Review of Periodical Subscriptions at Memorial Library

As is typical for a library at a liberal arts college, over 60% of Memorial Library’s funding for materials is committed to periodical subscriptions. Add subscriptions to full text databases, and that percentage climbs to nearly 80%. We ask you to help us verify those commitments from time to time, to ensure that these resources still reflect your teaching and research needs.

This is not a cancellation project. The outcome may simply confirm that the current subscription list is correct. It has, however, the potential to free funds that can then be used to support new curricular areas and to acquire other needed resources.

The Review

Attached is a list of the library’s subscribed periodicals associated with your academic department. We ask that the department use whatever method it chooses to assign each title on the list one of the following categories, and return the list to Sherre Harrington by Friday, April 29, 2011.

- A: Access only to this title is sufficient
- O: Ownership of this title is needed in some format
- P: Print subscription to this title is needed (give brief explanation)
- C: Cancel this title altogether; neither access nor ownership is needed
- R: Refer to another department (note department name)

More about the Categories

Assigning Categories A and O: Access vs. Ownership

Assign Category O, Ownership needed, for core titles in your discipline. Assign Category A, Access sufficient, for secondary titles.

In general, the library purchases periodical content in three ways:

1. Subscriptions to specific periodicals, either print only, online only, or print plus online.
2. Subscriptions to all of the titles from a particular publisher. This is normally an online only subscription. When we take this approach it is usually because the publisher offers a significant subscription discount for their full list vs. selected titles.
3. Subscriptions to aggregator databases. Aggregator databases bring together the content from periodicals from different publishers, sometimes with a subject focus and sometimes to provide broad access to the periodical literature.

Again in general, the first two types of subscriptions offer both access to and ownership of the content published during the subscription period. For print subscriptions, obviously, the physical issues we receive remain our property even if the subscription is cancelled or the journal ceases publication. This is also true for nearly all online title-specific and publisher-specific subscriptions. Only in rare instances will we accept a license that does not include what is referred to as archival or post-cancellation access to the content. The goal is a license to an online publication that parallels the security of owning the physical issues of the periodical.

With aggregator databases, however, archival rights typically are not an option. The licenses of a few non-profit projects, such as Project Muse and BioOne, do include archival provisions. Others, such as JSTOR, do not. And none of the for-profit aggregator databases, such as those from ProQuest, Wilson, and Ebsco, include archival provisions. The database vendors enter into contracts with publishers to
provide access to periodical content under a variety of conditions. In addition to the fact that the library does not actually own the content, a title in one of these databases may be embargoed for some period of time or it may never contain the entire publication (advertising, for example, is seldom included).

Assigning Category P: Print Subscriptions

While the specifics will vary, most academic publishers have moved to a pricing structure that imposes a surcharge on maintaining a print subscription. For example, for Oxford University Press journals the online-only price is the base price, with the print only price calculated at 110% and the print/online combined at 120% of the online only price.

Still, there are situations in which it is highly desirable to maintain a print subscription. We will continue to subscribe in print to a title that is also available online if:

1. The print edition of the periodical is more complete than the online edition. The online edition may be missing content, there may be a difference between the physical format of the print and online editions that inhibits use, or the online edition may not be as current as the print. If you know that any of these conditions exist, it will be helpful for you to note them on the list. However, we will investigate each title to ensure that a print subscription does not need to be retained for this reason.
2. A department desires to maintain a print collection of selected titles to facilitate browsing and serendipitous discovery.

Assigning Category R: Referral to another Department

The simplest way to create the departmental lists was to map Library of Congress call numbers to departments, and then use a title’s call number to identify it with a department. We manually adjusted some titles, but since there are few interdisciplinary call numbers, and the classification system does not always map exactly, you may find on your list titles that you think should be reviewed by another department. Please note on the list the department to which the title should be referred.

More about the List

The list includes all current directly subscribed periodicals associated with a particular academic discipline. Titles we receive only through aggregator databases are not included.

In addition to the journal title and a blank field for you to use to assign the category, the title list includes the partial Library of Congress classification number and general description, the 2010 institutional subscription price, how the title is retained and the approximate cost of microfilm or binding, how many times any microfilm or bound volumes have been used in the last 10 years, and the dates for which the library has print or microfilm holdings of the title.

Please note that the usage data is limited. Use data before 1999 is not available and the data given may include use to fulfill interlibrary loan requests from other libraries. It does not include use of unbound or online issues.