

Amy Hoseth  
Assistant Professor / Liaison Librarian  
Colorado State University Libraries

**Question: In keeping with the theme of the conference, “Something's Gotta Give,” what has to “give” in order to sustain viable scholarship, and why?**

In any solid and mutually beneficial relationship, there is give and take. And in today's academic library environment, where something most definitely has to give, I suspect that what has to “give” in order to sustain viable scholarship requires concessions from all three interested parties: vendors, libraries, and users. Some of what must give is already being given; other elements will be given only grudgingly, when it becomes apparent that *not to give* is not an option. Still, I remain hopeful that in this give and take, the parties involved will come to an understanding that today's shifting information landscape requires changes and concessions that were once unthinkable, and are now reality.

Vendors need to give up their expectation that libraries can continue to support cost increases and inflation. We can't—it's that simple. At my institution our budget has been cut for three years in a row, and only special funding from the provost's office (intended to cover serials inflation, but in reality not covering nearly all of it) has prevented the situation from being dire. As it is, we're in a state of perpetual resource evaluation, preparing for a serials cancellation project that is ever-looming. While it would be nice to think that this is a temporary situation, I fear that it is not. And vendors need to give up on the idea that today's economic reality has an expiration date. Instead, libraries and vendors need to work together to explore financial arrangements that will enable libraries to purchase needed resources while maintaining a reasonable budget.

Libraries need to give up their expectation that vendors will meet us more than halfway, change their pricing models, and enable us to return to our pre-recession purchasing levels. Vendors are for-profit companies, for the most part, and their ultimate goal is to make money. When vendors are unable to provide price breaks to libraries, or to find reasonable alternative pricing models for high-demand resources, then libraries will have to vote with their dollars and either take their business elsewhere or cut back on subscriptions. In this regard, libraries may also need to give up on the idea that we can provide all information to all people. Niche collections, institutional repositories, and streamlined resource collections all speak to the need for libraries to look inward, and find out how best to serve existing user populations now that “just in case” collection development is financially untenable. This is a hard truth for librarians, who are dedicated to helping users, but today's economic climate makes it unavoidable.

Even users aren't exempt from the need to “give” in this scholarly environment. In today's Google-dominated culture, I frequently encounter students who expect information to be freely available online, regardless of its source or provenance. Convincing them that not all information is free remains one of the great challenges for reference librarians. Today, users may need to give up their expectation that they have immediate access to all the resources that they need. Even in the face of daunting economic prospects, my library still provides students with massive quantities of resources. However, students may find that, more and more, they have to request articles via interlibrary loan, or find a book at a partner library, rather than finding them here in the building. Until all information is truly free, and

open-access or open-source resources grow to meet demand, users will need to manage their expectations.

Finally, while I would stop far short of predicting the death of print books, I think academic users may need to give up print books—at least new print titles at my library. We have moved heavily into patron-driven acquisition of e-books, and I suspect other libraries may follow suit in the years to come. This shift is due in large part to both space and financial concerns. In a recent focus group at CSU, conducted to explore attitudes among social sciences faculty and graduate students towards e-books, a colleague and I frequently heard the familiar romantic longings for print text. I understand—I'm a bibliophile myself. However, in our academic environment the potential benefits afforded by patron-driven e-book purchasing are undeniable.

In an era where information access and archiving are changing exponentially, and where the cliché of a “universe of information” is not so far off from the truth, it's odd to be writing about what the various arms of this triangle will need to give up in order to support and maintain viable scholarship. Ultimately, however, the financial pressure on libraries requires concessions from all parties. None will be easy, but venues such as the Charleston Conference at least provide a forum where most of the parties involved can hold open, forthright conversations about these issues, and work towards mutually beneficial and acceptable solutions.