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Nottingham**

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# **Journals and subscriptions code of practice**

**University of Nottingham Libraries**

Ruth Dale/Paul Cavanagh  
January 2023  
Version 1.0

## Document Information

<b>Document Name:</b>	Journals and Subscriptions code of practice
<b>File Name:</b>	Journals and subscriptions code of practice.docx
<b>Version:</b>	1.0
<b>Status:</b>	Final
<b>Author:</b>	Ruth Dale and Paul Cavanagh
<b>Contributors:</b>	Collections team, Resource Acquisitions team

## Published Release History

Version	Date	Contributor	Reason for change
1.0	Jan 23	RD/PC	Final version following previous working draft pilot
1.0	Oct 2024	RD	Edit to remove "policy" from title and doc name

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## 1 Mission

The library collections at the University of Nottingham inspire the academic work of the University, supporting collaboration in learning, scholarship and discovery. Our aim is to operate an evidence based, flexible and responsive model which meets current teaching, research and learning needs.

## 2 Scope

This Policy covers the collections and activities at the UK campuses of the University, excluding Manuscripts and Special Collections for which there are separate [Collecting Policies](#). It provides an overview of the policies governing “serial” collections management within University of Nottingham Libraries (the Library) and includes providing access to academic journal and related content where continuous subscription is required. It sets out the principles according to which we identify, acquire, maintain, store and make this content accessible and it applies to material in all formats.

In addition to this general Collection Policy, other related policies are outlined in Section 8 below.

## 3 Governance

This document will be reviewed and revised at least every three years by the Library Senior Management Team, seeking feedback via Academic Library and Student Union Representatives.

## 4 Extent

The Library’s significant print and online resources are discoverable via our online Discovery system, NUsearch, and made available through eight library sites (excluding Manuscripts and Special Collections).

- Business Library
- Denis Arnold Music Library
- Djanogly Learning Resource Centre
- George Green Library
- Greenfield Medical Library
- Hallward Library
- James Cameron-Gifford Library
- King’s Meadow Campus Store

## 5 Background

Academic journal content continues to be used heavily for research and, in many areas, for teaching.

We are committed to increasing access to and availability of online resources. Electronic access and publishing are already the dominant means of scholarly communication and dissemination across major disciplines (Sciences, Medicine, Business, Engineering), and the availability of electronic content across all disciplines is increasing (e.g. Digital Humanities). Covid-19 restrictions in 2020-21 only served to underline the limitations of print compared to the benefits of online access in many instances.

Aside from this, publishing trends have seen a concentration of content in fewer larger publishers, a noticeable shift towards online-only access in many disciplines, expectation of quick and instant access to article content and, most recently, the beginnings of real change towards open access (including Transformative Agreements such as Read and Publish models). The costs associated with both publishing and “reading” are not inconsiderable and inevitably this has an impact on library budgets and resource planning.

Effective collections policy and practice requires financial sustainability (avoiding unnecessary duplication of formats and titles, utilising Frameworks and Value For Money indicators when purchasing), managing subscriptions via formats which facilitate and maximise scholarly communication, and ensuring continuity of access to content (via licences and post-cancellation agreements). Internal budgetary indicators and external subscription agent data indicates our own increases for 2022 to have been in the range of 5% to 6%. (This is consistent with previous annual year on year price increases – though does not take into account currency fluctuations). Implementing transparent and measurable Journals and Subscriptions reviews, including budgetary costs, usage data and academic input and collaboration is essential to long term, sustainable resourcing Policy planning and practice.

We seek to give access to the most useful content for our staff and students, whatever the format or route, and to demonstrate value for money. We assess this value in different ways. Where we have online access we usually also have access to usage data, and this informs decision-making. However, not all titles are yet available online – and in certain subject areas some printed content can be preferred for specific reasons – so we will also review, store and subscribe to some physical journal content. The Library is aware of the value of academic staff input to these decisions, especially regarding printed content (both renewal of a current subscription and retention of our holdings).

The long-term transition from print to online resources is in parallel with global initiatives to adopt and implement Open Access policies and practice, resulting in new and potentially revolutionary models, such as Read and Publish or Transitional/Transformative Agreements. We actively partner with Jisc and other organisations in shaping negotiations around cost savings, increasing access to online resources and meeting the publishing needs of our academics and researchers. We adopt agreements from major global publishers and suppliers, ensuring that high quality digital content agreements, Open scholarship and research, and financial sustainability is central to our planning.

## 6 Principles

The Library will make final decisions on how best to use its budget for journals and subscriptions in support of the learning, teaching and research activities of the University and informed by academic input on discipline specific needs:

- We will use the network of Academic Library Representatives to inform and consult on any changes – both those we might plan and those out of our control (e.g. where a publisher changes its offering)
- We will review subscriptions, and print holdings, based on evidence of usage/demand and by comparing with document delivery costs (Interlibrary Loan) and we will analyse the content of similar online packages to minimise duplicated spend
- Online vs print:
  - We will prioritise online-only for all existing subscriptions where this is available and affordable, unless academic consultation identifies a specific

- problem with an online equivalent – ensuring the widest possible access, and licensing for overseas campus users where possible.
    - New subscriptions will be assessed based on online-only access where available
    - Combined print and online access will only be available where this is cost neutral compared to online-only
- When evaluating the value for money of Read and Publish deals we will take account of the level of University of Nottingham publishing at that venue and the value of the equivalent Article Processing Charges (APCs).
- A Library subscription will be taken to include access for all University staff or students. The Library can also manage similar access where non-library funds are used. Where a Department wishes to take out its own subscription with access only to a subset of users the Library can advise on how to handle this.

All library journal holdings and online access will be clearly visible via our Discovery system, NUsearch:

- We will simplify online access authentication via other routes wherever we are able – e.g. Browzine and Library Access, linking pathways via database providers etc.
- Print journals will be stored in either Libraries or Store: we will prioritise journal shelf space in libraries for current print journals with no equivalent online access. Journals in our Store can be requested via NUsearch, with delivery to a library usually within one working day
- We will extend online access to Walk in Users (WIU) from within Library buildings wherever the licence permits it
- We will continue to participate in the UK Research Reserve (UKRR) scheme, which helps us manage our space whilst ensuring retention of minimum holdings of print journals throughout the national network of research libraries. We will not dispose of print journals known to be of continuing relevance unless we have equivalent and reliable online access

## 6.1 Definitions

For the purposes of this policy “Journals and subscriptions” includes the following products, often (but not always) paid from the library’s main journals budget:

- Individual journal subscriptions – single titles from a range of publishers in all formats, where access to the most current content requires an annual subscription
- Publisher packages – a single agreement for online access to many of a publisher’s journals, usually most of their titles (but only rarely all of them). These agreements are often multi-year commitments
- Read and Publish (Transformative) agreements – where a single agreement covers both access to subscribed content and open access publishing costs for UoN authors of articles within that publisher’s journals. These too will often be a multi-year commitment and require liaison with colleagues beyond the Library. Current agreements can be found [here](#).
- Database Subscriptions – a variety of products including
  - Full text journal content across different publishers, though often not the most recent issue e.g. ABI/Inform, JSTOR.
  - Specialist subject indexes and abstracts, often with the facility to link to our own subscribed full text content e.g. Embase, Scifinder Scholar.
  - Non-journal content e.g. British Standards Online, Digital Theatre Plus, LION (Literature Online), Reaxys.

- Standing Orders – an agreement with a supplier or publisher to receive new content in a series etc. as it is published. These are usually not based on a fixed subscription but on a single charge on publication. E.g. Online encyclopaedias with irregular updates of new content, Print encyclopaedias with volumes published over time, Printed loose-leaf reference works with new insertions, Monographic series.
- Ongoing commitments – smaller annual fees paid to publishers where we made an initial large payment for access to content (fee sometimes covers new content, sometimes a hosting charge for the interface)

## 7 Managing subscriptions: purchase, access and review

### 7.1 Purchasing

#### Portfolio

We have a large portfolio of journal subscriptions reflecting the wide range of research and teaching at Nottingham. Subscription costs each year cover the entirety of the budget allocated and new subscriptions are usually not possible until and unless cancellations are made to the same value.

Requests for new subscriptions can come via many routes:

- New teaching programme approval Business Case – where specific new journals are named in any section about Resources, and which Libraries are invited to respond to.
- New research area/project where a specific journal is identified as essential for the work or for the publishing outcome (journal titles can also become available as part of a publisher’s Transitional Agreement).
- Request submitted via Library Reps, or in the context of an annual subscription review
- Individual ad hoc requests to the Collections team – often following a general enquiry about access to specific issues/articles.

Requests are added to a “wishlist” pending availability of funds – see Appendix 2 for an outline of the annual cycle for subscription review. Where individual Departments have themselves taken on the cost of a new subscription as a short-term solution these titles will usually be prioritised should library funds then become available.

In evaluating a new subscription, in addition to recommendation by academics, we will also use data on turnaways and interlibrary loan/document delivery requests for the title. Turnaways data is provided by the publisher, where they have been able to identify our users (usually by on-campus IP range, or similar) and track attempts to view unsubscribed content.

#### Supply

The HE library sector both benefits from and contributes to the negotiation of package deals for journal content from all major academic publishers and many smaller ones, usually via Jisc. The Library belongs to the NEYAL regional purchasing consortium (North East and Yorkshire Academic Libraries), which also gives access to national Joint Framework agreements for both books/eBooks and journals/ejournals. Wherever possible all purchasing uses one of these agreements. See Appendix 1 for more details about these organisations.

Although in many cases, therefore, we will not be buying journal content direct from a publisher, we will meet regularly with major publishers to review our access and ongoing value, and to share comments on technical features of their interface/linking etc.

The majority of titles available online are courtesy of large package subscriptions which are re-negotiated every 2-3 years and, although titles sometimes move around between publishers, we are generally committed to that package as a whole. Other individual subscriptions both print and online, are renewed/cancelled one by one. It is not necessary (or practical) to review the ongoing value of every subscription each year and the majority of subscriptions will be renewed automatically where not part of a Faculty review.

Journal subscription costs can fluctuate due to changes of publisher/policy or currencies. An average increase of 5% across our portfolio can mask some very large individual increases along with many of which change very little. Where a journal is not already under review we would also evaluate ongoing value if notified in advance of an unusually large increase.

## 7.2 Access

Online-only subscriptions are the preferred format for new subscriptions, and existing subscriptions will be upgraded to include electronic formats where possible. Whilst we are committed to increasing the access to and availability of online resources, we recognise the adoption of electronic formats is not possible or preferable in all instances due to a range of internal and external factors (costs, availability, disciplinary differences, commitments to partnership schemes and bodies) which must be considered during review.

We are part of a UK network of research libraries and we work in partnership with them to share information about our resources. As an Ex Libris Alma Library, we subscribe to the RapidILL peer to peer interlending service. Where our own online access, or retained print holdings, cannot satisfy a particular request we expect to supply a copy in most cases from within these networks.

### 7.2.1 Maximising access to online content

Our discovery system, NUsearch, should always contain accurate information about our own current access to online journals. In addition to this data about the time span available, the "articles" search enables discovery at article rather than title level. Links are provided for easy reporting of problems with accessing electronic resources.

On campus access to the full text of articles is made as seamless as possible. Off-campus use is facilitated by:

- Requiring publishers to use sector standard authentication methods
- Encouraging staff and students to use NUsearch – which will direct them to the correct log in link
- Offering additional services such as Browzine (a personal journal "bookshelf" for current awareness) and the Library Access browser extension (which improves log in and provides direct alerts to available content)

### 7.2.2 Access to print journals



We will prioritise shelf-space in libraries for print journals with an active current subscription and where we have no equivalent e-access. These will be expected to be used within the library and have a default status of not for loan. Manual issues can sometimes be made at the discretion of staff in libraries. Journals in Hallward and DLRC libraries are arranged in classmark order. Journals in other libraries are arranged in alphabetical order.

Journals with no current subscription will be located in our library Store where possible, and issues can be requested via NUsearch. These holdings will normally be reviewed via the UKRR scheme (see below under Review) and we would expect that eventually the only physical journals in our Store will be those agreed to retain as part of that process.

### 7.3 Review of subscriptions

Our primary aim is to provide access to information content, which does not necessarily require a subscription or local physical holdings. Any decisions made regarding review and cancellation of subscriptions will be data driven and will be made as transparent as possible to colleagues and academic staff via Academic Library Representatives. See *Appendix 2* for a summary outline of this review process, including current benchmarks.

Academic Library Representatives are our route to inform and consult on planned changes as a result of subscriptions review. Usage data analysis is a flag for action and review at Library level. Any proposed changes will be shared with Academic Library Representatives with a request for feedback. This ensures that the review process combines analysis of COUNTER compliant data over time and clear academic input and feedback, allowing transparent evidence-based decision making within a teaching, learning and research context.

What will be reviewed?

Package subscriptions are evaluated as a whole and only when the relevant agreement is under consultation. Most of them cover titles of interest across multiple Faculties.

We will aim to review individual subscriptions as follows:

- As a virtual “portfolio” at Faculty (or at least School) level – comparing all titles to identify the most and least well used
- On a 3-year cycle (to be manageable, and also to allow for at least 3 years of online data)
- With academic feedback requested on specific titles, rather than on all
- With academic input requested to identify “core” journals, especially where print only
- With the expectation that new course submissions, and existing course accreditations, also clearly identify core journals to feed into our decision-making

How do we identify online titles for review?

Use of one or more of the following indicators:

- Individual titles where the subscription cost and number of articles used shows a pattern of high Cost Per Use (CPU).
- A group of the least used journals in a list (regardless of CPU), which might be less cost-effective than new subscriptions requested.
- Annual resource cost shows increase above the predicted sector-wide average (using EBSCO serials price increase reports as a starting point)
- Annual resource usage shows continuing decline over at least 3 years.

How do we review print subscriptions? (Not generally borrowed and so with very little “usage” data to inform us). Annual resource cost increase can also flag titles for review, but we will also:

- Work with Academic Library Representatives to identify titles seen as “core”
- Switch core titles to e-only where affordable, and acceptable – so that data-driven review will become practical
- For remaining print subscriptions – seek consensus on cancellations.

#### UK Research Reserve (UKRR)

For full details about how we review all holdings of physical print journals (including those where there is no longer a current subscription) see our Stock Review policy. In general, holdings are identified as appropriate for review and removal where there is largely equivalent and reliable online access to the same content. Managing any removals via the UKRR Scheme ensures that minimum copies are retained. See link in Appendix 1 for more information about this scheme.

## 8 Related Statements and policies

This policy sits alongside other Library policies and statements, which are all outlined on our Policies webpages.

[www.nottingham.ac.uk/library/about/policies/policies.aspx](http://www.nottingham.ac.uk/library/about/policies/policies.aspx)

- Donations are accepted in accordance with the criteria set out in the Donations Policy
- Collection Policy for Monographs and one-off purchases
- Stock Review Policy – outlining how we review all information resources in order to best manage our collections and physical spaces

## 9 Contact for further information

Many library teams are involved in the work of managing our collections, and reference is made in other policies above to specific contact routes for reading lists, book suggestions and scanning.

If you have a general enquiry about library collections management, particularly about acquiring new material, you can contact the Collections team

[collections@nottingham.ac.uk](mailto:collections@nottingham.ac.uk)

## Appendix 1

### Bodies involved in HE journal publishing, supply and discovery

#### National / International organisations and initiatives

- NEYAL – North East and Yorkshire Academic Libraries (purchasing consortium)  
The objective of NEYAL is to secure library purchasing agreements in accordance with purchasing requirements that offer best value to Consortium members and meet the Consortium’s specifications.  
<https://neyalblog.wordpress.com/neyal-documents/>

- JISC / CHEST  
JISC Collections – are a negotiation and licensing service that supports the procurement of digital content for higher and further education and research institutions in the UK  
<https://www.jisc.ac.uk/libraries-and-research>

- UKRR – the UK Research Reserve, now managed via the British Library  
<https://www.bl.uk/ukrr>

UKRR (UK Research Reserve) is managed by the British Library to safeguard the long-term future of the nation’s printed journal collections. UKRR allows libraries to de-duplicate their journal holdings and save space. Journals are checked against the national collection and libraries listed on the National Bibliographic Knowledgebase. Two copies of a journal are always retained - an access copy at the British Library and one further preservation copy within the community.

<https://www.bl.uk/ukrr>

- NBK (National Bibliographic Knowledgebase) a collaborative resource to discover and compare content across all HE and Research libraries  
<https://discover.libraryhub.jisc.ac.uk/>
- COUNTER provides the Code of Practice for publishers and vendors to report usage of their electronic resources in a consistent way. This enables libraries to compare data received from different publishers and vendors.  
<https://www.projectcounter.org/>

## Appendix 2

### Sharing proposed changes with academic colleagues: benchmarking and review timeline

#### How will we identify subscriptions for review?

For online access, the core review indicator is resource Cost Per Use, determined by the total resource cost and the number of uses (views / downloads). Where possible, usage data will be COUNTER compliant to ensure consistency and comparability of data across time.

For print titles, we will review subscriptions that can be switched to online access only. Where there is no online access, we will agree with Academic Library Representatives which titles are to be retained as core or need further investigation.

#### What benchmarks and review indicators will we use for online titles?

The following benchmarks are utilised when applying review indicators:

- Resource CPU of more than £12
  - Individual titles where the subscription cost and number of articles used shows a pattern of CPU above the typical cost for library supply of an article via interlibrary loan.
  - A group of the least used journals in a list (regardless of CPU), which might be less cost-effective than new subscriptions requested. (such as new journals which have a close match with research or teaching areas – evidenced by large numbers of turnaways)
- Annual resource cost shows increase above the predicted sector-wide average (using EBSCO serials price increase reports as a starting point)
- Annual resource usage shows continuing decline over at least 3 years

Interlibrary Loans (ILLs) provide a benchmark for high CPU.

British Library pricing for 2022-23 is as follows:

- A standard electronic delivery of a copy from print costs £12.80
- A standard electronic delivery of a born digital copy costs £6.35.

We receive a small proportion born digital but most are scanned from print.

In this scenario we might therefore use £12 per view / download as a reasonable benchmark.

#### What data will we share and when?

We will share lists of proposed changes with titles, associated usage and costs data in a suitable format (e.g. Excel data).

A report summarising proposed subscription changes will be supplied to Academic Library Representatives in advance of any meeting to discuss this. There will then be time for them to circulate, explain and get feedback from their colleagues (e.g. inform us of any expected changes to teaching or research priorities that might impact usage etc).

Reps will also help review and update wishlists of new subscriptions, annotating with current priorities (i.e. why a particular title is key). Confirmation of budgets, and of any general overall savings also to be made, is not usually received until August each year at the earliest. If cancellations are subsequently made, and these exceed any savings required, this list will be used to select new subscriptions.

### How will we communicate any final decisions?

Libraries staff will review feedback and make final decisions in conjunction with the main renewal cycle (September - December). Any other changes for the coming calendar year will be collated and a summary of all supplied. See the following timeline for more information:

Spring term	Proposed changes and wishlists shared with request for feedback by the end of August
Mid-September [latest]	Libraries meeting to review Academic Library Representatives feedback and budget for coming year
Early October	Recommendations for title changes and additions to Associate Director for Content and Discovery
Late October	Confirm University changes and renewals with subscriptions agents / publishers Inform interested individuals if any new subscriptions are confirmed
November / December	Publishers confirm other changes to content (packages, new titles etc.)
January	Subscriptions changes summarised and details shared, including new access via individual new subscriptions as well as package contents