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# Journal Article Access Via a Pay-Per-View Model: Report and Recommendations from an Academic Leave, Spring Semester 2010

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TRINITY UNIVERSITY

SAN ANTONIO, TX

# **Journal Article Access Via a Pay-Per-View Model**

Report and recommendations from an academic  
leave, Spring Semester 2010

**Barbara MacAlpine**

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**Coates Library, Trinity University**

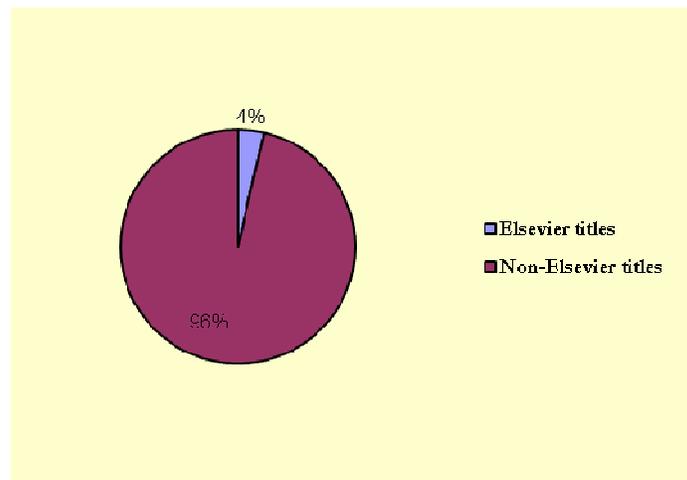
**July 2, 2010**

## Analysis of Journal Article Access Via a Pay-Per-View Model

The focus of my academic leave project was an analysis of Trinity's pay-per-view program, with an emphasis on statistics related to usage and finances. The project extended to an investigation of practices by other academic libraries for comparable information. My goal was to develop recommendations for changes to our existing program, including its possible expansion to publishers beyond Elsevier.

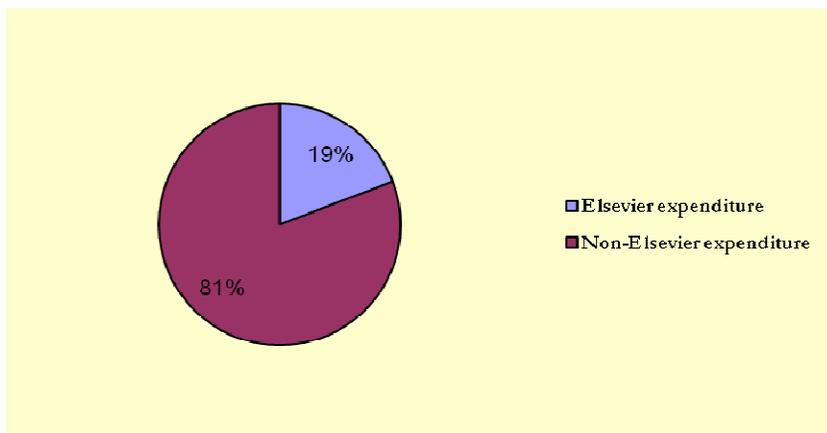
### **BACKGROUND**

In 2007 the Coates Library embarked on a new program to provide greater access to all articles in the journals made available through Elsevier, a major publisher of periodicals in the sciences, psychology, and business/economics. Rather than increasing our subscription base, we cancelled all Elsevier print journals and instead offered "pay-per-view" from its ScienceDirect platform. With this kind of service the library pays a \$30 charge for any Elsevier article and it is immediately available electronically. The greatest impetus for the pay-per-view program was financial. We hoped to achieve major savings by cancelling our 80 Elsevier print subscriptions, which in 2006 cost us more than \$150,000 annually with guaranteed increases for the future [see charts 1 and 2 below]. In addition to the potential savings, there were significant benefits offered to the faculty; they could submit an order for any Elsevier journal article at their convenience and receive immediate delivery to their desktops of a PDF of the original article. The PDF also provided any original graphics that were in color or required high resolution, which are especially important factors in some disciplines.



**Chart 1: Percentage of 2006 Coates Library subscriptions published by Elsevier.**

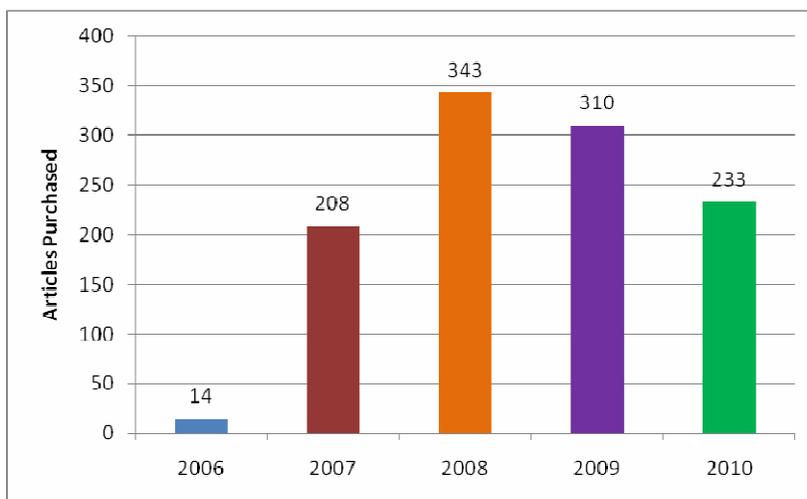
Courtesy of Clint Chamberlain, 8/21/06.



**Chart 2: Elsevier expenditures out of total 2006 Coates Library serials budget.**  
 Courtesy of Clint Chamberlain, 8/21/06.

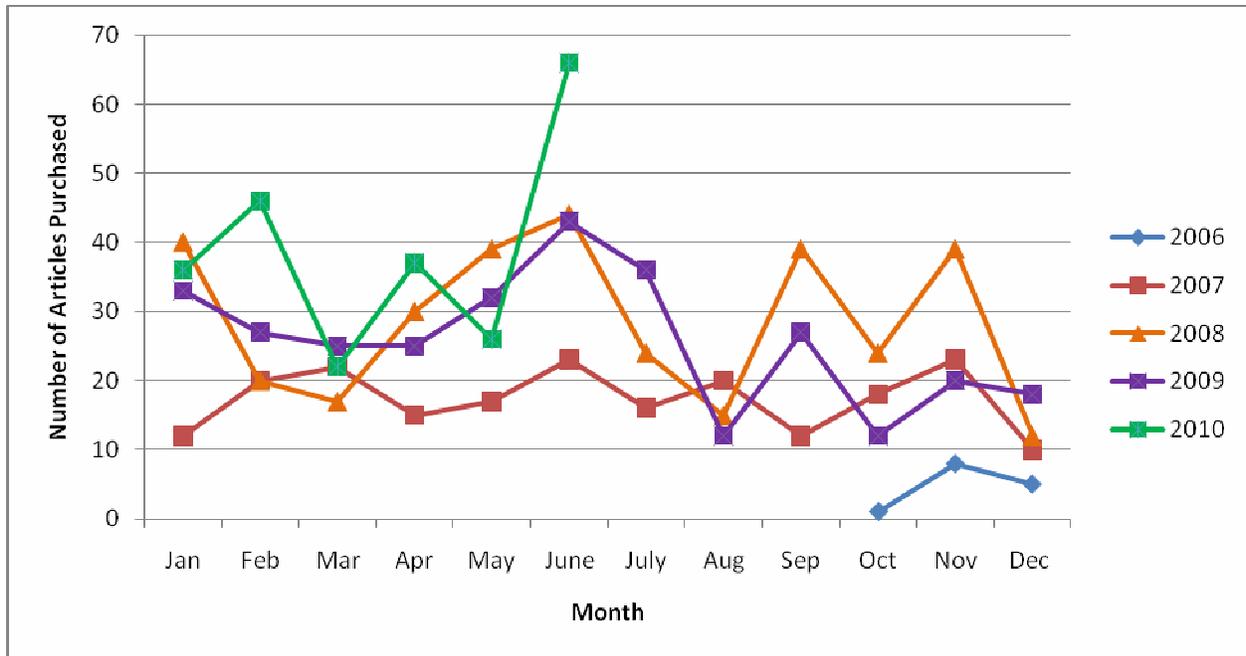
### PAY-PER-VIEW 2007 TO DATE

While traveling into uncharted waters, we estimated that we might spend as much as \$50,000 a year, so this amount was deposited into our Elsevier account in the 2006/2007 fiscal year. As it turns out, we have only spent \$33,240--from a focus group trial in the fall of 2006 through June of 2010. There has not been a steady increase in usage per year (see Chart 3), but articles purchased this June totaled 66, which is a new high for monthly usage (see Chart 4).



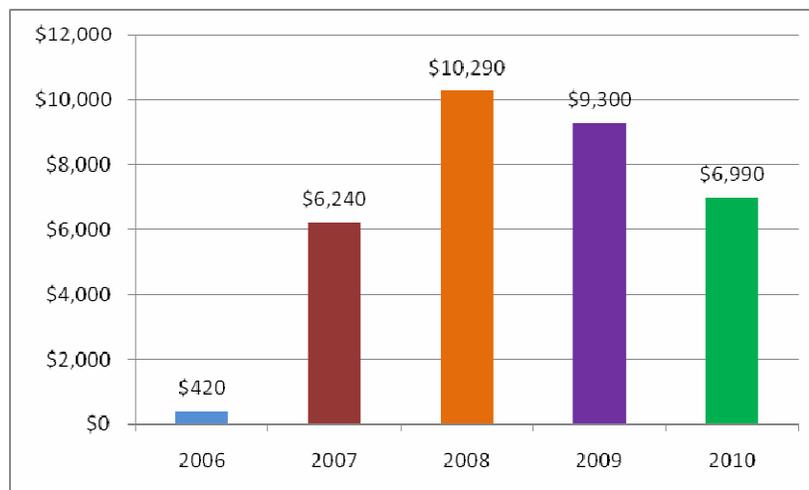
**Chart 3: Elsevier journal articles purchased per year, October 2006—June**

**2010.**



**Chart 4: Elsevier journal articles purchased by month, October 2006—June 2010.**

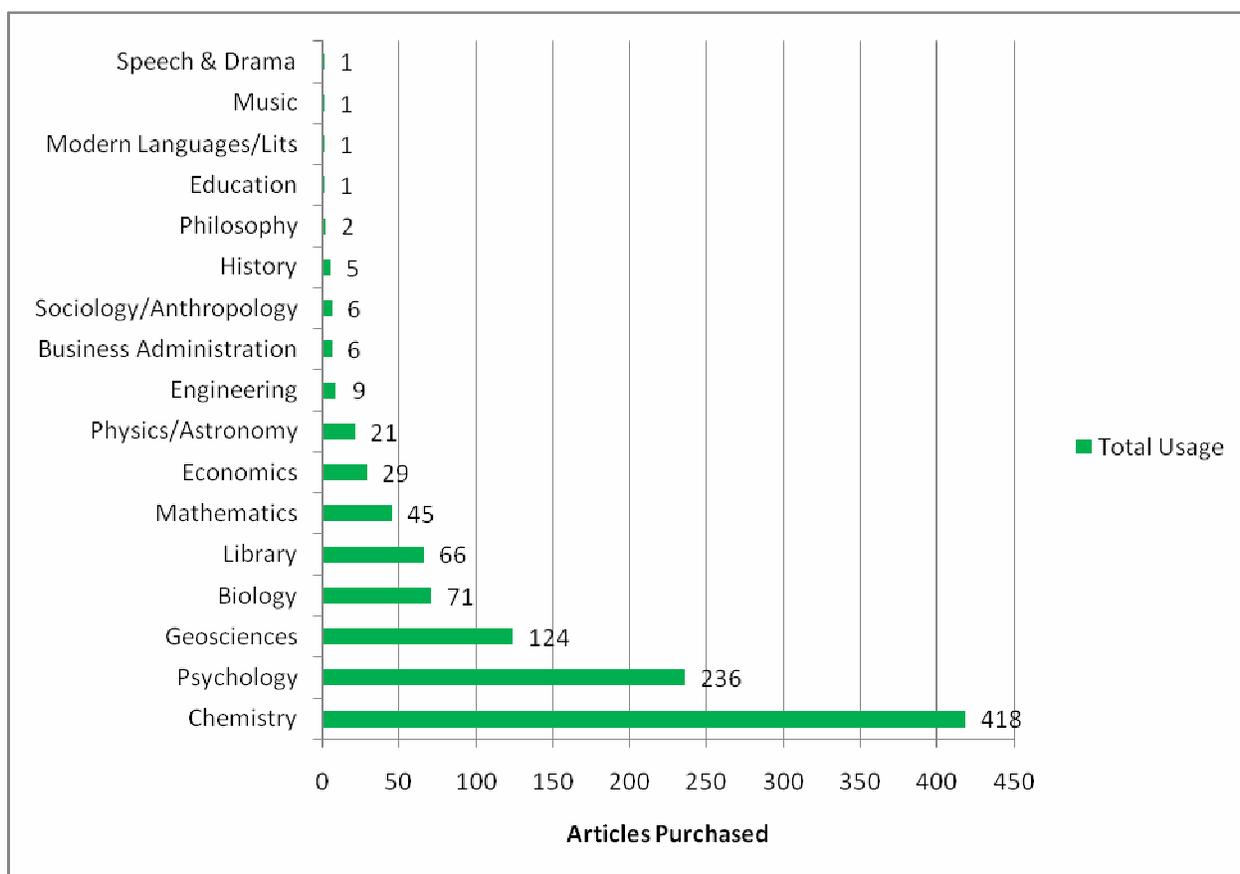
Based on activity thus far this year, one might expect that 2010 will produce more purchases than 2009 (see Chart 5). Nevertheless, our pay-per-view expenses are certainly not decimating the budget at the same rate as the paid Elsevier subscriptions did. **A conservative (5% increase per year) estimate of what our renewal bills from 2007 through 2010 might have been comes to a total of \$678,845 for Elsevier journals, compared with our actual pay-per-view article cost of \$33,240 for the duration of the program.**



**Chart 5: Expenditures for pay-per-view Elsevier journal articles, October 2006—June 2010.**

Why has usage been relatively low? There are a number of possible explanations: Elsevier journals are not as important to our faculty as we (and the publisher) thought. Some economically-minded faculty members have been just as satisfied to use the quick turnaround of interlibrary loan, judging it to be a free service. (Of course that's not completely true in view of staff time.) It is still a bit of an inconvenience to order the article on ScienceDirect, where one must jump through a few hoops and remember a username and password imposed by the library. Some faculty members also have access to ScienceDirect through other avenues (UTHSCSA, their last institution, a spouse, etc.).

Those who have used pay-per-view are generally quite satisfied, and a few departments have found it to be a good source for cancelled or previously inaccessible journals (see Chart 6). For many of our faculty, it is still an untapped resource. As other institutions have experienced, we have seen greater use of journals to which the library did not have subscriptions than to those we cancelled. By mid-2010, articles had been ordered from 278 of these non-subscription journals in ScienceDirect. Moreover, 39 of the 80 Elsevier journals we cancelled have seen no purchasing activity.



**Chart 6—Elsevier journal articles purchased by departments, October 2006—May 2010.**

A larger factor in the low usage, which was one of our earlier concerns about switching to pay-per-view, is that student access is a mediated process offered by the Help Desk, library liaisons, or faculty members. Most students are accustomed to (and spoiled by) one-click access, and mediation is not an option they will choose. If they have to contact a person to request the article, they will usually select another source instead. Libraries that offer students immediate click-through access for pay-per-view have much higher use of ScienceDirect journals. DePauw University, for example, has an FTE comparable to Trinity. The library tried unmediated pay-per-view with Elsevier for both faculty and students in 2007, spent \$50,000 in six months, and switched to a different plan (College Editions) that was more financially feasible for their purposes (Gilson). [Note that Elsevier would not allow Trinity to subscribe to College Editions, despite our expressed interest.] We have discussed changing the student access process at Trinity but have yet to follow through with other options (see Recommendations for Elsevier/ScienceDirect below for additional information).

## **PAY-PER-VIEW AT OTHER LIBRARIES**

As part of my examination of Trinity's program, I gathered data from a number of other institutions around the country that offer pay-per-view access to journal articles from Elsevier as well as other publishers. More than half of these are small liberal arts colleges and universities similar to Trinity in size and focus; 36 are from the Oberlin Group. My database of 70 libraries provides some basic information in an Excel format, descriptions of where more information is available (typically in email located in an Outlook personal folder), and perhaps more importantly, contact information for librarians involved with pay-per-view at most of the institutions. Surveys conducted by me as well as others populated part of the database. Queries from librarians following an ALA presentation on Trinity's pay-per-view program (Chamberlain and MacAlpine, "Replacing") and reactions to a paper published in *Serials* (Chamberlain and MacAlpine, "Pay-per-view") provided additional data.

At least 18 of the institutions are offering pay-per-view from Elsevier's ScienceDirect platform. A few have followed our lead and cancelled all of their Elsevier journals, while more have only cancelled high cost/low use titles. The amount being spent or budgeted varies considerably, from a low of \$5,000 to a typical \$30,000/year. Almost all the libraries provide either mediated or no pay-per-view service for students. Most interesting is the system set up at Lafayette College, which makes access for faculty easier and provides students with electronic mediation. The college FTE is similar to Trinity, but in the first seven months of pay-per-view with Elsevier the library had 1400 article requests (Heidenwolf). Its service began in late 2008, by which time Elsevier had made available a program called Article Choice. Under that plan, articles cost \$22 rather than the \$30 we are charged.

Eleven or more of the institutions surveyed are participating in Wiley's ArticleSelect program, in which pay-per-view is offered through the pre-purchase of tokens (one token per article). The librarians at Wellesley College have been especially impressed with the cost-saving opportunities for Wiley journals and have routinely (without consulting the faculty) cancelled subscriptions to high cost/low use titles in favor of using tokens (Lenares). The price for tokens decreases as the quantity purchased increases, ranging from a high of \$28.50 for 100 down to

\$10.50 for a pack of 1500. Hamilton College librarians reported the use of 400 tokens in busy months, while a Colgate University librarian noted that current use (in April 2010) was 10-11 tokens per day (Poulin). A number of librarians have expressed interest in cancelling part of their Wiley subscriptions in favor of access via tokens. This is the most popular of the pay-per-view programs that are reported; it is a model that other publishers could emulate to advantage.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **Elsevier/ScienceDirect**

Currently faculty members have a departmental username and password that they must remember when ordering pay-per-view articles. Those entry points have not changed since 2007, and the librarians agreed last fall that passwords should be reset prior to the fall 2010 semester. My communications with a librarian at Lafayette College back in 2008 revealed that it should be possible to set up an account with ScienceDirect that is connected directly to the IP address of the library's proxy server. Then a link for ScienceDirect journals in TDNet, our link resolver, would send faculty and staff to an authentication page where they could log in with their institutional username and password and receive the requested article. Orders would be filled without anyone having to remember another set of login information. **I recommend that the library's technical support coordinator and I work together along with support from ITS to establish this new means of authentication, with a goal of having it implemented before the beginning of the fall 2010 semester.**

While some degree of mediation is still in order for students who want Elsevier articles, it would be better to provide that electronically and thus in a more encouraging fashion. Again following the Lafayette College model, we could set up a link for ScienceDirect journals in TDNet that redirects students to a request form. After filling in information about themselves and the desired article, they would submit the form as an email to a special account for Reference. The form could have a link to allow our staff to check easily for print availability here, as well as a proxied link to ScienceDirect that would enable us to make a quick purchase. We would guarantee delivery of the article within a certain number of hours during times that full-time Reference staff members are available and a longer range of hours otherwise. **I recommend that the library's technical support coordinator and I work together along with support from ITS to establish this new means for students to request articles, with a goal of having it implemented before the beginning of the fall 2010 semester.** This could result in greater use of pay-per-view articles by the students; in fact, that would be my hope. It is still likely to be more cost-effective than the subscriptions we used to have for Elsevier journals. In general I would encourage spending down the initial \$50,000 that we deposited in our pay-per-view account as quickly as we can. Once the funds are depleted, we should have the option of switching to Elsevier's Article Choice program, which offers pay-per-view at \$22 per article.

It has come to my attention that the ScienceDirect platform offers a number of free journals, available for typically a span of years up to 12 months prior to the current date. If anyone at Trinity is logged in on the ScienceDirect webpage, he/she will incur a \$30 charge for one of these "free" articles. Per my inquiry to the Elsevier Helpdesk, "it does charge you for free articles if you are logged into your institution's subscription. Currently the system can only see

one subscription set, in your case, it would either be the free titles or the titles that you subscribe to” (Harris). Of course we don’t subscribe, but by logging in we are connected to the Trinity pay-per-view account and will be charged. **I recommend that the library’s technical support coordinator and I investigate a way to circumvent these unnecessary charges.**

**Wiley InterScience**

Since 2002 we have had increased access to Wiley journals, initially through the TICUL (Texas Independent College and University Libraries) consortium and more recently via its new name, TCAL (Texas Council of Academic Libraries). By agreeing to continue subscriptions to those journals which were in our Wiley collection in 2001, we have additional electronic access to many titles that are part of an Enhanced Access License (EAL) maintained by such institutions as Rice, Baylor, Texas A & M, UT—Austin, etc. By and large, this has been a great arrangement with major benefits for our faculty and students; with a subscription to 28 titles, we have access to articles from c275 journals. On the other hand, it has also become increasingly expensive (see Chart 7 below). The library’s manager of technical services created a draft list of our most expensive journal subscriptions (those which cost more than \$1,000 in 2010), and 19 of the 28 Wiley titles were on that list of 148 journals.

YEAR	# OF ARTICLES	SUB. PRICE	COST/USE
2002		\$31,983.15	\$35.07
2003		\$36,820.61	\$24.98
2004		\$39,214.04	\$40.81
2005		\$43,423.53	\$41.04
2006	1611	\$46,944.04	\$29.14
2007	2341	\$49,995.28	\$21.36
2008	2387	\$53,431.84	\$22.38
2009	2744	\$56,927.64	\$20.74
2010	1662 (Jan-May)	\$60,626.23	

**Chart 7: Wiley usage and costs.**

Subscription prices for 2002—2007 and cost/use for 2002-2006 courtesy of Clint Chamberlain, 8/28/07. # of articles not available 2002-2005.

Note that cost/use began to drop significantly in 2007. While that year may have been an aberration, by 2008 our usage statistics included Blackwell journals (acquired by the Wiley purchase and subsequent merge into the company now known as Wiley-Blackwell). What this means for us is that at a minimum, our cost/use is in the low \$20 range. If the former Blackwell

journals were removed from the # of articles figures for 2008—2010, because their cost is not included in the subscription price for any of the years on Chart 7, then cost/use could be higher.

Why is that significant? If we wanted to save part of the funds currently being used for Wiley journal subscriptions, we could cancel some or all of those 28 titles, purchase a pack of 1,500 tokens for \$15,750, and participate in Wiley's ArticleSelect program. Tokens expire after a year, so with careful monitoring we would be able to order more when needed and not lose any through expiration. These tokens can also be used to purchase articles from former Blackwell titles, another possible area for a cost/use examination. A comparison of statistics between Scholarly Stats and Wiley often produces frustratingly different results for journal article usage, but even erring on the high side of usage suggests that we could save substantially by cancelling most or all Wiley subscriptions and providing pay-per-view access via tokens. **I recommend that we monitor the use of *Angewandte Chemie International Edition*, which is consistently the most requested article source in the Wiley group, and consider cancelling the rest of the Wiley journals for 2011.** I would also recommend that the library's new electronic resources and serials librarian undertake a similar study of the former Blackwell titles and their cost/use for other possible cancellations, taking into account the political climate of affected departments and their preferences for journals in print vs. electronic access.

### **Departmental credit card**

At least one library in the Oberlin Group (Dickinson College) has set up an arrangement whereby faculty in a specific department use a credit card to order articles from any publisher for immediate electronic delivery. The library reimburses the cost for the articles, using savings from cancellations of some of the department's more obscure, infrequently used subscriptions in order to support this fund. The faculty wanted to have the flexibility and freedom to purchase articles from journals that were outside the subscription base, and apparently they have been very appreciative of this arrangement (Brunskill).

If we can identify a Trinity department that has likely candidates for cancellation and would find this helpful without abusing the privilege, **I recommend offering credit card reimbursement for articles as a trial on a one-year basis.** A similar request was made by a faculty member in Biology several years ago, and that might be a logical department to consider.

### **Mediated ordering**

In November 2009 the manager of technical services set up document delivery ordering and invoicing procedures to enable library liaisons to use their P-Cards for the purchase of "I need it now" articles for their faculty. This does not apply to ScienceDirect or other document delivery services for which we already have arrangements in place. While this kind of ordering has not been used heavily, it is a service that creates considerable goodwill toward the library. **I recommend that new librarians be made aware of this service and that all liaisons be reminded of it on an annual basis.** This is one more way that the library can spend relatively little money to support the immediate research and teaching needs of our faculty.

## **Most expensive journal subscriptions**

Under the Wiley InterScience recommendations, I mentioned the list of most expensive journal subscriptions that was created earlier this year. While the 148 items do include journal packages and titles that could be considered part of a core collection, **I recommend examining all of them on an individual basis and considering cost per use, with the idea that some might be cancelled in favor of pay-per-view access.** This particular recommendation is probably aimed at myself more than other librarians because most of the titles are in the science disciplines, but if the list were posted in the common folder, it would offer an opportunity for any/all liaisons to look at it for possible consideration.

## **Usage statistics**

We have access to many journal usage statistics through publishers' webpages and the ScholarlyStats service. Due to lack of staff time and perhaps our lack of knowledge about what we could access and how it could be effectively used, we have not fully benefited from the wealth of information that is available. **I strongly recommend that a prominent responsibility for the new e-resources and serials librarian will be to develop a system for harvesting these usage data and making them available to the liaison librarians.** They would be a valuable tool as we work with faculty to identify journal subscriptions that may no longer be very relevant for our collection and our campus.

## **BUDGET AND PERSONNEL RAMIFICATIONS**

My interests in undertaking this project included gaining a better understanding of Trinity's utilization of the Elsevier pay-per-view program, determining effective ways to encourage appropriate use of Elsevier articles by faculty and students, and looking at other possibilities to save money while improving access to journal articles. By making the Elsevier process easier, it is likely that use and short-term costs will increase. However, if we are able to switch to the Article Choice plan, we will eventually be paying 27% less per article (\$22 rather than \$30), so the impact on the budget will be somewhat diminished. Moreover, a move from subscriptions to primarily pay-per-view for the Wiley journals should also provide savings. If we decide to wait on that decision, it would still be an option in a later year when the budget is being squeezed.

There will be an effect on personnel if we move forward with improved access to the ScienceDirect articles for students and they begin to increase their requests. While I'm suggesting that this service be provided by Reference staff, it could instead become part of Interlibrary Loan's responsibility. The critical factor is that we would guarantee article delivery within a few hours when the full-time staff is here, so it might put added pressure on those individuals to process requests in a very timely fashion. Coordination of efforts and sufficient backups to handle staff absences will be important.

## **CONCLUSION**

I approached this study as a strong proponent of pay-per-view journal article access, and my research reinforces this position. Trinity has saved a significant amount on Elsevier articles

since 2007, far more than anticipated when we deposited what we thought would be our first annual payment of \$50,000 in a pay-per-view account. Moreover, pay-per-view has been a popular service for those faculty members who have utilized it. We are now ready to increase our usage and cost by making the process easier for our faculty and students.

Additional savings may result from establishing other pay-per-view arrangements, especially for the Wiley-Blackwell journals. As a colleague at Colgate noted, "As with anything, there is risk involved that they will change the model if enough users switch to token access, but compared to canceling titles and having no access, it seems a reasonable risk" (Poulin). Our cancellation of all Elsevier journals was certainly a risk, but the results have far outweighed the initial concerns and the effort it took to start the program. To quote all kinds of people (including one of my favorite brothers): Nothing ventured, nothing gained.

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