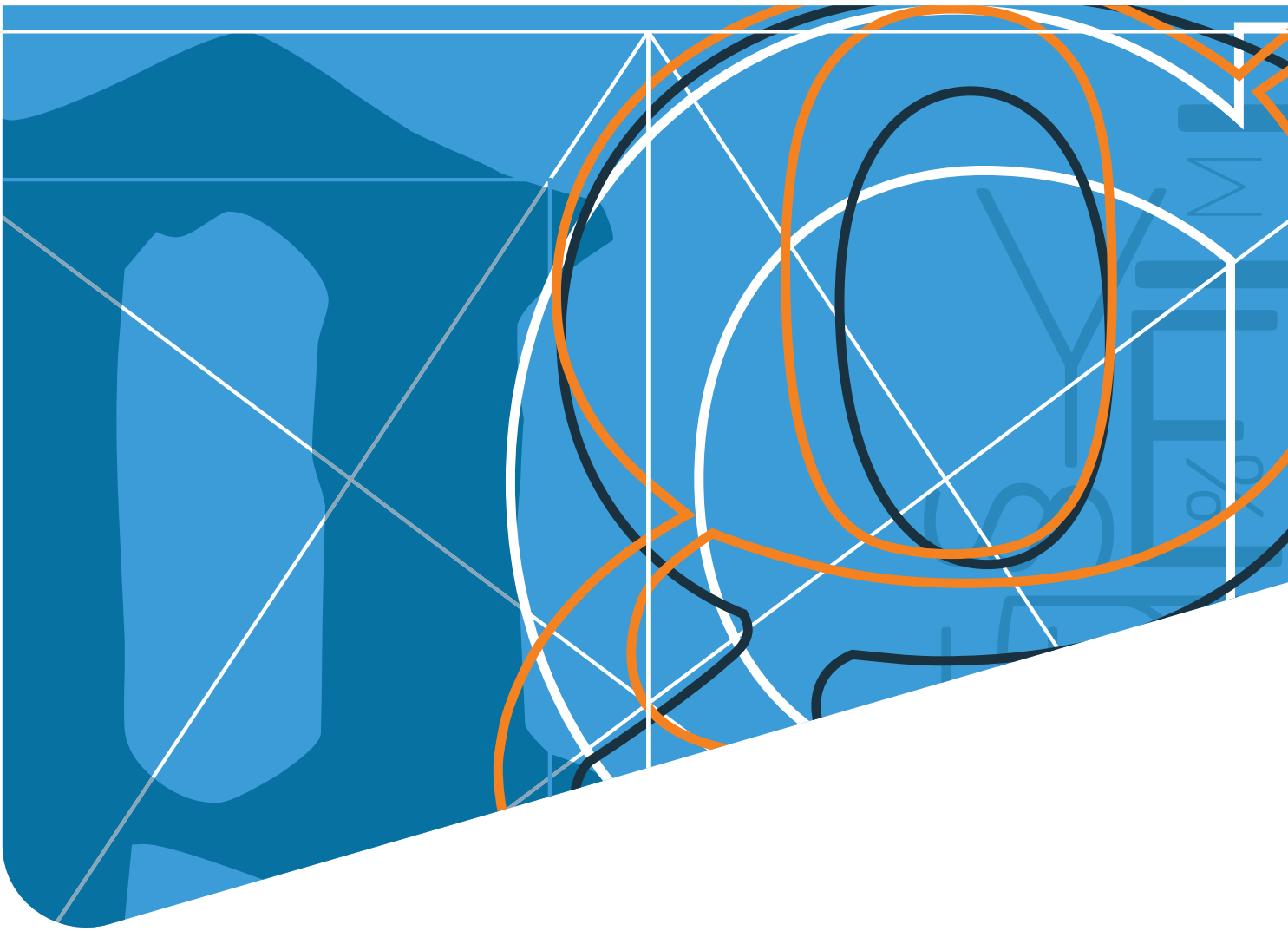
Illustration inspired by the work of Johannes Gutenberg



8 STEPS TO BUILDING AN EFFECTIVE EBOOK COLLECTION

ADVANCING DISCOVERY

In 2007 we wrote a guide on the best practices for acquiring and implementing an eBook collection. Since then, eCollections have become more common place, publishing technologies have improved, library budgets have tightened, and user expectations have risen. So, we thought it was time to re-visit these steps, see what's changed, and give our latest take on how to build a successful eBook collection.

1. Define your Collection Development Strategy

Libraries typically assemble their eBook collections either by selecting individual titles over time or buying entire subject collections to create a critical mass of information.

Buying individual titles gives you control and flexibility to meet the changing needs of your researchers. And with less upfront investment needed, this approach is becoming more popular with 23% of librarians surveyed in 2018[1] wanting to see more 'a la carte' options.

The downside to this approach is that, long-term, the overall costs are greater, with more time and resource needed to source, order and index individual titles. Stretched resources was cited as the single biggest challenge facing librarians last year[2] and purchasing complete collections can be one of the most cost-effective solutions to this, as they give a greater return longer term.

As accumulated usage of an eBook collection grows over time, the cost per download significantly reduces. 20 years after purchasing Springer Book Archive collections, a library will see accumulated usage of fourteen times that of the first year.

If this is the approach you decide to take, here are some quick tips:

- Use the latest data to reveal high-demand, frequently searched subject areas. Springer Nature supports this through its Librarian Portal and Account Development team.
- Consider book types included in the collection - reference materials and monographs adapt better to online search.
- Seek user feedback on recent collection acquisitions and how they are typically approaching texts, including: chapter-downloads, non-linear exploration of the text, online highlighting and annotation.
- Always consider the volume of archive material in a collection and the longer-term pay-off of this material. The citation half-life for books is typically longer than that of journals with the average number of citations peaking several years after publication.

Check out our handy infographic

(1) Today's Library & the future of Scholarly communication (Springer Nature, 2018)
(2) The Costs of Print Book Collections: Making the case for large scale eBook acquisitions (Springer Nature)

2. Evaluate Business Models

Once you've established which strategy will best serve your users and match your strategic goals, the next step is to carefully evaluate vendor policies. Keep the following in mind:

Concurrent users:

Check vendor restrictions on simultaneous access and seek out providers with no user limitations (or very high limits), as many electronic titles will have big spikes in demand.

MARC records:

Vendors should supply easy-to-import MARC records so you can quickly integrate electronic collections into your library catalog and avoid the time-consuming, expensive task of manual catalog integration. Systems such as KBART Automation make content discoverable and accessible in a fraction of the time it used to take.

Continuous Access:

Seek out publishers offering this model for eBooks. Lots of publishers have adopted an ongoing subscription model which can leave the library's most critical assets vulnerable to contract disputes and other circumstances beyond its control.

Digital Preservation:

Libraries need reliable, long-term access to eBook content, regardless of changes to the publisher. Look for perpetual access to libraries in any contract and participation in archive programs such as LOCKSS , CLOCKSS or PORTICO to safeguard your content.

Flexible packages:

Find publishers who will allow you to incrementally supplement subject collections.

Reliable, user-friendly platform:

You need to be sure your eBook platform performs around the clock and is supported by 24/7 customer service, if something does go wrong. Researchers need continual access to collections and the best user experience has been proven to drive up usage and research output.

Publication Quality:

Check your eBook supplier provides the content as high resolution PDFs and ePub versions, which can be downloaded on any mobile device to ensure the best user experience.

3. Pool resources to reduce costs

The library is the centre of the institution and perfectly placed to collaborate with all other departments to pool resources for content investment, increase usage and avoid duplicate purchases. A regular review of research grants awarded to the institution and investing in collections or titles that support those areas can be a good starting point for expanding your content.

- Check what invoicing options your supplier offers to facilitate collaboration across departmental and budgetary lines.
- Keep a consolidated, updated list of publications acquired from both centralized and de-centralized budgets to ensure funds aren't being allocated to resources you already have.
- Any planned spend should always directly support your institution's overall content strategy.

4. Review acquisitions policy

Before any new eBook collection is ordered, budget and policy reviews with Librarian Liaisons are key to understanding the latest user behaviors and needs.

Integral to these discussions should be any policy changes needed to support the acquisition of electronic vs print collections, including the relative benefits of a centralized vs departmental acquisitions approach. Next steps should be to:

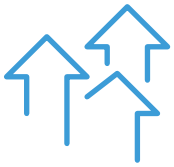
- Make collection decisions and secure budget approval by department or subject area in conjunction with subject liaisons.
- Define the usage profile for a collection which can impact vendor choice, licensing agreements, and ultimately, availability of budget.
- Estimate the number of concurrent content users and factor in search behaviors, the number of access points, and printing requirements.
- Assess costs associated with specialist storage of archives versus expansion of your eBook collections.

"More than a third of academic librarian interviewees described their acquisitions strategy as largely faculty-driven; and most took faculty requests and curricular needs into account to some degree, along with other factors – such as usage, budget, consortial options, etc."(1)

"...the expected cost of owning a monograph is more than **seven times** the monograph's purchase price. This has important financial implications for libraries that are building their collections: the initial cost of populating a collection is a small fraction of the ongoing cost of maintaining one."(2)

(1) Today's Library & the future of Scholarly communication (Springer Nature, 2018)
(2) The Costs of Print Book Collections: Making the case for large scale eBook acquisitions (Springer Nature)

5. Integrate collections and boost discovery



Springer's 2018 study into the role of the library within its institution found that, "Nearly all interviewees felt the library should be the campus hub and starting point for content discovery. However, about a third did not offer an option for web-scale search across all library resources. Even the majority that did currently have library discovery services in place noted that truly comprehensive search across all holdings is still illusive, as some providers are unable to integrate some licensed academic databases."(1)

After establishing business needs, libraries should enlist IT services, their cataloging department, or their consortia to agree requirements and timelines for integration of new texts with the library discovery system. The next step is to make your new collection as discoverable as possible. Here are three quick, effective ways to do just that:

Enable link resolvers

Ask your publisher to supply you with the data needed to support these frequently used link resolvers, including: EBSCO Full Text Finder; EX Libris SFX; Serial Solutions 360 Knowledge Base; OCLC WorldCat Knowledge Base.

Link to subject collections via online research and LibGuides

LibGuides allow for easy navigation of relevant resources in a specific discipline. As access to many publisher platforms is granted through IP authentication, including EZProxy for off-site users, when you are writing a LibGuide it's good to include direct links to any new eBook collections.

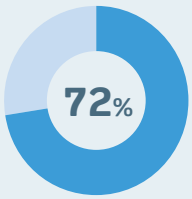
Advance discovery with a Metadata Downloader

KBART, the enhanced Metadata Downloader has now been launched by Springer Nature, replacing the retired MARC Downloader Tool. This improved web tool provides librarians and library cataloguers with easily downloadable MARC and KBART metadata which can be embedded into library catalogues, as well as title lists for a library's licensed content.

6. Promote, promote, and promote again

Ongoing promotion of new collections before, during and after acquisition are essential for driving long-term usage. And with 72% of librarians citing 'promoting greater content usage amongst faculty' as their single biggest focus, efforts behind this are already substantial. To boost these efforts, seek as much support as you can from publishers.

- Publishers should be able to provide a variety of print and online promotional tools to support your publicity drive.
- Check the publisher's website for dedicated library resources, including on-site and remote training options, banner ads, downloadable posters, and other promotional aids.
- Use email, intranets, social media and departmental forums to spread the word.
- Regularly repeat this activity to make existing resources work harder for your institution.



72% of librarians citing 'promoting greater content usage amongst faculty' as their single biggest focus

7. Digital Preservation

Ask your vendor what partnerships they have in place to ensure that content remains accessible and usable to their customers, regardless of media failure and technological change.

Digital preservation organizations such as CLOCKSS and Portico ensure accurate rendering of authenticated content over time.

8. Review and renew

After successful implementation, you'll need to closely evaluate the speed at which users are accessing the new collection, along with other trends including research methods, how they're reading content (eg. Chapter downloads vs full text), how they're accessing content (on or off campus) and how frequently they're printing or ordering print versions of the text. As part of this process, you should review associated Altmetrics for some of your best ranking titles, along with gaps in your existing catalogue.

3-6 months after integrating a new collection, interview active users and evaluate their needs. Provide your publisher with feedback on technologies and new content that could support emerging research trends at your institution.

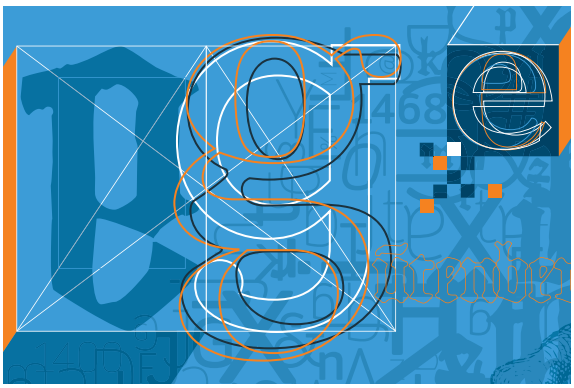
Ask your publisher for tools, case studies, and client references to support your internal communications and get buy-in from the wider institution. Measuring ROI should also be integral to the review process. Your publisher should give you easy access to usage stats so that you can calculate cost-per-download.

Finally, check that your usage data and return on investment are aligned with your overall content strategy.

SPRINGER NATURE

springernature.com

Springer Nature advances discovery by publishing robust and insightful research, supporting the development of new areas of knowledge and making ideas and information accessible around the world.



Johannes Gutenberg (c.1395 – c.1468)
Johannes Gutenberg was a German inventor whose introduction of mechanical movable type printing into Europe is widely regarded as laying the basis for the modern knowledge based economy. Whereas movable type had been used in Asia previously, Gutenberg's innovation was developing a casting system using molten type metal that produced many duplicates of the same letter. This process was used to print the 42-line or Gutenberg Bible, which was acclaimed for both its technical quality and its beauty. Gutenberg referred to the process as "Das Werk der Bücher" the work of the books – an indication perhaps that, although he had invented the printing press, he understood his real legacy to be the books that the process created.

eBook Collections:

Science, Technology & Medicine
Biomedical & Life Sciences
Chemistry & Material Sciences
Computer Science
Earth & Environmental Science
Energy
Engineering
Intelligent Technologies & Robotics
Mathematics & Statistics
Medicine
Physics & Astronomy
Professional & Applied Computing

Humanities & Social Sciences
Behavioral Science & Psychology
Business & Management
Economics & Finance
Education
History
Law & Criminology
Literature, Cultural and Media Studies
Philosophy & Religion
Political Science and International Studies
Social Sciences

For more information, visit springernature.com/contactus

Follow twitter.com/SN_LibraryLink