

# Deaccessioning Print Journals Working Group

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# A Microcosm of the Library Environment?

- To what extent are you deaccessioning print journal backfiles?
  - 1 routinely, 6 dabbling, 2 have plans, 5 have no plans
- You have access to the data you need in order to deaccession print journal backfiles with confidence.
  - 1 strongly agree, 6 agree, 3 neutral, 3 disagree
- We need to seriously rethink processes for print serials check-in.
  - 4 strongly agree, 3 agree, 6 neutral, 1 disagree
- What is the most important element needed to reconcile the urge to act according to local need with aspirations for building a cooperative future?
  - 3 infrastructure, 6 policy framework, 3 funding, 2 central coordination

# Birth of DAP-J

- Grew out of conversations begun at the RLG Programs Shared Print Collections Summit, November 2007
- Imagined the path from mostly print collections to mostly digital collections
- Wondered why more libraries aren't clearing shelf space by deaccessioning JSTOR print backfiles
- Or, if this is being done widely, why we don't hear more about it
- Asked ourselves: "If not in this situation, when?"
- Inspired by experience of UKRR: "Just bin it!"
- Formed group to seek out **low-hanging fruit**

# Enter: An Intrepid Band of Fruit Hunters

- ARL
  - Columbia University
  - Indiana University
  - New York University
  - University of Arizona
  - University of Michigan
- Medium Academic
  - Binghamton University
- Liberal Arts College
  - Swarthmore College
- Museum
  - Brooklyn Museum
  - Frick Collection
  - Metropolitan Museum
  - Museum of Modern Art
- Special Library
  - U of Pennsylvania Law
- Legal Depository
  - Trinity College Dublin

# Low Hanging Fruit: Don't Bump Your Noggin!

- Arizona routinely sending JSTOR backfiles to CRL
  - Several libraries have discarded duplicates
  - Museums eager to clear space
  - The rest: interested, but not quite ready
- 
- And here's why...

# Some Obstacles to Deaccessioning

- Legal deposit libraries are very limited in what they can discard
- Public institutions cannot divest themselves of state assets
- Law libraries need access to original paper copies for citation checking
- Cost data for discard vs. store not available when space needed
- So print journal backfiles moved to offsite storage
- Where they are now shelved by size
- So that discarding them has become prohibitively expensive

**Don't these collections then become de facto archives?**

**These libraries have made a tacit commitment to keeping these materials.**

**Are there natural groupings of keepers and divestors?**

**Can we build equitable relationships between them?**

# More Obstacles to Deaccessioning

- We lack the infrastructure to record and disclose retention commitments
- We lack the network-level policy framework and business model to support keeper-divestor relationships
- We lack consensus that deaccessioning print journal backfiles is the right thing to do right now
- Storage is relatively cheap
- Until that changes it's easier not to deaccession



# Two Competing Objectives (per Bob Wolven)

- Defining conditions that will ensure long-term retention of journal backfiles on a national or international level
  - Or: How can we assure that as libraries cancel print and deaccession backfiles, enough copies will be retained?
- Defining conditions that will make it easier for libraries to realize the potential space/cost savings from deaccessioning journal backfiles
  - Or: What comfort level is needed for libraries to make these decisions?

*“In principle, these two may be linked, but on an immediate, practical level they’re not that closely aligned. I suspect that for most libraries deaccessioning, satisfying the first objective is both unnecessary and insufficient. That is, if they’re holding on to print runs of JSTOR titles it’s not because they think their copy of volume X may some day be the last one left, but because they’re concerned about ease of access on those occasions where print is needed or desired...”*

*“...So, to have an impact, and perhaps garner sufficient interest, models for long-term retention have to be seen in the context of near-term access.”*

**--Bob Wolven  
Columbia University**

# Groping Toward Linking the Two Objectives

- First Principles:
  - Action happens locally, for local reasons
  - Group action will begin in already-formed groups of natural partners
- How to encourage, support, and link up group efforts toward a coherent global picture?
- How does this relate to the commonly-seen straw man where the few who retain are paid by the many who divest?

# Even More Obstacles to Deaccessioning

- We lack confidence:
  - that digital versions will persist
  - that 2 or 3 dark archives are sufficient
  - in validation of dark archives
  - that there is sufficient duplication of print holdings in the network
  - in the condition of non-archived print backfiles
  - that images are of sufficient quality in digital versions
- It's hard to throw good stuff away.

# What, Me Worry? Shining Light on the Scary Bits

If each institution answers the following questions, what will we have learned?

And will it be something that can be generally applied?

- What specific pressures would compel you to remove print journal backfiles from the shelves?
  - Where's the tipping point between "keep" and "divest?"
- What economic factors would make removing them worthwhile?
  - What throws the switch from "not worth it" to "worth it?"
- What guarantees and assurances would have to be in place before you could deaccession with confidence?
  - What level of assurance is "good enough?"

# How To Make a Low-Hanging Fruit Salad

- Identify core data elements needed in hand in order to make responsible retention or discarding decisions 1
- Gather the actual data 4
- Identify sampling tasks to shed light on hard-to-address areas such as validation and optimal duplication 0
- Actually do the sampling tasks 6
- Produce a list of obstacles to discarding print backfiles of dual-format journals 3
- Produce advice on overcoming those obstacles 3
- Decide what level of assurance is “good enough” 1
- Create a manifesto challenging current thought and behavior regarding shared print 1
- Implement a deaccessioning project 1

# Data Ranked “critical” or “important” to Making Deaccessioning Decisions

- Quality of archive 100% (76.9% “critical”)
- Quality of images 100% (42.9% “critical”)
- Use 92.8% (57.1% “critical”)
- Who else owns 78.6% (50.0% “critical”)
- Cost 78.5% (21.4% “critical”)
- Actuarial risk 61.6% (15.4% “critical”)
- Retention guarantees 57.2% (42.9% “critical”)
- Condition 42.9% (0.0% “critical”)



Most libraries will only deaccession when they have to; basic attitudes and behaviors toward the value of print journal backfiles and what constitutes an acceptable level of risk must change profoundly before deaccessioning can be effectively accomplished on a transformative scale.

- 2 Strongly agree
  - 11 Agree
  - 0 Neutral
  - 1 Disagree
- *“I agree at present, but...economic pressures may change these attitudes rather quickly.”*

Questions?

Comments?

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