Liaising through Numbers: Implementing a Transparent and Sustainable E-resource Assessment Plan

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Introduction

Electronic journals subscriptions and databases account for the majority of a Library's budget. It is important to consistently review these resources and inform stakeholders about major collections decisions in a way that is sustainable for employees.

Objective

Find a way to manage electronic resource maintenance, inform decisions about cancellations and renewals, track learning trends over time, and increase transparency about collections decisions.

Checklist

1. Identify priorities and create a calendar
2. Create a renewal template with relevant fields
3. Determine data collection method and responsibility
4. Select appropriate analysis tools if applicable*
5. Choose consistent data reports*
6. Make decisions and further analysis
7. Identify stakeholders with which to share information
8. Implement system to solicit feedback and share information

*Collection assessment tools can help identify concerns such as: collection overlap, author affiliations, percentage of open access content, and forecast unbundling/ cancellation scenarios.

*Counter data (currently in release 5) provides consistent report across many major vendors. There are reports for title, database, and platform level usage. Using the same report for all journals, all databases, etc. can help create a direct comparison for usage and for calculating cost per use.

Questions

Who is responsible for collecting data?
What are our assessment priorities? Some methods include: reviewing most expensive subscriptions first, or looking at a specific subject area
Whose feedback is important to consider?
What system(s) do we have in place for collecting data? Consider: vendor contacts, access to vendor portals, SUSHI harvesting through ILS or another database
What are the best communication channels to reach the library? The University?

Other Considerations

Ethical practices of the vendor
Accessibility
Barriers to Discovery
Site maintenance and changes
Staff time investment
Library principles and priorities

Stakeholders

Library administration
Liaisons/ subject specialists
Public-facing employees
System specialists
Acquisitions employees

Conclusion

Creating a transparent and sustainable e-resource assessment plan is possible with planning, forethought, and consistency. It is important to clearly define responsibilities, and ensure that data collection and assessment work is integrated into day-to-day. Communicating decisions about collections can enhance relationships and trust with both the larger library and the institution.

Title	Metric_Type	2019	2020	2021	2022	AVG Use	CPU
Evolutionary Microbiology	Total Item Request	317	279	321	407	319	$7.51
Journal of General Virology	Total Item Request	30	12	13	28	20.5	$20.17
Journal of Medical Microbiology	Total Item Request	843	800	787	782	793.5	$2.25
Microbiology	Total Item Request	655	676	589	708	665.5	$3.22

This is an example of usage for a journal package that had a large price increase. We used C5 TR_J1 Total Item Requests as the measure, and calculated cost per use from calculating average usage against the journal price.