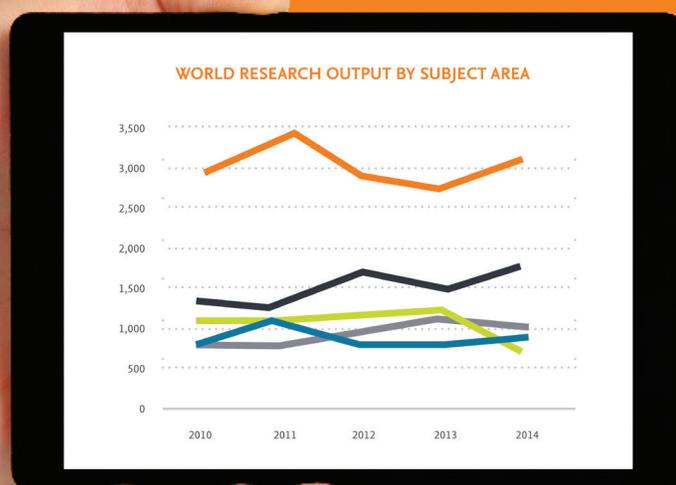# Making a Case for
Evidence-Based eBook Purchasing:

The University of Chemistry and Technology
Prague, The Czech Republic

By Jiří Jirát, Ph.D

Laboratory of Informatics and Chemistry and Centre for Information Services,
University of Chemistry and Technology, Prague, The Czech Republic

WORLD RESEARCH OUTPUT BY SUBJECT AREA

Data, driving high-quality decisions, can be a powerful vehicle for change. Librarians are empowered by key insights from data that can be leveraged to identify and close any content gaps — areas in a library's collection that need development to support interdisciplinary research and learning. Such gap analysis provides librarians greater visibility into usage behavior, as well as their institution's and the world's research trends in order to make informed decisions and achieve greater returns on investments. In this case study you'll see in detail how one institution used data analytics. Learn more about how Elsevier can provide the knowledge to fill in the gaps and help support your library's goals at **elsevier.com/books-sd**.

ELSEVIER

Getting the most out of Elsevier eBooks: Evidence-Based Purchasing Supports UCT Prague's Library Goals

As library budgets decrease and the amount of published research continues to grow, many libraries are turning to patron-driven business models in order to gain the most value for the money they have to spend. In 2013 UCT Prague decided to adopt an evidence-based purchasing strategy that not only helped to improve their researchers' workflow but also substantially increased their eBook return on investment. With fewer than 500 eBook chapter downloads in November 2013, the number of downloads rose to 13,000 within just one year. Here is their story.

About UCT Prague

The University of Chemistry and Technology (UCT) is located in Prague, The Czech Republic. Founded in 1952 (with origins dating back to 1807), UCT consists of four main faculties: Chemical Technology, Environmental Technology, Food and Biochemical Technology and Chemical Engineering.

While it may be considered small in size (fewer than 5,000 full time equivalent students), UCT is nevertheless the Czech Republic's largest university specializing in chemistry and has produced many notable scholars, including Professor Otto Wichterle, inventor of soft contact lenses in the 1950s and Vladimír Prelog, now a professor at ETH Zürich who won the Nobel Prize for Chemistry in 1975.

With approximately 800 staff and close to 3,500 students and researchers, ChemTK — the joint library of UCT Prague and National Library of Technology — provides its users with access to more than 100,000 books and journals in chemistry and closely related subject areas (over 1 million total in all STE areas).

University of Chemistry and Technology in Prague, The Czech Republic

ELSEVIER

**UNIVERSITY OF
CHEMISTRY AND TECHNOLOGY
PRAGUE**

Moving Towards Evidence-Based Purchasing

In 2013-2014 UCT began to review their purchasing strategy and chose ScienceDirect from Elsevier to expand their eBook collection. The library appreciated that Elsevier not only publishes key titles in their subject area but was also one of the first and only publishers at the time to provide evidence-based subscriptions (EBS) to their customers with no digital rights management (DRM) restrictions.

Given the choice to open up all eBooks to their users or select three collections upfront, UCT decided to make the entire eBook collection on ScienceDirect, including the frontlist, available for a one-year period. With a minimal initial payment, researchers and staff at UCT Prague were able to benefit from access to almost 10,000 of Elsevier's more than 35,000 STM eBooks valued at close to €1.5 million.

Jiří Jirát, Ph.D.: 1974; Ph.D. in Chemical Engineering, is a member of both Laboratory of Informatics and Chemistry and Centre for Information Services, University of Chemistry and Technology, Prague. His main interest is chemical informatics and electronic publishing.

The Rollout Experience and Title Selection Process

The EBS model at UCT was introduced in January 2014. No marketing or promotion was done for the first three months; all usage was driven by referrals from ScienceDirect, UCT's linking service (SFX) and UCT's discovery service (Summon).

The following September a new library website was launched and was followed up in November with an email to all users encouraging them to explore the expanded eBook access at UCT.

The resulting high usage by UCT users allowed the library to track access and readership over the next months to see which titles were being read more consistently. The library was eventually able to identify and set a threshold of at least 18 views in order for the eBook to be considered for purchase.

Faculty and staff were also encouraged to recommend titles for purchase. Both lists were checked against the holdings of the National Library of Technology to ensure there would be no duplicate purchases.
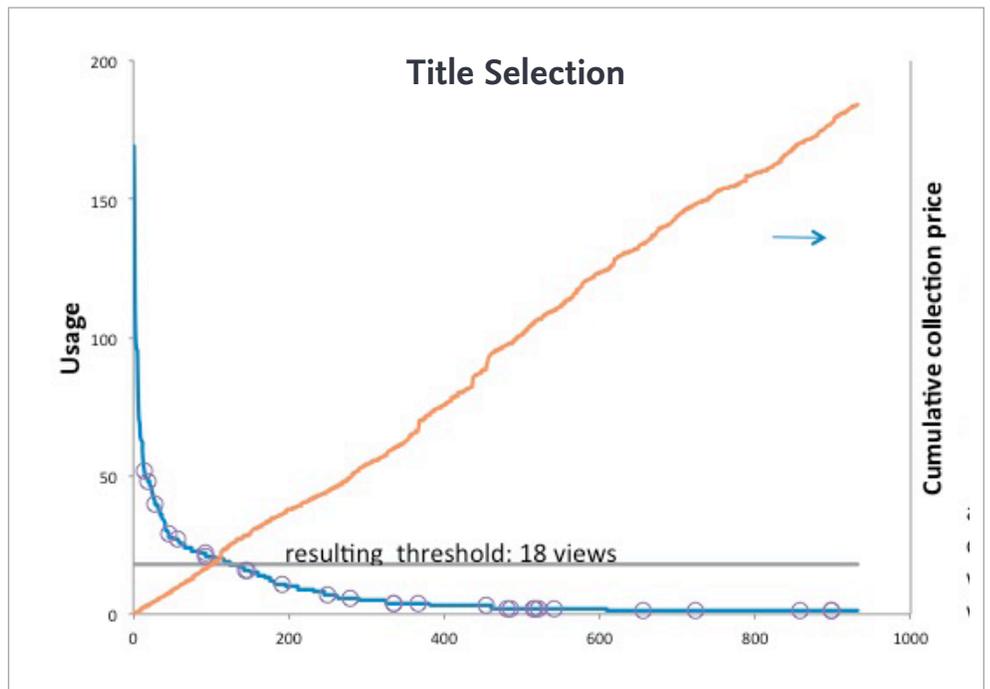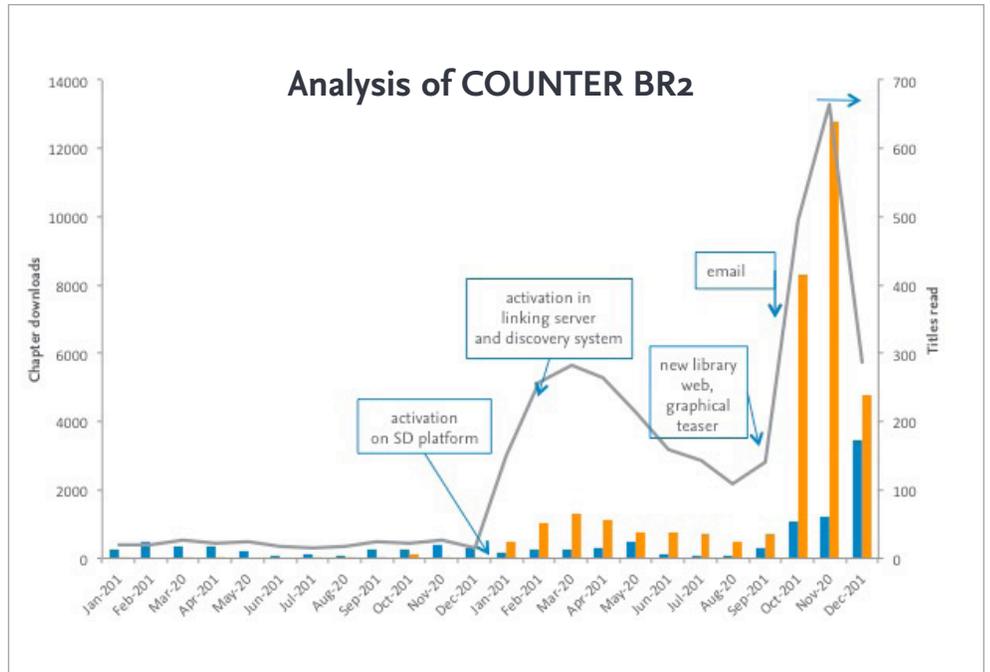
ELSEVIER

Legend:

Blue:
Chapter downloads:
Current holdings
(perpetual access)

Orange:
Chapter downloads:
Not in holdings

Grey:
Titles read

Analysis of COUNTER BR2

Title Selection

ELSEVIER

Analysis of UCT's Title Selection

After reviewing all of the usage statistics available (both those provided by Elsevier and information gathered internally), UCT was able to make a confident and informed decision regarding their final selection of eBooks.

Evidence-based subscription models allow librarians to select content based on detailed usage reports, the closest thing to polling actual patrons individually about their preferences.

Interestingly, the usage analysis led UCT to purchase many titles within the Agricultural, Biological and Food Sciences subject collection that would not previously have been identified as relevant for their users.

The usage analysis also showed that older books were just as important as those published more recently, with one third of titles accessed published prior to 2007. The frontlist represented almost one quarter of the final title selection.

With this information, the library was able to conclude that their initial decision to open up all eBooks to their users was most certainly the right one.

"Limiting our initial EBS selection to only three collections and a limited number of years would not have given us access to the variety of eBooks which were ultimately selected to be purchased by UCT."

Jiří Jirát, Ph.D.

Lessons Learned at UCT

Dr. Jirát suggests two conditions which will help ensure a successful rollout of an EBS model at other intitutions:

1. Open up a substantial number of titles to get a real sense of which titles are being accessed and how often

2. Ensure that the platform you are using has a reasonable amount of usage so that you are able to track it over time and make relevant decisions for your institution

ELSEVIER

Conclusion

As libraries continue to face growing financial constraints, evidence-based purchasing models can help librarians make more informed and relevant purchasing decisions for their institutions. This ability to select and purchase content based on detailed usage reports and overall research trends allows librarians to save both time and money while ultimately providing a better service for their users and increasing their ROI.

As the experience at UCT suggests, there is much value to be gained from librarians working closely with publishers to achieve greater transparency, accountability and efficiency when it comes to all library purchasing decisions.

Download the White Paper

"Library Content Acquisition: Hard Data, Shrewd Investments"

To learn more about Elsevier's patron-driven purchasing options:

https://www.elsevier.com/solutions/sciencedirect/content/books-overview/purchasing-options

Gap Analysis: Accelerating the flow of research

At Elsevier, we track every ScienceDirect turnaway at your library. That information, together with usage reports and global research trends, helps identify gaps in your library's collection.

Once you know those gaps, you can strategically purchase materials to fill them. In fact, librarians who practice this type of targeted purchasing see a much higher return on their investment.

Learn more about filling gaps in your collection.

ELSEVIER

About Elsevier Books

Elsevier eBooks, series, reference works, Reference Modules, and textbooks present the collective viewpoint of experts on a given topic. Serving many purposes for researchers, an eBook presents all of the current research in a given field, curated by expert reviewers, and dynamically linked to related content.

Books can be browsed and searched on ScienceDirect any time. eBook formats address the growing demand for research being accessible on mobile devices, and are downloadable as full-text book chapters in PDF and HTML formats, where available, to entitled users. All eBooks come with complimentary MARC records to increase discoverability, and are DRM-free.

eBook content retains value for years, supporting researchers, faculty, students, and professionals in their research endeavors.

About Elsevier

Elsevier is a world-leading provider of information solutions that enhance the performance of science, health, and technology professionals, empowering them to make better decisions, deliver better care, and sometimes make groundbreaking discoveries that advance the boundaries of knowledge and human progress. Elsevier provides web-based, digital solutions — among them ScienceDirect, Scopus, Elsevier Research Intelligence and ClinicalKey — and publishes over 2,500 journals, including *The Lancet* and *Cell*, and more than 35,000 book titles, including a number of iconic reference works. Elsevier is part of RELX Group, a world-leading provider of information solutions for professional customers across industries.

elsevier.com

September 2016

ELSEVIER