

**MISSISSIPPI STATE UNIVERSITY LIBRARIES  
COLLECTION DEVELOPMENT POLICY  
ELECTRONIC RESOURCES**

**Revised by: Electronic Resources Subcommittee of the  
MSU Libraries Collection Development Committee**

**Date: October 6, 2003**

**I. GENERAL STATEMENT**

Mississippi State University Libraries recognizes its obligation to provide access to information in the most appropriate format available. Over a period of time, electronic information access tools have supplemented traditional information formats such as books and microform. However, electronic formats present special problems of acquisition, storage and preservation that more traditional formats do not. For example, electronic formats may be significantly more expensive to acquire and maintain. They may be physically installed at workstations in the library or accessible outside the library through the Internet. Moreover, they may require additional hardware and software to operate and use. Finally, there must be a compelling reason to justify the migration from print to electronic formats. A library that emphasizes access over ownership may find that gaps in the collection will result if a product offered by a commercial vendor is no longer available or affordable. Because these concerns complicate the selection of electronic resources, it is necessary to articulate a separate selection policy specifically focused on electronic resources.

**II. DEFINITION**

Electronic resources refer to those categories of materials that require computer access.

**III. ELECTRONIC RESOURCES COLLECTED BY MSU LIBRARIES**

**A. Databases**

With the advent of linking, clear database definitions have become problematic. However, databases generally fall into one of two categories: primarily bibliographic or primarily full text.

- 1) **Primarily bibliographic:** If a database is primarily bibliographic, it does not function as an end in itself. It leads users to other information sources. It is equivalent in category to print indexing and abstracting services. Examples include America: History and Life, Sociological Abstracts, and Agricola.
- 2) **Primarily full text:** If a database is primarily full text, it *can* function as an end in itself. It can provide full text, numeric, statistical data, or graphic representations. Full text databases may also include bibliographic entries, which lead users to other information sources. Examples include Academic Search Premier, Ethnic NewsWatch, and Lexis-Nexis Academic Universe.

## B. Electronic Journals

- 1) Bundled with print: Electronic journals which are available to the MSU community as part of paid print subscriptions will be processed upon arrival according to procedures set forth in **Appendix 1**.
- 2) Stand-alone aggregated packages (e.g., JSTOR, Wiley, ACS): Subscriptions to aggregated packages of electronic journals will be considered for addition to the collection upon the recommendation of the appropriate library liaison, departmental library representative or patron according to procedures set forth in **Appendix 2**.
- 3) Single subscription electronic journals: Single subscriptions to electronic journal titles will be considered for addition to the collection upon the recommendation of the appropriate library liaison, departmental library representative or patron according to procedures set forth in **Appendix 2**.
- 4) Free electronic journals: Free electronic journals (either stand-alone or part of a package) will be considered for addition to the collection upon the recommendation of the appropriate library liaison, departmental library representative or patron according to the procedures set forth in **Appendix 3**.

## C. Electronic Collections Other Than Electronic Journals

Electronic collections are any type of electronic resources that is not a serial. These collections could be monographic in nature or a primary resource material. Examples include the Core Historical Literature of Agriculture. Depending on whether or not a collection has a cost associated with it or is free, it will be considered for addition to the collection upon the recommendation of the appropriate library liaison, departmental library representative or patron according to the procedures set forth in **Appendix 2** or **Appendix 3**.

## IV. ELECTRONIC RESOURCES NOT COLLECTED BY MSU LIBRARIES

### General Purpose Applications Software

This category of computer files includes personal productivity programs such as word processing, database or spreadsheet management programs. This category does not cover commercial software applications products purchased for library staff use.

## V. GENERAL SELECTION CRITERIA FOR ELECTRONIC RESOURCES

### A. Electronic resources considered for acquisition or access should:

- 1) represent information useful and important to a significant segment of the MSU user community and reflect current curricular and research needs, or be relevant for reference purposes,
- 2) be available in a format for which MSU Libraries owns or is willing to acquire the appropriate hardware and software,

- 3) reflect the excellence, comprehensiveness and authority expected in print format,
  - 4) have adequate print or online documentation such as a print reference guide or online tutorial developed by the producer,
  - 5) have a search interface that is intuitive and that will not require special or intensive training for library staff and patrons,
  - 6) be broadly accessible under current copyright and licensing laws.
- B. If the resource claims to be the electronic equivalent of a print resource, the electronic counterpart should be the true equivalent of the print version in scope and content. The electronic resource should be considered only if it offers some value added features like increased flexibility of searching or increased access through networking.

## **VI. SPECIFIC SELECTION CRITERIA FOR ELECTRONIC DATABASES**

A. Electronic databases considered for acquisition by MSU Libraries should:

- 1) meet the usual and customary technical standards of the industry,
- 2) be updated on a regular basis, if currency is important,
- 3) have backfiles available if needed,
- 4) have the ability to be archived, if necessary,
- 5) and be user-friendly.

Some measures of user-friendliness are:

- a) the existence of introductory screens,
- b) the availability of on-line tutorials,
- c) prompts and menus,
- d) novice and expert search levels,
- e) helpful error messages,
- f) speed with which the retrieval system processes commands,
- g) ease of exiting from one function to another in the retrieval system,
- h) controlled language searching with an online thesaurus or authority files,
- i) ability to print, download to disk or e-mail results.

B. Consideration should be given to vendor-related issues such as:

- 1) vendor's reliability and business record which should suggest continued support for the product via updates or new versions,
- 2) customer support available from the vendor during the library's working hours,
- 3) price penalties for different formats,
- 4) logical and clear vendor produced documentation,
- 5) availability of the product for a trial period to allow evaluation before the library makes a commitment to purchase,
- 6) availability of published reviews of the vendor's product in appropriate library journal publications,

- 7) feedback from librarians who use the vendor's product in their libraries,
- 8) vendor's willingness to make clear whether purchasing or leasing the product is more economical for the library.

C. Access-related issues that need to be considered include:

- 1) the ability of the product to be available to affiliated off-campus MSU users,
- 2) the graduated pricing schedule determined by the number of simultaneous users,
- 3) the expandability of the hardware to accommodate technological change,
- 4) the level of availability of the product which must comply with the Intellectual Freedom Statement of the American Library Association.

D. The decision to select a physical database mounted on a stand-alone workstation, a physical networked database (e.g., CD-ROM or DVD) or a product via the Internet will depend on the projected usage, hardware requirements, licensing costs or discs required for coverage.

E. Notwithstanding the above criteria and recognizing MSU Libraries participation in statewide consortia, some electronic databases may be selected and made available as the result of consortia arrangements or agreements.

## **VII. PROCEDURES FOR THE EVALUATION OF NON-REFERENCE ELECTRONIC RESOURCES**

See **Appendix 2**

## **VIII. IMPLEMENTATION**

A. MSU Libraries will comply with copyright law and will take measures to promote compliance among patrons of the library.

B. MSU Libraries will optimize access to electronic resources when appropriate through the following:

- 1) purchase, loading and maintenance of software or hardware necessary for operating the electronic resource,
- 2) bibliographic control through the cataloging of each electronic resource,
- 3) storage for the item if needed,
- 4) appropriate circulation procedures if applicable,
- 5) sufficient security measures,
- 6) staff support and training,
- 7) user support and training.

C. MSU libraries will negotiate and comply with the vendor licensing agreements.

- 1) It will be the responsibility of the Administrator of Systems to negotiate and sign licensing agreements.

- 2) The Administrator of Systems will be responsible for overseeing daily compliance with licensing agreements.
- 3) Final responsibility for compliance with licensing agreements rests with the Dean of MSU Libraries.

## **IX. NETWORKING AND DUPLICATION**

- A. Whenever feasible, MSU Libraries will purchase licenses that permit networking of the electronic product to maximize use for off-site patrons or to fulfill consortia agreement obligations.
- B. MSU Libraries should consider duplicating a particular resource in print if it is decided that the electronic medium is unstable, thereby making it unsuitable for archiving, the information content of the resource, or if the vendor does not allow the archiving of its product.

## **X. REPLACEMENTS**

The criteria used to decide whether MSU Libraries should replace an electronic resource does not differ essentially from those used to consider the replacement of materials in print or microform. These criteria include documenting a demand for the resource, considering the cost of replacement or the alternative of accessing the electronic resource through a remote location.

## **XI. GIFTS**

MSU Libraries will accept gifts of electronic resources to be housed in the library if they conform to the selection criteria as stated in Sections V. and VI. Moreover, such resources must be evaluated according to procedures outlined in Appendix 2. For further information, see the Collection Development Gift Policy.

## **XII. PRESERVATION**

The preservation of electronic resources will be consistent with the current technology used for the long-term conservation of information in electronic media. Special attention will be given to the stability of the electronic format as an archiving medium.

## **XIII. WITHDRAWALS**

It is the prerogative of the library staff to permanently withdraw any electronic resource whenever any of the following conditions occur:

- 1) the information is obsolete or superseded by more current information,
- 2) the information is available in a more suitable format.

#### **XIV. POLICY REVIEW**

Due to the dynamic nature of the electronic information environment, the Electronic Resources Subcommittee of the MSU Libraries Collection Development Committee will conduct an annual review of the selection policy concerning electronic resources. After ERS review, the policy will then go to the MSU Libraries Collection Development Committee for approval.

## APPENDIX 1

### Procedure for Processing Electronic Journals that are Bundled with Print Subscriptions.

#### A. Processing

The initial process will begin in the Serials Department. Information concerning print titles with electronic counterparts will be forwarded to the Coordinator of Serials. Reference titles will be referred to REEC (Reference Electronic Evaluation Committee). If REEC recommends a title, the recommendation will be forwarded to the Coordinator of Serials and the rest of the following procedures will be followed. If the electronic version is the same as the print version or contains substantial supplementary materials, the electronic version will be added. If the supplementary materials are of questionable value, the Coordinator of Serials will consult with the appropriate library liaison.

#### B. Systems Maintenance

The Serials Department is responsible for the registration of IP addresses and/or password registration. The Administrator of Systems and/or the Coordinator of Serials will be the contact person for most electronic journals.

#### C. Electronic Database Maintenance

The Serials Department will maintain an Access database with information concerning URL, department coding, accompanying print subscription, hegis, etc. This database will be available on a read-only basis on the L drive as a resource for all faculty and staff.

#### D. Cataloging

The Serials Department will provide a serials cataloger with a "Request for Cataloging Form" providing the information necessary to catalog the electronic version.

## APPENDIX 2

### Procedure for the Evaluation of Non-Reference Electronic Resources for Purchase

- A. A library liaison may recommend to the Electronic Resources Subcommittee that MSU Libraries consider an electronic resource for purchase. The library liaison will assume the responsibility for supplying complete information on the title and acting as primary reviewer.
- B. The Electronic Resources Subcommittee will consider the request and determine if the title/service needs an on-site demonstration or trial. If the ERS recommends that this title is to be reviewed, the ERS Chair will contact the Administrator of Systems to determine whether the proper hardware/software configuration can be made available to support the product. If the hardware/software will be available, the ERS chair will provide relevant information to the Administrator of Systems who will be responsible for contacting the commercial vendor and negotiating the terms for the on-site trial.
- C. The Administrator of Systems will set up the product and notify the library liaison that the title/service is ready to review.
- D. The library liaison will be responsible for the details of the evaluation once the title/service is on-site. S/he will be expected:
  - 1) to have an in-depth knowledge of the features of the title/service,
  - 2) to compare the electronic title/service to the print equivalent, if currently subscribed to, including costs,
  - 3) to demonstrate how to use the title/service to ERS members, library staff, and appropriate departmental faculty.
- E. The library liaison will be responsible for submitting a written report to the ERS presenting the results of the evaluation. The report must stipulate:
  - 1) the advantages as well as the disadvantages of the title/service given our current electronic information environment,
  - 2) the clientele who will best be served by the product, and,
  - 3) a recommendation concerning the product, supported by appropriate documentation such as written evaluations.
- F. The ERS will make a recommendation regarding the purchase to the MSU Libraries Collection Development Committee chair who will forward the recommendation to the Dean of MSU Libraries and the Administrative Council.
- G. The members of the Electronic Resources Subcommittee of the MSU Libraries Collection Development Committee will be responsible for the evaluation of the library's non-reference electronic resources on an on-going basis, paying particular attention to changes in the database content or retrieval system. This evaluation is especially



important during the period before a licensing contract is up for renewal with a particular vendor. Any recommendations will be submitted to the MSU Libraries Collection Development Committee chair who will forward the recommendation to the Dean of MSU Libraries and the Administrative Council.

- H. Electronic resources that have a reference function will be evaluated by the Reference Electronic Evaluation Committee (REEC).

## APPENDIX 3

### Procedures for Selecting Electronic Resources Available Without Charge

- A. Anyone may recommend to the Electronic Resources Subcommittee (ERS) that an electronic resource available without charge be considered for inclusion in the online catalog. Library liaisons are particularly encouraged to recommend such resources. The individual submitting the site for review will fill out the first section of a three-part form providing their name and contact information, the URL of the recommended resource, the title of the resource and any authorship information that they may have for the resource.
- B. The types of resources to be considered are:
- a. Premier or outstanding sites that organize a large collection of links in the subject areas taught at the University.
  - b. Sites identified as being related to the research needs of specific MSU courses will be included.
  - c. Society and organization links, representing groups that have a broad campus membership or interest and which offer services and publications.
  - d. Gateway sites to large numbers of government publications.
  - e. Sites that are actual publications or data in full text that are highly pertinent to specific MSU courses, assignments or disciplines may be selected for inclusion. This does not include class information sites (i.e., course syllabi and assignments).
  - f. Special collection and university archive collection type sites such as MSU sites, Starkville sites, and state of Mississippi sites.
  - g. Sites that are based at MSU, but are not necessarily by or about MSU.
- C. The ERS will review each resource that is recommended for inclusion.
- a. The ERS will be expected to fill out the second section of the three-part form providing information on whether the resource meets the criteria for selection.
  - b. The criteria for selection are as follows:
    - i. Content
      1. Accurate information
      2. Substantive information
      3. Higher education level
      4. Evaluation by reputable review source (e.g. Choice or Scout Report) is desirable
      5. Sites which have stated selection criteria are preferred
      6. For electronic journals, access must be to a substantial portion of articles.
    - ii. Authority
      1. Clearly identified responsibility for source
      2. Status, affiliation, qualifications or reputation of the author is evident
      3. Information sources are documented

4. Supported or sponsored by reputable institution
5. Commercial nature of site does not impede its use or is balanced by the usefulness of its content
6. Peer-reviewed journals are desirable

iii. Timeliness & Stability

1. Size and nature of archive (e.g. there should be at least two years of archiving for electronic journals)
2. Site should be regularly maintained
3. Dates of revision should be posted
4. Longevity of the resource
5. Evidence of stability and continued maintenance

iv. Usability

1. Site is easily navigated
2. Site is well organized
3. Graphical nature of the site does not impede use (e.g. Bobby approved sites are desirable)
4. Note special technical requirements for use (e.g. Flash, Adobe Acrobat, etc.)

c. The ERS form will also stipulate:

- i. The clientele best be served by the product
- ii. A recommendation concerning the resource

D. If an electronic resource available without charge is recommended by the ERS, it will be added to the collection.

E. Once a resource has been approved for inclusion, the form will be forwarded to the Coordinator of Serials who will record appropriate statistics and add the title to the Access database of electronic resources which is maintained on the L drive. A member of the Serials Department will complete the third part of the form and send the entire form to the serials cataloger.



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Request to Include in the Online Catalog  
a Record for an Electronic Resource  
*Available Without Charge*

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NOTE: Priority will be given to requests made by MSU-affiliated users.

URL: \_\_\_\_\_

Title of Website: \_\_\_\_\_

Author of Website: \_\_\_\_\_

Recommended by: \_\_\_\_\_

Contact information for person recommending resource: (optional)

Phone \_\_\_\_\_ Email Address \_\_\_\_\_

Status

\_\_\_\_ Faculty

\_\_\_\_ Staff

\_\_\_\_ Student

\_\_\_\_ Other (please specify): \_\_\_\_\_

Evaluation Form to Consider a Request  
to Include in the Online Catalog  
a Record for an Electronic Resource  
Available *Without Charge*  
(Part 2 of a 3 part form—Part 1 must be attached for consideration)



Mississippi State  
University Libraries  
<http://library.msstate.edu>

Electronic Resources Subcommittee

Evaluator: \_\_\_\_\_

Please use the following points when considering the resource for inclusion in the catalog.

Content

- accurate information
- substantive information
- higher education level
- evaluation by reputable review source (e.g. Choice or Scout Report) is desirable
- sites which have stated selection criteria are preferred
- for electronic journals, access must be to a substantial portion of the articles

Authority

- clearly identified responsibility for source
- status, affiliation, qualifications or reputation of the author is evident
- information sources are documented
- Peer reviewed? \_\_\_\_\_
- supported or sponsored by reputable institution
- commercial nature of site does not impede use or is balanced by the usefulness of content

Timeliness & Stability

- size and nature of archive (e.g. at least two years of archiving for electronic journals)
  - How many years are available? \_\_\_\_\_
  - Current Issues? \_\_\_\_\_
- site should be regularly maintained
- dates of revision should be posted
- longevity of the resource
- evidence of stability and continued maintenance

Usability

- site is easily navigated
- site is well organized
- graphical nature of the site does not impede use (e.g. Bobby approved sites are desirable)
- note special technical requirements for use (e.g. Flash, Adobe Acrobat, etc.)

Please indicate the clientele who will best be served by the product:

Recommendation for inclusion:

\_\_\_\_ This resource should be included in the Online Catalog

\_\_\_\_ This resource should not be included in the Online Catalog

Additional Comments (use back if necessary):

(Part 3 of a 3 part form)

Mississippi State University Libraries  
Request to Catalog an Electronic Resource

From: Serials

Date:

The following electronic resource needs cataloging:

Title	
URL	
Purchase/Gift (Free)	
Remarks	
DBCN	
Accompanies print/online only	

PLEASE RETURN THIS FORM TO THE COORDINATOR OF SERIALS.

Cataloger's remarks: