



eBOOK ARCHIVES

Driving Collaboration through Content:
The Impact of eBook Archives on
Carnegie Mellon University, USA

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Carnegie Mellon University's ethos is to encourage 'close collaborations between faculty and students to address scientific, technological and societal challenges'. Offering reliable, unlimited access to wide-ranging current and historical literature for the entire institution is key to delivering against this goal.

In 2014, CMU invested in its largest single purchase of eBook collections to date, with the aim of freeing up more space and giving the institution a more flexible, convenient and consistent content experience. Led by Denise Novak, **the Acquisitions team initially invested in three Springer eBook Archive collections: Computer Science, Engineering, and Mathematics & Statistics.** Here, Denise talks more about the main motivations behind the purchasing decision, the challenges of undertaking a large-scale eBook acquisition, and how this has met CMU's very specific needs.

What drove your decision to license the Springer Nature eBook archive?

Back in the 1990s, the president of Carnegie Mellon wanted the university to adopt a widespread digital content strategy. This was when the gradual process of moving from print-based information to eBooks and journals began, but it was relatively limited, and our print collections continued to grow over subsequent years. Eventually, we simply ran out of space and in the late 90s, the library began a comprehensive and concerted weeding effort to create more room. We weeded most of the journals (except for the Fine Arts) in an exercise that is still ongoing today. For the library, there's no doubt that the biggest motivating factor for the transition from print to electronic was to create more space and, most importantly, to use that space more productively.

How did the library space change after the transition to electronic content and how did this impact students, researchers and faculty?

During the 1990s, I remember the library being a quiet place with few students or researchers regularly using it for extended periods. But with the steady rise in eContent and the opportunity this presented to create more study space, that really started to change. We saw a whole mix of people returning to the library to work in groups, as well as relying on it more for individual study.

The university has undergone massive growth over the past 20-30 years, increasing from 7,000 students in the early 90s, to over 14,000 students today. And that's before you even count faculty and researchers. This expansion really added to pressure on the library to create more space. To accommodate the ambitious weeding project we'd set for ourselves, we used some of our offsite storage for print copies of the journals and books we still needed to be able to access. We sent the rest to be recycled or resold. Some of the space created was converted into a café where students can discuss and collaborate, and we used the rest to create group study areas and extend the quiet space for individual study.



Denise Novak is Head of Library Acquisitions at [Carnegie Mellon University](#) (CMU), Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. CMU is a global research university with over 14,000 students from 114 countries. It has more than 1,400 faculty and is spread across three campuses in Pittsburgh, Silicon Valley and Qatar. CMU is 'one of just 25 universities to be admitted to the [World Economic Forum's Global University Leaders Forum](#) (Times Higher Education (THE), 2018). It boasts three libraries devoted to Fine Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences (Hunt); Engineering, Materials Sciences and Robotics (Sorrells) and Biology and Life Sciences (Mellon).

"We've been able to consistently meet content demand, ensuring that all students have simultaneous and unlimited access to course books right at the very start of the semester."

Denise Novak

What do you see as the biggest benefits of institution-wide access to eBook archives?

The main benefit to our institution has been very high usage in comparison to print formats. So, although the initial investment in digital archives was substantial, that investment is really starting to pay off and the usage stats are showing a greater return. And despite some resistance at the beginning, professors and academics have adopted eBooks as the preferred format for textbooks. We've also been able to reduce costs from the loss and theft of print titles. And perhaps most important of all, we've been able to consistently meet content demand, ensuring that all students have simultaneous and unlimited access to course books right at the very start of the semester.

The latest usage stats we've recorded for Springer eBook Archives remind us that even old information is incredibly valuable to scholars in STM fields. And those same statistics help us to calculate return on investment more easily, which means that for the first time we can really show the true value of our content to the university. For me, one of the most encouraging side-effects of eBook acquisitions has been the number of students, researchers and faculty we've seen return to the library. In that sense, it really has been a 'win-win' for Carnegie Mellon.

Was there a reason you prioritised the purchase of eBook collections in STM areas over social sciences and humanities?

We've seen eBooks have a big impact on STEM subjects in recent years. The format is very convenient for students and researchers in these fields, because of the ways they retrieve and read information. Students of STM subjects are often looking for an answer to a very specific question, so they need to be able to quickly search publications using keywords or chapter downloads. We're seeing huge growth here and lots of researchers rely on eBooks for this style of study.

We've also heard positive feedback about the benefits of being able to access eBook content from anywhere (on or off campus), and that has been reflected in growing year-on-year usage. Faculty can also access all the eBook content they need remotely (from offices, labs, or homes) and find what they're looking for on the spot.

The first eBooks emerged in STEM subjects and we've seen demand grow quickly in these areas, but that's starting to change and we're seeing more requests for eBook collections in the humanities and social sciences. Humanities eBook titles are still behind STM on the growth curve, but I would expect that gap to continue narrowing.

What impact have eBook collections had on library staff and their roles?

The management of eBooks needs fewer staff than the maintenance of print collections, and this has meant that some of our librarians have been freed up to support other important initiatives, such as implementing the new ILS.

There's no doubt that since the advent of large-scale eBook collections at Carnegie Mellon, acquisitions work has increased, and cataloguing has changed a lot following the withdrawal of the microfiche collection and removal of print titles to offsite storage.

There's also been an impact on our liaison librarians. Since the selection process has moved from print to online formats, this role has become more teaching and training focused – and that's meant liaison librarians can provide better support to students and researchers.

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Springer Nature offers 10 English Language eBook collections in HSS subject areas, and 11 English Language eBook collections in STM subject areas

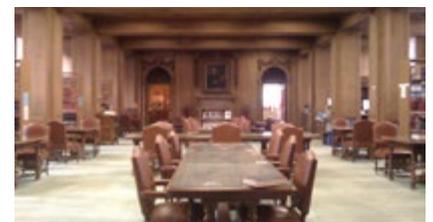
Libraries at Carnegie Mellon University



Hunt



Sorrells



Mellon

What were some of the challenges associated with the acquisition of eBooks?

Around the time we started to purchase large eBook archives, there was some push-back from faculty over the transition. It was a significant change, requiring quite a bit of adaptation in terms of working styles, and this didn't sit comfortably with all staff. But over the past decade faculty have adapted to online content, acknowledging that students expect content to be available electronically. The increase in younger faculty and researchers entering academia who are already comfortable consuming content online has really moved the dial in terms of adoption. Liaison librarians have also done a lot to communicate and reinforce the benefits of eBooks to faculty through collaborative research initiatives.

"My best piece of advice to other libraries? Start acquiring eBooks now. Don't put this off if you want to stay current and relevant. The future lies in electronic content."

Denise Novak

What is the biggest benefit to the library of the data associated with eBooks usage?

One of the most useful datasets we get from our eBook collections is the number of turnaways (or denials). We rely heavily on these stats to inform future purchases so that we can better support our researchers and be confident that we'll see a good return on the investment.

What advice would you give to other libraries looking to acquire large eBook collections or eBook archives?

My best piece of advice to other libraries? Start acquiring eBooks now. Don't put this off if you want to stay current and relevant. The future lies in electronic content. Product Information

Content from over 160 years of publication – the Springer Book Archives

The Springer Book Archives consists of high quality digital versions of books from Springer (and around 40 imprints) published between 1842-2005, including many previously out of print titles. Available as one-off purchases with continuous access in German, English and Palgrave packages, the titles included are digitized to a high standard with optimum metadata.



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Bibliography:
Times Higher Education (THE). (2018). Carnegie Mellon University. [online] Available at: <https://www.timeshighereducation.com/world-university-rankings/carnegie-mellon-university> [Accessed 12 Nov. 2018].