POLICY ON NETWORKED ELECTRONIC ACCESS - PREFERENCE OVER PRINT

The Library has implemented a policy of preferring the provision of networked electronic access to resources over purchase of the print equivalent. This policy was established following extensive consultation with faculties and departments in 1999, and with the approval of the Library Committee and endorsement of Academic Board.

The Library Committee resolved on 20 September 1999: LC4/99 that where available and appropriate, journals and other information resources be provided in full-text, networked electronic formats, and that the equivalent print versions not be purchased. This resolution was reported to the meeting of the Academic Board on 13 October 1999, which endorsed the report and the resolution without discussion.

Changes in the nature of scholarly communication and the publishing of research material across all disciplines provided the opportunity to consider such a strategic and innovative shift in providing resources.

The impetus for this change was the considerable advantage networked resources provide, including

- access regardless of location, 24 hours a day
- delivery of information directly and, in general, more quickly than print
- improved functionality.

During the consultative process a number of issues were raised and discussed in regard to the concerns and implications of this policy shift in the quality, provision, and long term access to resources available only in electronic form. As a result of these discussions a set of guidelines were agreed for implementation of the policy.

These guidelines are:

- Equivalence - the electronic version must be at least equivalent in terms of content and quality of image when compared to the print version.
- Price - the subscription costs of the electronic version should not exceed those of the print version. It is acknowledged that there may be additional costs such as site licence and platform fees that may need to be accommodated above the subscription costs.
- Currency of content - the electronic version must be available no later than the print version
- Archiving and long term access - the Library needs to be confident that appropriate archiving and means of long term access exist for electronic versions.
- Continuity - the Library needs to be reasonably assured that the titles will continue to be available on a stable vendor platform before print versions are cancelled.

This policy has been implemented for several publisher-based collections including Elsevier (ScienceDirect), Academic Press (IDEAL) and Wiley.

In September 2004, Library Committee LC3/04 extended the policy to cover the purchase of digital back sets of journals. The Committee further resolved that where an electronic back set is acquired and appropriate archival access is guaranteed, the Library's equivalent print holdings may be discarded.

The general implementation of this policy, including technical factors, is monitored through the Library's Electronic Resources Group.