The Big Deal, Sustainable Scholarship, and Virginia Research Libraries

Council of Deans
October 13, 2020
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Interim Dean of Libraries and University Librarian
Publishing Big Deals

Comprehensive licensing agreement in which a library or library consortium agrees to buy electronic access to all or a large portion of a publisher’s journals for a cost based on expenditures for journals already subscribed to by the institution(s) plus an access fee.

Market Consolidation
Net Profit Margin FY2018

- Elsevier: 37%
- JPMorgan Chase: 31%
- Alphabet: 23%
- Apple: 22%
- Amazon: 4%
- Walmart: 1%

Source: Elsevier Annual Report and Standard & Poor Netadvantage database
2020 Collections Expenditures

- **ELECTRONIC SUBSCRIPTIONS**: 80%
- **PRINT SUBSCRIPTIONS**: 2%
- **MONOGRAPHS**: 12%
- **COLLECTION SUPPORT**: 6%

**JOURNALS & RESEARCH PLATFORMS**: 49%
- **ELSEVIER**: 15%
- **SAGE**: 2%
- **SPRINGER**: 7%
- **NATURE**: 7%
- **WILEY**: 7%
2020 Elsevier Invoice: $1,993,176

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Service</th>
<th>Amount</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ScienceDirect</td>
<td>$1,885,589</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Freedom Collection</td>
<td>$29,223</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lancet specialty titles</td>
<td>$8,531</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cell Press</td>
<td>$29,285</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elsevier book series</td>
<td>$34,105</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Masson Collection</td>
<td>$1,883</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2021 Contract $2,066,600
## Other Elsevier Subscribed Products – 2020*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Product</th>
<th>Amount</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ClinicalKey</td>
<td>$163,573</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Digital Commons</td>
<td>$54,763</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knovel Ebooks</td>
<td>$45,091</td>
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<tr>
<td>Reaxys</td>
<td>$29,600</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RMC</td>
<td>$8,497</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Other Sub-Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>$301,524</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>ScienceDirect Invoice Sub-Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>$1,993,176</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL Elsevier Expenditure</strong></td>
<td><strong>$2,294,700</strong></td>
</tr>
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* Individual prices rounded
Virginia Research Libraries Elsevier Contract

• Initiated in 2001
  • Annual increases ranged from 6-15% prior to 2009
• Current 5-year contract expires December 2021
  • Year 1-2: 3.5% annual increases
  • Year 3-5: 4% annual increases
• Increase from 2017-2020: 16%
## Current VRL Commitment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Institution</th>
<th>Allocation</th>
<th>2020</th>
<th>2021</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>University of Virginia</td>
<td>27.11%</td>
<td>$2,634,700</td>
<td>$2,740,100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Virginia Tech University</td>
<td>22.48%</td>
<td>$2,184,900</td>
<td>$2,272,300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Virginia Commonwealth University</td>
<td>20.44%</td>
<td>$1,987,200</td>
<td>$2,066,600</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>George Mason University</td>
<td>11.78%</td>
<td>$1,141,400</td>
<td>$1,187,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Old Dominion University</td>
<td>8.39%</td>
<td>$815,800</td>
<td>$848,400</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>William &amp; Mary</td>
<td>5.03%</td>
<td>$489,000</td>
<td>$508,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>James Madison University</td>
<td>4.77%</td>
<td>$463,200</td>
<td>$481,800</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>$9,716,200</strong></td>
<td><strong>$10,104,700</strong></td>
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</table>
VRL Decisions Pending

• Balance of 2021 contract:
  • Negotiate reduction – discussions range from 0% to 30%
  • Consider exercising early termination clause

• New contract
  • Reduce spend by 50% by reducing subscribed content
  • Tie year-to-year increases to Higher Education Price Index
  • Multiple years (2-3)
  • Institutions that will participate
Cancellations on the Rise
What a Subscription Buys

- Backfiles and early years; often already owned by library and available in perpetuity.
- Recent years; estimated 45% of recent articles compliant with Federal open access mandate and available free of charge; 28% of articles overall.
- Current year – paywalled, subscription access only plus in some cases, open access funded by APC, about 7% of articles.

Courtesy of John E. Ulmschneider, VCU Dean Emeritus
Striving for Sustainable Scholarship

• Break “big deals”
  • Diversify collections
  • Support new collection areas more robustly

• Walk away from unsustainable deals

• Expedite document delivery

• Invest in open access
Methods of Finding Research Articles

Install browser plug-ins
- Open Access Button
- Unpaywall

Search for open access copies
- Google Scholar
- PubMed Central

Get it from the library*
- Expedited Document Delivery
- Contact your librarian

Use your network
- Contact the author
- ResearchGate
From the Council of Deans

• Contact me if Elsevier reaches out to you
• Recommendations on how to best communicate with your faculty
• Reassess promotion and tenure requirements that focus on impact factors
• Consider where your professional societies publish their journals and if they come up for negotiations, consider a non-profit publisher
• Support open access and retaining author’s rights
The VCU Libraries will always get you the journal articles you need to do your work using a combination of subscriptions, interlibrary loan, and other document delivery options free of charge.
Acknowledgements

Content

• Frazier K. What's the Big Deal? The Serials Librarian. 2005. 48:1-2, 49-59. DOI:10.1300/J123v48n01_06
• VCU Libraries faculty and staff: Karen Cary, Amanda Echterling, and Caslin Applewhite

Images

• Presentations by John E. Ulmschneider (VCU), Tyler Walters (VTech), and Elaine Westbrooks (UNC)
• Posada A., Chen G. Inequality in Knowledge Production: The Integration of Academic Infrastructure by Big Publishers. Leslie Chan; Pierre Mounier. ELPUB 2018, Jun 2018, Toronto, Canada. hal-01816707
• Icons from The Noun Project