

GENERAL GUIDELINES FOR URI ACQUISITION OF ELECTRONIC INFORMATION RESOURCES

I. INTRODUCTION

The following are provided as a guide to the libraries of the University of Rhode Island in developing and reviewing proposals and in negotiating contracts with providers of information in electronic formats. Many of the issues in the emerging electronic age will require discussion, experimentation, and collaboration on an on-going basis.

II. COLLECTION DEVELOPMENT

- A. Collection development policies and criteria should be applied consistently across formats including electronic resources.
- B. Principal considerations include:
 - Establishing a rationale for the acquisition of each resource
 - Meeting faculty and student information needs
 - Providing access to electronic resources and integrating them into library programs
- C. Balance should be sought among:
 - Disciplines
 - Instructional and research resources
 - Different needs of each campus
- D. Priority should be given to those electronic resources which offer:
 - Integrity of the resource (compatibility and completeness vis-à-vis print version)
 - Economies of scale
 - Benefit to the greatest number of users
 - Timely availability
 - Increased functionality
 - Remote Access
 - Improved resource sharing
 - Rights to perpetual access
 - Completeness of digital archive
- E. The URI libraries should be able to specify the content and the format for resources to be acquired.
- F. Selection decisions should not be compromised by provider-defined linkages between print and electronic versions of the same products.
- G. An electronic resource should have sufficient content to evaluate its usefulness and to justify its selection.
- H. Acquisitions should be compatible with the goals of any URI Libraries' strategic plan.

III. COSTS AND PRICING

- A. Information providers should offer a choice of pricing models from which the URI libraries may select. These models could be based upon various criteria including simultaneous use, user population, number of locations, library budget, etc.
- B. Pricing models which are based upon campus or system FTE often do not recognize that the content offered may have interest to only a limited segment of the total user population. Where a resource may not be of broad or general interest, pricing should be based upon more appropriate criteria such as size of the actual user community or projections of use based upon estimates or actual recorded usage.
- C. The URI libraries should not be required to purchase both the print and the electronic versions of a resource.
- D. Unit cost should decline as the volume of use increases. Information providers should specify volume thresholds or breakpoints at which the overall unit cost will decrease.
- E. The cost of providing access services and the basic cost of the content should be separate. The URI libraries should be free to negotiate a license for electronic content which is separate from the access service. Should the same content be offered through multiple access providers, the URI libraries should be free to choose which access service best meets its needs. The URI libraries should be able to change access providers, if necessary, without having to renegotiate a license agreement for content.
- F. The pricing of information and access services to the URI libraries should reflect its contributions in helping to create a marketplace through training and exposure of products to new and future customers.

IV. LICENSING

- A. The license should include permanent rights to use the information that has been paid for in the event that a licensed resource is subsequently canceled or removed. License should specify current coverage as well as access rights in the event of cancellation (i.e.sliding year access, backfiles, access to complete runs, etc.)
- B. Information providers should employ a standard agreement that describes the rights of libraries and their authorized users in easy-to-understand and explicit language. The terms should reflect realistic expectations concerning URI's ability to monitor use and discover abuse. Agreements should contain consistent business and legal provisions; however, nothing should prohibit URI's rights under all applicable state and federal laws.
- C. Authorized users will be determined by URI. Authorization and authentication of users is a shared responsibility of both the providers and the URI.
- D. Licenses should permit fair use of all information for educational, instructional, and research purposes by authorized users, including viewing and output (downloading, email, and printing).

- E. Licenses should not limit URI's rights to enhance or reformat data, if content and integrity are preserved in order to make the data more visible or convenient for URI users within Fair Use.
- F. Vendor-provided, campus-differentiated use data should be available to URI as part of contractual provisions. Confidentiality of individual users and their searches must be fully protected. Use data generated by URI may be made available to the information provider. URI supports the International Coalition of Library Consortia (ICOLC) "Guidelines for Statistical Measures of Usage of Web-Based Indexed, Abstracted and Full-Text Resources." [NOTE: link to ICOLC Guidelines]
- G. Contract start dates should be synchronized with the beginning of the fiscal year or calendar year as determined by URI.
- H. (Note: It is suggested by the current CD Officer that it would be more efficient and legally much more sound to outsource our licensing to our vendors, i.e. Ebsco; when this is fiscally possible.)

V. FUNCTIONALITY

- A. Preference will be given to vendors with a standard interface between different electronic products. Instructions and examples should be provided for both the search engine interface and resource-specific features. Documentation should be clear, concise, and comprehensive. Online help should be context-sensitive.
- B. The system capacity and network infrastructure of an information provider should be technologically up-to-date and provide for optimum response time.
- C. System-based error messages should provide clear indication of the nature of and reason for the error.
- D. Information resources should be platform-independent. Vendors should provide information in industry standard display and output formats.
- E. Vendors should provide options that meet Americans with Disabilities Act compliance. [NOTE: provide a link to ADA Web Design Guidelines]
- F. Vendors should provide sufficient advanced notice to keep the URI libraries informed of content, format, and any other changes.
- G. If a limited number of access ports are available, vendors should provide training or instructional passwords
- H. Vendors should be prepared to respond to URI libraries' reasonable requests for customization at the system wide or campus level, including, but not limited to, adding local periodical and serial holdings from individual libraries.
- I. Interfaces and search engines should be easy to use for first-time users, yet provide advanced searching capabilities making full use of searching features.
- J. Preference will be given to those vendors supplying MARC format cataloging records, including links, for each title.
- K. If there are any database content changes, URI reserve the right to renegotiate prices.

VI. PERPETUAL USE

- A. The URI libraries have a legitimate interest in maintaining collection integrity through archives of the electronic resources they have licensed or otherwise acquired. The URI libraries have a mission to ensure easy access to archival electronic material.
- B. The URI libraries should have permanent rights to use information that has been paid for in the event that a licensed resource is subsequently canceled or removed.
- C. Responsibility for maintaining the archive and providing archival access rest with the vendor and should be clearly defined in all agreements and licenses.
- D. The URI libraries should have the right to make or obtain electronic or printed copies for archiving and for use in perpetuity.
- E. Vendors must have contingency plans to maintain archival access agreeable to the URI Libraries.

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