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Optimizing KBART guidelines to restore perpetual access

Kelly M. Blanchat
CUNY Queens College

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Kelly Marie Blanchat

Queens College, City University of New York, Flushing, New York, USA

Abstract

Purpose – This case study aims to demonstrate how proactive use of KBART guidelines can assist librarians in the analysis and restoration of journal titles with post-cancellation perpetual access.

Design/methodology/approach – After experiencing a 25-per cent decrease in the collection budget, the Queens College Libraries (QCL) faced losing electronic journal content with cancellations to Big Deal licensing agreements. By using tools such as Serials Solutions, Ex Libris SFX and Microsoft Excel, the library was able to optimize KBART guidelines to analyze and restore journal titles under perpetual access licensing clauses. The implemented workflow mirrored the process to create "Big Deal" renewal spreadsheets at Springer Science + Business Media.

Findings – By using KBART guidelines to manipulate and analyze data, the library was efficiently able to identify journal titles for perpetual access. Because the resulting data were formatted within KBART guidelines, it could then be transferred to a knowledge base for enhanced content discovery.

Practical implications – While there are numerous variations on perpetual access rights across hundreds of vendors, the workflow developed at QCL can be replicated, or altered on a case-by-case basis. By highlighting the work necessary to implement perpetual access clauses, this article makes a case for both standardizing licensing clauses as well as increased vendor adoption of KBART guidelines.

Originality/value – This case study examines the workflow of an Electronic Resources librarian with vendor experience, the overlap of concerns between librarians and vendors, and the ways in which to analyze journal holdings without an automated system.

Keywords Licensing, Electronic journals, KBART, Perpetual access, Post-cancellation, Serials management

Paper type Case study

Introduction

Perpetual access is essential – especially for libraries with dwindling funds – as it directly correlates to long-term collection investments. Perpetual access should be initiated at the beginning of a new licensing agreement with the negotiation of a specific clause, which is especially important when licensing bundled electronic journals in the "Big Deal". Such a clause will state that, in the event of a cancellation or non-renewal, the licensee will retain access to previously subscribed content.

Deciding to cancel the Big Deal is disheartening, to say the least. If perpetual access has been negotiated retaining access and ensuring discoverability is essential, though not straightforward: eligible titles will need to be identified, and amended holdings will need to be provided for A-Z lists and link resolvers (OpenURL). These amended holdings will not be standard journal packages, and, thus, not available as a collection or a target to easily activate.

This article will outline the process developed by Queens College Libraries (QCL) to efficiently analyze, confirm and maintain post-cancellation perpetual access to electronic journals. By using the workflow described below, approximately 2,600 journals – each covering varying copyright years between 1996 and 2013 – were re-activated for the collection.

Background

Queens College

The QCL at Queens College, one of the senior colleges of the City University of New York (CUNY) system, had not used a dedicated Electronic Resources librarian until August 2013, yet had been licensing electronic content. Prior to establishing a dedicated Electronic Resources librarian, post-cancellation access had not been thoroughly maintained.

During the 2013-2014 fiscal year, QCL experienced a 25 per cent decrease to the collection budget. To maintain as much content as possible renewal priorities were re-evaluated based on cost, COUNTER statistics and resource interest; licensing clauses were reviewed to verify cancellation allowances and perpetual access rights. To retain previously subscribed content, a process had to be devised to ensure the effects of cancellation would also be cost-efficient for internal workflows.

Time and financial limitations required that current resources had to be optimized, such as Microsoft Office,

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ProQuest Serials Solutions and Ex Libris SFX. With a background in academic journal licensing at Springer Science + Business Media (Springer) the Electronic Resources librarian designed a method to identify titles for perpetual access from Big Deal collections and then generate amended library holdings. The process, which was based on the method of creating journal renewals at Springer, optimized Microsoft Excel by using KBART compliant data. By mimicking the methods from a major publisher, QCL was able to construct internal spreadsheets for documentation and discoverability without investing in any additional software.

KBART (Knowledge bases and related tools)

The United Kingdom serials group (UKSG) with the national information Standards organization (NISO) established the knowledge bases and related tools (KBART) Working Group to address issues related to OpenURL linking from the UKSG report, *Link resolvers and the serials supply chain* (United Kingdom serials Group, 2007). KBART Phase I Recommended Practice NISO RP-7-2010 addressed metadata-formatting guidelines for journals (National Information Standards Organization, 2010).

Though resource discovery is the ultimate goal of the KBART guidelines, its foundations for data formatting and delivery make it applicable for use with analytical workflows as well. It should be noted that KBART guidelines are just that guidelines and not industry standards or law. Vendor participation is encouraged but not mandatory. As this article will show, increased application by vendors and librarians alike will allow for more efficient data management leading to more accurate content linking.

Springer science + business media

Springer is a scientific, technical and medical publisher. From 2011 to 2013 the author – current Electronic Resources librarian at QCL – worked in academic journal licensing at Springer. During this time Springer transitioned many subscribing libraries to the Big Deal, which rolled previous *a la carte* subscriptions into a bundled, all-inclusive package. The bundling workflow utilized KBART guidelines in Microsoft Excel by using the V LOOKUP formula to reference and compare title holdings between journal packages. In the final stage, KBART compliant Excel files were provided to A-Z lists and link resolvers. Because the process did not involve library-specific software, it can be replicated without an additional financial investment.

Literature review

When the Electronic Resources Librarian decided to derive a workflow from processes used at Springer, it was, in part, due to limitations of software available at the library, and, in part, due to a lack of library literature documenting post-cancellation workflows. Numerous search queries for literature on serials management and post-cancellation workflows were conducted, with most relevant results received from the following three queries:

1 "KBART";
2 "electronic journal" AND ("perpetual access" OR "post-cancellation"); and
3 "big deal" AND ("perpetual access" OR "post-cancellation").

The consulted scholarly articles and conference proceedings span from 2005 to present, which is due to the development and evolution of the KBART working group, and trends in academic journal licensing and access, such as the Big Deal.

As an early example for the need of KBART guidelines, albeit without that terminology, Marshall and Kawasaki (2005) at Montana State University discuss an approach to managing complicated serials data using Microsoft Excel, emphasizing the need for internal title tracking; they do not discuss using data for resource discovery. Still, six years later Price and Duggan (2011) note that proactive e-journal reconciliation is time consuming and labor intensive. To answer to the time-consuming and disorderly nature of journal reconciliation, this article will show how KBART formatted data can be beneficial for analysis, efficient title reconciliation and ultimately enhanced content discovery.

The KBART literature is predominantly conference proceedings about how the guidelines will enable more accurate content linking (Glasser, 2011; McCracken and Womack, 2010; Zhu *et al.*, 2011). Blake and Collins (2013) note that KBART developments may eliminate formatting errors that impede the availability of individual lists in discovery systems (Blake and Collins, 2013, p. 25).

Bascones (2012) argues that lack of standardized data undermines a publisher's ability to provide data to libraries for perpetual access verification. Calvert (2013) discourages the use of isolated spreadsheets to maintain perpetual access information (Calvert, 2013, p. 72). At QCL, such lists are essential but not isolated, as the initial goal of the KBART working group was to improve data communication for link resolvers. Beh and Smith (2012) note that at Texas A&M 17 of 19 licensing agreements have perpetual access clauses, yet only transfer journals have been activated with perpetual access. From a 2010 survey of academic research libraries on perpetual access for journals, Carr (2011) calls for more stringent licensing negotiations for perpetual access (Carr, 2011, p. 13). Based on the experience at QCL, these clauses should be better negotiated to ensure uniform rights – and, thus, uniform workflows – throughout licensing agreements.

Overall, pre-KBART literature addresses the ways in which libraries can maintain journal data on their own, while later literature looks at how library vendors and publishers should adopt KBART guidelines. There is not, however, a wealth of current literature about how libraries can adopt KBART guidelines for internal workflows to proactively enhance OpenURL linking or other content discovery. Predominantly, post-cancellation and archival access issues are addressed with licensing references to LOCKSS, CLOCKSS and Portico (Luther *et al.*, 2010, p. 75). However, this too focuses on what vendors can do to adopt essential library services. A growing problem at QCL was the lack of time and technical resources to reconcile post-cancellation titles with perpetual access rights. Such lack accounted for a significant loss to the library's collection.

Beyond the call for better data transfers and vendor-supplied information, this article will address how KBART guidelines can be used by libraries as a proactive approach to reconciliation and discovery, thereby ensuring long-term investments to the collection.

The process

Once potential Big Deals were identified for cancellation, the library moved forward to determine which titles would be eligible for perpetual access. Perpetual access titles were reviewed before assessing any alternative renewal options, as any restored titles will have a long-term affect on the library's collection and, thus, influence future subscription decisions.

How KBART helped

To effectively analyze large amounts of journal data in Microsoft Excel, three sections of KBART are essential: NISO RP-7-2010 section 5.3.2.1, which underlines how data should be labeled, specifying sixteen separate data fields (National Information Standards Organization, 2010, p. 15); NISO RP-7- 2010 section 5.3.1.1, establishes how metadata should be formatted into tab delimited values (National Information Standards Organization, 2010, p. 13); and NISO RP-7- 2010 section 5.3.1.4, which notes that content providers should provide separate files for each individual content package offered (National Information Standards Organization, 2010, p. 14).

Immediately, Serials Solutions files can be identified as KBART compliant: Serials Solutions has endorsed the use of KBART, meaning the organization has an approved file and content format and is able to process KBART formatted files[1].

Gathering data

For the workflow in Excel, two spreadsheets are needed to identify titles for perpetual access: a "master" spreadsheet and a "referencing" spreadsheet.

For the master spreadsheet, it is ideal to export the Serials Solutions Big Deal collection list into Excel, as it will be inherently KBART compliant. Early in the cancellation process, such a collection will likely still be active in the knowledge base and should be easy to identify and export locally.

The referencing spreadsheet should be representative of purchased content, either from *a la carte* licensing agreements prior to the Big Deal, or from any Big Deal content that was directly invoiced, not complimentary. This spreadsheet will vary depending on perpetual access rights, but, in general, it can be exported directly from previous invoices or from title lists within licensing agreements. Formatting will be KBART-similar, requiring only tab-delimited values with distinct columns for "Journal Name", "ISSN", "Content Start Date" and "Content End Date". This spreadsheet is simply a referencing tool, as its name suggests.

In action

The first step to transfer an active collection to a post-cancellation collection is to create an access end date. On the master spreadsheet, the "Content Date To" column should reflect the last year of active subscription. For example, a licensing agreement cancelled in 2013 will have "Content Date To" revised to "2013" for all titles, overriding any blank or "to present" notations. See Figure 1, part A.

The subsequent workflow steps will be determined by the perpetual access clause, which will generally fall within two scenarios:

- Scenario 1: The licensing agreement grants perpetual access to all previously subscribed content. In this situation it is important to ensure that the master spreadsheet is inclusive of content prior to the Big Deal; *a la carte* titles will need to be identified and added to the master spreadsheet.
- Scenario 2: The licensing agreement grants partial perpetual access, such as for titles directly invoiced, not complimentary. In this situation, complimentary titles will need to be identified and removed from the master spreadsheet.

Identifying titles

For either scenario – whether adding content or removing content – the V LOOKUP formula can be used to identify

Figure 1 Part A: these fields represent Big Deal titles with perpetual access, cancelled after a 2013 licensing agreement; these were formerly "to present"; Part B: the ISSN column should be used as the V LOOKUP value; Part C: these fields represent *a la carte* subscriptions that have been included using V LOOKUP in the master spreadsheet; Part D: the Public Note column should reference the status of the master spreadsheet, making it distinct from any active Big Deal collections; Part E: marking Display Public Note with "No" will ensure any note is kept internal

Title (Required)	Default URL	Publisher	Public Note	Display Public Note	Location Note	Display Location Note	ISSN	Coverage Date From	Coverage Date To	
Abacus	http://onlir	Sydney Ur	Library-specific package for perpetual access. Previous collection cancelled after 2013 subscription.	No		No	0001-3072	2008	2013	
About Campus	http://onlir	John Wile	Library-specific package for perpetual acc	No		No	1086-4822	1997	2013	A
ACADEMIC EMERGENC	http://onlir	Hanley &	Library-specific package for perpetual acc	No		No	1069-6563	2008	2013	
Academic Review	http://onlir	The Institi	Library-specific package for perpetual acc	No		No	1554-1142	2010	2013	
ACCOUNTING & FINAN	http://onlir	Blackwell	Library-specific package for perpetual acc	No		No	0810-5391	2008	2013	
ACCOUNTING PERSPEC	http://onlir	Canadian	Library-specific package for perpetual acc	No		No	1911-382X	2002	2013	
Acta anaesthesiologica	http://onlir	Blackwell	Library-specific package for perpetual acc	No		No	0001-5172	2008	2013	
ACTA ARCHAEOLOGICA	http://onlir	Levin & M	Library-specific package for perpetual acc	No		No	0065-101X	2008	2013	
ACTA BIOCHIMICA ET E	http://onlir	Shanghai	Library-specific package for perpetual acc	No		No	1672-9145	2008	2008	C
ACTA Crystallographica	http://onlir	Published	Library-specific package for perpetual acc	No		No	0567-7394	2008	2013	
Acta Crystallographica	http://onlir	John Wile	Library-specific package for perpetual acc	No		No	2053-2733	2008	2013	A
Acta Crystallographica	http://onlir	Published	Library-specific package for perpetual acc	No		No	0108-7673	2008	2013	
ACTA CRYSTALLOGRAP	http://onlir	Published	Library-specific package for perpetual acc	No		No	0108-7681	1996	2013	
ACTA Crystallographica	http://onlir	Published	Library-specific package for perpetual acc	No		No	0567-7408	1996	2013	

D   E   B

relevant titles. Microsoft has online tutorials available for Excel's V LOOKUP, which locates matching values between the two spreadsheets. The "ISSN" column should be used for V LOOKUP values, which will avoid potential punctuation discrepancies from "Journal Name" values. See Figure 1, part B. When an ISSN does not have a match between both spreadsheets, Excel will return a negative value, or "#N/A".

Scenario 1: Any title that has returned "#N/A" will need to be included in the master spreadsheet, as Excel has located an *a la carte* title on the referencing spreadsheet not included in the Big Deal collection. See Figure 1, part C.

Scenario 2: Any title that has returned "#N/A" will need to be excluded from the master spreadsheet, as Excel has located a complimentary title on the master spreadsheet not granted perpetual access. In such a situation, even a decrease in content represents enhanced resource discovery by eliminating false holdings.

As the final step, a title level note should be added within the "Public Note" column, indicating the licensing agreement and date of cancellation. Marking "Display Public Note" with "No" will ensure that it is kept internal. See Figure 1, parts D and E.

Communication with a knowledge base

Once complete the master spreadsheet will be distinct from the initial Big Deal collection exported from Serials Solutions. For inclusion in the library's A-Z list, it should be uploaded as "Library Specific Holdings" and given a new distinct collection name. The data can then be used to match sources in Ex Libris SFX to update link resolvers.

Conclusion

Though there are numerous variations on perpetual access rights across hundreds of vendors, it is important to try to negotiate rights specific to your library's collection needs. It is also important to communicate the value of KBART compliance, as increased vendor adoption allows for the library to access better data for increasingly efficient and proactive workflows. With that said, it is good practice to verify all holdings customizations with a vendor representative before communicating changes to a knowledge base.

Note

1. www.niso.org/workrooms/kbart/endorsement/

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Further reading

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About the author

Kelly Marie Blanchat is the Electronic Resources Librarian at QCL, CUNY. She holds an MLIS from Long Island University and a BA from Sarah Lawrence College. Her previous professional experience includes working in academic journal licensing at Springer Science + Business Media, and in digital archiving at the Ford Foundation International Fellowships Program. Kelly Marie Blanchat can be contacted at: kelly.blanchat@qc.cuny.edu