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CONVERTING MONOGRAPHIC SERIES AND STANDING ORDERS FROM PRINT
TO ELECTRONIC FORMAT

By Amy Dumouchel Dittman and Terra Kallemeyn, Boston College

While the O’Neill Library at Boston College has a long history of an annual print to electronic conversion project for serial subscriptions, nothing similar had been tried with its standing orders. As space becomes increasingly pressing within the library, an experiment to translate this project to the library’s standing orders was undertaken. The idea for this project came from a request by a subject liaison to convert two specific standing orders for publications from the Geological Society of America -- the Special papers and Memoir to online only. This request led the Resource Acquisition & Management department to realize that there was no established workflow for this kind of conversion. As a result, an initial workflow was developed to address the immediate need, and served as a template for future conversions or a larger scale project.

Both of the print titles in question had ISSN, were identified as journals in the Alma knowledgebase and appeared with an annual cost in the vendor database. These factors gave an initial impression that they could be managed with the existing electronic journal workflow. For that reason, the initial plan was to base the workflow for these titles on our established e-only project for journals workflow.

To understand the development of the standing orders workflow, a brief overview of the e-only journal project is necessary. In the case of the journal e-only project, the majority of the library’s subscriptions are managed by a single agent, Harrassowitz, who produces a report of all the library’s subscriptions available in IP-authenticated electronic format. This list is cut down to reflect only library subscriptions in print or print plus online format, and a copy is sent out to subject liaisons, with a four-week response deadline. There are limited reasons, such as a specific faculty request for print that subject liaisons are permitted to reject a title’s conversion.
Anything that does not meet the criteria of these reasons for rejection will be converted to online only in the subsequent calendar year.

Identifying Candidates for Conversion

To begin, a similar report for the library’s standing orders was requested. However, this is where the two projects began to diverge. Unlike Boston College’s journal subscriptions, which are managed by a single agent, there are numerous vendors for the library’s standing orders. At this stage, it was decided to focus entirely on just the two primary standing order vendors -- Harrassowitz and YBP Library Services. As a result, a second report was requested from YBP. Since the two reports contained slightly different information, after they were merged, any missing details for each order -- such as complimentary access to back volumes, was investigated and filled in at this stage.

After the two reports were merged, it was apparent that bibliographers would need even more additional information to make informed decisions about which titles could convert. Certain titles, such as the Statesman’s Yearbook online, were treated as more of a database subscription by publishers. As a result, for all series titles, whether an electronic standing order would provide perpetual or only subscription-term access had to be documented. Additionally, pricing had to be normalized to an annual fee, to create an accurate comparison in the pricing between the two formats. While most of the print standing orders are charged on a per volume basis, the pricing for many -- but not all, of the online standing orders the quotes were supplied as an annual fee. For this reason, expenditure data was taken from the library system, and used to extrapolate the average annual expenditure on the print standing orders. In cases where the online pricing was also by volume, this same conversion was made.

Following completion of the report in mid-July, a copy was sent to the head of collection development, soliciting an opinion about when and how best to introduce this project to subject liaisons. The next meeting of the Bibliographers’ Council in early September was chosen as the
preferred time of introduction. While the timing of this was not ideal -- coinciding with the start of the semester, it still seemed to have many benefits over either delaying until later in the fall semester, or introducing the project by email over the summer, while many liaisons were still away on vacation. After speaking at the Bibliographer’s Council meeting, emphasizing that unlike the journal e-only project, participation in the standing orders project was purely voluntary, the report was sent out to the bibliographers’ email list. The email further emphasized that in consideration for the time of year, there would be no deadline to respond. To date, six of the eighteen subject liaisons have taken advantage of this offer, and eight total standing orders were converted to online only. Additionally, other bibliographers have voiced an intent to review their lists during a quieter time of year.

**Providing Access to Converted Standing Orders**

After identifying additional candidates for conversion to electronic standing orders, the workflow for converting these orders needed to be further developed. The project diverged in two additional ways from the journal project it was based on. The nature of standing orders led to differences in the timing of converting the orders, and also in receiving and activating the online content.

While in the case of the journals project, the conversion is scheduled to take place at the start of the next subscription year, standing orders often have irregular publication schedules leading to potential unforeseen gaps. To prevent this, the print receiving records were consulted for the last received volume and the last volume invoiced. When contacting the vendor, the cancellation effective dates were based on the print volume or years for which the library had already paid. The online standing orders were requested to start with the next year and/or volume in the series.

Unlike in the print to ejournals project, many of the standing order series also required individual analytical entries for each volume. This difference is due to the fact that while from an acquisitions perspective, these are referred to as ‘standing orders,’ from a bibliographic
standpoint, they are considered monographic series, where each volume is distinct. Learning these terms helped to identify the unique considerations needed when ordering, receiving and cataloging volumes in a monographic series. In the case study of the Geological Society of America titles, the librarian specified she wanted the electronic volumes handled the same way as the print standing order, which prevented us from simply activating the online serial record in the Alma knowledgebase. Instead, each volume needed to be cataloged as it was published. In order to do this for the larger project, the first step was to look at the print check in record for each title to get an idea how the volumes were received and cataloged. Many of these had a print receiving note: ‘analyzed’ with a call number, indicating that each individual volume is cataloged separately, with a title proper and subject headings specific to its unique contents, linked together with an 830 MARC tag for the series title.

Another question that arose from the need to analyze the volumes from certain series was finding a way to track and confirm access when a new volume is published online since the material will not physically arrive at the library to trigger the process. For that reason, methods of receiving alerts to volumes on different platforms had to be identified and documented for each analyzed series. Most often -- as in the case of the Geological Society of America titles -- this is an emailed Table of Contents for the new volume. There were occasions where RSS feeds were available. However, some publishers -- DeGruyter in particular, do not offer either of these options for notification of new volumes in monographic series. For these cases, we requested our subscription agent email or mail an invoice for the volume, as it is produced, to serve as the trigger.

When print standing order volumes arrive, they are checked into Alma and an item is created. During the check-in process, the physical item record is assigned a barcode and a call number representing its physical location. In the electronic environment, this translates to when an email or invoice arrives alerting us of a new online volume. This triggers the equivalent workflow of
creating electronic items, which Alma refers to as a portfolio. The portfolio contains the title, ISBN, volume number and URL to locate the online contents. Another type of electronic inventory, used to group electronic portfolios, is the electronic collection with a monographic series name. For instance, a local electronic collection record called Special Papers (Geological Society of America) monographic series contains the individual portfolios for each volume received electronically for this series.

Creating a portfolio triggers the implementation phase of the online standing order workflow. Once the portfolio exists with the unique identifiers, Alma enables an option to ‘Create activation task’ within the portfolio results list. Clicking on this option adds it to the activation task list which is a workbench of all electronic resources currently on order. These are resources for which access is expected but not yet confirmed, preventing them from being published to the public catalog. From the activation task list workbench in Alma, the status of the portfolio is set to ‘Access confirmed.’ A report is run to pull all titles with status ‘Access confirmed’ and the group involved in providing access to new electronic resources knows to catalog the new volumes. Acquisitions adds a note within the activation task to catalog the title individually, because it is named on a specific monographic series, to inform the metadata department how it should be cataloged.

**Conclusions**

At this point in time, there are no immediate intentions to follow up with a repeated process, but it is likely that it will be done again in the next several years. For now, the staff of the Resource Acquisition & Management department are reviewing standing order workflows in general, and seeking to consolidate standing orders under fewer vendors. Doing so would facilitate a repetition of this project, with a broader scope of content included. However, there are workload concerns related to the expansion of this project. Unlike ejournals, once activated they can be largely ignored, each series that is analyzed, requires manual handling and activation
for each new volume. If, in the future, the Alma Community Zone could expand to handle this format better, reducing the amount of labor, it might be easier to expand the scope of this project. Otherwise, staffing implications, and possibly reassignment of print staff to electronic resources workflows would need to be considered to support the additional workload.

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