Publication Trends in Library Reserves: A Quantitative Content Analysis

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Publication Trends in Library Reserves: A Quantitative Content Analysis

By Denise Dimsdale

Introduction

The purpose of this study is to investigate the peer-reviewed literature on library reserves in post-secondary institutions and to identify publication trends over time. The study analyzes library literature in a systematic way to provide statistical insight into publishing trends, including publication frequency and topic shifts about library reserves. Investigating such trends provides information about how culture has changed over time and provides a reference point for future studies.

This study defines library reserves as content set aside or gathered in conjunction with the library for a particular course offered at a post-secondary institution. Library reserves content exists in a variety of formats, including physical copies of textbooks, digital book excerpts, DVDs, persistent links, and many other formats or file types. The purpose of library reserves is to ensure that students are able to access the resources needed for the classes they are taking. Library reserves services in the United States have a long history documented as far back as the 1870s (Austin 2004). Over the years, the service has persisted and grown. Today, most academic libraries consider library reserves to be one of their core services (Goodson and Frederiksen 2011).

Although some historical surveys about library reserves have been written, no meta-analysis or other empirical studies have been conducted concerning publication trends or topic shifts over time about library reserves. This study is unique in that it uses quantitative content analysis to reveal trends in library reserves publications. Using the three primary library science databases—Library and Information Science Abstracts (LISA); Library, Information Science & Technology Abstracts (LISTA); and Library Literature & Information Science Index (LLI)—this study aims to answer the following questions: What are the literature trends about library reserves over time? How have topics in the literature changed over time? What are the most frequent topics? Which journals publish the most on these topics?

This study discovered that library reserves-related topics appear slowly in the early literature and begin to drop off in frequency in 2008. Through content analysis, seven of the most frequent subtopics within library reserves were identified: electronic reserves, implementation, physical reserves, evaluation, E-Reserves software, copyright, and learning management systems.

Literature Review

Although previous publications about library reserves do not address publication trends, a few publications of note do provide library reserves surveys that include historical information. Loring (1997) chronologically highlights the way in which legal matters and technology unfold and influence guidelines and policy over the course of thirty years. He traces the origins of the struggle between library reserves and copyright back to the Copyright Act of 1976 and creation of the Classroom Guidelines. Although the Classroom Guidelines were not part of legislation, they were created...
to provide guidance on the application of fair use in the classroom. Loring points out that the application of the Classroom Guidelines for library reserves was problematic and led to restrictive interpretations of fair use. Furthermore, fear generated through various lawsuits led to many overly-conservative practices within library reserves. In 1982, the American Library Association (ALA) published the Model Policy Concerning College and University Photocopying for Classroom, Research and Library Reserve Use (the “Model Policy”). According to Loring (1997), this policy was not as effective as it could have been because it was published after many of these restrictive interpretations had already been established. Loring predicts that a successful future for electronic reserves will require clear guidelines that are quickly established. Eighteen years after the publication of this prediction, however, clear guidelines for the application of fair use in library reserves have yet to be established.

Austin (2004) describes the state of library reserves from their origins until around 2004. Austin confirms Loring’s report of conservative practices but also describes the slow emergence of some liberal approaches to library reserves around the time of the ALA’s publication of the Model Policy. Austin goes on to describe the 1990s as a time of experimentation in electronic reserves. He includes information about the electronic reserves subgroup of the Conference on Fair Use (CONFU). It is worth noting that this subgroup was in place for nearly four years, from 1994 to 1998. The group managed to draft some guidelines for electronic reserves, but the debate over the application of fair use in electronic reserves was so contentious that CONFU never endorsed the guidelines that were drafted. Austin goes on to discuss further legislation, but ultimately, his idea for a successful library reserves service in the future includes flexible licensing options.

Neither Loring (1997) nor Austin (2004) predicts the vast technological changes or the flexible publishing options that have emerged more recently. However, New Approaches to E-Reserve (Cheung, Thomas, & Patrick 2010) surveys the evolution of electronic reserves and discusses much of the technology that is used today, including integrated library systems, classroom management systems, bibliographic software, and linking. Although predictions about the future of library reserves are not spelled out, issues related to changes in users, culture, teaching, and technology are addressed. Furthermore, the book touches on open-access publishing and Creative Commons licenses. Though issues of copyright are not ignored, the book focuses more on the best uses of available technologies.

All three of the aforementioned sources recognize the struggle between emerging technologies, content needs, and legal concerns. This struggle remains evident today in the case of Cambridge University Press et al v. Patton et al, which began in 2008 and is still ongoing. This case focuses on the use of digitized book excerpts and questions the applicability of fair use in library reserves (Smith 2014).

Although historical surveys provide information about the environment of library reserves over time, they do not provide quantitative evidence about the topics that are being included or omitted in the literature. This study provides quantitative evidence about topics and other publication trends in the library reserves literature. Providing such evidence reveals additional insights into the state of library reserves and publication information about library reserves. In order to address publication trends in the library reserves literature, it is necessary to consult the primary research databases for the discipline. Though many resources exist for the field of library science, the discipline has three primary databases: Library Literature & Information Science Index (LLI); Library; Information Science & Technology Abstracts (LISTA); and Library & Information Science Abstracts (LISA). All three of these
databases provide broad coverage with indexing and abstracts for hundreds of journals related to library science. These three databases are also the core resources for peer-reviewed literature in the discipline. In terms of historical coverage, a database search in LISA reveals coverage as far back as 1966. LISTA provides coverage as far back as 1970 (EBSCOhost 2014), and LLI provides coverage as far back as 1980 (EBSCOhost 2015). Overall, these three databases provide for the primary coverage of the peer-reviewed literature and include significant historical coverage for the discipline.

**Methodology**

The subject term searches contained in table 1 were performed in the databases LISA, LISTA, and LLI.

The following inclusion and exclusion criteria were applied when selecting from the search results:

- Inclusion criteria: academic libraries, English language, peer reviewed journal articles, and a major theme within the article relevant to course reserves as defined in this study.
- Exclusion criteria: book reviews, interviews, bibliographies, editorials, general reader’s advisory articles, or any article not meeting the subject inclusion criteria.

The search results which met the inclusion criteria were then exported to Endnote. Duplicates were removed. References and abstracts meeting the criteria were then imported into NVivo.

Pre-determined topics were not used in the coding process. Rather, the abstract of each article was analyzed and coded with a descriptor or several descriptors that best represented the topical focus of the article. The title of each article was also consulted during the coding process. Categories emerged during the first round of coding. The author reviewed the coded content a total of three times to ensure category consistency. For ten of the articles, the full-text of the article was consulted because the abstract was nonexistent or did not sufficiently describe the article. This process yielded a total of 212 articles, 18 subtopic descriptors, and 610 instances of subtopic descriptor tags.

<p>| Table 1 |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Search strategies</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>LISA via Proquest</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>LISTA via EBSCO</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>LLI via EBSCO</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Limitations

The scope of this study is limited to peer-reviewed literature in the databases LISA, LISTA, and LLI. Although these are primary databases for the discipline, relevant content outside these databases and the library discipline could yield a more holistic perspective. For practicality, much of the time, only the abstract was consulted in the content analysis. A more thorough content analysis could be performed using the full text of all documents.

Results and Discussion

Few articles meeting the criteria of the study were discovered in the early years of the literature. Prior to 1993, only eight articles meeting the study criteria were discovered. Although the first article appears in 1974, there are gaps that show no articles meeting the criteria from 1976 to 1984 and from 1989 to 1992. Publications are present in the literature from 1993 onward. The number of articles published and the frequency and range of topics introduced influence one another. The frequency count for subtopics is expected to increase when there is an increase in the number of articles published. Likewise, if there are few articles published, then it is likely that few topics will be introduced into the literature.

Thus, it is helpful to keep in mind the number of articles that are being analyzed at any given time. The frequency count of articles meeting the criteria of the study published by year is represented in figure 1.

A likely possibility for the lack of coverage in the early literature is that journals focusing on this topic came into publication much later. For instance, the *Journal of Interlibrary Loan and Information Supply* began publication in 1990. The journal changed names twice to eventually become the *Journal of Interlibrary Loan, Document Delivery, and Electronic Reserve* in 2004 (USF Library Catalog 2014). The *Journal of Access Services* did not begin publication until 2002 (USF Library Catalog 2014). Coverage for the *Journal of Academic Librarianship* begins in LISTA in 1975 (EBSCOhost 2014), which is the same year that the journal began publication. However, for the thirty-nine years of LISTA coverage for this journal, only nine articles meeting the criteria for this study were discovered. Thus, even some of the journals that make the top five list for publications about library reserves do not publish a large percentage of articles on the topic. Overall, the total number of published articles meeting the study criteria peaks in 2006 and 2007 and then begins to drop off. This drop in publication may coincide with a drop in library reserves services,
possibly because improvements in technologies, such as learning management systems, offer alternatives to library e-reserves (Goodson and Frederiksen 2011). Another possibility for the decline beginning in 2008 may be related to the uncertainty in the copyright case of Cambridge University Press et al v. Patton et al, which also began in 2008.

The 212 articles included in this study were published in forty-eight unique journal titles. The Journal of Interlibrary Loan, Document Delivery and Electronic Reserves published 45.75 percent of the articles. The top five journals based on the number of articles published meeting the criteria of this study are identified in table 2.

Eighteen subtopic descriptors are identified in this study, and the seven most frequently tagged, with the exception of the “other” category, are listed by frequency in table 3. The frequency number is the number of instances of tagging for the identified subtopic. The percent is calculated by dividing the frequency number for the identified subtopic by 610, which is the total number of instances of tagging for all subtopics. The “other” category (not included in table 3) does not represent a specific topic area but rather a variety of more unique topic areas whose individual frequency was less than .1 percent. In total, the percentage frequency for the “other” category is 5.25 percent. This indicates that there are some unique topics within the library reserves literature. Articles in the “other” category include topics about using reserves to teach information literacy skills, the impact of reserves on grades, using restaurant-style pagers to let students know about availability, discussions about infrastructure, and more.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 2</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Top Five Journals</td>
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<tr>
<td>Journal of Interlibrary Loan, Document Delivery and Electronic Reserves</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Journal of Access Services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Journal of Academic Librarianship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Journal of Library Administration</td>
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<tr>
<td>Program</td>
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</table>

Table 3 reveals some expected and unexpected results. Considering society’s rapid move toward Internet-based content and interaction (Castells 2000), it is expected that most of the articles meeting the criteria for this study would be about electronic reserves. Furthermore, it makes sense that the topic of implementation would be high on the frequency list due to libraries implementing new technologies. This study supports those expectations. However, it
is somewhat unexpected that physical reserves ranks as the third most frequent topic. This is especially unexpected since the topic of library reserves is absent from much of the early literature investigated in this study. This data suggests that physical reserves remain an important library reserves service. In a 2010 article, Leung discusses the importance of managing access to print books for both reserves and non-reserve loans for as long as this format remains part of the library collection. Furthermore, while Goodson and Frederiksen (2011) focus on electronic reserves, they also note that most institutions that they surveyed in 2010 maintained both electronic and physical reserves.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subtopic</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>electronic reserves</td>
<td>180</td>
<td>29.51%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>implementation</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>14.75%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>physical reserves</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>8.03%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e-reserves software</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>6.89%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>evaluation</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>6.72%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>copyright</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>5.90%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LMS (Learning Management System)</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>4.59%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Several factors may be contributing to the continued presence of physical reserves. In recent years, the rising cost of textbooks has created a need for access. Politz (2009) notes that having physical reserves is one way to provide access to textbook content, and Murphy (2013) describes how the University of Oklahoma recently implemented a program that placed thousands of textbooks on physical reserve. Another factor that may be keeping physical reserves in place is the opportunity to provide access to content using the right of first sale (Palfrey 2013) rather than licensing or fair-use evaluation of all-rights-reserved content.

A look at each of the top seven most frequently tagged subtopics in figures 2 through 8 provides a visual reference for how each of the subtopics unfolds over time.

Electronic reserves is the subtopic used to describe any library reserve item available in digital format. Figure 2 shows electronic reserves-related publications surging from around 1990 to 2009 with 2005–2009 having the highest frequency. More specifically, the years 2006 and 2007 tie for the high point in publishing the most on the subtopic of electronic reserves. For 2006, the top three most frequent topic areas are electronic, implementation, and learning management systems (LMS). For 2007, the top three most frequent topic areas are electronic, implementation, and copyright. This data
suggests that there is a concern about copyright and a move toward using the LMS for library reserve content during this time.

Implementation is used to describe the act of starting a reserve service for the first time, or the start of significant changes to a reserve service, such as implementing the use of e-reserves software. Figure 3 shows that implementation reaches its high point in 2000–2004. A more detailed analysis reveals that the most frequent use of the subtopic occurs in 2001. The top three most frequent topic areas for 2001 are electronic reserves, implementation, and e-reserves software.

Physical reserves is used to describe tangible reserve items such as print books, DVDs, and photocopies. Figure 4 shows that though this subtopic rises and falls frequently, it remains present through 2013. The most frequent use of this subtopic occurs between 1995 and 1999. During this time, topics include automation, use, cost, and copyright. The topical focus is on making the physical reserves service more efficient and better for the user. In terms of copyright, one article reported that the results of the Basic Books v. Kinko’s lawsuit increased the use of physical reserves (Seaman 1995). The next highest peak comes in 2005–2009. The topics during this time are also concerned with efficiency. Three articles during this time discuss the need for placing textbooks on physical reserve. Overall, the most frequent subtopics included alongside that of physical reserves are electronic reserves, evaluation, use, and cost.

Evaluation is used to describe analysis and typically involves surveys, use statistics, or some other analytical tool or process. As illustrated in figure 5, for five-year analysis, the 2000–2004 range contains the most frequent use of the subtopic of evaluation. Overall, the term evaluation is most often used alongside the subtopics electronic reserves, physical reserves, and use.

As illustrated in figure 6, the highest frequency for the subtopic of copyright appears from 2005 to 2009. During this time this subtopic was tagged fourteen times in reference to a wide range of copyright-related areas, including copyright policy, fair use, CONFU guidelines, TEACH Act, permissions, and more. It is interesting that both the unsanctioned 1998 CONFU guidelines and the 2002 TEACH Act, which did not directly address library reserves, still show up as topics during this time period (Austin 2004). The presence of these two topics indicates that there is continued struggle over the application of fair use and a continued interest in the proper way to use copyrighted content in the teaching environment. Overall, copyright most often appears alongside the subtopics of electronic reserves, physical reserves, and implementation.

E-reserves software is used to describe software designed specifically for managing electronic library reserves. Homegrown systems as well as commercial products such as Ares or Docutek are included. Figure 7 depicts how the frequency of the subtopic e-reserves peaks in the years between 2000 and 2004. The topic area of e-reserves software includes topic areas such as implementation and software comparison and design.

LMS (learning management systems) is used to describe software for delivering courses online. Examples of this type of software include Desire2Learn, Blackboard, Sakai, and others. Figure 8 shows that the most frequent use of the LMS subtopic appeared in the years 2005–2009. Overall, the subtopic of LMS most frequently appears alongside the subtopics of electronic reserves, implementation, and reserves software.
Conclusion

The first peer-reviewed article about library reserves appears in the literature in 1974. Over the course of 40 years, only 212 peer reviewed articles about library reserves were discovered. Thus, the amount of peer-reviewed literature published about this core library service is not abundant. Most articles were published in the *Journal of Interlibrary Loan, Document Delivery and Electronic Reserve* followed by the *Journal of Access Services*. Publications appear slowly in the literature and drop off after 2008. In terms of subject matter, library reserves offer a variety of topics. Although the topic of electronic reserves predominates, physical reserves still rank very high. Another popular topic is implementation. Articles about implementing new technologies or services abound. This is reflective of the changing nature of academia and the digital shift in general. Publications about copyright concerns appear in the early nineties and continue throughout. Finally, articles about e-reserves software and learning manage systems are also published frequently.

Further Research

This study reveals many questions about library reserves that could be studied further. Since publication of articles about library reserves drops dramatically beginning in 2008, a more detailed investigation into why this drop occurred is warranted. It is possible that new technologies such as accessible persistent links, improvements in learning management systems, or other technological advances are rendering library reserves obsolete. An investigation into the way in which instructors are providing content to their students could help answer this question. Another possibility is that the 2008 lawsuit of *Cambridge University Press et al v. Patton et al* may have produced an environment in which it feels unsafe to publish on topics related to library reserves. It is also possible that the perseverance of physical reserves is related to copyright or licensing limitations on how electronic content can be used. Investigations related to reactions to this lawsuit and other copyright or licensing uncertainties may shed some light on the drop in publications and on the perseverance of physical reserves.
Another research question that has received little attention in the library reserves literature revolves around how access to content affects teaching and learning. Literature in educational research may help to shed some light on these issues. Taylor (2014), a lifelong teacher, provides a personal account of changing pedagogy and technology from the 1950s to the present day. He points out that new pedagogies are emerging that may not require a pre-determined set of content within the course design. However, content is still needed in these emerging pedagogies, and it remains clear that a pre-determined set of content is currently the predominant teaching method. Thus, the need for content continues to be a fundamental need. With this in mind, studies about how library reserves may or may not be filling the content needs of teachers and students are warranted.

In recent years, content itself is changing in terms of our definitions of format types. For instance, the line between what is considered an eBook or e-textbook and what is considered an online course can be a bit blurred, as the features of these formats are often similar (Young 2013). As evidenced by Loring (1997) and Austin (2004), questions surrounding the use of all-rights-reserved copyrights have increased with emerging technological changes. Rather than attempting to relieve such struggles through guidelines and case law, perhaps more flexible publishing options would better meet the needs of teachers and learners. Within the last few years, alternatives to all-rights-reserved publishing practices have flourished. The *State of the Commons* reports an increase of creative commons works from 50 million in 2006 to 882 million in 2014 (Creative Commons 2014). Additionally, a growing body of research is supporting the idea that open textbooks can improve student success (Hilton 2015). Thus, it is possible that struggles over copyright restrictions and access to course content over the last forty years may receive some relief by the proliferation of open educational resources (OER). Perhaps studies about the effectiveness of using OER versus all-rights-reserved copyrighted resources within the library reserves environment could reveal whether or not OER is a sustainable solution.

*Denise Dimsdale is Education Librarian at Georgia State University*
References


Creative Commons. 2014. “State of the Commons.” [https://stateof.creativecommons.org/report/](https://stateof.creativecommons.org/report/).


APPENDIX A:

SUBTOPIC DESCRIPTORS AND DEFINITIONS

**Subtopic Descriptors:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subtopics:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>electronic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>implementation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>physical</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>reserves software</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>evaluation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>other</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>copyright</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LMS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>use</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cost</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ILS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>linking or library databases</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>satisfaction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>automation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>workflow-process improvement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>course pack</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>audio-visual</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>textbook</td>
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</table>

**Definitions:**

Audio-visual: used to describe content that is either audio content or video content. The content may also contain both audio and video elements. This content may be physical or electronic.

Automation: in the context of this study, automation is used to describe automating the circulation process or the processing of reserves.

Copyright: used to describe an article focusing on the legal aspects of copyright.

Cost: used to describe an article that focuses on expenditures.

Electronic: used to describe reserves in digital format.

Evaluation: used to describe analysis and typically involves surveys, use statistics, or some other analytical tool or process.

ILS (integrated library systems): in the context of this study, ILS is used to describe the inclusion of library reserves materials in the OPAC (Online Public Access Catalog).
Implementation: used to describe the act of starting a reserve service for the first time, or the start of significant changes to a reserve service such as implementing the use of e-reserves software. Includes “how we did it good” articles, some type of evaluation where the ultimate goal is definitely to implement ERes or something new, pilot studies, actual implementations beyond pilot studies, etc.

LMS (learning management system): is used to describe software for delivering courses online. For example: Blackboard, Moodle, Sakai, Desire2Learn, etc.

Linking or library databases: this tag is used when an article focuses the use of links for access to online content or the use of library databases to access online content for library reserves.

Other: this tag is used for a small number of article topics that do not fit into the identified categories. This includes such topics as using reserves to teach information literacy skills, the impact of reserves on grades, using restaurant style pagers to let students know about availability, discussions about infrastructure, etc.

Physical: used to describe tangible reserve items such as print books, DVDs, photocopies, etc.

Reserves software: describes software designed specifically for managing electronic library reserves. Homegrown systems and products such as Docutek or Ares are included.

Use: this tag is used when the article focuses on how frequently library reserves are used.

Workflow-process improvement: (differs from implementation): the emphasis is on how to do things better or more efficiently. This could be managerial, procedures, etc. The goal is not necessarily to implement a new product or service but to improve existing services or to potentially make moderate changes such as using a different scanner.

Satisfaction: this tag is used when the article focuses on user’s level of satisfaction with library reserves.
APPENDIX B

ARTICLES USED IN THE QUANTITATIVE CONTENT ANALYSIS


Woodman, Bonnie. 2007. “Promoting Course and Electronic Reserves to Campus Faculty.” *Journal of Interlibrary Loan, Document Delivery & Electronic Reserves* 17 (1/2): 183–211.

