Big Deals from a publisher’s point of view

The Value of Elsevier’s “Big Deal” for the University of Berne

Presented by
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What is a “Big Deal”? 

What are the benefits of a “Big Deal”? 

What are the key findings of the article? 

„Big Deal“ or not „Big Deal“? 

Increasing transparency for e-journal subscriptions and Big Deals. A comprehensive assessment of e-journals in Science, Technology and Medicine (STM) 

Michelle F. Schaffer, Isabelle Kurgus and Gerhard Bissels 

Bern University Library, Bern, Switzerland
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What are the key findings of the article?  

„Big Deal“ or not „Big Deal“?  

• University subscribes to journals  
• For the promise of not cancelling titles, the university can get access to additional journals.  
• The university gets access for a fraction of the normal list price, depending on its size.  
• # of journals: 2,000  
  -> in many cases 10 times more journals than subscribed journals  
• We call this “Freedom Collection”.  

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Benefits for the user:
- access to large # journals
- Increased productivity: access to content means output rate is pushed
- If research focus changes: journals are already available for access: Trend towards being interdisciplinary is supported.
- no costs for document delivery
- no opportunity costs for searching and ordering of articles or journals
- quick access on the spot to content needed
- quality

Benefits for the librarian:
- no need to monitor and change subscriptions each year
- prices are known in advance
- no need to deal with single journal orders or doc delivery orders
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**Competitiveness**

- Journal articles are your “raw material” because:
  
  input (content) -> output (journal articles published) -> part of **ranking** criteria.

- Researchers require access to journal content. It is an important part of their “equipment”. If your competitor grants broad journal access and you don’t:

  Where will the researcher go to?
What are the key findings of the article?

- "Big Deals" are cost-effective
- Many expensive journals for specific research topics
- Bundles contain poorly used collection titles
- Limit (financial) flexibility
- Higher frequency of use is an important indicator of relevance
- Big Deal contain mainly STM journals
What is a “Big Deal”?  
What are the benefits?  
What are the key findings of the article?  

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Article Finding: “Big Deals are” cost-effective
Article Finding: “**Big Deals are cost-effective**”

True.

Because:
- Lots of Additional Journals (via Freedom Collection) are offered for a fraction of list price.
- These titles increase the usage base (# of available titles) significantly. They are used. The usage is excellent.

- -> usage going up
- -> cost per use: going down
Article Finding:
- “Many expensive journals for specific research topics”
- “Bundles contain poorly used collection titles“

True. And also true is:
„Big Deal“ or not „Big Deal“?

University of Berne

Spend 2015
- 12%
- 88%

Usage 2015
- 269,748 (45%)
- 333,504 (55%)

Subscriptions
Freedom Collection
Article Finding:

"Limit (financial) flexibility"

Yes. And also no.

How would the library serve user needs without a Freedom Collection? More flexibility without?
Average University & Library spend

- **University**
  - Research & Overhead: 69%
  - Instruction: 29%
  - Library: 2%
- **Library**
  - Other: 16%
  - Staff: 50%
  - Books: 11%
  - Journals: 23%

- **Total**
  - Instructions: 29%
  - Research & Overhead: 69%
  - Library: 2%

**“Limit (financial) flexibility”**

**„Big Deal“ or not „Big Deal“?**
“Higher frequency of use is an important indicator of relevance”

1. Consider looking at usage over a longer period (3 years?)

2. Consider looking at non-usage based aspects:
   - Usage/Cost per use is not always a true indicator, it does not tell us about the outcomes.
     -> One brilliant idea can be the result of just one use.
   - Having access to a Freedom Collection is a value in itself.
     -> Even if not all journals are used (now!), you are prepared for the future.
     -> Journals might be used (significantly) in the future.
Conclusion

Yes, a “Big Deal” is big.

As long as you get Elsevier value, this is a worthwhile investment.

Thank You.