

Why the Journal Review List Is So Long Or, How the “List of Proposed Cancellations” Came to Be

As Western prepares for reductions in expenditures of \$315,000 to its Fiscal Year 2016-2017 library resource access budget (an approx. 15% spending cut), you may wonder: Why is the [“List of Proposed Cancellations”](#) so long? Why specifically those titles?

The 3,600 subscriptions shared with faculty for review comprise 3.3 percent of 108,000 currently accessible subscriptions. The “List of Proposed Cancellations” includes individual titles contained in eligible journal packages. A “package” is a prescribed collection of journals available from a vendor as a bundle. In order to apply “single resource” and “smallest purchasable unit” definitions from the [Sustainable Access Task Force’s final report](#) to an entire journal package, it has been broken apart for analysis. The list enables the Libraries to work closely with faculty to analyze individual journal titles within large journal packages. Based upon this collaborative analysis, the University may then aggressively renegotiate a current package in its entirety, define a smaller journal package, or purchase individual titles when commercial vendor contracts permit.

The approach the Libraries has taken, in collaboration with faculty, is in the best interests of the University as it places the University’s interests before commercial vendors’ and follows necessary strategies employed by many other universities around the world. In the end, this transparent, collaborative process will lead to more balanced collections, responsible spending, and fiscal sustainability.

Specifically:

- Western can no longer afford its current journal packages and maintain a balanced collection.
- In order to maintain a balanced collection, Western must evaluate all eligible journal packages for their teaching and research content, not merely by how inexpensive cost-per-use (CPU) is in the aggregate.
- Overwhelming evidence indicates that journal packages show highly uneven use and inconsistent value at the individual title level, but offer excellent CPU in the aggregate.
- If the University were to maintain any entire journal package based strictly on aggregate CPU, this would eliminate the possibility of transparent discussion among faculty around title-level use and value to the University’s teaching, learning, and research mission.
- Comparing the aggregate CPU of an entire journal package with the CPU of a single title purchase is inequitable and threatens the retention of most single-title purchases, which were strategically acquired to meet specific faculty needs.
- An approach in which an entire journal package is maintained in its entirety without faculty review pits one journal package against another and potentially one group of faculty needs against another.
- Retaining any entire journal package without thorough faculty review and careful analysis of both its aggregate and title-level CPU could establish a precedent that limits the University’s ability to evaluate journal package content and renegotiate license renewals in the future.

Western’s Sustainable Access Task Force, in its deliberations and final report, has offered the University an unprecedented, positive path forward. In producing this list, the Libraries has built upon the task force’s considerable efforts to create a transparent, campus-wide discussion about what faculty and

students need to be successful in their teaching, learning, and research. The Libraries is deeply appreciative of the Task Force's hard work and recommendations.

The list of titles in its current format allows the Libraries to identify the titles which can be more inexpensively acquired through interlibrary loan. By working with Western faculty on such a thorough review of journal package titles, the Libraries will also understand which individual titles faculty consider important for retention and why. The combination of financial considerations and faculty feedback places the University in the most powerful position it has been in for many years to engage commercial publishers in renegotiation efforts. Beginning in May, the Libraries will contact each commercial vendor with a list of titles identified through the faculty review process. The University will aggressively push vendors for volume pricing and steep discounts in order to retain the largest number of needed journals at the lowest total cost. Negotiated savings will increase Western's overall purchasing power and reduce the final number of cancelled titles. As per the Faculty Senate resolution, the Libraries looks forward to working with the Senate Library Committee in the Fall on a thorough evaluation of this year's journal retention and cancellation process so that it may be improved for future years.

If you have any questions about the review list or process for retaining or cancelling journals, please contact Mike Olson, Director of Scholarly Resources and Collections Services, at Mike.Olson@wwu.edu.