

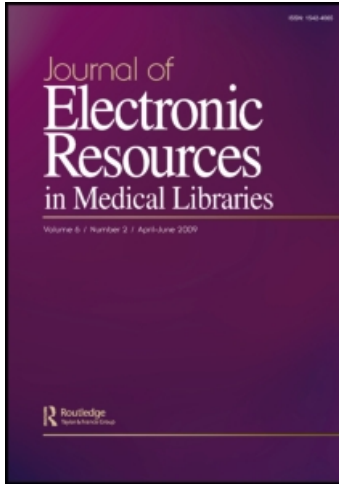
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Print vs. e-Journals: One Hospital Library's Quest for the Final Solution

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eJOURNALS FORUM

Janna Lawrence, Column Editor

Print vs. e-Journals: One Hospital Library's Quest for the Final Solution

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Providing both print and electronic access to journals in a small hospital library is no longer possible, but what is the best way to adjust services? An evaluation plan was developed to assess print journal use and guide decisions regarding format purchases.

KEYWORDS *e-journals, hospital libraries, surveys*

INTRODUCTION

Saint Francis Hospital in Evanston, Illinois, is a 375-bed Level I Trauma Center in a northern suburb of Chicago. In 1997, Saint Francis joined Resurrection Health Care, the largest nonprofit, Catholic health care system in Chicago. Throughout its history, Saint Francis Hospital has supported medical education, a nursing school, a school of radiology, and an EMS/paramedic training program.

The Medical Education Department currently supports five residency programs affiliated with the University of Illinois, Chicago. These include Internal Medicine, Diagnostic Radiology, Obstetrics and Gynecology, Transitional Year, and Integrated Residency Programs in Surgery, Emergency

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Medicine, Urology, and Radiation Oncology. More than 500 physicians in a variety of specialties, including cardiology, orthopedics, neurosurgery, neuroradiology/interventional radiology, anesthesia, emergency medicine, family medicine, radiology, and surgery, practice at Saint Francis. The hospital's 340 nurses are seeking Magnet Status and are working toward certification in their specialties as well.

The hospital's vision statement says that "Saint Francis Hospital is the premier community hospital on Chicago's North Shore, serving as the northeast anchor of the Resurrection Health Care system and is known for excellence in quality of care and exceptional customer service."¹

Saint Francis Hospital library supports the vision of the hospital through its service to enriching education and evidence-based practice. The library collection reflects the needs of the hospital's education programs and specialties. It houses a collection of approximately 3,000 print books, with a rapidly expanding digital book collection. The journal collection was originally based on the old "Brandon/Hill Selected List of Print Books and Journals for Small Medical Libraries"² and the "Brandon/Hill Selected List of Print Nursing Books and Journals."³ Combined, the lists select a total of 227 journals, with 141 medical titles and 86 nursing titles. The collection has been weeded over the years, probably because of cost and budget issues.

Over the last five years, the library staff has been reviewing electronic information resources and e-journal use. The library received grant funding to preview new electronic resources for its users. The staff has continually surveyed the users to determine which resources they found most useful to their practice. As more and more electronic journals are made available through vendor packages or directly from the publishers, the library is faced with the question of how to steward limited resources for the most effective use.

The hospital library committee, chaired by the director of Medical Education, consists of physicians, program faculty, residents and interns, nurse educators, and informatics specialists. This committee guides the direction Saint Francis Hospital library has taken in navigating the new world of e-resources.

PROBLEM

Chaos in e-journals publishing is confounded by the current economic downturn. Library budgets are in turmoil. Providing both print and electronic access to a journal is getting complicated, particularly when publishers change their pricing structures midyear and journal vendors scramble to keep up.

BACKGROUND

Since 2005, the library has conducted an annual user satisfaction survey (see Figure 1). The survey process actually began in 2002 when electronic journal

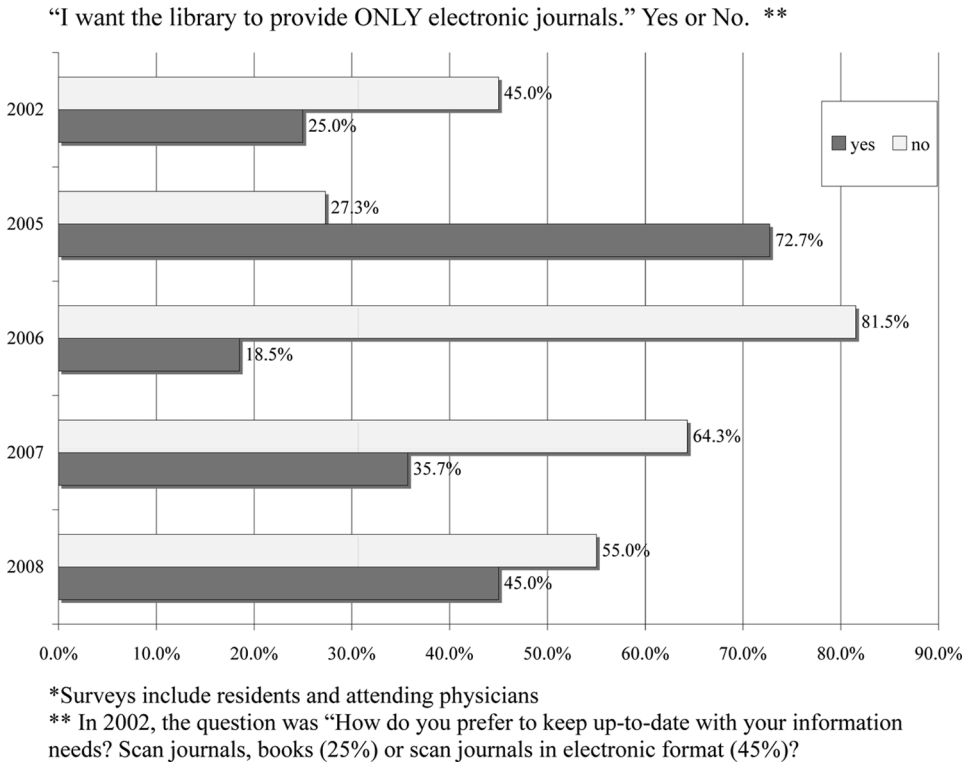


FIGURE 1 User satisfaction survey results, 2005–2008.

access was still relatively new. The question asked then was, "How do you prefer to keep up-to-date with your information needs? Scan journals and books in print or scan journals in electronic format?" The results indicated that 25% scanned journals and books in print, while 45% scanned journals in electronic format. This was the beginning of the shift to electronic format.

No survey was conducted in 2003–2004 because of personnel changes, but in 2005 the survey process started up again. These surveys were not intended as a scientific study of electronic journal use but rather as an indication of trends in use by the institution's own physicians. Not every user group was surveyed each year. Some years only the residents (house staff) were surveyed. Other years only the attending physicians were surveyed. In order to get access to as many attending physicians as possible, different survey approaches were taken. A freeshare product, SurveyMonkey.com,⁴ was used for the online surveys. The 2005 survey was a survey of residents only, and the results indicated that more users wanted only electronic journals.

In 2006, the first attempt was made to survey attending physicians online. Results indicated low response, and approximately 22% of respondents did not want the library to have only electronic journals. Since some physicians were still migrating to using e-mail and the Internet and others

were not using it at all, the survey was printed and distributed at the hospital's quarterly medical staff meetings in 2007. Participation increased, but still only 30% desired only electronic journals and the larger response was in favor of keeping print journals. In 2008, participation increased again, with more (36%) wanting electronic journals only and 64% indicating that they wanted the library to continue to retain print journals.

There clearly was a divide between the resident's use of electronic journals and the attending staff's use. However, there was no evidence that the print journals had been moved or even touched on the library shelves. The library assistant reported spending less than 10 minutes a day re-shelving print journals.

To develop evidence of print journal use, an evaluation plan (see Figure 2) was developed by the library manager and a library school student volunteer. The goal was to assess print journal use and guide decisions regarding print and electronic purchases. The evaluation included a print journal inventory, a journal use survey, and data collection, which enabled the librarian to create a final solution.

To initiate the evaluation plan, the student volunteer inventoried the library's current collection, creating an Excel file of all the journals currently received. This confirmed that the library had 149 journal titles in its current collection. Then the student volunteer and the library manager developed the user survey. This entailed a tally sheet, as shown in Figure 3.

A separate tally sheet was developed and printed for each print journal title. When a journal was received and checked in, the tally sheet designed specifically for that journal was attached to the front of the journal cover. A removable adhesive was used to attach the tally sheets so as not to damage the journal when the survey was over. Users were asked to initial and date their use of the print journal.

To ensure that users understood what the library was doing, various formats were used to communicate the survey to the physician staff. Marketing the survey was an important part of the study, as the hope was to increase the number of users to the maximum. The student volunteer wrote a letter (see Figure 4) that was placed in physician and resident mailboxes. The letter also appeared in a monthly physician e-mail called the Physician Newsflash. The letter was posted in the library near the current journal collections and was also posted in the physicians' lounge, the residents' lounge, and medical staff

- Develop list of all print journals
- Create a tally sheet for each journal and fix to each issue as it is processed
- Notify users of study
- Post survey reminder in library
- Collect data twice at three month intervals

FIGURE 2 Evaluation plan: February–August 2009.

**St. Francis Hospital Library
Print Journal User Survey**

Please enter your initials and the date you used the journal. Thank you for your participation.

Cancer

Initial	Date
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

FIGURE 3 Tally sheet sample.

February 2, 2009

Dear Saint Francis Hospital Library User:

The Library staff is exploring its digital future by examining journal use and archival availability for journals. Between February and August, 2009, we are conducting a survey of journal use.

When you are browsing journals in the library, please take a minute to place your initials next to the journal you use, whether you simply pick it up to browse the table of contents, or you read an article.

Thank you for your participation in this important review of library resources.

Sincerely Yours,

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FIGURE 4 Sample letter.

office. These steps were repeated several times during the survey period to remind users of the survey. For the nursing staff, letters were posted in the nursing office and announcements were made in several shared nursing leadership meetings. Awareness efforts were made in the hope of bringing more users to the library to use the print journals.

Data collection took place at three month intervals. The student volunteer counted all the user initials and dates by journal title and created an Excel file of the total counts. Counts were made in May and in August. Figure 5 displays the top print journals used within the survey period.

DATA REVIEW

The data review included the user's initials and date the journal was used. The library staff and the library committee were particularly interested in the use of each print journal, not who used them. The library staff did not initial the surveys when using the journals for interlibrary loan or photocopying. It was determined that the library staff's use of the print journals was not the goal. Figure 5 lists the print journals that had the most use. Some journals had one use only. With usage numbers for the top 12 journals ranging from a high of 30 uses to a low of three uses, it was clear that, as expected, most print journals were not being used, especially when compared to the larger use of electronic journals. The data also showed that no print nursing journals were being used. For comparison purposes, Figure 6 shows a sample of the use of the library's electronic resource collection by journal

Journal Name	Times Used
<i>New England Journal of Medicine</i>	30
<i>Lancet</i>	16
<i>Circulation</i>	17
<i>Journal of the American College of Cardiology</i>	16
<i>Annals of Surgery</i>	10
<i>Archives of Internal Medicine</i>	8
<i>American Journal of Respiratory & Critical Care Medicine</i>	7
<i>Obstetrics and Gynecology</i>	7
<i>Clinical Infectious Diseases</i>	6
<i>Surgery</i>	5
<i>JAMA</i>	4
<i>Annals of Allergy Asthma & Immunology</i>	3

FIGURE 5 Top 12 journals used, February 1, 2009–August 17, 2009.

Journal Database	Searches
MD Consult	5,089
<i>NEJM</i>	1,497
ProQuest Nursing	621
OVID	565
EBSCO	251
MEDLINE	107
CINAHL Full Text	109
Health Business	32
PsycINFO	3
EBM Reviews	96

FIGURE 6 Sample electronic resource use, January–June 2009.

name or aggregator database names from January to June 2009. For example, *NEJM* reflects the search use statistics for that period of the *New England Journal of Medicine*.

DISCUSSION

At a meeting of the library committee held immediately following the survey period, the librarian and the student volunteer presented the survey results and recommendations to the committee regarding a final solution. The discussions continued to bring out the overwhelming use of electronic journals over print titles. Arguments were expressed that long-standing attending physicians would be upset that their favorite print journals were gone, but the library staff assured the committee that any article could be printed for those physicians by the library staff. Costs presented comparing “print plus online access” to “online access only” support the decision to provide just online access.

The discussion also brought up the question about what to do with the 12 journals that were obviously used in print, as indicated by the survey data. The decision to retain print titles was made based upon the following criteria:

- The journal was used extensively by one of the residency programs (Internal Medicine, Radiology, Obstetrics and Gynecology, and Surgery).

- The journal supported one of the hospital service lines (i.e., cardiology or oncology).
- The journal required print purchase to obtain the online access.

For example, the *New England Journal of Medicine* had 30 print uses over the six-month period, and it supports the Internal Medicine Residency Program. It was decided that the library would make use of the journal's "print plus online" subscription option. It was also decided that a single use during the survey period was not considered significant enough to retain the journal in print.

CONCLUSION

After evaluating all print journals, 36 titles met the criteria for retention in print. The library staff will continue to evaluate the decision to provide only online access for a significant proportion of the journal collection. Marketing the decision to move to only online access to the library journal collection will provide more feedback regarding online versus print. A Physician News-flash e-mail announcement brought no negative responses to the decision within two months after the survey completion.

FUTURE ISSUES

Other issues that the library must deal with include archiving journal backfiles and publisher restrictions on provision of interlibrary loan using electronic content. How can the library archive electronic journals when print journals are no longer retained? Policies on access to back issues vary among publishers and providers. A one-time purchase of archive access for selected titles is a possible option. More evaluation and study must be done. With interlibrary loan, licensing considerations are an issue, with not all licenses allowing interlibrary loan. These questions must continue to be studied given publishers' policies and decisions and how they impact library journal collections.

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