

Jisc Digital Resources: widening access to electronic content

Jisc Digital Resources, formerly Jisc Collections, is a shared service for all UK higher education libraries. We undertake large scale digital content acquisitions and licensing activities, to enable libraries to provide as much relevant electronic information and at the lowest cost possible.

Negotiating with the major journal publishers

We negotiate with all the major journal publishers and estimate that this work saves the sector £256,000 in duplicated effort and legal review each year. Also, our expert negotiations limits the price increases publishers would otherwise demand by £6.1m per annum.

Containing the cost of journal subscriptions is the highest priority, but another is ensuring that institutions have the widest possible range of content to support research and teaching. For instance, one of our recent negotiations has enabled 17 higher education institutions (HEIs) to afford a major publisher's collection of 2011 peer-reviewed journal titles. This is important because across the sector there are strong and positive correlations, irrespective of institutional size, between the use of e-journals, and numbers of papers published, citation impact, number of PhD awards and research grant and contract income.

We insist that all the agreements we negotiate are available under our own model licence, which contains more favourable provisions than any standard commercial licence for access and use of electronic resources. Our insistence on the use of the model licence also ensures that publishers comply with the industry standards which ensure that users can easily access the content their institutions have paid for and that librarians can manage and evaluate that content efficiently.

Reducing the total cost of ownership for scholarly communications

Journal publishing models are changing rapidly, especially here in the UK where government, research councils' and research funders' policies increasingly require publication of research outputs in open access. In the past two years, following publication of the [Finch Report](#), there has been marked growth in the numbers of articles published in the open access sections of hybrid journals, ensuring that they are free both to read and to use.

Article processing charges (APCs) are probably the most familiar of the methods adopted by publishers seeking to recover the costs they incur when publishing content in open access. It also seems that the majority of APCs are being paid to the largest, traditional journal publishers who are receiving a substantial proportion of HEIs' total subscription payments. One institution we spoke to recently spent more than £28,000 in annual subscriptions with just one publisher, and also published 12 journal articles with the same company. Those 12 APCs amounted to an extra £21,000 paid by the university to that single publisher.

We have developed several systems that we believe are sustainable and offer practical ways to offset the cost of APCs against subscription rates; discussions with publishers are ongoing on behalf of UK institutions. Following our negotiations, several large publishers have already agreed to implement these systems. Our agreements with some of the larger commercial publishers will reduce the extra cost of APCs by 75% for some institutions.

Resources to support research and teaching

In addition to journals, we negotiate with a wide range of publishers for a variety of different information resources, so that institutions benefit from reduced and differentiated pricing for datasets, e-books and multi-media. We estimate that our work saves the sector £250,000 in duplicated effort and legal review each year and that our expertise reduces the costs that would otherwise be paid by the sector for these resources by £24m per annum.

Over the past ten years e-books have become firmly embedded in most HEIs, with lecturers and students being enthusiastic users. Initially the convenience of any time, any place access was the key driver, but now we see e-books referenced on reading lists and in virtual learning environments, and this had led to a significant increase in their use. E-books provide the opportunity to enhance the student experience and academic outcomes and to drive innovation in learning and research and so we have negotiated agreements with all the publishers of the most popular e-book collections.

We also licence the Ordnance Survey data on behalf of the community at special educational rates and deliver the data and maps to the desktop, via the Digimap service. This data is highly used by the majority of UK HEIs across many faculties, not only geography departments. Without our intervention, data used each year would cost the sector an additional £41m per year at the commercial rates.

Our digital library

With funding we received, we have built up a digital library of content, which is freely available to the sector. This digital library includes historic books and texts, e-journals, periodicals and other primary source materials.

The availability of these online resources means that all students and staff can easily use previously inaccessible or rare material at the desktop. This ubiquitous availability has made a great difference to teaching. Justin Champion, a lecturer at Royal Holloway, said of one of the digital collections:

“Now all students can have the resources of the British Library, of the Oxford and Cambridge university libraries, and of some of the great North American collections on their desktop. Students in Hull, or Durham, Penzance or Hastings can be examining some of the rarest and most impressive works of a global collection with a few clicks of the mouse.”

The cost of acquiring such resources is beyond the means of most UK higher institutions, but the funding we have received, and the leverage we can apply through procurement at a national level has enabled us to buy the content at very deeply discounted rates. At a conservative estimate the content in

the digital library, would have cost those institutions that use them £17m per year, if bought individually at the publishers' standard rates.

Contact details

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