

**Electronic Journals: Bases and Perspectives by Alice Keller<sup>1</sup>  
– Review –**

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The book *Electronic Journals: Bases and Perspectives* by Alice Keller, Assistant Director of OULS (Oxford University Library Services) is meant to introduce and familiarize everyone interested in library and information sciences, with the current issue of high interest “electronic journals”. The objective of this monograph is to offer efficient ways to deal with the domain of information and documentation, methods which represent one of the most recent and fast developing components of modern library and information science.

The author fully describes the problem of the journals provided in electronic format, starting from the crisis of periodical publications.

Chapter 1, *The Process of Change in Publishing Journals* presents the historical evolution of printed journals and the crisis of these publications determined by the information boom, especially after 1950, the prices increase, the peer review and selection process, the enhanced number of titles and delay until publication.

In the last paragraph of this chapter, the author debates upon the definition of electronic journals and presents some opinions, but concludes by suggesting that, in this matter, we can still relate to the traditional definition of a journal.

Chapter 2 follows the historic evolution of electronic journals, since their first publication at the beginning of the '80s: the electronic

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<sup>1</sup> Alice Keller, *Reviste electronice. Baze și perspective*, transl. Ioana Velica (Cluj-Napoca: Argonaut, 2006). The original work: Alice Keller, *Elektronische Zeitschriften. Grundlagen und Perspektiven* (Wiesbaden: Harrasowitz, 2005).

journal *Mental Workload* and the *BLEND* project, and continues with the first electronic journals published by the databases suppliers.

The *Quartet* and *Adonis* projects and the CD-ROM products of the American company UMI (United Microfilms International) show the process of electronic journals dissemination, using CD-ROMs, at the end of the '80s and the beginning of the '90s.

The distribution of electronic journals through the scientific networks in the first half of the '90s was based on the Internet, mainly on the *Listserv* service. At the same time, the author presents the great projects in order to emphasize the tendencies of development between 1992–1995.

The appearance of the Web and its development after 1996 had a huge impact on the distribution of electronic journals which, however, did not solve the problems of the crisis, instead led to the wider circulation of electronic copies.

Chapter 3 describes the present evolution and the projects regarding the electronic journals, classifying them in two groups: parallel electronic editions of printed journals and purely online periodicals. The analysis of the whole serials offer and the purely online journals, according to various domains, is highly interesting.

This chapter also presents information related to the digital object identifier system - *DOI*, the *CrossRef* initiative, the context sensitive interconnection and the *SFX* applications.

The innovative models for ensuring quality are also described, raising some problems regarding the dynamic journals, the serials with interactive visual contents, and the “E-only” patterns (electronic exclusively).

In Chapter 4, some problems related to electronic journals are presented from the users' perspective, the advantages and disadvantages of electronic journals being emphasized, as reflected in usage statistics.

The recognition and acceptance of E-only journals is herewith analysed by means of certain studies, though there are only a few surveys based on sound opinions of authors, editors or academic decision makers.

In Chapter 5, the author discusses the ways to access the electronic journals and presents the formats used, from the earliest ones to the most widely used today, distributing them in two categories: text formats (*ASCII-texts*, *PostScript*, *PDF*, *TEX*, and *LaTEX*, *SGML*, *HTML* and *XML*) and graphic formats (*TIFF*, *GIF*, and *JPEG*).

Chapter 6 investigates the bibliographic description of electronic journals and points out the impossibility to elaborate a complete catalogue of such periodical titles.

The *Directory of Electronic Journals, Newsletters and Academic Discussion Lists*, which ceased to be published in 2000, was highly significant. However, the registering tool of new publications – *NewJour* – is worth being mentioned, as a method to inform the subscribed users on the new e-journals and newsletters, service which is still delivered today.

Other catalogues offering access to knowledge are also referred to, the *Elektronische Zeitschriftenbibliothek* (EZB) of the University of Regensburg being the most up-to-date and complete one. This catalogue can be accessed from the site of our library, on the basis of an agreement made in 2000.

Business process in libraries is the topic discussed by Chapter 7, which deals with problems related to licensing and prices, means to keep the public informed on the subscribed titles, the importance of a help desk, aspects concerning training courses for users and the need of an *ERM* system (Electronic Resource Management).

The synthesis on page 165 is extremely useful, particularly for Romanian libraries, since it emphasizes the important aspects that must be discussed when making a licence agreement, considering the fact that we lack experience in this respect.

Chapter 8, focused on journal consortia, presents different consortium patterns functioning in Germany, Austria, Switzerland, and the Great Britain. The advantages of consortia and some price models are also described here.

The experience of these countries in organizing consortia was thoroughly discussed by Alice Keller in her book *Konsortien in Bibliotheken. Eine praktische Einführung* (Library Consortia. A Practical Introduction), translated into Romanian and converted in html format by librarians of the Lucian Blaga Central University Library (with the author's consent - see: <http://www.bcucuj.ro/consortii.html>). The first consortium involving the four central university libraries in Romania was based on this book (at the initiative of Doru Radosav, General Director of the Lucian Blaga Central University Library) as an organization set up by mutual agreement, which began to purchase databases in 2004 at the benefit of the institutions implied.

Chapter 9 presents aspects related to the production and characteristics of the journals market, the costs of printed and electronic

journals, and also the financial effort to digitize back issues of printed periodicals.

All these costs analysis lead to a thorough comparison between the printed and electronic journal formats, the author trying to find solutions concerning the crisis of journals caused by the ever increasing prices beginning with the '70s.

Chapter 10 is also referring to prices and discusses the formation of electronic journal prices, emphasizing the need of free access, as well as the new ways to fix the prices of subscriptions and licences.

Consisting of individual articles orders, the *pay per view* method to access the electronic journals is further discussed and also illustrated by the *EZUL* projects of the Bavarian State Library and the *TIB* projects in Hanover.

A very interesting solution is used in Germany, where two kinds of information suppliers and libraries have been assigned to cover the information needs, above regional level: the informational associations and virtual special libraries, respectively. Together with the EZB, since 2003, they have set up the *Vascoda* portal formed by the portals of 37 libraries, research and information institutes in Germany.

The long term archiving of electronic journals is thoroughly discussed in Chapter 11, with special emphasize on the current technical considerations: technology preservation, refreshing, migration, emulation, and conversion.

The pioneer projects in this process are also mentioned, with particular reference to the project of developing a long term electronic archiving deposit, implemented by the Dutch Royal Library in collaboration with the company IBM and the Elsevier Science Publishing House.

At the same time, this chapter introduces the reader to the greatest electronic journal retrospective digitizing projects, particularly to the *Jstor* project, projects in Europe – mainly in Germany and the Great Britain – and in the USA.

The text is, in my opinion, an introduction and a guide for those wishing to approach the critical informational field of electronic journals, as well as for the managers of institutions that store and archive informational collections (libraries, archives, universities, research centres etc.). In Romania, this book should be brought into attention of the decision makers on national level, who are responsible for subsidizing and validating projects related to cultural collections.

The reader wishing to find out what the concept of electronic journal implies and many of its related issues will benefit by a substantial introduction to the matter and will become familiar with the basic knowledge, through useful examples for each particular subject. At the same time, the book thoroughly investigates certain topics through statistical analyses and suggestive graphic representations, would anyone wish to go beyond the level of a beginner.

We recommend the book especially to librarians, library managers, archives and information centres, as well as to professors, PhD students, MA students, and final year undergraduate students in the above mentioned specialities.