

The Problem of Measuring E-resources^{*)}

Robert Hayes¹, Karin Karlics², Christian Schlögl²

¹ University of California at Los Angeles (UCLA)
Department of Information Studies

² University of Graz
Institute of Information Science
and Information Systems

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INTRODUCTION

E-journals (e-books) differ from print journals (books) in various ways:

- physical composition/medium
- short time since their introduction
- handling/administration
- integration into (other) library processes and structural organization

→ Difficult for libraries to identify the workload caused by e-resources

SURVEY: Sample (1)

- E-mail survey
- Addressees: members of mailing list of Austrian consortium “E-Medien”
- Period: spring 2008 (analysis period: 2007)
- Reminder email to university libraries in May 2008
- Reminder phone call to big university libraries which did not respond by June/July
- Exploratory study
- 13 responses of which only 12 were considered
 - 8 university libraries
 - 4 other institutional libraries

SURVEY: Sample (2)

- Sample very heterogeneous:
 - libraries with 10 librarians vs. > 100 librarians
 - hosting organizations with 2,000 students vs. > 20,000 students
- Distinction between group1 (8 libraries) and group2 libraries (4 libraries) depending on number of
 - students
 - faculty staff
 - library staff
 - staff dealing with e-resources and
 - contracts
- The following analyses relate only to group1 libraries („big“ libraries) if not otherwise indicated

SURVEY: Conceptualizations

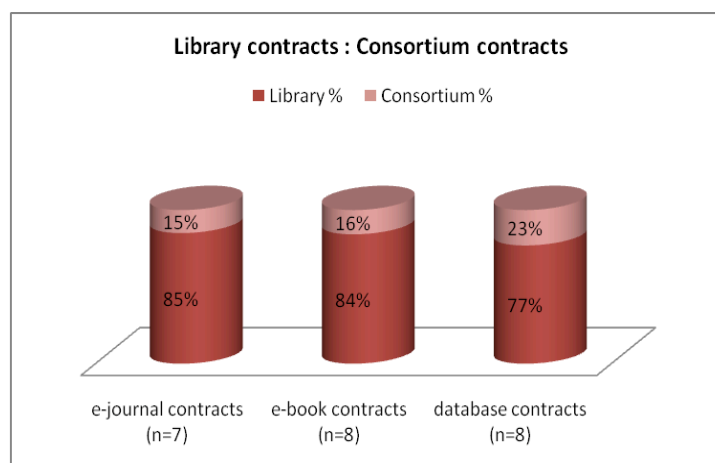
- 3 types of e-resources:
 - E-journals
 - E-books
 - Databases
- Number of e-resources **vs.** number of contracts
- Library contracts **vs.** consortium contracts (Austrian consortium „E-Medien“)
- Acquisition **vs.** making available
 - soliciting bids
 - testing and evaluating resources
 - price comparisons
 - licensing negotiations
 - all tasks to guaranteeing online access to e-resources:
 - „record keeping“ in a management tool
 - trouble shooting

RESULTS: number of contracts – library vs. consortium (1)

Number of contracts	Number of contracts		Ratio of contracts	
	Library	Consortium	Library %	Consortium %
e-journal contracts (n=7)	66.1	10.8	85%	15%
e-book contracts (n=8)	6.0	1.1	84%	16%
database contracts (n=8)	36.8	11.0	77%	23%

- still relatively few e-book contracts
- most contracts are negotiated by the libraries themselves

RESULTS: number of contracts – library vs. consortium (2)



RESULTS: number of contracts – library vs. consortium (3)

Problem:

- In contrast to consortium contracts it was difficult to determine the number of library contracts – reasons:
 - Distinction between contracting and ordering
 - Contracts signed for a longer period

RESULTS: expenditures – library vs. consortium

Expenditures EUR		Expenditures %		Number of contracts %	
Libraries	Consortium	Libraries	Consortium	Libraries	Consortium
300,764	507,548	37%	63%	81%	19%

Ratio between expenditures for library contracts and consortium contracts nearly reverse compared with number of contracts!

→ Library contracts:

- large number of contracts
- including fewer and less expensive journals
- being more specific (tailored to the needs of the particular library)

Problem:

- What are the actual costs for e-journals?
Only the surcharges for online access? Also including costs for print subscription?

RESULTS: number of e-resources (1)

Type of e-resource	Average number of resources
e-journals (active)	7839
e-journals (archive)	433
e-books	203
databases (active)	95
databases (back files)	43

Problem:

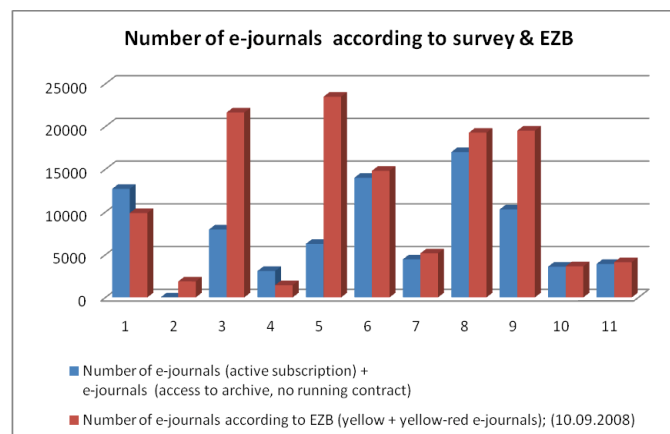
- What do “e-journal holdings” include?

Number of e-journals to which a library subscribes

Number of e-journals to which a library has access: includes also cross-access via consortium and open access journals

Number of e-journals provided by EZB (Electronic Journal Database): includes also non journal resources like working papers, reports, ...

RESULTS: number of e-journals (2)



→ Data about number of e-journals not reliable at all!

RESULTS: number of management tools

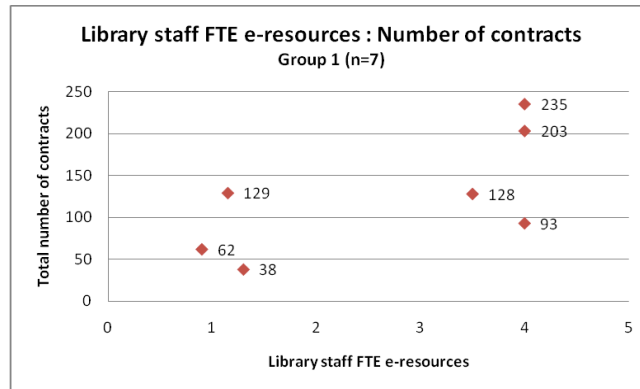
Type of e-resource	Average number of management tools
e-journals	3.4
e-books	2.1
databases	2.6

- several tools used in parallel: library catalogue, EZB, HAN server, linking services (e.g. SFX) → double and triple effort
- no optimal management and access system for e-resources

RESULTS: tasks and internal organization

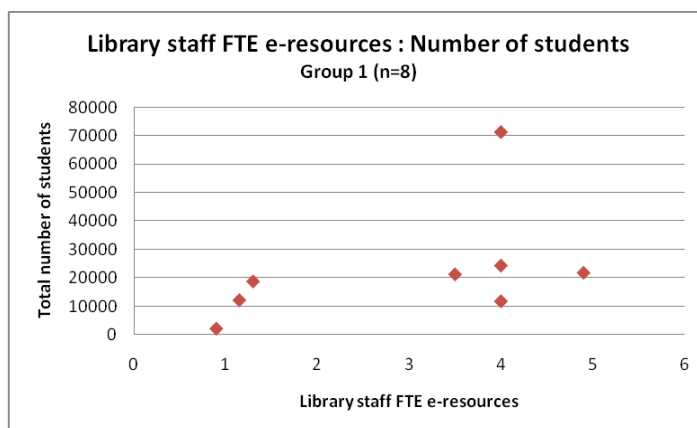
- Ratio between acquisition and making available of e-resources: **1/3 : 2/3** from 20:80 (Min) – 40:60 (Max) (all libraries: group1 and group2; 1 exception)
- Organizational structure:
 - 3 libraries: own department for e-resources
 - 5 libraries: tasks were assigned cross-departmentally

RESULTS: bivariate analysis (1)



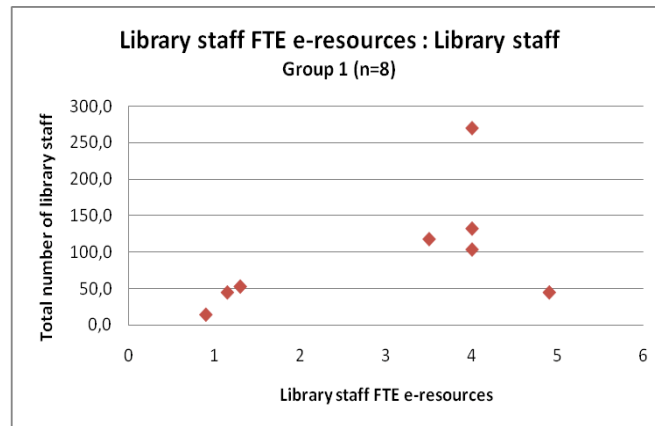
- 2 clusters of libraries as to no. of staff (FTE) in charge for e-resources
- low relation between no. of e-resources staff and no. of contracts

RESULTS: bivariate analysis (2)



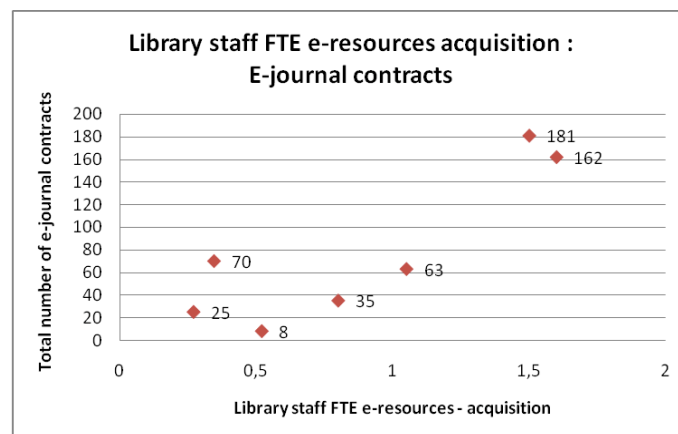
- no relation between no. of e-resources staff (FTE) and no. of students

RESULTS: bivariate analysis (3)



→ weak relation between no. of e-resources staff (FTE) and no. of library staff (FTE)

RESULTS: bivariate analysis (4)



No. of staff for e-resources acquisition estimated by means of ratio „acquisition : making available of e-resources“ (1/3 : 2/3)

→ medium-sized relation between no. of e-resources acquisition staff (FTE) and no. of e-journal contracts

RESULTS: bivariate analysis (5)

Problem – difficult measurement of no. of staff in charge of e-journals:

- own e-resources department or interdepartmentally organized
- different organizational assignment of tasks in different libraries, e.g.
 - trouble shooting by data processing department vs. library (technical services) staff
 - contracting by legal department vs. library staff
- different interpretation of responsibilities: e.g. reference services (for e-resources)

Summary (1)

- Difficult measurement of workloads based on
 - number of e-resources
 - e-journals: subscription vs. accessibility
 - e-books: variety of accessibility and subscription models
 - number of contracts
 - distinction between contracts and orders
 - number of staff involved in managing e-resources
 - own department vs. cross-departmental assignment of tasks
 - new occupational skills and their assignment: e.g. contracting, trouble shooting
- difficult to compare data among libraries

Summary (2)

- **Main results:**
 - Most of e-resources contracts (80%) are negotiated by libraries themselves
 - acquisition of e-resources takes much time (1/3 of the total time spent for e-resources)
 - Costs for consortium contracts make up the majority of the total expenditures (63%)
 - consortium contracts usually include
 - more cost-intensive contracts
 - more e-resources
 - E-resources are managed with more than 1 management tool
 - no management tool fulfills the requirements of management and access of e-resources
 - duplication of work

Summary (3)

- Staffing requirements:
 - < 1 FTE for small Austrian libraries
 - on avg. 3 FTE (1 – 4) for bigger Austrian university libraries
- Because of measurement problem it is difficult to determine a clear correlation between staffing for e-resources and other variables
 - exception: number of contracts * number of staff for acquisition of e-resources

Future research: questions to be considered

- Is it at all possible to measure workloads for e-resources based on the indicators mentioned before?
- Would a future survey provide more reliable results
 - if more questions are asked?
 - if questions are more detailed in order to be more precise?
- Considering the small number of questionnaires
 - would libraries be prepared to invest even more time in statistical matters in order to provide better results?
- Should data collection methods be changed?

Thank you for your attention!