

Chapter XII

One-Stop Shopping for Journal Holdings

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ABSTRACT

In this chapter, the author advocates providing a unified, seamless interface—one-stop shopping—for the full range of journal literature available and of interest to library patrons. After outlining the reasons why libraries should provide this access, the chapter reviews the tools available for making journal collections accessible, then analyzes the categories of journal literature to which a library could provide access—print and individual electronic titles, aggregated collections and big deals, free titles, free articles, and articles available for purchase. The chapter discusses the challenges associated with each category, as well as tools available to overcome these challenges. It closes with a brief look at future trends that will affect the ability of libraries to provide coherent, seamless access to journal literature.

INTRODUCTION

A patron stops at the reference desk and asks the librarian, “Do you have this journal?” This scene is played out in libraries across the world every day, yet the answer is no longer a straightforward yes or no. Where does one look to answer the question? The catalog? A Web-based list of journals? Both? Somewhere else? There is a disconnect between what the patron wants to know—“How do I get this article?”—and what library catalogs and other bibliographic control tools are designed

to answer —“Does the library own this item?” This disconnect did not exist when journals were available only in print. Either the desired item was in the library’s collection, or it was not. But now the range of possibilities is much greater:

- The library may own the item in print and/or microform
- The library may have purchased electronic access to the item, in addition to or instead of the print

- The library may have purchased access to an aggregated database that includes the full text of the journal the patron wants
- The journal (or only the specific article) may be freely available online, either on the publisher's site or as part of an open access resource (e.g., an institutional repository or PubMed Central)
- The article may be available for a fee from the publisher/vendor site or a document delivery service
- The article may only be available via inter-library loan.

Answering the patron's seemingly simple question may require searching several sources—online catalog, Web list, aggregated database, publisher Web site, internet search engine, and so forth—and considerable knowledge of electronic journals. So much for the simple, known-item search.

This chapter will explore these issues in depth, focusing on the patron's experience in searching for journal literature. The specific objectives of this chapter are as follows:

- Convince the reader that one-stop shopping for journal literature is a worthy goal, with an emphasis on how it meets user needs
- Demonstrate the extent to which this goal can be achieved with current tools and standards
- Explain the challenges and limitations that prevent a library from achieving true one-stop shopping
- Explore what would be needed to bring us closer to this ideal

BACKGROUND: HISTORY AND LITERATURE REVIEW

While this chapter will primarily focus on electronic journals, it is useful to briefly review

challenges associated with serials, regardless of format. Serials caused problems in library catalogs before the advent of electronic journals, and these problems continue today, whether or not the serial in question is received in print or electronically. In order to have a serial in a library catalog, one must catalog it, which can be a daunting prospect. Osmus (1996), Cole and Williams (1992) and Williams (1997) provide an overview of serials cataloging issues through the advent of electronic journals in the early 1990's. Once in the catalog, serial records can be difficult for users to find and interpret. Snaveley and Clark (1996) provide a clear, readable, and all too accurate view of the pain a library user must endure when using journals in academic libraries. They address a variety of problems with searching for journals in online catalogs, as well as the difficulties users experience when attempting to interpret holdings and locate actual articles. Fescemyer (2005) analyzes both the difficulty finding journals with one-word titles and the complexity of many catalog records for serials, concluding with a plea for single records, shorter displays, consolidated holdings, and consistency across catalogs. According to Shadle (2006), the Functional Requirements for Bibliographic Records (FRBR) standard may provide a way to make it easier for users to find and interpret serial records in library catalogs. Finally, Black (2006) provides an excellent overview of bibliographic control of serials, both print and electronic. As these resources demonstrate, serials are by nature complicated—complicated to catalog, complicated to manage, and complicated to use. The advent of electronic journals has increased the complexity significantly, as explained in the introduction to this chapter.

The management of electronic journals has followed a fairly consistent pattern in most libraries, a pattern that is well documented in the literature. The remainder of this section will provide a brief overview of the history of electronic journal management in libraries, based on a review of the literature and the author's experience. A more

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