

"Pay Per Article" Trial at Dickinson

Problem

An analysis of our current journal subscriptions by the Physics department revealed that we had many expensive physics journals that were both too specialized to be appropriate for student use and not relevant to faculty research interests. At the same time, the Physics faculty stated a strong desire for the ability to quickly and easily access articles from a wide variety of journals, many of which would be rarely utilized by the department as a whole. They emphasized that immediate access to pristine copies of these articles is what would be most helpful for their teaching and research.

In order to try and bridge the gap between the needs of the faculty and the limits of the library budget, it was suggested that subscriptions for journal titles that were expensive and not appropriate for our collection should be eliminated and a "pay per article" system should be investigated.

Methodology

To determine whether such a model might prove sustainable, we launched a one year "pay per article" trial in August 2007. In this system, Physics faculty members were able to directly purchase articles that were not available in the library collection. There were no initial restrictions in this trial in terms of how many articles could be ordered but overall spending was monitored by library staff and the faculty would be notified when certain designated amounts had been spent.

The department itself was responsible for determining whether any system was needed for distributing spending across faculty members. The department was also responsible for paying for any articles that were purchased that could have been accessed through the Library's collection.

Procedure:

- Upon purchasing an article, a faculty member must forward a print out of the receipt containing bibliographic and cost details to the department administrator.
- The department administrator forwards the print out to the library liaison for approval.
- The library liaison checks to make sure we did not have access to the purchased article then forwards the approved print outs to acquisitions staff for payment approval to charge to the specified library account. This data is compiled and used for tracking and reporting.

- Copies of approved receipt print outs are returned to the Physics department administrator so, that upon receipt of their monthly credit card statement, they can apply the library-periodicals account number to each line item representing approved single article purchases.
- The appropriate acquisitions staff member finalizes the billing process and files a copy of the monthly statement with the article payments clearly indicated.

Results

Savings: During the trial period we spent ~\$450 for article purchases while the journal cancellations saved us thousands of dollars. A total of twenty-one journal articles were purchased, and the prices for these articles ranged between \$9.50 and \$29.95.

Feedback from Physics faculty:

"Overall, I have found this system to be very well suited for my needs, and I would recommend it to the other departments as well."

"I have been very happy with the trial. It is great to receive the articles I need immediately, and they come from a variety of journals... Almost everything I needed has been available online through either the library subscription, free online content, or single article purchase."

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