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Digging Deeper Into Article-Based Publishing

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Digging Deeper Into Article-Based Publishing

Abstract

In March 2013, science librarian Michelle Price began tracking online first articles for faculty in her liaison areas of pharmacy, biology, chemistry, physics, and nursing. This was a result of the e-mails she was receiving from faculty inquiring about full-text access to articles they knew had been published due to alerts directly from the publisher's website. It was these initial e-mails that led Ms. Price to begin digging into the difference between "epub ahead of print" and Article-Based Publishing (ABP). Her interest and involvement would soon spread to the access services and electronic serials librarians at St. John Fisher College and lead to an Article-Based Publishing Think Tank Day, which included representatives from a local community college, a public university, a medical library, and a science library.

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Comments

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Digging Deeper into Article-Based Publishing

In March 2013, Science Librarian Michelle Price began tracking online first articles for faculty in her liaison area. This was a result of the emails she was receiving from faculty inquiring about full-text access to articles they knew had been published due to alerts directly from the publisher's website. It was these initial emails that led Ms. Price to begin digging into the difference between "epub ahead of print" and Article-Based Publishing. Her interest and involvement would soon spread to the Access Services and Electronic Serials Librarians at St. John Fisher College and lead to an Article-Based Publishing Think Tank Day, which included representatives from a local community college, public university, medical library, and science library.

St. John Fisher, a small liberal arts college located in upstate New York, has nine professional librarians on staff at Lavery Library that often find themselves working collaboratively. At the same time that Ms. Price noticed that patrons were having difficulty accessing articles with an "online first" status, then-Head of Access Services, Micquel Little, noticed more Interlibrary Loan requests for similar articles. In April 2013, Ms. Price sent out a PowerPoint presentation to her liaison faculty explaining how these articles might affect student citations: that students may begin citing articles with no volume or issue date because none had been assigned to that article yet (M. Price, personal communication, April 22, 2013; Price, 2013).

During the summer of 2013, Ms. Price and Ms. Little began to uncover more pieces of the Article-Based Publishing (ABP) puzzle. Ms. Price became more familiar with the publication status tag "epub ahead of print" in PubMed. At one time the PubMed FAQ included the following definition, "Publishers may submit citations for articles that appear on the web in advance of the journal issue's release, and those articles are tagged with 'Epub ahead of print.'" However, that definition has since disappeared from the FAQ, and now there are two separate pages available to help users decipher the meaning of "epub ahead of print." The NIH (2014) lists the PubMed/Medline data element field

descriptions, and “epub ahead of print” is listed as “electronically published but followed by print.” A separate NIH FAQ page for Loansome doc (2012) goes into a much deeper explanation of what “epub ahead of print” means, including the fact that “Many publishers limit online access to ‘ahead of print’ articles to individual subscribers; charging others for obtaining the ‘ahead of print’ article, sometimes also including libraries with paid subscriptions.”

In contrast, Article-Based Publishing is not dependent on a print edition and refers to an entirely different publishing model, not just a release time. Elsevier began practicing Article-Based Publishing in 2010 and offers this definition:

“Article-based publishing is publishing an article to an “Issue in Progress” as soon as it is finalized and not having to wait for the entire issue to appear... Now, every time an individual article is finished, it receives a page range and is published online inside an Issue in Progress.” (Elsevier, n.d.)

In theory, Article-Based Publishing speeds up the publishing process and provides earlier access to articles. It has been the case several times that Lavery Library librarians have encountered journals that practice Article-Based Publishing from both Elsevier and other publishers, which do provide earlier access to articles. In the best cases, the ABP articles did not change title or have major revisions between the publisher’s website and vendor-supplied database subscription. Indexing is done without delay to all of the known indexing services, and if the library purchases an institutional subscription that includes “to present,” the library had complete access to all published articles of that journal including the ABP articles.

What we also found was that many times this process did not go smoothly, or did not occur at all. During fiscal year 2013-2014, a pilot study commenced to track and purchase ABP articles that the library could not obtain through Interlibrary Loan. The Library would purchase access to an article if their request fell into the category of Article-Based Publishing, was not available through our

subscriptions (even if marked through present), and was not available through Interlibrary Loan. Ms. Little and Ms. Price took their understanding of Article-Based Publishing at that time and its impact on Interlibrary Loan and gave a presentation at the Annual Meeting of the Upstate New York/Ontario Chapter of the Medical Library Association (Price & Little, 2013).

The following years consisted of querying colleagues via professional workshops and listservs. Ms. Price queried the Med-lib listserv and invited users to view the conference presentation (Price, 2013). One of the most interesting follow-up conversations was in regards to the product ClinicalKey and access to ABP articles. On February 24, 2014, Natasha Andjelkovic, ClinicalKey Editorial Director, sent a lengthy response to the listserv registrants outlining ClinicalKey's position regarding ABP articles. From April 2012 until November 2013, ClinicalKey was not posting ABP articles until they had reached a certain stage in the proofing process. Clinical Key did acknowledge a discrepancy in access with some journal titles and said they were working with their publishing partners to remedy the situation. (Andjelkovic, 2014).

When Lavery Library welcomed a new Head of Access Services, Kourtney Blackburn, she and Ms. Price continued to work with increasingly difficult interlibrary loan requests. During the pilot, Ms. Blackburn began recording the different names applied to ABP articles: ahead of print, early view, posted online, published online, article first published online, and posted online. Oftentimes Ms. Blackburn and Ms. Price would follow an article as it moved from ABP status to a journal and into our subscriptions. The electronic serials librarian, Ms. Marianne Simmons, was also involved once we discovered that different databases would have different access to ABP articles from the same journals even if both subscriptions were to the present. It was a time to discuss vocabulary and structure. Through our networking efforts, we found that almost all librarians did not have a good understanding of what Article-Based Publishing is, how it differs from the "epub ahead of print" model, and how that would affect user behavior and access.

It was in May of 2014, that Ms. Price extended this conversation to librarians outside of St. John Fisher College and called to order a half-day Think Tank to discuss Article-Based Publishing. Ms. Price, Science Librarian; Ms. Blackburn, Head of Access Services; and Ms. Simmons, Head of Reference and Electronic Serials, attended from Lavery Library. In order to assure a good representation of librarians for the Think Tank, also in attendance were librarians from Milne Library, SUNY Geneseo; Carlson Science and Engineering Library, University of Rochester; Edward G. Miner Library, University of Rochester Medical Center; and LeRoy V. Good Library, Monroe Community College. The afternoon-long session set to meet the following objectives:

- Define terminology associated with Article-Based Publishing
- Contrast Article-Based Publishing with “epub ahead of print”
- Predict future issues/challenges to librarians and researchers regarding Article-Based Publishing.

At the end of the day, the Think Tank made several general observations regarding Article-Based Publishing. In theory ABP is a great idea. It also seems like a way to generate extra income above and beyond the negotiated contract. Editors might not have an awareness of ABP. There is difficulty in determining if a subscription includes ABP articles. With the widespread adoption of Article-Based Publishing and online publishing, “issues” are now an artificial construct. The group brainstormed the issues around three stages: the publisher’s website, indexing/abstracting services, and full-text access. They concurred that Article-Based Publishing affects all three stages, and in all three stages there could occur barriers to access. At one point, a new term was suggested to help define a subset of ABP articles. A Mandatory Individually Purchased Article (MIPA), is an article that is not available to institutional subscribers even if they have purchased a “to present” package. Until this unique type of ABP article moves into an issue and becomes available through subscription, the only way for a library to provide access to this article is to purchase it individually.

Following the Think Tank, Lavery Library continued with its second year of the ABP pilot, recording more data based on the conversation and terms defined by the group. The library hopes to share this data after the conclusion of the pilot. In the meantime, Ms. Price gave a presentation to campus faculty during a Faculty Research Showcase day in February of 2015 about Article-Based Publishing. Subsequently there have been several follow-ups with faculty regarding their recently accepted articles, and one who is an editor of a journal and was unaware of Article-Based Publishing.

There are still many questions that require further research to really understand the larger effects of Article-Based Publishing. Ms. Price has identified the following six questions to guide future research.

1. How many journals practice Article-Based Publishing? Is it different per discipline?
2. How does Article-Based Publishing affect indexing? If there are delays, how long are they?
3. How does Article-Based Publishing differ, if at all, between individual subscriptions, institutional subscriptions through the publisher, and institutional subscriptions through a vendor?
4. How has Article-Based Publishing spawned new “beyond present” packages like *Science Express* from *Science Magazine*?
5. What are the best practices regarding versioning of Article-Based Publishing articles?
6. What type of awareness do journal editors have of Article-Based Publishing?

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