

TO: Senate

QUESTION FROM: Senator Nicholas Dunn

RESPONSE FROM: Senator Colleen Cook, Trenholme Dean of Libraries

SUBJECT: Question and Response Regarding Library Subscriptions and Open Access

MEETING DATE: March 27, 2019

PREAMBLE: The University of California (UC) system made headlines earlier this month by not renewing its \$11 million subscriptions contract with Elsevier, a major academic publisher—for issues relating to pricing and open access material by its own researchers¹. McGill’s mission involves a commitment to the “dissemination of knowledge” as a “service to society²”.

McGill spent \$16 million on ‘Journals and E-Resources’ as part of its FY18 Collections budget³. Many of its current deals are the result of bundled CKRN negotiations, though no Canadian university is negotiating a big deal in the near future⁴. Currently, McGill does not make such information (e.g., prices of serial subscriptions) public, though some universities in Canada do⁵.

QUESTION:

1. How much does McGill pay for access to Elsevier content on annual basis?
2. How do consortial arrangements like CKRN work? When is the next big negotiation for McGill scheduled to take place?
3. Is McGill able to make information on how their collections funds are spent publicly available? Why or why not?
4. Does McGill have an interest in moving more towards an open access future, especially with respect to research published by members of the McGill community?

¹ Alex Fox and Jeffrey Brainard, “University of California takes a stand on open access,” *Science* 363:6431 (8 March 2019): <http://science.sciencemag.org/content/363/6431/1023.1>.

² McGill University Mission Statement and Principles: <https://www.mcgill.ca/secretariat/mission>.

³ McGill Library Annual Report (2017): https://mcgill.ca/library/files/library/mcgill_library_-_annual_report_2017_website_version_0.pdf (p. 13).

⁴ Jessica Lange, “This past week the University of California didn’t renew its contract with one of the biggest publishers of research articles in the world,” *The Turret* blog: <https://blogs.library.mcgill.ca/schulich/this-past-week-the-university-of-california-didnt-renew-its-contract-with-one-of-the-biggest-publishers-of-research-articles-in-the-world/>.

⁵ “University of Alberta Libraries Statement of Principle on Non-disclosure Clauses in Licenses,” <https://www.library.ualberta.ca/about-us/collection/disclosure>.

RESPONSE:

Good day, Senator Dunn,

In response to your questions, below is the Library's response.

1. McGill pays about \$1.4 million USD annually / \$1.8 million CAD annually (we pay in U.S. Dollars) for access to Elsevier content.

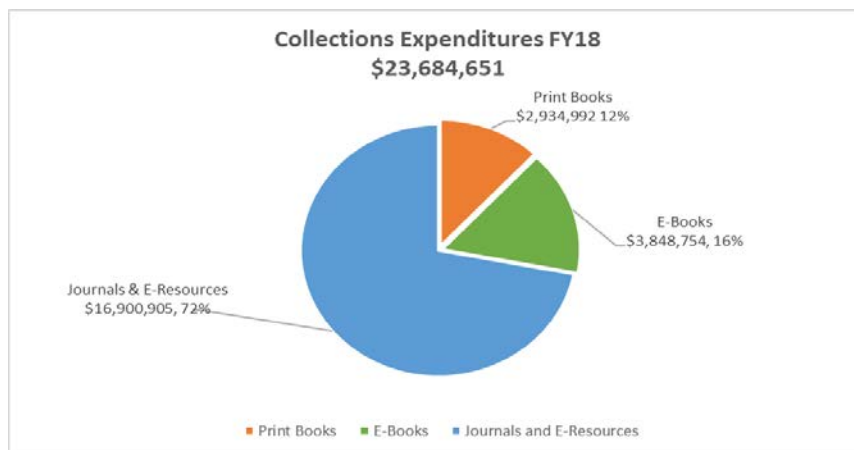
The cost per article download for 2018 is about \$0.66 USD per use/ \$0.94 CAD per use, which is based on 2,086,968 downloads from Elsevier e-journals.

2. About 70 Canadian Universities cooperate in CRKN (Canadian Resource Knowledge Network) and have a negotiating team that works for the best deal possible for all of the members in this buying consortium.

Elsevier ScienceDirect is negotiated on a multi-year contract (usually 3 years) with an opt-out clause allowing us to cancel our subscription at the date of the renewal.

We have a 3-year contract that ends December 31, 2020. CRKN will negotiate with Elsevier sometime in 2020 before the contract ends.

3. Here is the budget breakdown for the Library collection materials for FY18:



Elsevier allows us to share our pricing information but many publishers do have confidentiality clause in their license agreements that do not allow us to share any cost information.

4. Although the Library is not paying for APC (Article Processing Charge) – making research articles open access in gold open access journals – it does support and encourage a move towards more open access in various ways like:
 - Achieving reductions on APC costs for McGill authors either via negotiations with publishers or paying institutional
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memberships. Here are a few examples (see <https://mcgill.ca/library/services/open-access/how#apc> for the complete list): :

- American Chemical Society (ACS): 25% discount
 - BioMed Central: 15% discount
 - NRC Research Press: \$1,500 discount
 - Sage e-journals: 40% or more discount
 - Some examples from the Library supporting OA initiatives by paying subscriptions to help maintain their activities:
 - [arXiv.org](https://arxiv.org) e-print archive
 - [Directory of Open Access Journals \(DOAJ\)](#)
 - [Érudit](#): largest French-language OA e-resources in Humanities and Social Sciences in North America.
 - [Héritage](#): 10-year project to make Canada's most popular archival collections OA (40M pages).
 - [Knowledge Unlatched \(KU\)](#) for OA journals and books
 - [Portage](#) a shared stewardship of research data from CARL
 - [SCOAP3](#): worldwide initiative to make journals in the field of High-Energy Physics OA
 - 1science Montreal based company making scholarly content searchable and retrievable:
 - [1findr](#) searching both OA and non-OA scholarly articles: over 90M records
 - [1foldr Hub](#) a platform that keeps track of McGill peer-review articles (OA and non-OA): listing **69,970 OA McGill articles**.
 - Helping McGill authors to start open access journals by installing and providing access to OJS software
 - Hosting and publishing McGill OA journals:
 - [CuiZine](#)
 - Working with McGill authors to help them self-archive (Green Open Access) their scholarly output via the Library institutional repository – eScholarship@McGill (<http://digitool.library.mcgill.ca/R/>)
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