Recording and Maintaining Post-Cancellation Access

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Abstract

This article is a written account of the presentation given by Jia Mi, based on her experience as the electronic resources and serials librarian at The College of New Jersey (TCNJ). Three serials projects, a journal review, a "Big Deal" subscription review, and a bound journal review brought heightened attention to the importance of recording and maintaining post-cancellation access. This paper is an overview of what she learned.

Keywords: post-cancellation access, electronic resources, journal cancellation, perpetual access

Introduction

The College of New Jersey (TCNJ) is a highly selective liberal arts college. It has a full-time equivalent of 8,449, mostly undergraduate, students. The library's e-collections include approximately 121,227 unique e-journals, 578 individually subscribed e-journals, seven journal packages, and 128 databases. As the electronic resources librarian, Mi manages the entire serials cycle, including selection, trial,

set-up, access, EZproxy authentication, access maintenance, use statistics, assessment, and review. After working on three serials review projects, she added post-cancellation access (PCA) as an additional ongoing task to managing serials. Prior to conducting these serials reviews, Mi had not paid much attention to post-cancellation access. TCNJ's Gitenstein Library had never had a severe budget cut and Mi had not done an extensive serials review before 2019. This meant journal cancellations were uncommon, and PCA rights were not considered.

Overview of Projects

Journal Review and Cancellation Project

In the past, Gitenstein Library employees took a very conservative approach to cancelling print journal subscriptions. As of 2017, the library still had over 1,500 print journal subscriptions in its holdings. In 2018, Gitenstein Library migrated some print subscriptions to online subscriptions and reduced their print journal subscriptions to approximately 1,200. A serials review conducted shortly after 2018 led library workers to cancel all but 860 print journals. In 2019, the library migrated to a new integrated library system (ILS), Alma, and a new discovery layer, Primo. Five other institutions in New Jersey migrated to Alma and Primo at the same time. Gitenstein Library employees compared their print journal holdings to these five institutions and determined TCNJ's library had the most print journals. This prompted a 2021 print journal review and cancellation project. Based on this review, they cancelled 248 print journal subscriptions, sixty-nine online journal subscriptions, converted 254 subscriptions to online only, and saved about $155,000. Cancelling this many print journals led to an investigation of what content would remain after cancelling or converting to online-only, and this increased awareness of the types of PCA available.

Re-evaluation of "Big Deal" Subscriptions project

As a result of COVID-19 related budget cuts, the library was asked to look at their "Big Deal" subscriptions with the intention of decreasing their spending. Mi used Unsub, which is a data dashboard and forecasting tool from the non-profit Our Research, to evaluate Gitenstein Library's deals. This tool facilitates the evaluation of "Big Deal" subscriptions. Unsub helps determine whether the institution's "Big Deal" subscriptions are a good deal or whether the library should cancel the deal and instead subscribe title by title. Unsub also presents access options after cancellation. Unsub requires participating institutions to provide four categories of information to evaluate "Big Deals." These are: whether the item is Open Access (OA), what post-termination access (PTA) is available, interlibrary loan data, and cost per use. Unsub uses this data to provide a forecast for the next five years. The forecast includes information such as what the library's access will look like if the "Big Deal" is canceled, what kind of access will be available in five years, and what percentage of journals will likely be Open Access (OA). Working with and providing data for the Unsub tool further educated Mi about PCA rights.

Bound Periodicals Review Project

TCNJ's senior administration identified the lower level of the library as a suitable location for additional offices. However, the lower level housed the library's bound periodical collection. TCNJ college administration wanted as many periodicals removed as possible and offered to pay for electronic access to the content that would be removed. This required Mi to determine the PCA rights of the material and the backfiles needed to replace the bound journals. To conduct this review project, she used Alma to generate a current list of titles. This verified which bound periodicals and indexes were on the lower level. To decide which bound periodicals could be withdrawn, Mi checked to see how many of these titles were available online, how many were currently

included in their electronic subscriptions, and which were available in Gitenstein Library's databases. Mi considered the years included in database access even though this access is not guaranteed.

Then Mi investigated the backfiles. This was challenging because many journals had changed publishers. The change in publisher created confusion around who owned the backfiles. To determine backfile ownership Mi often called multiple publishers, who did not always reply in a timely manner. This was frustrating because it slowed the project timeline. After checking with publishers about backfiles, Mi conducted an overlap analysis and used a report from Gitenstein Library's journal subscription agent, EBSCO. This EBSCONET report, called E-Journal Access and Registration, can be used to check an institution's access and provides information about perpetual access and backfiles. This report helped Mi a great deal and meant calls to each publisher were not always necessary. Mi found that EBSCO works with all publishers to get backfile information. The data may include whether backfiles are available, the start date of the backfiles, and where the backfiles are located (for example, with the publisher or with a third party.) Once she had all the necessary information, Mi was able to calculate some of the costs of getting backfiles and created a report for TCNJ college administration detailing what it would cost to replace all the bound periodicals with online access to backfiles.

Post-Cancellation Access

What is post-cancellation access and why is it important to track? According to Carter and Toyota-Kindler:

> Post cancellation access (PCA) allows for the perpetual, continued ownership of explicitly defined electronic content. Any electronic resource content can come with PCA (or perpetual access), but it is most commonly provided with one-time purchases (e.g., eBooks, primary sources) and e-journal subscriptions.[1]

PCA is also known as post-termination access rights or perpetual access rights. Canceling an e-journal subscription does not necessarily mean all access to the content is cancelled. To determine what access remains, one must study the license agreement and work with the publisher to determine PCA rights. It is important to track and record accurate PCA to ensure continued ownership and access. Replacing content from journals through backfiles can be prohibitively expensive.

Identifying Licensed Content with Post-Cancellation Access

Individual Journal Subscriptions

Identifying PCA rights for individual journal subscriptions can be difficult for many reasons. To determine PCA rights it is necessary to track the history of each journal subscription. Some of the obstacles encountered during the tracking process are journal titles that have been transferred to a different publisher, journals that have become OA, journal publishers that have moved to a different platform, journals that have changed titles, and journals that have ceased publication. While conducting serials reviews, Mi realized that journal publishers frequently do not notify subscribers when content becomes unavailable or when titles are discontinued.

To identify licensed content for individual subscriptions Mi relied on the EBSCONET E-Journal Access and Registration report to gather information about PCA. This report displays all the institution's journal subscriptions received through EBSCO, what the institution's current access is, and whether there is perpetual access. It includes the history of the subscription, format changes, title changes, and publisher changes. Mi downloaded the subscription history from the EBSCONET report to an excel file and attached the file to the corresponding Alma records as proof of payment and years paid. When cancelling a journal subscription, she now adds an access note and records the years paid, format changes and any other relevant historic information in Alma.

When journal titles transfer to a new publisher, information about the subscription and PCA can be lost. It may be necessary to contact the publisher to identify PCA rights. The new publisher may not have the older subscription history and may require proof of the subscription years and payment. If the subscription included retaining access to paid content, the publisher should be able to provide PCA. The National Information Standards Organization's (NISO) Transfer Code of Practice section 3.2 states, "the transferring publisher must ensure continued access to its subscribers where it has granted perpetual access rights, even if the transferring publisher will cease to host the online version of the journal after the effective transfer date."[2] This code of practice is useful for negotiating with current publishers to regain PCA rights. Another invaluable tool when dealing with journal transfers is the Transfer Alerting Service. This tool contains a database of journal transfer information and allows the user to search journals by title, publisher, or year to see which journals have changed publishers or platforms. In addition to the database, the Transfer Alerting Service allows users to subscribe to a notification list to receive alerts when journals make transfers, RSS feeds, and an API for automatic querying.[3] The EBSCONET report mentioned earlier is helpful to use in conjunction with the Transfer Alert Service when identifying PCA rights for transferred titles. Once the institution's PCA rights are identified, the new publisher can be contacted to gain or ensure access to this content.

Mi typically received an announcement via email when a journal converted to OA and could also confirm this information in Alma's knowledgebase. She also used the E-Journal Access and Registration report to check which OA journals have been activated for their library, because Gitenstein Library does not switch on every OA journal. Prior to incorporating this into her electronic resources' workflow, Mi ran a report for each year to see which OA titles had moved to new publishers or platforms. Now she checks the OA journal titles periodically to see if the journal has changed publishers or platforms and to make sure they have continued access. She also checks during the package

renewal process to determine whether any of their journal subscriptions have moved to OA.

When journal publishers move from one platform to another, subscribers' PCA rights can get lost. The EBSCONET E-Journal Access and Registration report provides information about platform changes. It is wise to verify that access and PCA rights remain whenever a publisher changes platforms. Journal title changes are another instance when PCA rights can be lost. It is necessary to track the entire history of a title to see the whole picture of PCA rights. An effective way to find PCA rights for a journal which has changed titles is to use a report from the institution's subscription agent regarding title changes. Tracking the history of title changes for a particular journal should lead to the title which contains the record of PCA rights. If information about journal changes is not tracked regularly it can become difficult to track the title, publisher and platform changes and determine what the institution's PCA rights are.

When a journal ceases publication, subscribers may not be notified. Information regarding journals that have been discontinued should be available from the institution's subscription agent. The date of cessation should be recorded locally along with the PCA rights. Check which titles have ceased publication during the renewal period. If PCA rights have not been previously determined, make sure they are identified and documented when the title is discontinued.

Journal Packages

Journal packages are acquired by multiple means. They may be a "Big Deal" subscription, they may be arranged directly through vendors, or negotiated through a consortium. PCA rights can vary depending on the terms agreed upon when the content was acquired. Mi only counts vendor platform access rights as true PCA, whether they include an ongoing maintenance fee or not. The PCA rights available from consortium packages are less guaranteed.

When subscribing to journal packages directly through a vendor, it is important to pay attention to the license agreement. To determine

PCA rights for Gitenstein Library's journal packages, Mi looked at the license agreements. Some publishers are willing to provide thorough information about subscription history and PCA rights, others are less helpful. It is also possible to request entitlement reports from publishers. These reports include subscription access date ranges and perpetual access date ranges. Mi had little success requesting these from publishers. Multiple publishers agreed to send them, but few actually did send them.

Subscription agent package reports may be useful to see how the package has changed. However, if the report is not viewed often, it is difficult to monitor how often journals move from one package to another. If the core journals move to a different package, the institution may be inadvertently paying for a package no longer desired. The core journals may require an additional cost if they have moved to a different publisher. Being aware of when and where journals move is one way to maintain some power in instances where publishers typically have the most power.

It is possible to lose PCA rights without copies of invoices that prove payment. Maintaining diligent records of payment information is important! And make sure to note discrepancies. While trying to identify PCA rights at Gitenstein Library, Mi discovered the previous serials staff maintained journal records on paper cards. Some information was noted on the cards, but no proof of payment was saved. Mi also received incorrect information from publishers because of a nearby college with a similar name. Publishers would claim that TCNJ had access to a journal, when really it was the similarly-named college. This error was revealed only after much investigation by Mi. She uncovered another issue when a new sales representative inaccurately recorded the start dates of their journal packages. Instead of using the correct date, she used the date of the new license, more than twenty years after they first subscribed. When seeking the PCA rights, Mi realized Gitenstein Library had PCA rights for many more years than what was recorded by the vendor.

When subscribing to journal packages through a consortium, PCA rights should also be recorded locally. Consortia often do not identify

PCA rights for members. Best practice is for each institution to determine its own PCA rights. The consortium license agreement is the best place to start identifying PCA rights. If your institution does have PCA rights, determine whether self-hosting is allowed and whether there are any direct or indirect costs associated with access. Check the format of the content; it may be a format such as a PDF or video file that is difficult to integrate into an ILS. Make sure the format of the content is noted as well as information regarding how the content can be integrated into the ILS.

Ensure specific language for PCA rights is included in journal package license agreements. Examples of model licenses are available from LIBLICENSE.[4] The Big Ten Academic Alliance Library Initiatives provides a standard license agreement to use or adapt.[5] Included is a section devoted to PCA and perpetual access. The California Digital Library has a license agreement toolkit that lays out specific language to look for or add to licenses.[6] It is important to ensure licenses clearly state what the PCA rights are. This model language can help when negotiating licenses with vendors and publishers.

Recording Post-Cancellation Access

Incorporate the tracking of PCA rights into serials management. Create a policy or procedure to track PCA rights. When starting this process, focus on the highest-use journals and packages first, then track lowest-use journals. Once the policy or procedure is created, document the PCA rights at the point of purchase. This will save time and reduce the amount of historical research needed later. For the same reason, track title and publisher changes as they happen using whatever method works best for your institution. Note titles change frequently in "Big Deal" subscriptions. It is helpful in the long run to track and record these changes as they happen.

Mi used the licensing module in Alma to track the details of perpetual access, and whether there is a license agreement or not. In Alma, the PCA rights can be recorded in multiple places. Mi records

perpetual access rights at the collection and the portfolio levels. Recording this information in a note field is another option. Mi also files a copy of the subscribed titles with the license and invoice payments for each journal or package.

Maintaining Post-Cancellation Access

Most publishers provide PCA in one of two ways. One way is by giving subscribers a uniform date. If the subscription is maintained until that date, perpetual access will be available based on that date. Alternatively, publishers will provide PCA based on when the institution started paying for the subscription. When proof of payment is provided, the publisher will allow access to content based on the year the subscription started. If the publisher provides PCA based on the subscription's start, be aware that any complimentary access provided prior to the subscription is usually not included in the PCA rights. Proof of payment is crucial when negotiating with publishers. Most publishers will grant the PCA rights if payment history is provided. If the payment history is unavailable, it is difficult for an institution to gain PCA rights.

In summary, maintaining post-cancellation access is easier when the following steps become part of the workflow. First, update the journal holdings record each time the journal moves to a new publisher. In the ILS, note the dates of access available during the subscription as well as the perpetual access dates available after cancellation at the journal level. If a journal changes its title during the subscription period, the publisher may only provide PCA rights on the current (newer) title. Be sure to investigate previous titles to confirm the institution has all the PCA rights it is entitled to. Track journals even if they become OA. The OA status may reverse in the future. If this is the case, the institution may have PCA rights. Work with publishers and vendors to avoid vague license agreements and employ model language instead. Make sure the agreements clearly indicate the PCA rights, how the

post-cancellation content is offered (whether on a third-party site or stored by the subscriber), and the format the content will be in. Track title changes often. When renewing licenses verify the accuracy of the license, sometimes the publisher or vendors revert to a standard license without all the changes negotiated.

Contributor Notes

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Notes

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