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JISC Collections: Post-Cancellation Entitlement Registry Scoping Project

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Abstract

Since e-journals were first introduced into library collections, Post-Cancellation Access (PCA) rights and perpetual access have been a concern for librarians. Perpetual access concerns are being addressed by initiatives such as LOCKSS, CLOCKSS, PORTICO, among others. The same cannot be said for PCA rights. We haven't yet seen any commercial, institutional or community initiative and work directed at addressing the problem.

It is within this context that the JISC Collections: Post-Cancellation Entitlement Registry Scoping Project has been designed and implemented. It has explored in some detail what would happen if an institution wanted to ascertain from a publisher what its PCA rights were.

The findings of interest to publishers and libraries are detailed in this article.

Introduction

In the beginning, when the only option was to subscribe to a journal in print form, that was it! Post-cancellation access (PCA) rights didn't exist and what you did with your paper copy was up to you. But when electronic versions of journals were made available, things became more complicated.

At first the electronic version was seen merely as an accompaniment to the subscription, but in no time e-journals became more and more significant in library collections. The commercialisation of e-journals has brought with it electronic features, access types and subscription business models (mainly packages, licences and deals). In libraries, the introduction of e-journals to collections has been accompanied by a certain degree of scepticism from librarians. Some of the main concerns were and still are:

- The consistency of their collections
- Issues of perpetual and post-cancellation access
- Loss of control of their holdings

- New requirements in such areas as cataloguing and providing access for library users

Despite these concerns, some librarians recognised the advantages of e-collections, including the amount of space saved and the fact that they increased the number of available resources and gave users more independence. Whatever the librarians' approach, the truth is that integrating e-journals into library collections has overloaded library staff. Over the years, periodical librarians have learned to juggle the growing amount of work associated with acquisition and the demands of managing the journals within the limit of available resources, which have decreased continuously in terms of both staff and budgets.

A pending task seems to be the establishment of a process for recording PCA rights, the subject of this report. Of course, decisions regarding PCA rights have been (and are) made by most libraries, based on their priorities or on an ad-hoc basis. However, most libraries seem to lack clear and complete processes. Publishers are not doing any better. Their creativity and innovation are reflected in their subscription business models and in the products they make available, but not in the way in which they keep their records.

As mentioned above, since e-journals were first introduced into library collections, PCA rights and perpetual access have been a concern for librarians. Perpetual-access concerns are being addressed by initiatives such as LOCKSS, CLOCKSS, PORTICO, etc. The same cannot be said for PCA rights. We haven't yet seen any commercial, institutional or community initiative and work directed at addressing the problem.

It is within this context that the JISC¹ Collections (JC) Post-Cancellation Entitlement Registry Scoping Project has been designed and implemented. It has explored in some detail what would happen if an institution wanted to ascertain from a publisher what its PCA rights were.

We worked with two test publishers, identified in this report as Publishers A and B. We made use of feedback and collaboration from 19 libraries. We ran a survey on the current practices of PCA entitlement in the libraries, we requested data for all the PCA entitlement for most of the participating libraries and we designed two verification workflows and drafted a verification agreement. In addition, we prepared and standardised the data, sent it to the libraries for verification and carried out the subsequent follow-up. Finally, we ran two workshops, one in London and one in Edinburgh, in association with EDINA.² Twenty library representatives from 19 universities from the NESLi2 (National Electronic Site Licence Initiative) and SHEDL (Scottish Higher Education Digital Library Consortium) members participated. This scoping project is the first documented experiment regarding PCA entitlement in the UK.

Definition

Post-cancellation access entitlements specify the conditions that allow on-going access to the journal volumes a subscriber has paid for. They are "...most commonly associated with e-journal licence clauses designed to provide assurance of continued access to subscribed material in certain circumstances, including post-cancellation...."³

Since 2000, post-cancellation access rights have been included in most NESLi2 agreements. The clauses are not standard but vary from publisher

to publisher and have also changed over the years. This diversity means that interpreting the clauses requires time and effort and can be seen as a contributing factor in libraries' lack of understanding of their PCA rights. As an example, a number of clauses specifying post-cancellation access rights are presented below.

- Access to all licensed content published during subscribed-to years only. Access to the rolling archives covering non-subscribed-to years will be lost after termination. However, since 2007 institutions have been accruing perpetual access, i.e. 2007 to 2010, to which access would be retained after termination. **IOP NESLi2 2011-2012**
- Access after termination provisions would only apply if an institution cancelled their ScienceDirect access completely. At this point, access to subscribed titles, covering the period for which they were subscribed, would be available via ScienceDirect for an agreed access fee. **Elsevier, NESLi2 2012**
- Post-termination access, via SAGE Journals Online, is given to all titles in the licensed material for the subscribed volume (rather than to just 'subscribed' titles). There is no post-termination access to the additional back-file material (to 1999) unless a full-rate subscription was taken for those years. **Sage, NESLi2, 2012**
- Access after Termination in the NESLi2 Licence: Post-termination access is granted to T&F subscribed journals only (whether print plus online or online-only), starting from the point when your institution first started subscribing to the title. **Taylor and Francis, NESLi2, 2012**
- As of January 2007, post-termination access is available to content subscribed to during the 'supply period' (and to any other periods granted to the institution under previous licences as will be outlined in your NESLi2 licence agreement) but not to the back-files that accompanied that content (the four-year rolling archive referred to in Section 7)... NPG would be willing to offer an incentive

offer on the permanent post-cancellation rights to these 4 years at the time of adding a new title so these can be added as firm years in the catalogue. This has not been taken forward further at this point. We shall consult with institutions at a later date on this matter. **Nature, NESLi2, 2012**

Why is Post-Cancellation Access Important for Libraries?

The libraries consulted gave the following reasons why PCA is important:

- Libraries must have something tangible to show for the years they subscribe to the big deals or to an individual title.
- Libraries have a responsibility to demonstrate the value of the resources they pay to access. Therefore, maintaining access to the additional value of the subscribed content, for the years the big deal was taken, is the minimum required for them to be demonstrating good stewardship.
- Libraries need to have firm control of their holdings in order to take confident acquisition and stock-management decisions (i.e. weeding the paper collections) or if they want to participate in national initiatives such as the UK Research Reserve (UKRR).
- Libraries need to be prepared for any change that may occur in publishing patterns that could affect the consistency of their collections e.g. the current publishing trend seems to be toward discontinuing print copies, leaving online as the only version available for subscription.
- Libraries need to be able to respond to audit requests, demonstrating understanding of what has been paid for and what has been received (or entitled) in return.

Why an Entitlement Registry?

The proposed Post-Cancellation Entitlement Registry (ER) would provide authoritative records of entitlement, which will be increasingly important if as a result of the economic situa-

tion, libraries cancel journal deals and when the journals of societies and professional bodies (and their back-files) move from one publisher to another.

An authoritative record of entitlement would have the benefit of:

- Saving libraries time and duplicated effort.
- Providing an authoritative record and proof of a library's entitlement. This may be used to authorise access to archival runs of journals, whether that content is held on a publisher's platform or in a preservation solution such as Portico.
- Providing access to an authoritative record to support a move from print+electronic to electronic only.
- Providing a data source for Knowledge Bases or a shared UK Knowledge Base.
- Developing a methodology for quality assurance and verification of entitlement records.
- Once operational, a central Entitlement Registry should also benefit publishers, as it should simplify library-publisher interaction.

Current Practices Regarding Post-Cancellation Access Rights in Libraries

As one of our first activities, we ran an exploratory survey to enquire about the libraries' current practices in recording PCA entitlement. We asked: when they verified their PCA entitlement; how the entitlement information was stored locally; and which sources of information they used to find out their entitlements and PCA rights. We sent these questions by email to Lis-Nesli-Reps and SHEDL mailing lists.

In response, libraries gave different situations in which they implemented PCA rights management:

- *As part of the subscription or renewal process*

At the moment of evaluating whether or not to move to an online-only subscription (if there is not perpetual [long-term] access, the

subscription will remain in print or in print+online).

When a library is subscribing or renewing a deal, it gets the lists of subscribed titles from the publisher, although these are checked only if time and resources are available.

- *As part of the cancellation process*

When a library cancels or loses access to a single title for any reason, it will check if it has PCA.

When a library cancels or changes a deal, it will if possible record PCA entitlement for the titles to which it is losing access. In most cases, the library staff will assume that they keep access and verify PCA for specific titles on an ad-hoc basis.

- *As part of the general management of the collection*

When a title moves between publishers (information about this movement is found on publisher websites or on mailing lists, such as the TRANSFER mailing list).

When a library is managing its collection, e.g., weeding the printed copies.

When there is a specific issue or on an ad-hoc basis.

PCA rights are recorded locally:

- On an ERM system, where one has been implemented
- In spread-sheets
- In files, where a list of subscribed titles is filed with a copy of the licence.

The sources of information used by libraries are:

- *Regarding entitlement holdings*

Libraries receive entitlement information from the publisher or agent. When possible, they check this information with their own records, though some simply assume that the information provided by the publishers is correct.

Libraries handle their own investigations title by title (especially in the case of single titles).

- *Regarding PCA rights*

Libraries look for perpetual-access information in LOCKSS, PEPRS, Portico, publishers' websites and licences (some publishers include specific information about PCA rights in their licences, though in most cases the wording is vague).

Post-cancellation Access Rights Data Fields: Lack of Standardization

There are no specific standards for PCA rights. For this reason, as part of the project, we have elaborated a data field list, whose purpose is to group together all possible data that an ER would need to contain. To prepare this list, we consulted existing serials standards (KBART, ONIX for Serials, Project Transfer) and continuing access services (Portico).

The data categories are:

- Journal-descriptive metadata
- Entitlement metadata
- Access-management metadata
- Publisher metadata
- Service provider metadata
- Institution metadata
- Verification metadata

This list was sent to the participating publishers to serve as a guide as to which data fields they should provide if at all possible.

Libraries were not involved in the design of the data field list.

Publisher Record-Keeping: Need for Standardization

A participation agreement was signed with Publishers A and B, who agreed to provide PCA data for all HE NESLI2 members (up to 160). Before providing the bulk data, both publishers ran trials in which they produced data for 8 libraries (Publisher A) and 17 libraries (Publisher B).

The provision of this data turned out to be a time-consuming and complicated task. Some of the problems the publishers encountered were:

- They had a number of internal record systems: publication information, accounts information and subscription information were held in different systems, sometimes including Excel spread-sheets.
- These various record systems were often disconnected and manual work was necessary to extract the data.
- Regarding entitlement start and end dates: Publisher B split entitlement right into different rows according to year, so that for an entitlement lasting from 2006 to 2010 they provided five rows of data. In the case of Publisher A, the entitlement dates were nearly impossible to decipher. Explanations from the publishers have not yet resolved all ambiguities.
- In most cases, entitlement data could be provided only 2005 forward.

For these reasons, JC had to standardise the data provided by the publishers before sending it to the libraries. When possible, files separated by libraries were merged and entitlement dates were grouped. In the case of Publisher A, EDINA helped in creating human-readable files.

The publishers started providing the data in October 2011. The data fields provided were:

Publisher A

- Journal-descriptive metadata: Publisher's Code, Title, ISSN, EISSN, URL, Alternate URL, Frequency, First Info, First Year, First Month, First Volume, First Issue, Last Info, Last Year, Last Month, Last Volume, Last Issue
- Institution-related metadata: Account Number, Institution Name

- Entitlement metadata: Title, ISSN, EISSN, Start Year, End Year, URL

Publisher B

- Journal-descriptive metadata: Journal Code, Current Title, Print ISSN, Online ISSN, Frequency (2011), Primary Title, Old EISSN, Old ISSNs, Last Year of Title Variant; Month OA Option Started; Year OA Option Started; Month OA Stopped; Year OA Option Stopped
- Publisher-related metadata: Former Publisher, Transferred?, Year of First Publication by Publisher B (where known), Last Year of Publication, Publisher B Published/Ceased/Moved,
- Entitlement metadata: Subscription Code, Pack?, Sub Start Year, Sub End Year
- Institution-related metadata: University, Ringgold

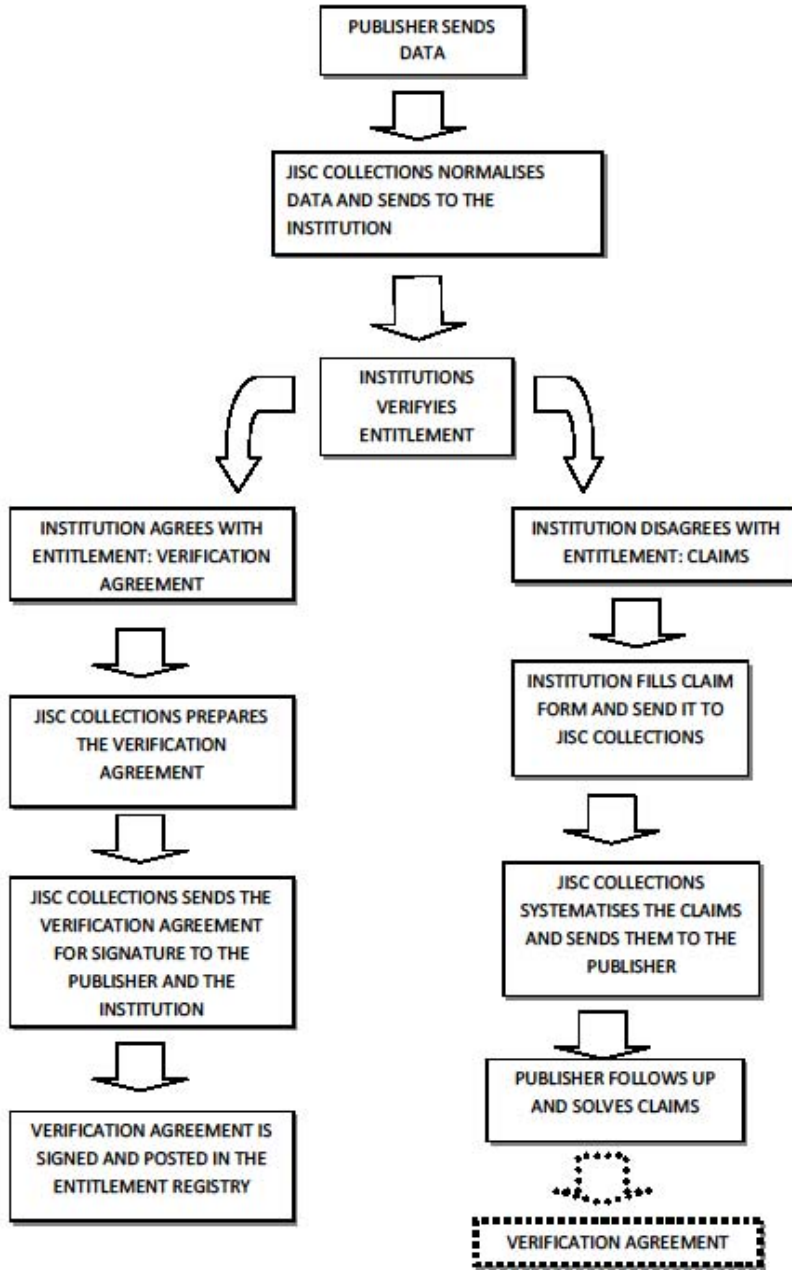
Verification

One of the aims of the ER scoping project was to identify workflows and costs for the verification process. Our assumption was that the data in the ER needed to be verified in order to produce a reliable source of information and the project was designed to include a verification phase.

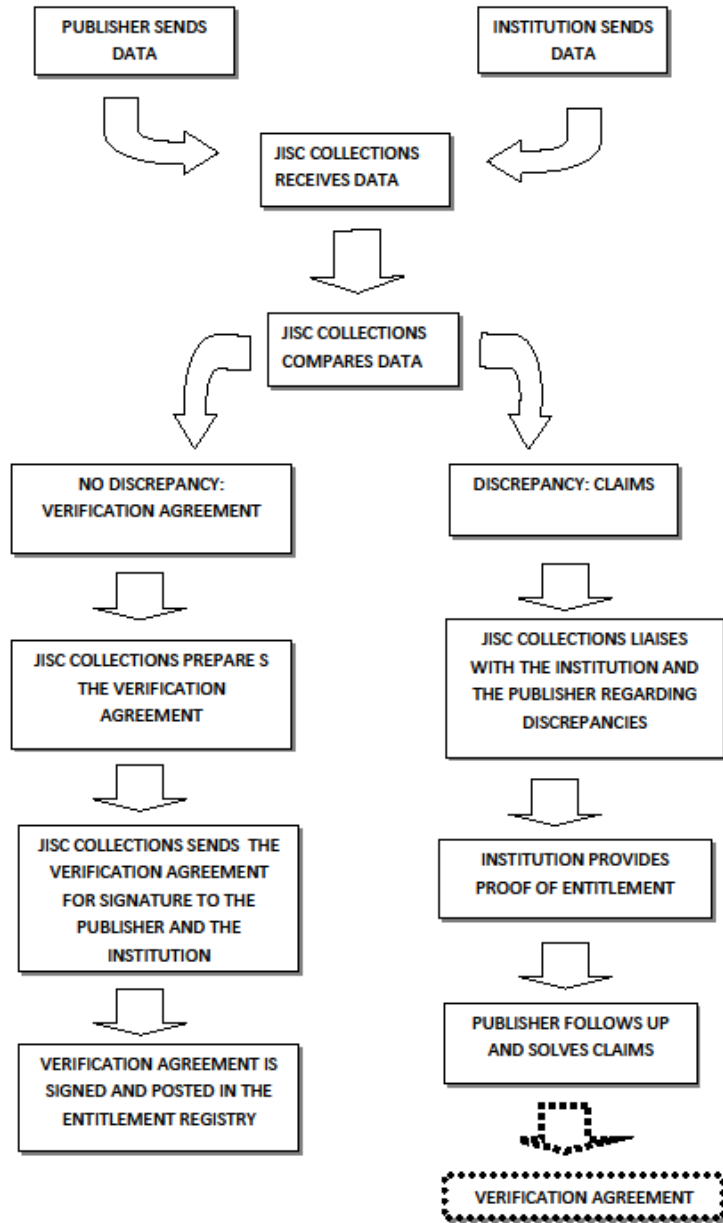
Verification workflows

After the data was standardised it was sent to the libraries to be verified against their own records. We suggested two possible verification workflows, which we called scenario A and scenario B (see figures below). The difference between the two was who was doing the verification. In scenario A, the work is carried out by the libraries after receiving the standardised data from JC. In B, JC does the verification after receiving the data from the publishers and the institution. Of the 18 libraries consulted, 17 chose to work with scenario A and 1 with B.

VERIFICATION: SCENARIO A



VERIFICATION: SCENARIO B



Verification from the libraries' perspective

Ten libraries reported back on the verification (2 with data from Publisher A; 8 from Publisher B). The following is a summary of their comments and observations:

- All the libraries claim to have PCA rights prior to 2005.
- Some libraries used their subscription agent's records. However these records couldn't provide data prior to 2007.
- One library, created by the merger of several others, didn't hold records for individual institutions prior to the merger.

- Some cancelled titles were found to be in the lists as current subscriptions.
- A small number of titles couldn't be found in the libraries' subscription records.
- In the case of ceased and transfer titles the libraries were unsure where to go for access.
- Some libraries claimed to have entitlement to more titles than appeared in the data provided by the publisher. There were two extreme cases of libraries that received a very short entitlement list (one with 5 and another with 8 titles), when they claimed to have far more entitlements.
- One library said that the verification would require far too much effort because of their complex structure (they have 103 sub-libraries). They would need delivery addresses for every year of every journal in order to verify.
- One library said the verification would require an unjustifiable amount of time and wouldn't have sufficient benefit.

Verification from the publishers' experience

We sent back to the publishers the data verified by the libraries with their comments and corrections. The publishers followed up and solved most of the queries, but there are still outstanding replies concerning a few libraries. Some of the results of the verification exercise for the publishers were:

- They identified some anomalies in the way they process and report data.
- One publisher affirmed that in some cases it can no longer go back and verify pre-2005 entitlements. If an institution cancels a current subscription and therefore loses the historical entitlement, the publisher always honours claims for the period 1997-2005. In cases such as this, they either take the libraries' record and update their own, or update all the records on the assumption that if a library held a subscription in 2005 it also held it in 1997.⁴

Verification outcome

The experience of both publishers and libraries during the verification workflows helped us to identify an important problem.

To recap, when the data received from the tester publishers was standardised and sent to the participating libraries for verification, not all the libraries could carry out the verification of the publishers' data. This was mainly because it was a costly exercise, but some libraries couldn't do it because the lists provided included only a few titles. Others couldn't rely on their own records. From the verification that *was* carried out, discrepancies occurred in at least 50% of the titles.

The problem that emerges, therefore, is that, on the one hand, the verification process is time-consuming for libraries but, on the other hand, it has been revealed that the data *needs* to be verified.

This problem is crucial because the approach we take will directly affect the feasibility and costs of the proposed ER. This was the subject of discussion during the workshops that were organised in London and Edinburgh.

A summary of the outcomes is:

Libraries are convinced that PCA data needs to be verified. Unverified data will be considered meaningless and the ER that contains it will be another source of conflicting information.

The main cost of the ER will be time. Library time, from both experienced and inexperienced staff, will be particularly sought after at the first stage of data population. Lots of time-consuming manual intervention will be necessary. In general, libraries are faced with a dilemma. On the one hand most of them will find it difficult to provide the necessary resources to perform each task and on the other they recognise that costs will increase more and more, as the problem will only worsen if it is not tackled soon.

It is interesting to note that today, if a library's entitlement is not clarified, it will face additional costs (related to print-subscription management,

such as the provision of space and the checking-in of publications). In addition, the main value of the ER will be found in the time- and cost-saving that it will represent, as much as in the improved quality of the libraries' holdings for end users.

Some suggestions for reducing costs are:

- To concentrate primarily on the most important publishers
- To work in partnership with subscription agents⁵
- To divide the verification process between the libraries (community work)

Libraries who performed the verification reported that they felt isolated. Neither JC nor EDINA was able to help them effectively, since the libraries themselves were the only ones with access to and understanding of their data. It has, however, been pointed out that the national framework that JC gives to libraries is positive.

As mentioned above, the lack of standardisation seems to undermine the publishers' capacity to provide data and the libraries' capacity to verify it. However, the effectiveness of a standard lies in its being adopted consistently; and getting publishers to adopt a standard approach is recognised as an uphill task. However, participating publishers appear to have appreciated the opportunity they have had to identify problems in their systems and subsequently to have taken measures to solve them.

Furthermore, flexibility seems to be a key point when approaching the verification of PCA entitlement. Libraries need to have the choice of different verification workflows. It seems that both proposed scenarios could work, as they can be adapted to the different capacities of the libraries. However, libraries need to be given more guidance on how to carry out the verification and on potential sources of information.

Current or Historical Data?

Another issue encountered during the verification phase was: publishers participating in the scoping project were unable to supply consistent data before 2005 because their current fulfilment

systems do not provide this information. Some participating libraries have provided data for as far back as 1997.

This issue was one of the subjects discussed during the workshops, in which we asked the following questions:

- How far back do participants think data in the Entitlement Registry should go (should it include current or/and historical data)?
- If only current data, what should be done with the historical data?
- Is there any other kind of data that might be useful and less demanding in time and effort: for example, title lists of old deals?
- How can the recording of entitlements be done in a sustainable way?

Going back to the past is challenging in itself, but when talking about PCA entitlement the task seems even harder, since libraries and publishers are confronted with their own limitations. There is also a common belief that it can only get harder for them to carry out this task if we don't take action now. To capture old data will involve a series of one-off exercises, which can be done centrally (crowd-sourced), and thus avoid a duplicating of effort among libraries.

What is clear is that gathering historical data will be useful only if it is accurate. A suitable strategy will also need an established starting point. Although the starting point will vary from publisher to publisher, some of our proposals are:

- The most recent year of the back-files package
- The first year when the PCA clause was included in the NESLI agreement
- 2005, as being the main year from which our sample publishers were able to provide data
- The current year⁶, and then, over time, work backwards

Furthermore, for libraries the importance of having PCA after cancellation could be influenced

by the journal subject: with medicine, for example, it is crucial to be up to date; with philosophy perhaps less so.

Reconstruction of past entitlement will require working with unstructured data in different formats (old invoices, paper title lists, etc.). For this reason, to perform this task, libraries will need other data, such as:

- An authoritative list of title transfers and title changes
- A list of publishers' mergers and acquisitions
- Licensing information. A link to the licence comparison tool ELCAT <http://www.jisc-collections.ac.uk/News/elcat-beta/> could play a useful role.

Key Findings from the Entitlement Registry Scoping Study

The study found evidence that the approaches, strategies and capacity regarding PCA entitlement varied considerably among UK HEIs and publishers. While this could be attributed to the relatively low level of activity in this area, it raises the issue of whether or not a more centralised and streamlined approach would help improve the process and encourage publishers and libraries to invest resources.

Findings also included:

- Libraries would be ready to explore a community work approach.
- Libraries are aware of the problems regarding their PCA entitlements and will appreciate guidance and help to define a suitable strategy when dealing with them.
- Libraries' approaches to dealing with PCA are and will be influenced by their current collection-management strategies.
- Libraries are aware of the costs involved in the clarification of their PCA entitlements and not all of them are ready to face these costs.

- If nothing is done, the current problems over PCA entitlement will only get worse.
- Libraries expect JC to play a role in the coordination and provision of old data.
- Publishers know that their systems are failing to provide accurate information.

Recommendations

Gathering of data

- Libraries should be involved in the definition of the required fields.

Standardization and verification

- These two processes should be automated. Partnership with EDINA is recommended.
- Libraries and publishers should be encouraged to adopt good practices in their record-keeping.

Workflows

- The Entitlement Registry will need to be designed in the context of current workflows in the libraries. For example, it might be possible to use the Entitlement Registry to assist with the renewal/cancellation process.
- It will not be possible to have only one strategy. The implementation of the ER will require a set of strategies.
- Collaboration with subscription agents should be explored in more depth.
- More detail about PCA entitlement should be incorporated into the licences.
- Incorporation of PCA entitlement data in tools such as Knowledge Base+ (KB+)7 should be explored.

Costs

- Library management and staff should be informed about the problems of their current PCA practices and encouraged to consider suitable strategies to start minimising the consequences.

Endnotes

¹ <http://www.jisc-collections.ac.uk/>

² The Entitlement Registry Scoping Project was closely aligned with a separate and parallel strand of activity (PECAN 2) led by EDINA (http://edina.ac.uk/projects/pecan2_summary.html).

³ T. Morrow, N. Beagrie, M. Jones and J. Chruszcz, *A Comparative Study of e-Journal Archiving Solutions; a JISC funded investigation. Final Report, May 2008*, accessed June 13, 2012, <http://www.jisc-collections.ac.uk/Reports/e-journal-archiving-comparative-study/>

⁴ Three of the libraries participating in the scoping study were affected by this policy. Two were really pleased with the outcome, the third expressed concern about some titles dating back further for which he was sure he should have access.

⁵ As part of the scoping project we explored the possibility of obtaining the entitlement data from one subscription agent and held various meetings and exchanges of information with them. In the end, however, the agent decided not to provide the data in their possession.

⁶ As part of the scoping study we asked two publishers to participate in the project by providing the 2012 holdings for their NESLI2 subscribers. Unfortunately neither publisher signed up to our proposal. No explanations were given.

⁷ Over the course of 2011-2012, HEFCE will be investing £600,000 in the creation of a shared service knowledge base for UK academic libraries to support the management of e-resources by the UK academic community. JISC Collections has been appointed by HEFCE and JISC to lead this work, drawing on its own knowledge and experience in the field of licensing, negotiation and electronic resource management.

(<http://www.jisc-collections.ac.uk/KnowledgeBasePlus/>)