Are Journals Cost Effective? Subscriptions to Electronic Full Text Versus Pay-Per-View

Barbara J. Iobst MLS, AHIP
Lehigh Valley Health Network

Linda M. Schwartz MDE, AHIP, CM
Lehigh Valley Health Network, linda_m.schwartz@lvhn.org

Evelyn J. Little
Lehigh Valley Health Network

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Subscriptions to Electronic Full Text Versus Pay-Per-View
Barbara J. Iobst, MLS, AHIP and Linda Matula Schwartz, MDE
Lehigh Valley Health Network, Allentown, Pennsylvania

**Question:** Are subscriptions to electronic full text content cost effective compared to pay-per-view?

**Method:**
Spreadsheet created to compare one year of total articles costs based on title usage and importance.

**Issues:**
50 titles with no pay-per-view access excluded; 34 titles requiring print subscription for content excluded. Aggregated packages may contain many titles that are rarely used. For this reason, only selected core titles and titles with >30 uses/year were included from one vendor. Additional content in aggregated packages (books, images, etc.) was not considered; the number of titles was divided by the total package cost. This study was based on one library; journal usage and cost will vary by institution. Embargoed content was ignored for this study.

**Conclusions:**
Subscription packages/individual subscriptions are cost effective compared to pay-per-view with an estimated saving of at least $18.79 per article based on usage with an overall saving of $878,995.96 in FY09.
Because some journals could not be included in the study, the estimated pay-per-view costs would actually be higher than shown.
Pay-per-view costs were higher than subscription packages for six packages and lower for four packages.

**Other Considerations:**
Direct access to content via subscriptions saves user time. Not all content is available by pay-per-view. Pay-per-view purchases could not be provided 24/7 in the library. Pay-per-view budgeting is unpredictable. Administrative time was not quantified for either delivery method.

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