

**MANAGING EJOURNAL: DEALING WITH LIBRARY PATRONS,  
PUBLISHERS AND PROVIDERS  
(SOMETHING SMELLS FISHY OR WHERE ARE THE BACK FILES FOR THE  
JOURNAL OF FISH BIOLOGY AND WHO OWNS THEM?)**

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**ABSTRACT:** Managing eJournals can be a challenge as well as an adventure into unknown terrain. The game rules are constantly changing and vary from provider to provider or publisher-to-publisher be it *Ingenta*, *Blackwell Synergy*, *Springer* or *Elsevier*.

At the beginning of each new year there is the prospect of confronting access shutdowns, even when there is a paid subscription. Rolling archives can also create confusion among libraries patrons and librarians as well.

How do publishers or scientific societies inform libraries about changes in online policies? Do they even bother? When a journal goes online-fulltext does it inform its readership or its subscribers? Patrons are kept informed about the availability of eJournals through in-house intranet webpages or the external services of the *Elektronische Zeitschriftenbibliothek = Electronic Journals Library (EZB)* at the Universitätsbibliothek Regensburg (University Library of Regensburg).

**KEYWORDS:** eJournals; full-text journals; online-access; serials control; electronic publishing.

**Introduction:** The History of eJournals at the *Alfred-Wegener-Institut for Polar and Marine Research Library*.

Prior to the advent of the World Wide Web and the first true online full-text journals, the Alfred-Wegener-Institut (AWI) Library had email advance journal notification from publishers containing the table of contents from selected titles. From 1993 through 1996, the library actively disseminated tables of contents (toc) via forwarding emails or posting to electronic bulletin boards within the institute. By 1995, the AWI Library had its own intranet pages and began listing journals on a web page. At this early stage of development, it linked a title to the publisher's web page containing the table of contents with or without abstracts. Beginning in 1996/97, the Library began having access to online full-text journals. At this time, titles were available without additional payment as

long as there was a print subscription. Throughout 1997, numerous journals became available without additional charges, one of the publishers, Springer, as of this writing, still continues to offer free online access with a print subscription. Needless to say the success of the online journals, measured by the eager use from the research community, prompted many journal publishers to require an additional fee for the online-access after the initial year of free online + print subscription. By 1998, we were negotiating our first access agreements, in a consortium of the *Hermann von Helmholtz Association of German Research Centres* (HGF), with four major publishers of scientific journals: *Academic, Elsevier, Kluwer, and Wiley*. Agreements with the publishers' of *Science* and *Nature* respectively were also made within the framework of the HGF Consortium. Since then, the Alfred-Wegener-Institut Library maintains an eJournal mix with access provided by, consortial publisher agreements, individual titles online + print fee based, and free online full-text with print subscription.

Serials control has changed greatly throughout the last 15 years. Prior to 1990, serials were managed with a paper-based system: the Kardex and the card catalogue. These were supplanted from 1900 until 2001 by a computer supported in-house serials management system, *AWIEIS*, created with *DataEase* a relational database programme. In 2000, the Alfred-Wegener-Institut Library migrated to the *Common Library Network* of the German Federal States Bremen, Hamburg, Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania, Lower Saxony, Saxony-Anhalt, Schleswig-Holstein, Thuringia and the *Prussian Cultural Heritage Foundation* (SPK) (GBV) system, *Pica - LBS* and the module for acquisition and journal management, *ACQ*, was fully implemented for AWI periodical titles by 2002. Keeping track of eJournals was not so difficult in the early years, prior to the consortia agreements, because there were so few titles, but as the numbers grew and the varieties of the online-access expanded, it was necessary to find ways to track the titles. The internal library web pages were at first sufficient, however, with the introduction of the eJournals union catalogue of the *Elektronische Zeitschriftenbibliothek EZB* (*Electronic Journals Library*) a better tool was found.

## **Challenges**

*Springer* is one of the major publishers of serials for which subscriptions are held at the Alfred-Wegener-Institut Library. The current eJournal agreement gives us access to titles for print subscription holdings without additional cost. True, we could also purchase access to titles for which we have no present subscription. Presently there is no apparent need for the additional cost and service. The working relationship with Springer has been good from the inception of online full-text access. There has been no interruption of services due to changing links or end of the year subscription starts.

*Elsevier* is the largest publisher of periodicals held at the AWI Library. The consortial agreements have gone through at least three phases during the past seven years. To start complete access was offered to all titles on a trial basis prior to a signed agreement. The first consortial agreement encompassed cross-access. All HGF holdings could be shared

online without additional cost to each member of the consortium. This followed by a limited number of selected cross-access titles. Cross-access is determined by members of the consortium from the titles held in common by HGF members.

Scientific Societies with or without a publishing arm can often prove interesting in eJournal agreements. Some are generous, lenient, low in cost and some more truculent, costly and restrictive in user access. A major player among the Scientific Societies is certainly the *American Geophysical Union*. Over the years they have often had challenging pricing schedules and terms of use. At present, we have access to all of our print subscription AGU titles online, including the archival issues, access is permitted for two simultaneous workstations.

During the years since the introduction of eJournals, we have witnessed a number of mergers or takeovers. *Elsevier bought Academic Press*. *Springer* acquired *Kluwer*, and *Urban and Fischer* became part of *Elsevier*. These mergers incurred changes in online-access agreements, be they with individual publishers or through consortial contracts. Some agreements had been very generous as was the case with *Academic Press* and *Kluwer* and now are more restrictive with their new owners.

Intermediators or Providers of eJournals made their appearance around 1998. *Ingenta Catchword* and *Allan Press* are three major services that represent Online-Journals of interest to the Alfred-Wegener-Institut Library. *Allan Press* has been around the longest, having been the print publisher for many academic and society publications without their own publishing arm. *Allan Press* makes the *American Meteorological Society* publications available to us. *Ingenta* provides access to publications of the *International Glaciological Society*. *Catchword* was purchased by *Ingenta* in 2002. Each of these services has their own way of granting online-access either by using tokens or access numbers, which must be provided by the publisher. Often the mailing label for the print journal is the only key to unlock the online-access. All too frequently the administrative pages of the eJournal Providers require a good deal of not very intuitive adjustment to activate the online subscription. At any rate, first the journal or society must be paid for the online-access, frequently 10% of the print subscription price before the Intermediator can grant access privileges.

## **Developments**

Adequate control and management of eJournals require ever more time and effort thus increasing the workload. Problems are: link changes, i.e. URL address changes, payment issues with each beginning new year, moves from free to pay mode, new online-availability, and change of publisher or provider. Currently the library's eJournal web page is proofread at the beginning of each year to validate links and update titles as required. The EZB also does a fine job of keeping accurate link and web-site location but it is a joint venture and we as well must offer input for our unique eJournal titles. Of course our library patrons are the major source for changes and alert us about lack of

access for previously operating full-text eJournals. Some publisher and providers also offer good, reliable and frequent information about eJournal changes and additions; in particular *Ingenta*, *Blackwell-Synergy* and *Oxford University Press* are to be commended.

A major annoyance has been the time frame for which access to the online full-text is made available. For a subscription to a print journal started in mid-year either one received the back issues for the past issues or the subscription did not terminate at year's end but rather 12 months later. This is not true for eJournals! Payment for access in August 2005 does not carry over to August 2006; it ends on 31 December 2005. We end up paying for services that are not completely rendered for the year's price. The *AGU* has in the past two years shut down our online access at the beginning of each new year. The invoice has been mailed to us at the end of November and should their finance department not show paid-in-full then service is interrupted for at least the first two weeks of January. Even the telephone, power and gas companies are more generous about cutting services within the first month of non-bill payment! Not so *AGU*, even though we have been a subscriber in good standing for years.

Is it not possible either to send the invoices out earlier, or at least wait one month prior to canceling services without warning? On January 2<sup>nd</sup>, I know what to expect when I return to work after the Christmas holidays, and all the phone calls and emails I will receive from my library patrons who can no longer access *AGU* eJournal.

In 1998, at the early stage of eJournal availability, access was for the most part limited to the current year and perhaps as far back as 1995. Now many publishers have started digitalizing past issues making them available with or without added cost. Frequently, the eJournal administrator is not informed about the availability of online archival issues or the cost required for access. The library patron wants access to the issues shown on the publisher's web page. It is the patron who is the major source of notification for eJournals archival depositories. *Blackwell-Synergy* is an example of one publisher that has continued to expand its archival issues for journal titles but at an additional cost, albeit minimal 10% more than the print+Online current issues. *Nature* has a moving wall or rolling archives access, which means that our library has access to the current year and the past 8 years at no additional cost. Our patrons frequently need to be re-informed that although last year 1994 was available to them as an eJournal, this year they only have access back to 1995. Sometime it is frustrating for the user, but we do hold bound past volumes in the library and can scan them to be emailed to the patron. There are also some societies and publishers that offer free access to all archival issues and only charge for the current issues, as is the case with *Developmental Cell* (*Elsevier*).

When eJournals change publishers, providers or societies, rules regarding access rights frequently change as well. There is much more havoc than with the print counter part. The print version continues to arrive from the new publisher after the new account information is forwarded, but the eJournal's links have to be changed to reflect new URLs and often the rights regarding archival access are changed. Sometimes the eJournal

manager is not even informed of the changes. The *Journal of Fish Biology* was printed by *Academic Press* until 2002. *Elsevier* acquire *Academic* and for a time continued providing access to its eJournals with URLs being forwarded to the new *Elsevier* URL address. Then the web page for the *Journal of Fish Biology* disappeared. Upon some research and going to the print copies, it was discovered that the title was now being published by *Blackwell* and that *Synergy-Blackwell* provided the online access albeit without much of the back issues that had published under the *Academic* imprint. The Society responsible for the journal, *The Fisheries Society of the British Isles*, had also not informed us of the changes. This quandary also appeared in the *IAMSLIC* Server. The Library's eJournal page was re-linked to the new *Synergy-Blackwell* URL but what about the issues prior to 2003?

By chance, it was discovered that the eJournal provider, *Ingenta*, also had not just one Web page but three Web pages for the *Journal of Fish Biology*. One listed *Blackwell* as the publisher, and the other erroneously to the now defunct *Academic Press*. The latter Web page had all the back issues from 2002 until 1995, and one for *Elsevier* which listed nothing. Our library had access to the *Ingenta-Blackwell* Web page but not to the *Ingenta-Academic* Web page. Many, emails written to *Ingenta* were answered but the replies never truly addressed themselves to the issues at hand. Why did they list a defunct publisher and link it to *Elsevier*, which no longer listed the title as their own? Why could we not have access to the *Ingenta-Academic* Page but could to the *Ingenta-Blackwell*? Who was in-charge? *Elsevier* never replied to any of the letters, nor did the Society. Within the last year the *Synergy-Blackwell* Web page has added back-issues extending through to 1993, far exceeding the *Ingenta-Academic* Web pages. Why *Ingenta* maintains three Web pages for the one title remains a mystery and no amount of correspondence has been able to clarify the issue. One can only speculate on the issue of publisher buy out and scientific society's role in who gets to publish.

Institutional membership in scientific societies with journal titles has also been a difficult situation. In the past, the AWI-Library had a membership to the *Deutsch Geophysikalische Gesellschaft* (DGG), entitling the library to the journal: *Geophysical Journal International*. When the title became available online, it was, with frequent difficulties re-activating access each year, also open for available as an eJournal as part of the institutional membership with the print subscription, but that changed in 2004. Institutional members no longer had online access, necessitating a change to library subscription, paying the online + print fee and the additional 10% for the archival access. This all took time and any number of mailings to clarify the issue which the society had clearly not quite sorted out itself.

### **The Future**

Library patrons expect to have access to eJournals faster than the print subscription. They expect access to pre-publication titles. They want to be able to call-up archival issues

online. Library patrons do not want to have to come to the library to retrieve journal articles. They do not want to stand at copy machines photocopying journal articles.

*Science* offers “*Sciencexpress*” and *Nature* has “*Advance online publication*” for pre-publication articles. For the former we have no online-access, it being reserved for members only; for the latter we may access. It is frustrating and confusing for library patrons to be locked out from the former and yet admitted to the latter. The expectations on the speed and availability of publications have risen and the library can no longer remain passive waiting for the printed journal to arrive in the mail. Eventually there will be a growth in pre-print Open Access Journal articles. This will then obviate the need to have to pay for *Sciencexpress* and other costly advance publication pre-print services.

Archival access continues to expand as publishers and societies retroactively digitalized back issues and make them available online. Some charge, some do not and others use a moving wall limiting access to a limited number of years with the paid eJournal subscription. There will be a growth in services like *JSTOR* which will hold archival eJournals for many of the Academic Publishers and Societies. The *Open Access Initiative* (OAI) will certainly make research more aware of the value in archiving their own pre-prints and making them available to the research community at large.

Use statistics for eJournals have become increasingly standardized. These statistics facilitate decision-making, helping to determine periodical title cancellations. They can be used to extrapolate the print usage. For the first time, these use statistics were used at the Alfred-Wegener-Institut Library in assisting the library committee to list cancellation candidates in 2005 for the coming 2006 budget year. Likely titles for acquisition can also be made with use statistics, for example, attempts to access but turned away.

## **Conclusion**

Library use has been greatly altered over the past seven years with the introduction of eJournals. Fewer patrons frequent the collection and the copy machines in the library are idler than they were in the past. Library workstations are used no longer just to search the catalogue, databases, or internet but rather to access eJournals, however, guests to the Alfred-Wegener-Institut Library are by far the heaviest users since AWI researchers are well equipped in their laboratories and offices with their own networked computers. During the past five months alone, there has been a decline in the printing of eJournal articles on library laser printers, patrons are coming with memory sticks, portable hard drives and now save articles directly to removable media. Many researchers now prefer PDF files to paper, they are easier to carry on expeditions and for many students there is no desire to transfer digital images back to paper.

Tracking eJournals for currency, URL accuracy and changes require periodical checks. The Alfred-Wegener-Institut Library makes a yearly inventory at the beginning of each year, relies on feedback from library users, notifications from publishers and societies,

and the postings from colleagues like the *IAMSLIC List* as well as the *EZB Union Catalogue*. True enough, correcting errors in access can sometimes take up from 2 weeks to six months to resolve e.g. *AGU* and the *Journal of Fish Biology*, or setting up additional archival access as with *Blackwell-Synergy* may well entail numerous correspondences to the library's serials provider and follow-up directly to the publisher before the premium access is established.

Almost eight years have elapsed since the first journals became available to us online with full-text; eJournals are still young and publishers are still feeling their way around in a new game. Where we shall yet end is unclear but there are signs on the horizon, that some publishers e.g. *AGU*, might like to see the disappearance of the print format. It might not be too far in the distant future that we have print-on-demand only and libraries become repositories only for the rarest, dated, and obscure monographic and serial publication.

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