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Kimberly R. Abrams

CUNY New York City College of Technology

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An analysis of ebrary Academic Complete at Adelphi University

Kimberly R. Abrams

Adelphi University Libraries, Garden City, New York, USA

Abstract

Purpose – This paper aims to examine the academic and financial value of ebrary Academic Complete package to the Adelphi University Libraries.

Design/methodology/approach – ebrary provided statistics and this sample was used to analyze subject usage and overlap with the print collection.

Findings – It was found that although there was overlap with the print collection, the usage statistics are high enough to warrant continued subscription.

Originality/value – This paper case study of Adelphi's issues regarding subscribing to a backfile of e-books including subject usage, print overlap, and information management.

Keywords Collection development, United States of America, information management, Electronic books, ebrary

Paper type Case study

Introduction

E-book packages are becoming an integral part of collection development for academic libraries. There are many types of packages with their own platforms, downloadable options, and digital resource management restrictions. ebrary, which is owned by Proquest, is an e-book platform that has a tiered purchasing model by which they market e-books to academic libraries. Academic Complete is considered to be the foundation of their structure, which then may be supplemented by patron-driven acquisitions, and single-title purchases. The Academic Complete package cannot be owned, but may only be leased for a yearly fee. The titles in this package change on a regular basis, and this requires ongoing digital content management which is comparable to the ongoing management of e-journals in full-text databases.

Within Academic Complete, not only can these titles be discovered through the webpac, but the package also functions as a database by allowing patrons to search full-text monographs. All titles in the collection can be accessed by multiple users, so there are no turnaways. This is especially helpful towards the end of the semester when many students may be working on a similar paper topic. The cost is relatively inexpensive and based on the number of FTE students at an institution, with prices ranging from \$6,000-\$80,000 per year (Remy, 2012). Ebrary also offers usage statistics to assist librarians in evaluating this product. This study goes beyond the basic statistics offered by ebrary by analyzing subject usage and the rate of overlap with Adelphi's print collection.

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About Adelphi

Adelphi University's main campus is located in Garden City, New York and has a student body of 8,000 individual students or 6,600 full-time equivalent (FTE) students. The University has a College of Arts and Sciences and professional schools in Business, Education, Nursing, Social Work, and the Derner Institute for Advanced Studies in Psychology. There are centers in Manhattan, Hudson Valley, and Hauppauge at which courses for the professional schools are taught. Swirbul Library at the Garden City campus is the main library with smaller libraries at each of the centers, which support bibliographic instruction and collections pertinent to the courses taught at those centers. While Adelphi has made the move to providing e-journals online, there has recently been a push to purchase and subscribe to e-books in order to increase access for all students, especially for commuter students and students at the various centers.

In the fiscal year 2011/12, the total materials budget was \$2,231,471.54 with \$1,259,970.33 spent on electronic resources. During the fiscal year 2012/13, the materials budget shifted to more electronic resources acquisitions with a total budget of \$2,291,133.83 spent on all materials and of this, \$1,516,835.23 was spent on electronic resources.

Literature review

The concept of subscription to an e-book package is reminiscent of full-text database subscriptions and "big deal" e-journal packages. Ebrary Academic Complete operates both as a database of monographs and as a set of 87,000 individual monographs with ebrary-provided MARC records that may be discovered through the library's webpac. Even in cases where

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individual e-books or e-book packages are purchased, often a hosting or platform fee must be paid in order to retain access (Armstrong *et al.*, 2009). In this sense, e-books are becoming more like continuing resource orders and less like firm monograph orders. Libraries have to change their book buying budgets to accommodate ongoing subscriptions and hosting and maintenance fees (Armstrong *et al.*, 2009).

While e-books offer the opportunity to reach patrons wherever they have an internet connection, there are significant workflow and information management issues for libraries. One major issue is that many technical services departments are still organized around a print model, but responsibilities for e-book acquisitions often cross department lines (Biesler and Kurt, 2012). Amalia Beisler and Lisa Kurt at the University of Nevada, Reno found that communication was the greatest obstacle to managing e-books efficiently, so a workflow was created that not only addressed issues within the department, but was also centered on the needs of end users (Biesler and Kurt, 2012).

At the University of Portsmouth, Anne Wordon and Timothy Collinson found that library instruction that included teaching students the benefits of e-books was a driving factor in the high usage rate of e-books. In their survey they discovered that students in the humanities and social sciences usage was the highest, and that 47 percent of male and 46 percent of female respondents mentioned that the first time they heard about the e-book collection was through library instruction (Wordon and Collinson, 2011). In this case marketing e-book collections during library instruction led to a higher probability that those students would use e-books in their research.

According to a study by Steve Sharp and Sarah Thompson, it was found that in recent years, purchasing models for e-books have become more varied. Libraries now need to decide whether there is value in purchasing individual titles, if it is more efficient to purchase large collections, or should patrons choose titles through a patron driven acquisitions model (Sharp and Thompson, 2010). In terms of Academic Complete, the model is leasing a backfile of titles. The University of York decided to subscribe to the Social Science subject collection in April 2005 and in July 2007 to subscribe to the Education collection. In 2009, it was found that out of the 14,000 titles, 41 percent of the titles were viewed. The high usage suggests that the packages were carefully selected in order to maximize usage. The cost was very low, with each title viewed costing the library £0.45 (Sharp and Thompson, 2010).

In a recent study of 18 government agencies, universities, and private institutions in the United Arab Emirates (UAE) from 2003-2010, it was found that the Academic Complete package was not being adequately used by their patrons (Kaba and Said, 2012). They found that government and private institutions saw both low usage and no annual usage growth (Kaba and Said, 2012). The main reason the authors give for the lack of use is that there was not enough promotion to end users and that the users were not very aware of what was offered (Kaba and Said, 2012).

In 2008, the University of Liverpool purchased a package of titles published by Springer with copyright dates between 2005-2008 and then made additional purchases later in 2008 and again in 2009. When the library began purchasing Springer packages, it was found that there was a high rate of duplication, so the library opted to purchase the 2010 package in 2009, which is again reminiscent of the way in which the

e-book purchasing model is more like subscribing to serials than traditional firm monograph purchasing (Bucknell, 2010). Upon analysis of the usage statistics, it was found that "each subject area [had] been well used (with the usual exception of mathematics), [and that] the number of unused titles continue[d] to diminish each year, and older titles continue[d] to attract significant usage" (Bucknell, 2010).

Basic usage analysis

When Adelphi first subscribed to Academic Complete in March of 2011, the cost for a subscription for an institution of 6,600 FTE was \$20,719.00. In 2012, the figure rose to \$22,377 and with the most recent renewal in 2013, the institution paid \$24,167.00. While the price of Academic Complete is rising faster than inflation, so many more titles have been added that Adelphi has determined that the additional content warrants these increases. The package was promoted through bibliographic instruction classes as a means for students to access books from home or if all the books on a particular subject were checked-out. Also, a link to the ebrary database is included on the library home page and the MARC records were loaded into the webpac, so that patrons could search ebrary as a stand-alone database or discover the materials through a traditional webpac search.

The statistical analysis that ebrary provides through the administrative portal is offered as part of the package and is helpful in examining the academic value to end users as well as the financial value for the institution.

From April 2011-March 2012, Adelphi users accessed 4.2 percent of the available books in the 70,000 title e-book package. The 2,922 titles that were accessed have a total list price value of \$187,033.57. During this same period, there were 5,933 user sessions. The following year from April 2012-Mar 2013, there was marked growth in patron usage. During this same time, the package grew to over 80,000 titles and Adelphi Users accessed 6.2 percent of the titles in the package. The 4,974 titles that were accessed had a total list price of \$350,425.17. From this data, it is clear that Academic Complete is adding more titles that Adelphi patrons use and by doing so provides access to academic monographs wherever the patron has an internet connection. Table I compares the number of books accessed and the list price for those titles.

One issue that must be noted is the number of pages viewed in each of these books. Even if the books are being accessed, it is pertinent to examine whether or not the patron finds that the information is relevant to their research. For 2011-12 the total pages viewed was 92,841 with the range of pages viewed per book from 1 page to 2,658 pages (the number of pages read can exceed the number of pages in the book, since multiple users are taken into consideration). The median number of pages viewed was eight pages per book and the average was 31 pages per book. From 2012-2013 the number of books accessed was much higher and the number of page views jumped to 139,766. The upper end of the range of

Table I Comparison of titles accessed in 2011-12 and 2012-13

	2011-2012	2012-2013
Total number of books accessed	2,922	4,974
List price of books accessed	\$187,033.57	\$350,425.17

number of pages accessed was also higher with the range being 1 page to 3,242 pages. However, the median dropped to six pages per book and the average dropped to 28 pages per book (Table II).

The pages-viewed statistics can be analyzed in a few different ways. First, there are some books that are being used a lot by patrons and this inflates the average. Since the package is not static, these statistics could be used as collection development tools to add some of the highly accessed titles to the permanent e-book collection. The median is much lower and could indicate that this package is being used more as a browsing collection or that patrons are often not finding what they need. It is difficult to compare these statistics with print book check-outs, because, while Adelphi does track in-house usage statistics, books that are not put on re-shelving carts cannot be tracked and so the numbers under represent true browsing data.

Subject analysis

One major aspect in determining whether or not the package is financially and academically valuable is to look at the number of students in various departments and professional schools and examine whether or not the library is providing access to necessary subjects.

In order to analyze subject coverage, the author randomized the full list of titles that were used by patrons for a 20 percent sample in Excel. This sample comprises 586 titles for April 2011-March 2012 and 942 titles for April 2012-March 2013. The latter sample was considerably larger due to the increase in the number of books viewed in the package and greater patron awareness of the package.

A subject analysis of the sample showed that the greatest area of use was in Social Sciences and Medicine, which suggests that the Schools of Social Work and Nursing are the best served by this subscription. During the school year 2012-13, students in Social Work and Nursing comprised 1,119.6 FTE or 23.9 percent of all undergraduate students and 687.7 or 31.2 percent of all graduate students. Both the Schools of Nursing and Social Work have strong e-journal collections, so the students are accustomed to using e-resources. These schools also request a lot of bibliographic instruction, during which ebrary is promoted, which could be another factor for high usage (see Figures 1-3).

Duplication rate

When leasing a backfile of e-books, it is also necessary to examine whether the titles being used are already duplicated in the libraries' print collection. In the sample of ebrary titles utilized by patrons in 2011/12, the Adelphi Libraries currently hold in print 123 out of the 586 titles, for a duplication rate of 21.5 percent. The total list price of books in the sample in 2011/12 was \$38,926.74 with the list price of the duplicated

Table II Comparison of pages viewed in 2011-12 and 2012-13

	2012-2011	2012-2013
Total	92,841	139,766
Range	2,658-1	1-3,242
Median	8	6
Average	31	28

Figure 1 Number of full-time equivalent undergraduate students by school 2012-13

Number of Full-Time Equivalent Undergraduate Students by School 2012-13

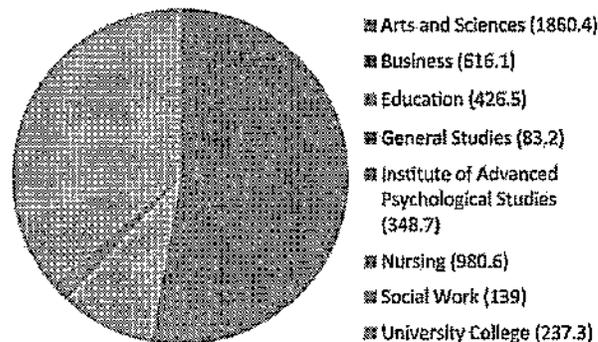


Figure 2 Number of full-time equivalent graduate students by school 2012-13

Number of Full-Time Equivalent Graduate Students by School 2012-13

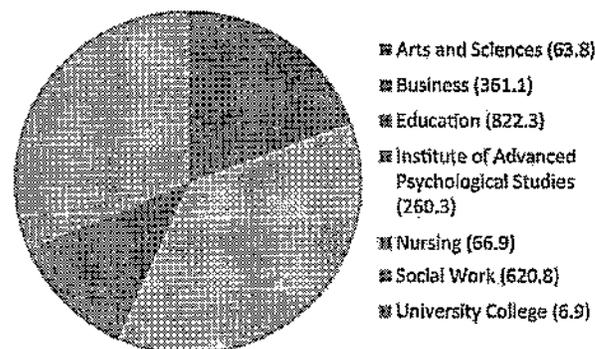


Figure 3 Comparison of titles accessed by subject in 2011-12 and 2012-13

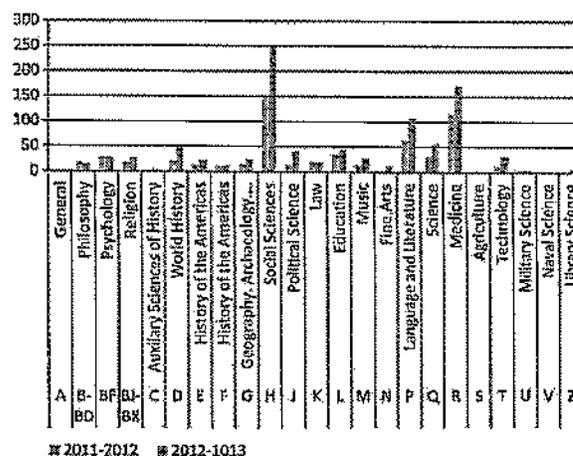
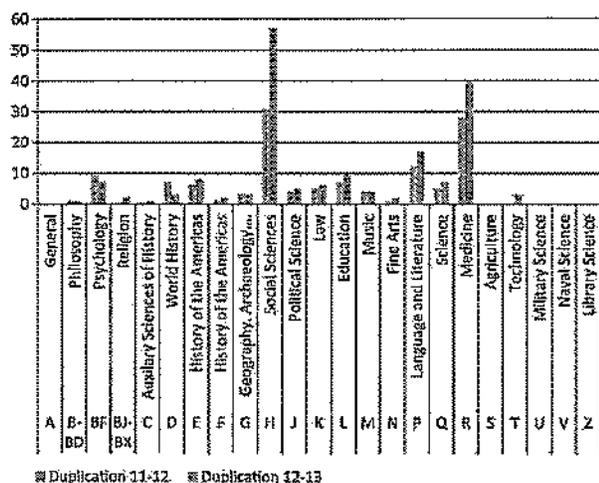


Figure 4 Comparison of the rate of duplication with Adelphi's print titles in 2011-12 and 2012-13



titles at \$7,022.97 or 18 percent of the total list price that overlapped with the print collection.

For the year 2012-2013, in the 942 title sample, Adelphi Libraries held 142 titles in print, for a duplication rate of 15 percent. During this year, the total list price of books in the sample from 2012/13 was \$66,203.75 with the list price of the duplicated titles at \$10,932.28. Therefore, approximately 16.5 percent of the books as counted by list price are duplicated by print materials. From these numbers, it appears that ebrary is increasingly adding content that Adelphi patrons want and that the institution currently does not own (see Figure 4).

Information management

When the decision was made to subscribe to this package, it was known that the books available would not be static. Therefore, it was decided that if perpetual access was needed to a book, access via ebrary would not preclude a one-time purchase. When this product was purchased, it was not clear just how transient the materials were. During a 12-month period from September 2012 and August 2013, 2,831 books were removed and 11,667 titles were added to the package. While more titles are being added to the package than removed, this is an additional process that has to be added to the agenda for systems librarians every month.

Once per month an IT Specialist receives two files that ebrary provides. One is for MARC records to add to the catalog and the other is records to delete. Adding the records is relatively simple, but deleting the records requires more consideration. It was decided that the deleted record file would be matched to the titles currently in the system with an added note in the 599 field to delete the record. This allows the deleted records to be automatically removed from the ILS. If this process is completed every month, then there should not be records with dead links. During an employee transition at Adelphi, this process was not attended to for 16 months from

April 2011-August 2012 because no one was aware that it needed to be done. By extrapolating the average number of books deleted per month to the 16 month period, approximately 3,488 titles were not removed from the catalog. This resulted in a public service problem because e-book records in the library catalog were not reliable. Some patrons brought this to the attention of the reference librarians, but there were probably many patrons that just felt irritated by the problems with the catalog. Even if the records are scrupulously managed, there can still be issues with patrons using a title one day and then not having access to it the next.

Conclusion

While there is not a static title list, much more quality content is being added in comparison to the number of titles that are being removed. It was expected that there would be some overlap with the print collection, since Academic Complete is a backlist, but the duplication rate is not so severe that it causes concern. Even if print books and access to e-books overlap, an additional access point is being added, which might be of use to patrons, who need greater access to materials from home. The Schools of Social Work and Nursing seem to benefit the most from the package and they comprise a significant proportion of Adelphi's graduate and undergraduate enrollment. Despite its limitations, the ebrary Academic Complete package is a resource that the Adelphi Libraries find to be a good value for both patrons and the university.

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Corresponding author

Kimberly R. Abrams can be contacted at: kabrams@adelphi.edu