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Possible Futures: E-Reserves, Decentralization, and Collaboration

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Possible Futures: E-Reserves, Decentralization, and Collaboration

ABSTRACT

E-Reserves is a relatively young library support service that was conceived as a strategic, decentralized response to changes occurring in curricular resource formats during the 1990s. It is a service that has since become ubiquitous in academic libraries and one that is presently facing a crisis spurred by shifts in user culture, e-learning environments, and modes of scholarship production. Challenges facing E-Reserve services are compounded by a professional culture of isolation and by the absence of best practices and internal assessment measures that can serve as effective rubrics to measure changes or test the efficacy of current service models. This analysis of the history of E-Reserve services and evaluation of the current curricular support needs of faculty and students sheds light on the current crisis and envisions possible futures for the service. The article ultimately advocates for a move towards hybrid and iterative service models and highlights the importance of collaboration and outreach to ensure the future viability of E-Reserve services.

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INTRODUCTION

One of the primary functions of an academic library is to provide curricular and instructional support services for students and faculty. In fact, most of the work we traditionally associate with university libraries—facilitating access to academic resources and course materials, supporting information literacy through outreach and instruction, and providing reference and circulation services—can fall under a curricular and instructional support services umbrella. Academic librarians, who have specialized knowledge of resource management practices, taxonomies, copyright and intellectual property, and digital literacy trends, are also well positioned to offer services that reflect new pedagogical paradigms and emerging DIY scholarship initiatives. Innovations in library services should also reflect “basic shift[s] in user culture and learning behavior” (Cheung, 2010, p.1). Some academic libraries have reimagined services to reflect the pedagogical, publishing and cultural shifts that have transformed higher education, but others have fallen behind and have seen curricular and instructional support services move outside of the library. And this brings me to E-Reserves, a relatively young library support service that was conceived as a strategic, decentralized response to systemic changes occurring in curricular resource formats during the 1990s. It is a service that has since become ubiquitous and one that is arguably in a moment of crisis. In a 2011 analysis of the state of E-Reserves in academia, librarians Kymberly Goodson and Linda Frederikson indicate that “expanded use of course management systems and other technologies in academia have presented new challenges and opportunities for libraries providing electronic reserve services. At the same time, budget constraints, staff shortages, and a handful of recent high-profile legal cases have led several institutions to implement modifications to existing e-reserve operations or to consider their elimination. Given these conditions, the current environment for academic e-reserves is one that appears to be in the process of significant change” (p. 33-34).

THE CRISIS

As early as 2004, Colorado University librarian Brice Austin predicted the ensuing crisis surrounding E-Reserves and outlined the following three possible futures: “libraries will no longer provide course reserves;” “libraries will offer only very limited course reserve services;” “libraries will offer expanded, multi-faceted course reserve services.” Ten years after Austin (2004) published “Reserves, Electronic Reserves, and Copyright: The Past and the Future” all three of these futures are being realized in different ways at different institutions. If libraries “no longer provide course reserves” (and Goodson and Frederikson remind us that some do not), it isn’t because the future of libraries and electronic resources aren’t intimately connected. Instead, the fall out is emblematic of a culture shift and an environment where the library is no longer the de-facto source for digital course material. If libraries “offer only very

limited course reserve services,” they are probably serving a niche population who have, because of a lack of technological aptitude or preference for a managed curricular support solution, opted for the full-service resource delivery model that many libraries still provide. What remains to be fully explored is what “expanded, multi-faceted course reserve services” look like. How will libraries embrace innovation now and also strategically anticipate future pedagogical, publishing, and cultural shifts? While some case studies have emerged and librarians Ophelia Cheung, Dana Thomas, and Susan Patrick (2010) have outlined some “New Approaches to E-Reserve” in their optimistic exploration of the future landscape, Goodson and Frederikson’s study conducted the same year illustrates that many libraries are still struggling to catch up to present realities.

What many recent studies of the current state of E-Reserves don’t address is the fact that the current crisis is tied to a previous one. Early adopters of the service often cite the “promise” of E-Reserves to mitigate “problems inherent in traditional reserves” including resource access, space, and staffing limitations (Austin, 2001, p.3). E-Reserves were developed in a crisis laden atmosphere and most service models were, at least initially, implemented without a real best practices blueprint or extra-institutional professional support infrastructure. On many campuses, E-Reserve services remain largely isolated from other digital library initiatives and are still, 15 years after their widespread adoption, representative of a particular moment in university culture when digital resources became widespread but faculty and students didn’t have enough technological skills or access to publishing platforms to be self-sufficient. An analysis of the history of E-Reserve services and evaluation of the current curricular support needs of faculty and students sheds light on the current crisis and illustrates opportunities for alternative futures that Austin (2004) could not have foreseen a decade ago.

THE 1990S

E-Reserve services, “started as an electronic counterpart of print reserve [s]” (Cheung, 2010, p. 1) and, like its print counterpart, is designed to provide access to course-related material. What constitutes an E-Reserve resource is largely institutionally defined and can refer to almost any digital course material including: instructor created resources like problem sets, notes, and sample tests; licensed digital library holdings; web links; streaming media; and digitized copyrighted materials. By 1999 E-Reserve services had become culturally pervasive enough that the ARL issued SPEC Kit 245 *Electronic Reserves Operations in ARL Libraries*, which revealed that 56% of reporting ARL academic libraries in the US and Canada had implemented some form of E-Reserve service. The ARL report also illustrated something interesting about the generation of E-Reserve services: conceptually, many libraries considered E-Reserves to be an extension of existing Course Reserve services, which had been delivering curricular materials in print to students for decades. In practice, this meant that many libraries didn’t hire or designate

professional staff to managing this new digital service, most of the libraries responding to the ARL survey indicated that they did not allocate a specific budget for the service, and at the time of the ARL SPEC Kit release, 70% of reporting libraries indicated that the service operation was entirely separate from other “digital library efforts” (Kristof, 1999, para. 10)—a disconnect perhaps reflecting the fact that E-Reserve services are usually managed within Public Services units which don’t traditionally manage digital library initiatives. Furthermore, a large majority of ARL respondents surveyed indicated that the service was not “scalable to a larger digital library effort” (Kristof, 1999, para. 10) (ie. integration was not possible). The study also revealed that there were variable and often piecemeal workflow and platform solutions in place at many institutions.

It is not surprising that the high pitched digital fervor that generated E-Reserve Services, which one respondent in the ARL Survey characterized as an “add-on without additional funding or staffing,” (Kristof, 1999, para. 9) did not ultimately yield a sustainable, iterative service model for many libraries. Eileen O’hara (2005), a SUNY librarian who oversaw both the “implementation” of an E-Reserves program in 1998 and the “dismantle[ing]” and consolidation of the service in 2004, described the environment of their Circulation Department during the 1998 launch of the E-Reserve program as “under siege” (p. 36). The institutional discrepancies reflected in the 1999 ARL SPEC Kit concerning the variety of staffing, hardware and software, workflow, assessment, and copyright models are also not surprising. Differences in user culture and practical budgetary and staffing considerations effected implementation decisions at many institutions. For many libraries (even those with budget and staffing constraints) E-Reserves seemed like a necessary step to provide access to digital materials during a time before learning management systems and digital institutional repositories were culturally pervasive. Many libraries also saw E-Reserve programs as essential innovations that would alleviate service and delivery related problems associated with maintaining articles and instructor created resources in print.

So in the late 1990s and early 2000s most academic libraries simultaneously built decentralized programs from the ground up to meet the needs of their patrons and to reflect the cultures of their institutions. The 1999 ARL survey revealed that “most libraries chose to develop their own ‘home grown’ systems rather than purchase a commercial product;” most libraries developed their own copyright policies; and less than half of libraries surveyed implemented processes for evaluating and improving their services (Kristof, 1999). These facts weren’t, in themselves, problematic: E-Reserves were an immediately successful, decentralized solution to a crisis. Librarians began publishing case studies and ed-tech companies released platforms that were likely to result in standardization. Even the ARL SPEC Kit was, itself, a sign that best practices were on the horizon; its explicit goal was to establish the “current state” of the service in the interest of “defin[ing] common practices, successes, and benefits” (Kristof, 1999, para. 1).

DECENTRALIZED INNOVATION

The kind of decentralized model of innovation responsible for the generation of E-Reserve services and countless other ground up initiatives in Academic Libraries has a lot going for it. Kathleen Fitzpatrick (2011), MLA's Director of Scholarly Communication, suggests that, "in the main, we [academics] are extraordinarily resistant to change [...] a senior colleague once joked to me that the motto of our institution (one that I think might be usefully extended to the academy as a whole) could well be 'We Have Never Done It That Way Before'" (p.10). The glacial pace of change means that many of the most effective changes to higher education practices happen (or at least begin) in very local contexts. Decentralized innovations by definition are not created with scalability and interoperability in mind; if they were, they would not be as efficient. Of course, decentralized initiatives can be effectively 'scaled up' but many are built in isolation from the financial, strategic, or technical infrastructure that extends beyond the local realm in which they are implemented. It's no accident that many of the libraries that have chosen to discontinue or consolidate E-Reserve Services have cited financial, strategic, or technical challenges as the primary contributing factors.

Cheung, Thomas, and Patrick (2010) acknowledge that "whatever challenges are ahead for e-reserve, *integration*, *collaboration* and *interaction* are keystones for survival and service expansion" (p.8). This echoes Austin's (2004) position that "rather than trying to make faculty teaching methods fit our vision of what reserves is or once was, we will have to mold reserves to fit the changing face of instruction and the changing realities of student participation in the learning process" (p.50). Local collaboration is one step that Public Services staff can take to integrate E-Reserve services with digital library initiatives in the interest of scalability and viability. Digital library initiatives, often thought of in terms of isolated curatorial projects, have expanded on many campuses to include a host of publishing and stewardship activities that are intended to support teaching, research, and knowledge production—particularly in the context of hybrid and online instruction. Aligning E-Reserve best practices for metadata creation and file archiving protocols with Institutional Repository standards, for example, means that IR content could easily be repurposed as an E-Reserve resource, and vice versa. This kind of local integration could particularly benefit Public Service units with professional staff shortages and in a broader sense, could result in the serendipitous creation of multiple access points for library managed digital content across platforms.

Library staff can similarly pursue institutional partnerships with units outside of the library that support teaching, research, and publishing. Through outreach, promotion, and the articulation of a clear mission that is consistent with pedagogical and e-learning initiatives across campus, E-Reserve units can become part of a broader institutional culture. From this position, E-Reserve units can more easily gauge "changing realities" and adapt to cultural shifts. Too often,

however, E-Reserve Service units remain decentralized and operate in relative isolation from other library and institutional units. This disconnect introduces further obstacles to *integration* and *collaboration* since faculty might not be aware of the service or necessarily associate the library with curricular support activities. This isolation may also present challenges when it comes to assessing the efficacy of E-Reserve services, which should be measured in relation to other instructional support initiatives.

Extra-institutional interaction and collaboration is equally important for the continued viability of E-Reserve services. The professional community for Public Services Librarians is small in comparison to other realms of academic librarianship, in part because policies and workflows are often institutionally specific and in part because these units are often comprised primarily of para-professional staff. There are listservs and digital support forums devoted to E-Reserves, although these have eroded as E-Reserve services have. There is not a designated professional association or standards group and it is somewhat surprising that a library service with digital resource delivery, copyright management, and faculty outreach functions does not have a more robust professional community. This deficit has hindered the development of best practices for E-Reserve services and aside from general copyright guidelines that are interpreted and applied variously, common practices have largely failed to emerge. Even the establishment of unified and comprehensive copyright best practices has proven difficult in the context of E-Reserves since, according to Digital Scholars David R. Hansen, William Cross M., and Phillip Edwards M. (2013), “both law and practice in this domain are less established in in many other areas of copyright law” (p. 69).

Decentralization at both the inter and extra institutional level did not cause the current ‘crisis’ in E-Reserves, but decentralization has made it difficult for many libraries to rethink the service in the face of change. The absence of an extra-institutional support community during the current crisis means that no collective solution for a new service model has emerged. I don’t mean to suggest that every E-Reserve program was constructed without a blueprint or that every institution currently faces the same crisis or has the same needs, but I will suggest that the in the 15 years since the ARL report release, surprisingly little has changed for too many institutions except for the erosion of E-Reserve programs in the face of competition from alternative commercial, independent, and institutionally created platforms. Cheung, Thomas, and Patrick (2010) remind us that “new approaches to e-reserve are indicative of strategies necessary to cope with the challenges brought about by change. To embrace these as opportunities and to make the most of them is to succeed; to dodge and avoid them is to eventually be swept away” (p. 8-9).

THE AUGHTS AND THE OUGHTS

This past spring I invited Thomas Bruno, Associate Director for Resource Sharing and Reserves at Yale Libraries, to speak to a Metro Library Association *Reserves and Circulation* Special Interest Group meeting about his experiences implementing a new platform and workflows for a reimagined E-Reserve program at Yale. I co-founded the Metro SIG last year with a colleague in an attempt to foster collaboration with other Public and Access Services Librarians and staff in the New York metro area and the turn-out at our first two meetings spoke volumes about the need for extra-institutional support. Over 30 people attended our inaugural meeting in November 2013 and almost 40 attended Bruno's presentation in March 2014. Bruno outlined institutional changes that prompted a reevaluation of Reserve Services at Yale and there was one singular moment in his presentation that really articulated, at least to me, what's wrong with the current culture of E-Reserves. Reserve services, Bruno (2014) contended, are built on "a fear-based workflow;" what was once an innovative, strategic initiative has become a service perpetuated by "#1 fear of upsetting faculty, #2 fear of failing to meet student demands, [and] #3 fear of changing policies/procedures for fear of #1 or #2."

How did this happen?

Hansen, Cross, and Edwards' 2013 survey of "Copyright Policy and Practice in Electronic Reserves among ARL Libraries" provides insight into why we're so afraid:

One of the most striking conclusions that can be drawn from these responses is that many institutions have limited means for managing and assessing their institutional practices with respect to e-reserve services. Many institutions simply lack information about the e-reserve systems in term of the number of courses using the system, the number of items posted over a semester, or how much the university expended on licensing access to materials. Many respondents indicated that compiling these statistics was a difficult and uncommon task. Even for internal compliance with copyright policies, universities should take steps to ensure that these statistics are available. Furthermore, a lack of record keeping makes it impossible compare practices from one institution to another. [...] The current lack of uniformity in terms of e-reserve collection statistics makes comparisons unwieldy, thereby stifling an accurate risk assessment on the part of librarians implementing those systems. Libraries should work to establish uniform standards to track and report these statistics. [...] Another issue revealed by this study is the overwhelming variability that exists across institutions in nearly every facet of electronic reserves. The numbers and types of items, as well as the policies themselves, all vary widely, with little obvious correlation to enrollment, endowment, level of prestige, or any other traditional metric. (p.77-78)

It is apparent that challenges facing E-Reserve services are compounded by a culture of isolation and by the absence of internal assessment measures that can serve as effective rubrics

to measure changes or even to test the efficacy of current service models. In an environment where a systematic lack of procedural awareness is commonplace, a fear based workflow reigns.

In spite of these deficiencies, there is still a compelling argument to be made for continued library involvement in curricular and instructional support initiatives and even for “expanded, multi-faceted course reserve services” (Austin, 2004). In light of the conclusions presented by Hansen, Cross, and Edwards (2013), the fact that E-Reserves face competition from other institutional units when it comes to providing curricular support is not surprising. It is also not surprising, in light of broken service models and changing user culture, that many faculty opt to manage their own curricular resources. These facts do not suggest that students and faculty have evolved beyond the library or that individuals or other institutional units are necessarily doing it better than the library can. Austin (2004) reminds us that “colleges and universities can more easily accomplish their educational mission if faculty ha[ve] more methods for information delivery [and] library reserve departments are uniquely positioned now to gather those resource delivery models under one umbrella ” (p.52).

Goodson and Frederiksen (2011) outline some of the risks that universities take on when they move E-Reserves out of the library and cite copyright non-compliance and resource instability in particular (p.48-51). In addition, some faculty still rely on full service instructional support models and often, this isn't possible when the CMS becomes the de facto delivery platform. Overreliance on a CMS platform for resource delivery poses other long term resource management obstacles that most current research fails to address; lack of standardization in file formats, naming schemas, and archiving practices mean that down the line, universities might face significant challenges or resistance from faculty who are using these platforms should they decide to transition or discontinue. Faculty, particularly in hybrid and distance education contexts, are increasingly using the CMS as an instruction tool and are ‘publishing’ original content without necessarily considering the digital stability of these curricular artifacts. Even if there isn't broad institutional recognition of the importance of digital stewardship, the rise of digital pedagogy initiatives, the information glut, and the emergence of a DIY scholarship culture make the library more relevant than ever. Digital stewardship challenges present strategic opportunities for academic librarians and E-Reserve service staff in particular to redefine their roles within institutions. To do this “we will have to be creative, willing to change and adapt” (Austin, 2004, p50). Beyond creativity and flexibility, reimagining support services will require: a comprehensive analysis of user digital resource delivery preferences and curricular support needs, the establishment of sustainable and iterative service models, extra-institutional collaboration in the interest of developing best practices, and integration with other digital initiatives.

EMERGING SERVICE MODELS AND USER CULTURE

A report compiled in 2003 by the OCLC E-Learning Task Force highlights the need for libraries to balance the creation of “conceptual and technical infrastructures that allow the library to offer pertinent services” with the flexibility to “update services as new opportunities and viable alternatives present themselves” (p.16). In practice, this means that service models must be stable and iterative before collaboration is possible. This also underscores the importance of developing an E-Reserves infrastructure with a built in assessment component and of conducting periodic evaluations: “to ensure that the library service is satisfying users’ needs, e-reserve administrators have to find out what faculty and students really want via surveys, focus groups or other methods of soliciting feedback” (Cheung, 2010, p.138).

Denver University librarians Brown and Sewell (2013) discuss the impact of a series of faculty assessments they conducted to review their E-Reserve service and subsequently, to gauge perceptions of a newly implemented E-Reserve platform. Brown and Sewell (2013) indicate “a routine survey / feedback questionnaire [...] may improve [library] staff and faculty understanding and involvement with each other in course-related content” (p.42). Austin and Taylor (2007) highlight the importance of conducting assessments at the point when changes to a service are introduced: “if major changes need to be made it [is] best to address those changes as soon as possible instead of waiting until our routines became entrenched” (p.84). Austin and Taylor (2007) also cite peripheral benefits of periodic student E-Reserve surveys they conducted at the University of Colorado, which not only led to service improvements but also, provided insight into student resource preferences and resulted in “unexpected partnerships with other campus entities” (p.88). In both of the examples cited above, voluntary surveys were used as the assessment rubric but only Austin and Taylor (2007) explicitly address their decision to use a survey format and discuss their plan to incorporate their survey with end of semester Faculty Course Questionnaire in order to generate sufficient feedback (p.85). Considering what kind of data and response rate you need when designing an assessment tool and developing distribution plan is important to ensure that data is accurate and can be usefully translated into tangible service improvements. Incidental partnerships formed through the process of conducting assessments can also open up communication channels and result in new opportunities for collaboration. Reliable data concerning student and faculty resource preferences has relevancy beyond the immediate context of an E-Reserve service unit and could help to positively shape broader e-learning initiatives at many institutions.

While some libraries have discontinued or consolidated services in response to the widespread adoption of Course Management Systems, others have begun to think holistically about e-learning environments. The emergence of “a wide range of hybrid models” (Goodson, 2010, p.36) for E-Reserve services (which require various degrees of faculty participation in resource

delivery processes and often involve platform sharing, consolidation, or integration) reflect a recognition that “E-learning integration offers libraries a powerful medium for reaching faculty and students directly as they engage in teaching, learning, research, and outreach” (OCLC, 2003, p. 6). Hybrid service models allow the library to meet faculty half way as collaborators and move away from fear based workflows. When library services begin to reflect an increasingly participatory user culture, librarians will likely discover opportunities to reconnect with “those faculty and students who have begun to ignore the library and go directly to the web for their information needs” (OCLC, 2003, p6.). In this context, E-Reserve services may emerge as one component in a nexus of support initiatives offered by an amalgam of institutional units that can be mixed, customized, and delivered through a variety of different technological environments.

Goodson and Frederiksen (2010) describe an integrated E-Reserve service model in place at University of Wisconsin-Madison Libraries where a homegrown system of “Library Course Pages (LCPs) [is] used to provide both E-Reserves readings and other library-related course and instructional content” (p.41). This kind of curated service model that incorporates E-Reserves with “links to research tools, databases, and Web sites; tips for conducting library research; information on RefWorks; and contact information for appropriate librarians” (p.41) represents a positive step towards the integration of E-Reserves with other digital library initiatives. Cheung, Thomas, and Patrick (2010) similarly describe a range of hybrid and collaborative service models and discuss the integration of E-Reserves with ILS, CMS, repositories, citation managers, iTunes U, the Knowledgebase, and media services. Some of these models demonstrate how creative repurposing of technology can enable delivery of complex multi-media resources and result in cost sharing. Some of these models also point to the staffing and workflow efficiencies that might result from the implementation of collaborative instructional support initiatives.

Platform integration or consolidation is often seen as a move towards “one stop shopping,” models for curricular and instructional support (Austin, 2004, p49). However, not every institution will opt for the one stop shop approach since large, unified platforms make iteration difficult and often require the approval of the ‘We Have Never Done It That Way Before’ committee. It is more often the small, well-integrated interoperable services that can begin to address students and faculty preferences for “easy, convenient access to services at the point of use” (OCLC, 2003, p. 8) without compromising flexibility. The one stop shop service model is, at least philosophically, the idea behind the CMS and likely accounts for the ubiquity it now enjoys. However, it is possible to present the allusion of a one stop shop model to faculty and students while maintaining discrete and interoperable shops behind the scenes. The OCLC E-Learning Task Force (2003) notes that “service convergence and interoperability of systems are interdependent concepts” and indicate that to fully achieve the “integrat[ion] [of] existing and

new library and institutional services into the e-learning infrastructure” (p.16) libraries must build connections between not collapse services and platforms. THE FUTURE: DIGITAL STEWARDSHIP, EDUCATION, AND ADVOCACY

Beyond integration, the achievement of a holistic e-learning infrastructure also requires a redefinition and expansion of platforms, resources and services to accommodate new digital initiatives and anticipate further changes in user culture. Recent developments in DIY scholarship and Open Access publishing are two areas that could be beneficially integrated with E-Reserves. In some cases, institutional scholarship production—in the form of the Open Educational Resources, digital instructional content like videos or podcasts, or decentralized DIY publishing in academic blogs or MediaCommons—is happening outside of the library. In other cases, there are efforts to tie scholarship production with resource delivery through direct integration with library platforms and services. It is no accident that many Universities are reinventing their libraries through the establishing of ‘digital centers’ where research is conducted and content is produced. Columbia University, for example, has established a Digital Humanities Center (DHC), a Center for Digital Research & Scholarship (CDRS), an Academic Commons, and a Center for New Media Teaching & Learning (CCNMTL) in their libraries. In *Planned Obsolescence*, Kathleen Fitzpatrick (2011) calls for a “radical reexamination” of publishing in universities and argues that, “just as the library serves an indispensable role in the university’s mission, so will the scholarly publishing unit of the future” (p.187). In a context where scholarship is more open and university publishing is driven more by an institutional mission rather than an economic model, perhaps the library *is* the scholarly publishing unit of the future.

If we are reinventing pedagogy and publishing, then we must reinvent the mechanisms of support. The capacity of the library to play a strategic digital stewardship role may be evident to information professionals, but is less obvious to students and faculty. In her discussion of digital publishing and preservation Fitzpatrick (2011) argues that the important difference between digital content and print content “has to do with our understandings of those media forms, the way we use them, and the techniques that we have developed to ensure their preservation” (p.123). The most important step for librarians then, in seizing the collaborative opportunities that have arisen out of recent crises, is to begin building relationships and services that reflect our understanding of media forms—in terms of the ways they are used now and will be used in the future. Institutional relationships have a productive function beyond curricular support and resource delivery; in the context of E-Reserves and hybridity, beneficial conversations about knowledge production, resource affordability, and intellectual property could develop as a byproduct of collaborations and lead, ultimately, to further innovations in pedagogy and publishing.

The advocacy role of the library can and should extend beyond the institution. The library serves as an indispensable intermediary between patrons and commercial publishers particularly in advocating for affordable access to scholarship. Course reserve services are, at a fundamental level, a direct response to the ballooning costs of commercially published scholarship and E-Reserves librarians are thus well positioned to be drivers of change in this arena. Beyond supporting Open Access initiatives through collaboration, education and digital stewardship, E-Reserve librarians potentially have access to culturally important data that capture the literal and figurative costs that libraries absorb to provide access to curricular resources. Publicized cost, lifecycle, and circulation data can increase institutional awareness about the affordability crisis, drive institutional change, persuade faculty to rethink how they engage with and produce scholarship, and put pressure on commercial publishers to keep inflation down. As Austin (2004) reminds us, the E-Reserves crisis and how we manage it has important implications for “the future of education itself and beyond that even the future of our open and democratic society” (p. 52).

CONCLUSION

The current E-Reserves crisis introduces opportunities for libraries to reassess how they define and approach digital services. There are strategic measures librarians can take to make E-Reserves an integral part of the curricular and instructional support services landscape. Through advocacy, collaboration, and institutional outreach, librarians can realize the benefits of hybridity and become active players in new pedagogical and digital scholarship initiatives. While scalability and flexibility can't be achieved overnight, librarians can work to ensure E-Reserves programs don't just slowly erode. This doesn't mean we have to rebuild from the ground up; we already did that. Instead, the path to a sustainable future for E-Reserves depends on our ability to become effective digital stewards, to anticipate cultural changes and changes in scholarship production, and to meet faculty, and students where they are and where they are going next.

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