

INTRODUCTION

Electronic journals are an increasingly critical part of library collections. Even small libraries have access through aggregated databases and state-wide agreements to thousands of titles. Acquiring e-journal content involves more complex processes than buying print serials, often requiring a license and negotiation.

As the number of e-titles available in libraries grows, questions about how to manage them increase proportionally:

- Should e-journals be represented in the catalog?
- Should catalog records be linked directly to the journals themselves?
- Should patrons have lists of journals to consult that include both print titles and electronic versions? How can such a list be produced?
- Once the library has a title online, is canceling the print subscription safe?
- Can the decision to cancel be based on vendor-supplied use data?

Technical terms related to e-journal access and management constantly enter the language of librarianship. What is a link resolver? How is it different from a metasearch engine? When H.W. Wilson announces implementation of an “SFX-powered interface,” how will this added feature change a familiar database? Does the library have to do anything to make the new interface work?

The nonstop changes in the e-information landscape and its underlying technology compound the challenges libraries face. What will be the next big thing?

This report provides librarians with an introduction to the knowledge needed to build, maintain, and manage e-journal collections. It is divided into three chapters:

- Chapter 1 discusses the various ways in which e-journals can be acquired, beginning with a comparative analysis of the major aggregated databases.
- Chapter 2 addresses acquisitions issues, including pricing models and trends. Practical advice is offered on licensing and negotiation.
- Chapter 3 takes up questions of management and access. Introductions to e-resources cataloging and linking technologies lead the discussion. Tools and products aimed at solving various e-journal management problems are reviewed and differentiated. This chapter also addresses e-archiving, measurement of use, and ways to keep up with developments in the field.

Background on technical and product-related developments is provided when a historical context contributes to an understanding of the current state of the art.

Because technology changes continuously and those in the e-information business must constantly update their products to survive and thrive, some facts in this report may already be out-of-date. The practical suggestions for licensing and negotiation and the general guidelines for evaluation remain relevant, though the details of particular products and processes may change.