

A uOttawa Library Collections Primer

University of Ottawa Library

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Collection Development Overview

What is the purpose of the library collection?

The purpose of the collection is to provide the scholarly foundation for the academic mission of the university. As described on our [website](#), “the collection is at the heart of the University's mission to foster scholarship, innovation and knowledge creation.”

What are the objectives of collection development?

1. Ensuring a balanced and up-to-date collection across different types of materials (e.g. books, journals, databases, specialized resources);
2. Reflecting the diversity of perspectives, research areas, and publishing models within a discipline;
3. Delivering materials in a format that is optimal for research, teaching, and learning (which increasingly means in a digital format);
4. Developing a bilingual collection to the greatest extent possible;
5. Providing equitable, barrier-free access to our collections to the greatest degree possible.

Who makes decisions on what to acquire?

The Collection Strategy team has the leadership role in this area. The department possesses significant experience and expertise in collection management practices, content knowledge, vendor relations, and digital licensing models. Our strategy is informed by knowledge of new and existing academic programs, knowledge of strategic priorities of the university, awareness of research programs and curricula in the various faculties, and input from faculty and students.

What are the key criteria used to develop the collection?

- Intellectual significance and long-term value;
 - Measures of significance such as authority, originality, impact, timeliness, breadth or depth of coverage;
 - Relevance to the curriculum and the University's prioritized research areas;
 - Appropriate formats in relation to ease of use and availability;
- Nb - These criteria are applied regardless of format, e.g. print or online.

What are our collection development priorities?

- We purchase digital resources rather than leasing arrangements, wherever feasible, in order to secure permanent access;
- French scholarship: This constitutes a small portion of the global production of scholarship, but is essential to serve the academic mission of the University of Ottawa. We prioritize French scholarship and our strategy for selecting and acquiring resources reflects this priority.

- We avoid duplication of format, as much as possible, in order to use our collections budget in a cost-effective manner;
- We privilege the digital format over the print format, unless there are valid reasons for doing otherwise, since our user community has come to expect online access wherever available;
- We acquire digital resources directly from the publisher rather than a vendor or aggregator whenever possible, in order to provide a maximum amount of security and stability in the content available to our users;
- We acquire digital resources that respond to the needs of faculty and students in an increasingly interdisciplinary environment, since new knowledge is often being created in the confluence of traditional disciplines;
- We pursue opportunities to digitize library print collections, as appropriate, in order to broaden access to the richness of research material and advance the potential of open access for scholarship and learning. The Library has digitized the French cultural heritage of its collection (out-of-copyright print book - see <https://archive.org/details/universityofottawa>).

What are the challenges related to the collection of French scholarship?

- The status of scholarly publishing in French is both unique and fragile. The percentage of scholarly journals published in French amounts to only 6% of total worldwide production – and only 3% of open access publications. French-language scholarly monographs are usually published by university presses and commercial publishers and the players are few, small, and very often operate as not-for-profit enterprises. There are also a very limited number of French-language ebooks available to university libraries, compared to the availability of English language ebooks. Furthermore, French-language textbooks that reflect the Canadian reality are rare. Although the Library does not drive the creation and production of French language material, we are an actor in this sphere. In addition to collecting French-language materials, we are supporting Francophone researchers and students and the Francophone community of Ontario by supporting the development of French OERs, investigating new infrastructure and platforms for French material (such as PrêtNumérique), and advocating within our circles to ensure French-language needs are considered.

What are disciplinary differences and how does this affect collection development?

- **Disciplines differ widely in their preferred formats for scholarly communication and dissemination:** In Arts and Social Sciences, the monograph has long been perceived as the gold standard and is essential for success in an academic career path. In the STEM disciplines, the journal article is the standard. In others, such as computer sciences, conference proceedings are important. We are very sensitive to these deeply rooted disciplinary differences and this reality impacts our approach to allocation and decision-making. Non-traditional digital formats for scholarship are rapidly emerging and are challenging the long-held criteria of the academy's tenure and promotion system
- **Variations in the production and availability of scholarly publishing:** Production quantity (e.g. number of monographs and journals) varies greatly among disciplines, and this impacts our strategy.

- **Costs of scholarly publishing:** Costs vary enormously from one discipline to another, whether it be for monographs, journals, databases, or specialized forms of knowledge dissemination. This plays an important role in our approach.
- **Interdisciplinarity:** As more and more research is now done in cross-disciplinary and multi-dimensional teams, this has an impact on how we assess what is important for the collection, and what we acquire to support researchers, and what is available for acquisition.

What is collections stewardship and how does it impact access?

Stewardship of the collection is critical for the Library. This means that we implement policies, procedures, and actions to maintain access to the collection in perpetuity, to the greatest degree possible. Before the Internet, stewardship would have been focused solely on providing access to our owned collections, namely physical materials located on-site. The digital era, however, and all the new challenges and opportunities it brings, has changed our concept of access to materials. Through the use of resource-sharing networks, we can now provide access to the collections of partner libraries across the country and beyond. These items are typically delivered to us within several days through our interlibrary loan service. As more and more digital content becomes available, we can provide online access through a variety of different licensing models as well. We can now usually provide an alternative means of access to our collection resources (particularly journals), if we lose access as a result of cancellations.

What has been the impact of the pandemic and the challenges in an online-only environment?

Although we already prioritize electronic over print for many parts of the collection, moving to an online-only environment, due to the pandemic, has highlighted some of the challenges of digital resources. These challenges are especially pertinent for resources that are being used for courses that are offered online. There are certain books that are simply not available electronically. In other instances, some publishers will not sell electronic versions of certain books to libraries – they will only sell to individual users. We see this often with electronic textbooks (please see our statement here: <https://biblio.uottawa.ca/en/about/collections>), but also with many different types of resources, including films. In other instances, publishers or vendors will sell to libraries, but they have very restrictive usage models or prohibitive pricing. This is not a problem unique to the University of Ottawa – the following campaign concisely outlines some of the challenges libraries are facing: <https://academicebookinvestigation.org/>. It is written in the UK context, but the challenges are very similar here in Canada. There is also a popular Twitter hashtag (#ebookSOS) where librarians around the world are highlighting the large price disparity between print and ebooks, along with the unavailability of certain titles in certain regions.

Before the pandemic, the library always had the option of obtaining a print book (or a DVD, in the case of films) when the item was not available electronically, only licensed for individual use, was cost prohibitive, or was only sold under a restrictive access model not suitable to a research library. Since the

pandemic, without being able to rely on physical items, we are sometimes left in a situation where we are unable to provide access to a resource that our community needs.

The Collections Budget

How is money allocated to the Collections Budget?

Our budget cycle is based on the University fiscal year, which is May 1 – April 30, and the central administration allocates funds based on their own annual budgeting process. The library is typically informed of the Collections budget amount in February or March, ahead of the upcoming fiscal year.

What is covered by the Collections Budget?

- AV material (slides, microforms, etc.)
- Books (print and electronic)
- Catalogue records
- Databases
- Datasets
- Discovery service maintenance fees
- Films (DVDs and online/streaming)
- Government publications
- Interlibrary Loans costs
- Integrated Library System costs
- Journals (mostly electronic)
- Maps
- Sheet Music
- Software (e.g. NVivo)
- Streaming services (e.g. music, videos)

What are the key pricing issues for scholarly resources?

- **Price increases:** Annual increases to pricing is a (controversial) fact of life for commercial publishing. It is typically 5-6% per year for journals (in some years it has been higher than this, and occasionally lower). For consortial agreements, it is typically 2-3%.
- **Publishing mergers:** There has been a regular series of mergers and acquisitions in scholarly publishing in recent years. This means less competition and greater concentration of market share and power in the hands of a few major players.
- **Exchange rates:** The University of Ottawa Library spends about 70% of our budget on US publishers and are therefore vulnerable to the exchange rate. The weak Canadian dollar means we pay additional costs, about 30-35% more over the past several years. This also means that we have a major loss of purchasing power when the Canadian dollar is weak in comparison to its US counterpart.
- **Digital content:** There is an explosion of digital scholarly content available for research and teaching purposes, but our budget is constrained, therefore we need to be selective in our decision-making
- **For-profit vs non-profit publishing:** There is a growing conversation, locally, nationally and internationally, about the importance of supporting non-profit publishing (eg scholarly societies, university presses, local and independent publishing) rather than the traditional commercial publishers. There are major issues and implications to be considered, of which pricing is one.

What is a Big Deal and what are our largest ones?

Definition - "A Big Deal is a comprehensive licensing agreement in which a library or library consortium agrees to buy electronic access to all or a large portion of a publisher's journals for a cost based on expenditures for journals already subscribed to by the institution(s) plus an access fee"

- Frazier, K. (2005). What's the Big Deal? *Serials Librarian*, 48(1/2), 49-59

Publisher	Costs 2019-2020 (CAD)	Number of current journals (approx)
Elsevier	\$1,446,680	2,600
Wiley	\$ 664,445	1,506
Taylor & Francis	\$ 522,349	2,373
Springer	\$ 474,387	2,576
Sage	\$232,900	973
Totals	\$3,340,761	10,018

Please note: these five agreements are negotiated through the Canadian Research Knowledge Network

What is a library consortium and why are they important?

A library consortium is a cooperative of local, regional, subject-specific, or national libraries that coordinate goals and strategy for the benefit of all their members. Typically, this involves acquiring resources together. Consortia such as these band together to negotiate collectively with publishers to acquire digital content on a large scale, such as ejournal collections, ebook collections, and databases. This approach aggregates purchasing power and results in better pricing, multi-year agreements, and efficiencies in negotiating, delivering content, invoicing, and collection management. These consortial approaches have been in place for many years: our provincial consortium, the Ontario Council of University Libraries (OCUL), was established in 1967 and has been working collaboratively to purchase resources since the 1990s, and our national consortium (the Canadian Research Knowledge Network) was created in 2000 and has been licensing over 100 million dollars of content each year for university libraries across the country.

Many academic libraries spend a significant portion of their collections budget on consortial agreements. At the University of Ottawa, we spent \$4,694,530 for the 2019-20 year via the Canadian Research Knowledge Network, and \$3,068,056 via the Ontario Council of University Libraries.

The Library Collection by the Numbers

The following data includes materials purchased (owned) by the Library as well as materials accessed (available in a vendor database) via annual subscription; the latter usually refers to e-journals and can fluctuate from year to year.

Collection Type	Number of Items
Print books	2,440,928
E-Books	2,427,304
E-Journals	76,414
Databases	937
Government Publications	1,023,632
Microforms	1,933,215
Cartographic Material	423,988
Audiovisual Items	25,547
Slides	217,939
Music Items (e.g. scores)	87,835
TOTAL	8,657,739

Source: <https://biblio.uottawa.ca/en/about/collections> (data modified Oct 14, 2020)

What usage data do we currently have for the library collections?

We have standard usage information for most of our ejournals, ebooks, and research databases, which includes the number of downloads and searches. This data is anonymized. We also have data from our own 2016 survey of uOttawa faculty, which provided us with titles identified as priorities for journal literature as well as other resources. For our physical collection, we have circulation data, which includes checkouts and renewals.

What is the library's annual collections expenditure?

- Books (and other one-time costs) – 25%
- Journals/Databases (recurring costs) – 75%
- Thus, the majority of our costs are for journals and databases and are recurring on an annual basis.

Library Collection Budget – Annual Expenditures			
Year	Amount¹	Budget Indexation	Average Increase to journal prices (non-consortial)²
2010-2011	\$14,243,721	10%	NA
2011-2012	\$14,698,131	5%	NA
2012-2013	\$17,670,435	5%	NA
2013-2014	\$16,532,627	5%	5.9%
2014-2015	\$16,327,661	3%	6.1%
2015-2016	\$16,624,830	-2%	6%
2016-2017	\$15,373,290	0%	5.7%
2017-2018	\$15,766,173	5%	6%
2018-2019	\$15,564,906	5%	6%
2019-2020	\$15,562,789	5%	5%

¹source: <https://biblio.uottawa.ca/en/about/collections>

²source: Ebsco Five Year Journal Price Increase History (<https://www.ebsco.com/sites/g/files/nabnos191/files/acquiadam-assets/Five-Year-Journal-Price-Increase-History-EBSCO-2016-2020.pdf>)

How does University of Ottawa's collections expenditures compare to other institutions?

***2016-17 Library Collection Expenditures, CARL institutions
(Canadian Association of Research Libraries)***

Toronto*	\$35,520,798
Alberta*	\$27,104,505
McGill*	\$22,731,537
British Columbia*	\$18,320,823
Saskatchewan*	\$15,513,209
Ottawa*	\$15,399,536
Western Ontario*	\$14,822,051
Manitoba*	\$13,404,792
Calgary*	\$12,713,040
York	\$12,665,952
McMaster*	\$12,248,705
Laval*	\$12,109,168
Montréal*	\$11,137,837
Waterloo*	\$11,108,738
Simon Fraser	\$10,772,038
Queen's*	\$10,302,028
Victoria	\$9,211,310
Memorial	\$9,130,559
Dalhousie*	\$9,080,115
Guelph	\$7,952,684
Concordia	\$6,749,560
Sherbrooke	\$6,469,788
Carleton	\$6,408,473
UQÀM	\$5,463,430
Windsor	\$5,377,428
Ryerson	\$5,220,689
New Brunswick	\$4,551,547
Brock	\$4,069,260
Regina	\$2,928,803

*U15 schools. A description of the U15 research-intensive Canadian universities group is available [here](#).