

# Chapter IV

## Selecting, Acquiring, and Renewing Electronic Resources

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### **ABSTRACT**

*The purpose of this chapter is to provide in-depth and comprehensive coverage of the workflow for electronic resources (e-resources) from selection to acquisition. Along the way, it addresses major steps, processes, procedures, and issues in selecting and acquiring e-resources and acts as a teaching tool for librarians who would like to learn best practices for managing the life cycle of e-resources. This chapter covers various facets of the selection process, including tools, challenges, and criteria, and provides a checklist for collection development librarians for evaluating the resources. It also addresses acquisitions workflow from verification of a resource to ordering and acquiring the product and provides an additional checklist for acquisitions librarians for reviewing license agreements.*

### **INTRODUCTION**

In the last decade, there has been a sharp rise in the number and complexity of e-resources in library collections. Moreover, use patterns are shifting from print to electronic materials. Because of the proliferation of e-resources and user preferences for the electronic format, these resources are becoming essential mainstays of any library collection. Today's e-resources consist of wide varieties of materials including journals, books, indexes, abstracts, encyclopedias, reference books, aggregator databases, and full-text or partially

full-text databases. As these resources change at a very rapid pace and as libraries continue to build larger collections of e-resources, finding ways to manage them effectively, from selection to licensing, is becoming a major challenge for librarians.

This chapter covers various aspects of the life cycle of e-resources and emphasizes major steps for the librarians involved in the workflow of selection and acquisition. The objective of this chapter is to include methods of handling these resources and to provide a practical and valuable tool for librarians in any library.

## **BACKGROUND**

Selection of information sources is the core collection development function, and the primary objective of the selection decision for any format is fundamentally the same: satisfying user needs. With the advent of e-resources, job responsibilities of selectors have changed drastically. In the past, selectors recommended new titles on an individual basis using traditional selection criteria such as quality, relevance, use, and cost (Welch, 2002). Selectors analyzed faculty and user requests for new titles and made requests to add to the collection. But in the cyber world, the role of selectors has changed remarkably as e-resources have expanded and developed. Selectors must now address new issues as part of the selection and management processes, issues such as easy and quick accessibility for users, continuous content evaluation and technological and legal concerns.

Similarly, due to the overwhelming growth and availability of a variety of electronic products, the workflow of acquisitions has changed significantly, becoming more complex. Though the acquisitions process is closely connected to collection development in any type of library, it has distinct functions. The primary responsibility of the acquisitions department is getting the materials needed by the library's users in the most desired format and in the most efficient and economical manner. Thus, acquisition is defined as the technical process of ordering, receiving, and paying for an item after the intellectual decision to purchase an item has been made (Chapman, 2004). Even though the process of identifying, ordering, and paying for materials such as books, serials, and media is very similar to that of electronic formats, the life cycle of e-resources is more convoluted than that of print resources. It requires additional levels of details including tracking, recording, and reviewing the license and business terms, and

investigating variable pricing ranges. Acquiring information for an electronic product is often much more time-consuming than for print resources. It requires more time for decision making at every step as well as higher levels of skills and knowledge among staff (Wilkinson & Lewis, 2003). Also, it can require additional budget allocations due to higher subscription costs than for print collections. Due to the increase in the number of electronic formats, acquisition librarians are no longer just an expert in acquiring materials, having knowledge about publishers and book vendors, and identifying incomplete citations as well as finding out-of-print materials. Now they are also responsible for solving more creative problems in the areas of collection development, licensing, cataloging, technology and other issues related to e-resources (Kennedy, 2004).

Finally, the renewal and cancellation of serial subscriptions are a systematic recurring process in any type of library. Due to high inflation rates for serial subscriptions in all formats, shrinkage of budgets or buying power, and the emergence of new products, selectors are required to assess their collections for potential cancellations during the renewal process. Several traditional criteria are considered for reviewing serial subscriptions, such as low usage data, significant inflation rates, cost per issue, type of publication, relevancy, quality, duplication in other formats, and coverage in index and abstracting services (Foudy & McManus, 2005). Evaluating e-resources is equally important, and similar criteria can be applied for such a process.

Even though some processes remain the same, the role of collection development and acquisitions librarians has been transformed by e-resources. Moreover, an electronic resources (ER) librarian/coordinator has emerged who may carry out various responsibilities of the acquisitions librarian.

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