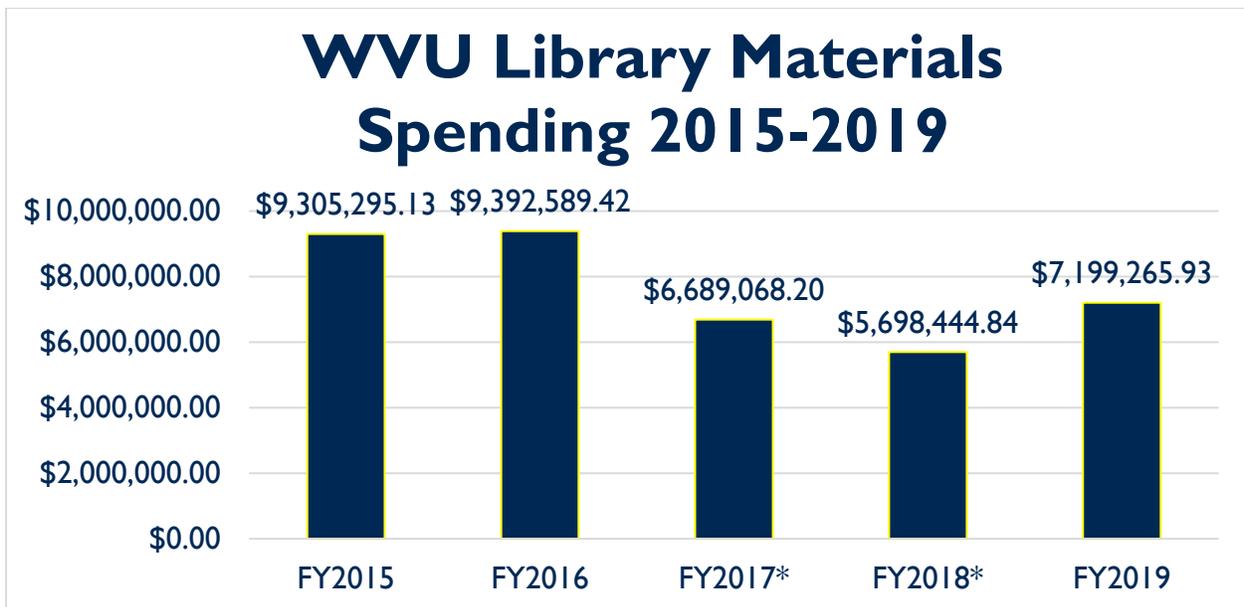


Message to Senate Library Committee

Regarding Journal Cuts

In lieu of our delayed meeting, I wanted to send this preliminary information about the journal cuts that you all are noticing. I'm happy to discuss further by email or in person at our meeting later this month.

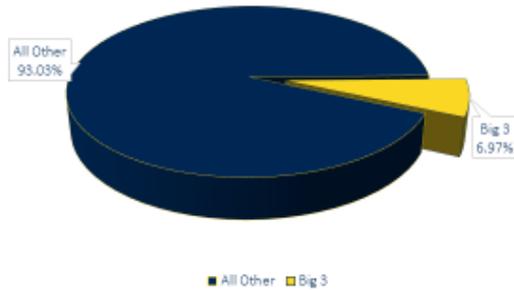
The WVU Libraries experienced severe budget cuts from 2016-2018. The numbers below represent our spending changes based on the budget reduction. Our budget was cut by \$1 million in 2017 and another \$1/2 million in 2018. You will note though that our spending reduced more dramatically than that budget cut. The reason is that we had grown to be dependent on our spending reserves (reserve funds) to cover inflationary costs that we had been experiencing over the years. (We had a pot of money in reserves that we used to cushion the increasing costs even though our budget was not increasing.) However, when our budget was cut we also received a freeze on any spending out of our reserves. There were legitimate reasons campus administration froze these assets and that freeze was not directed only at the library, but was in fact felt in all of the colleges as well.



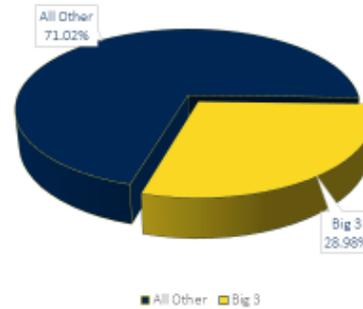
As we began tackling how to manage these cuts, we recognized that we would have to look at our large journal packages. Our “big three” (symbolized in yellow below) journal packages were with Wiley, Springer, and Elsevier. Before our cuts, this illustrates how the journal bundles affected us. As you can see, the journal packages accounted for nearly 30% of our budget even though they only supplied 7% of our titles, and thus could not be ignored.

Factors in walking away

WVU Libraries eJournals



WVU Materials Spending Pre-unbundling



In 2017 we “unbundled” our Wiley subscription. This means, we cancelled our subscription to the full package of titles and simply began subscribing to individual titles at list price per title. This meant that each item we bought was more expensive, giving us even less buying power – but the change was necessary because we could not afford the full package.

In 2018, as our other journal package multi-year contracts were coming to an end (Elsevier and Springer), we first negotiated for lower costs for those packages. When that was unsuccessful we unbundled them as well. This included canceling our subscriptions to the full packages that we could no longer afford and buying individual titles at list price.

Determining what to keep

We purchased a report that provided us with data about most of our Elsevier, Wiley and Springer titles including the following data from each journal

- Number of downloads by WVU users
- Number of published articles by WVU authors
- Number of times WVU authors cited the journal in their publications

We used this data to rank the journals from highest to lowest in terms of which to keep. We could not afford to keep as many as we consider to be heavily used by campus. Additionally we had to work to ensure some representation across disciplines – so the rank involved some human intervention and finessing. We are aware that we are not retaining as much as faculty want us to, but we simply do not have the funds to do so.

More money in 2019

We are currently in the midst of fiscal year 2019 and you will see from the first figure that our budget went up this year. That increase has all been spent on paying off our 2018 Elsevier bill that we could not afford to pay off during the previous fiscal year. We are happy to have this increase moving forward, but it has given us no extra buying power in 2019.

You will also recall that our reserve funds cushioned inflationary costs we experienced over the years. We can no longer use reserve funds in that manner. This means that we will continue to experience inflationary costs every year (averaging 3-6%) and that those costs will directly affect our budget. Thus, next year (FY 2020) we will have an extra \$1.2 million in to spend on materials – but some of that will be eaten up by inflationary costs before anything new is purchased.

Additionally, we have not been buying books in a regular manner since these budget challenges hit. Thus, we are committed to investing some of our extra buying power towards books, which will mean even less toward purchasing new or recently cut journals.

How we are Moving Forward

We used data to make the cuts and data will continue to influence our purchasing moving forward. The main factor that will influence re-subscribing to a journal is Interlibrary Loan usage. Other factors that may have sway in decision-making are stories of particular challenges faculty may be facing with high consequence. These stories, of course, will be more challenging to work with but we are open to the conversation and interested in finding solutions. What we would like to avoid is making deals on individual titles with colleges providing funding as that may seem like an easy short term fix, but becomes very cumbersome to manage over the long term. Additionally, colleges may not realize the commitment they are making to yearly inflationary costs.

What can you do?

Here are 3 ways that you can help us:

1. [Use interlibrary loan](#) to obtain articles to which we do not subscribe. This is how we will know that you need items we don't subscribe to. Roughly 72% of the journal articles we borrow are received within 10 hours of the request (that is an average so some are faster and some are slower). Harder to find materials (the remaining 28% of requests) take longer. We now have staff working in interlibrary loan seven days a week so requests made over a weekend can be processed immediately.
2. Talk to your [college/departmental library liaison](#). This is how we will gather stories that reveal underlying issues that the data does not provide. Our librarians may also be able to share newer tactics for getting the material you need.
3. Engage with us in a conversation about the state of scholarly publishing. While the Libraries purchase materials on behalf of the University, the problem of unsustainable materials costs is not one that we can solve alone. We are eager to talk with you and develop strategies for leveraging our combined resources to address this challenge from multiple angles.

We are not alone

We had to face the harsh reality of the unsustainable journal subscription costs in a difficult and painful way because of recent campus cuts. But I am personally convinced this is a reality that would have been faced eventually. There is a long list of campuses cancelling these journal packages because they are simply unsustainable. It has become an international challenge. So much so that [the SPARC organization that we belong to is tracking these cancellations](#).

The breaking news just yesterday is that the [entire University of California System has cancelled its subscription to the Elsevier journal bundle](#) because Elsevier would not negotiate in a sustainable manner. The US library community sees this as a victory because this might be an entity with large enough buying power to begin to get traction in having Elsevier come to the table in changing their pricing methods and because the action had the broad support of faculty on all campuses.

Another article from today shows some [changes in practice the Springer/Nature publisher is making in providing open access to this content](#). The entire “scholarly communication” issue is fluid, is being discussed daily in different venues, and is one we are tracking as closely as possible to make decisions that are in the best interest of this campus.

So, while past challenges around budget cuts like these have often focused on lobbying campus administration for more funding for the libraries, it is simply not the best course of action given the surrounding environment. This is the reason Ian Harmon, our Scholarly Communications librarian is joining me at the meeting to continue discussions around how we continue to engage our campus community in the challenges we are facing. We look forward to talking further then.

Karen Diaz, Dean

3/1/19