect personnel costs for binding print serials. As a possible next step in reducing indirect print serials costs, the library will investigate the possible of coordinating other serials activities (checking in new issues, claiming missing issues, etc.) with the Kent Campus.