April 26, 2022

Dear Colleagues,

At Rod Library, our mission is to empower and inspire our community to **discover, imagine, create, and innovate.** Our collections provide high quality and economically responsible resources to students, staff, and faculty to support their teaching, learning, scholarship, service, and creative endeavors. **Faculty librarians** manage the selection, acquisition, evaluation, and deselection of library resources using **professional best practices**.

Like the rest of UNI, and like many higher education institutions around the world, we face **lean economic times**. We employ a number of strategies to mitigate the effects of falling budgets and rising inflation. Among these are **strategic priorities for spending one-time funds**, like purchasing permanent access to electronic journal collections, or **seeking out cooperative arrangements** with other libraries, like the Regents Collective Collection project and the Fast TRAC agreement. We provide a robust **InterLibrary Loan** service and invest in **Open Access** projects like the Regents' Open Educational Resources (OER) grant program and our own UNI ScholarWorks institutional repository.

If you have attended Faculty Senate or Council of Academic Department Heads meetings, you already know that this year marks the beginning of what we anticipate to be a particularly lean period, and you may have seen a version of the chart on the Spring 2022 Materials Budget Update page. Our **flat budget** –it's been the same since 2003 – and the continuing **rate of inflation** of subscription database costs – it's been nearly 7% annually for years – combine to leave us no choice but to cut expenditures massively this year. As database and journal subscription costs make up the overwhelming majority of our expenses, they are the area that will bear the brunt of these cuts. For FY23, we have to adjust for an **approximately $300,000 shortfall (which is about ⅙ of our overall budget)**. We don't anticipate such a massive single cut again in coming years, but the **7% inflation rate** combined with a **stagnant budget** means that we have to continue to evaluate our subscription expenses and **make cuts every year** as long as this budgetary situation continues.

We began with **a comprehensive literature review** of other academic libraries' recent experiences with evaluating and canceling databases and journals. Based on this literature review, standards, and best practices in our field, our faculty librarians **prioritized seven criteria** to apply in evaluating how well each current database and journal package supports student learning and faculty research at UNI. These criteria included:

- **Content necessary for accreditation** or important to an academic discipline represented at UNI
- **Supports and facilitates faculty and student research** (relevant topics; level of information appropriate for user group; etc.)
- **Cannot be adequately replaced** by alternative methods of obtaining content (open access, institutional repositories, interlibrary loan, document delivery, etc.)
- **Is accessible** (allows remote access; accommodates the needs of people with disabilities; etc.)
- **Used by more than one department** OR is vital to a single department
- **Receives sufficient use** (past, present, and/or future potential usage; usage per included title)
- **Cost is affordable** (per use—search, view, download, or session; per included title; including fees, rate of inflation, etc.)

We have recently concluded our analysis of all 120+ databases and journal packages we currently subscribe to, and discussed our findings in multiple library faculty meetings, focusing on related groups of disciplines (like all science databases) or broader categories (general undergraduate-friendly databases, for example). You can find the **lists of databases we are cutting** [here](#).

This has been an enormous challenge which our faculty librarians have handled with great professional skill and a keen sense of fiscal responsibility. What we have learned will make future reviews and cuts more efficient, though of course never any easier. If you have any questions or comments about our process, please feel free to contact me.

Janet Brennan Croft *(she/her/hers)*

Associate University Librarian for Content Discovery

University of Northern Iowa

Rod Library

319-273-2812 **/ fax** 319-273-2913

LIB 213A **/** Cedar Falls, IA 50614

ORCID 0000-0003-2692-3586

https://northerniowa.academia.edu/JanetCroft

Editor of *Mythlore* https://dc.swosu.edu/mythlore