











As noted earlier, most journals provide only limited space for presenting long narratives, for developing complex ideas, and for the kinds of repetition and restatement that can help readers assimilate new material. Some of these problems might be avoided, however, if journals would routinely publish articles in the 60- to 100-page range. This is already the norm in some fields. In 2017, the full-length articles in the *Harvard Law Review* had an average length of 72 pages, for instance. Longer articles may gain greater acceptance as online-only journals (including many open access journals) remove the usual limits on page length.

A related development is publishers' apparent willingness to publish more short books, either as e-books or through print-on-demand technology. Although several longstanding and well-known book series have been issued in this format, most have been limited to a single field or approach. (See, for example, Oxford's Very Short Introductions and SAGE's Quantitative Applications in the Social Sciences.) More recently, however, several publishers, including Springer and Palgrave, have begun to publish shorter books across a wide range of subject areas.<sup>16</sup> This may be regarded as a migration from journals to books, a migration from full-length books to shorter books, or even as the birth of a new format.

### Supporting Positive Change

Newspaper and magazines tend to present the four library practices described earlier in consistently negative terms—understandably so. After all, each can lead to problems that are likely to resonate with librarians and patrons. However, each practice also has the potential to bring benefits that are sometimes overlooked. The advantages may not outweigh the disadvantages, but we should be fully aware of them when planning library collections and services.

The perceived and actual impact of each change will vary with the context, of course, and with the priorities and perspectives of those who favor or oppose it. I would argue that (1) the acquisition of fewer books may be appropriate if it is accompanied by an evidence-based, mission-focused refinement of the library's selection criteria; (2) the advantages of careful weeding are considerably greater than the disadvantages; (3) moving books to off-site storage has a negative impact on accessibility but generates corresponding benefits only when specific conditions are met; and (4) a switch to e-books would improve access at some libraries but not at others, and many of the problems associated with e-books have yet to be addressed.

The ideal publishing model for scholarly content would preserve the reasonable prices and ownership rights that promote sustainability in the print environment, capitalize on the potential for discovery and access inherent in online journals, uphold a straightforward and transparent peer-review process, and allow for works of varying lengths so that the important benefits of long-form publication are not lost. Some innovations in publishing are consistent with these goals; others are not. Although librarians have no direct control over authors and publishers, we can use our indirect authority—through collection policies and purchasing decisions, in particular—to support the development of information products consistent with the changes we would like to see. This can benefit our own universities and, more broadly, help support the integrity and sustainability of the scholarly communication system.



William H. Walters, a member of the Editorial Board of *portal: Libraries and the Academy*, is executive director of the Mary Alice and Tom O'Malley Library at Manhattan College in Riverdale, New York; he may be reached by e-mail at: [william.walters@manhattan.edu](mailto:william.walters@manhattan.edu).

## Notes

1. See, for example, Donald A. Barclay, "Turning a Page: Downsizing the Campus Book Collections," *The Conversation*, August 19, 2015, <http://theconversation.com/turning-a-page-downsizing-the-campus-book-collections-45808>; Adrienne LaFrance, "Keep the Library, Lose the Books," *The Atlantic*, September 15, 2015, <https://www.theatlantic.com/technology/archive/2015/09/keep-the-library-lose-the-books/405307/>; Martha Nichols, "The Death of the Library Book," *Salon*, March 16, 2010, [https://www.salon.com/2010/03/16/martha\\_nichols\\_public\\_libraries/](https://www.salon.com/2010/03/16/martha_nichols_public_libraries/); and Michael Rubinkam, "Why University Libraries Are Tossing Millions of Books," *Christian Science Monitor*, February 7, 2018, <https://www.csmonitor.com/Books/2018/0207/Why-university-libraries-are-tossing-millions-of-books>.
2. Peter Stokes, Allen Foster, and Christine Urquhart, "Beyond Relevance and Recall: Testing New User-Centred Measures of Database Performance," *Health Information and Libraries Journal* 26, 3 (2009): 220–31; William H. Walters, "Beyond Use Statistics: Recall, Precision, and Relevance in the Assessment and Management of Academic Libraries," *Journal of Librarianship and Information Science* 48, 4 (2016): 340–52.
3. Jo Handelsman and Megan Smith, "STEM for All," February 11, 2016, <https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/blog/2016/02/11/stem-all>; "President Trump Signs Presidential Memo to Increase Access to STEM and Computer Science Education," September 25, 2017, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/articles/president-trump-signs-presidential-memo-increase-access-stem-computer-science-education/>.
4. Nicole Mitchell and Elizabeth R. Lorbeer, "Building Relevant and Sustainable Collections," *Serials Librarian* 57, 4 (2009): 327–33; William H. Walters, "Journal Prices, Book Acquisitions, and Sustainable College Library Collections," *College & Research Libraries* 69, 6 (2008): 576–86.
5. Francisca Goldsmith, *Crash Course in Weeding Library Collections* (Santa Barbara, CA: Libraries Unlimited, 2016); Peggy Johnson, "Is Weeding an Unnatural Act?" *Technicalities* 33, 5 (2013): 2–4; M. Muthu, "Weeding Library Collections: An Overview," *Information Studies* 19, 4 (2013): 223–46; Rebecca Vnuk, *The Weeding Handbook: A Shelf-by-Shelf Guide* (Chicago: American Library Association [ALA], 2015); Mike Waugh, Michelle Donlin, and Stephanie Braunsstein, "Next-Generation Collection Management: A Case Study of Quality Control and Weeding E-Books in an Academic Library," *Collection Management* 40, 1 (2015): 17–26.
6. Paul N. Courant and Matthew "Buzzy" Nielsen, "On the Cost of Keeping a Book," in Charles Henry, ed., *The Idea of Order: Transforming Research Collections for 21st Century Scholarship* (Washington, DC: Council on Library and Information Resources, 2010), 81–105, <https://www.clir.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/6/pub147.pdf>.
7. Kara Schechtman, "How a Book Warehouse Is Changing Columbia's Library System," *The Eye*, March 9, 2018, <https://www.columbiaspectator.com/eye-lead/2018/03/09/how-is-a-book-warehouse-changing-columbias-library-system/>.
8. For more comprehensive discussions of these issues, see Timothy P. Bailey, Amanda L. Scott, and Rickey D. Best, "Cost Differentials between E-Books and Print in Academic Libraries," *College & Research Libraries* 76, 1 (2015): 6–18; Helen Georgas, "The Case of the Disappearing E-Book: Academic Libraries and Subscription Packages," *College & Research Libraries* 76, 7 (2015): 883–98; Sue Polanka, ed., *No Shelf Required 2: Use and Management of Electronic Books* (Chicago: ALA, 2012); Mirela Roncevic, *E-Book Platforms for Libraries* (Chicago: ALA, 2014); William H. Walters, "E-Books in Academic Libraries: Challenges for Discovery and



- Access," *Serials Review* 39, 2 (2013): 97–104; William H. Walters, "E-Books in Academic Libraries: Challenges for Sharing and Use," *Journal of Librarianship and Information Science* 46, 2 (2014): 85–95; Suzanne M. Ward, Robert S. Freeman, and Judith M. Nixon, eds., *Academic E-Books: Publishers, Librarians, and Users* (West Lafayette, IN: Purdue University Press, 2016).
9. Jean-François Blanchette, "A Material History of Bits," *Journal of the Association for Information Science and Technology* 62, 6 (2011): 1042–57; "Comparison of E-Book Formats," *Wikipedia*, March 9, 2018, [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Comparison\\_of\\_e-book\\_formats](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Comparison_of_e-book_formats); Margaret Hedstrom, "Digital Preservation: A Time Bomb for Digital Libraries," *Computers and the Humanities* 31, 3 (1998): 189–202; Stephen Sottong, "E-Book Technology: Waiting for the 'False Pretender,'" *Information Technology and Libraries* 20, 2 (2001): 72–80; William H. Walters, "E-Books in Academic Libraries: Challenges for Acquisition and Collection Management," *portal: Libraries and the Academy* 13, 2 (2013): 187–211.
  10. Judith Stoop, Paulien Kreutzer, and Joost G. Kircz, "Reading and Learning from Screens versus Print: A Study in Changing Habits: Part 1—Reading Long Information Rich Texts," *New Library World* 114, 7–8 (2013): 284–300; Judith Stoop, Paulien Kreutzer, and Joost G. Kircz, "Reading and Learning From Screens Versus Print: A Study in Changing Habits, Part 2: Comparing Different Text Structures on Paper and On Screen," *New Library World* 114, 9–10 (2013): 371–83; Sharon A. Taylor, "An Analysis of Instructional Design Conditions Using E-Books for E-Learning: Community College Students' Cognitive Load Perspectives," PhD diss., Capella University, 2011.
  11. Elizabeth Dobler, "E-Textbooks: A Personalized Learning Experience or a Digital Distraction?" *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy* 58, 6 (2015): 482–91; Tao Zhang, Xi Niu, and Marlen Promann, "Assessing the User Experience of E-Books in Academic Libraries," *College & Research Libraries* 78, 5 (2017): 578–601.
  12. Mari Aaltonen, Petri Mannonen, Saija Nieminen, and Marko Nieminen, "Usability and Compatibility of E-Book Readers in an Academic Environment: A Collaborative Study," *IFLA [International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions] Journal* 37, 1 (2011): 16–27; Alexander Thayer, Charlotte P. Lee, Linda H. Hwang, Heidi Sales, Pausali Sen, and Ninad Dalal, "The Imposition and Superimposition of Digital Reading Technology: The Academic Potential of E-Readers," in *Proceedings of the 2011 Annual Conference on Human Factors in Computing Systems* (New York: ACM [Association for Computing Machinery], 2011), 2917–26.
  13. Blaise Cronin and Kathryn La Barre, "Mickey Mouse and Milton: Book Publishing in the Humanities," *Learned Publishing* 17, 2 (2004): 85–98; Leigh Estabrook and Bijan Warner, *The Book is the Gold Standard for Tenure and Promotion in the Humanistic Disciplines* (Champaign, IL: Committee on Institutional Cooperation, 2003), [https://www.btaa.org/docs/default-source/reports/scholarlycommunicationssummitreport\\_dec03.pdf](https://www.btaa.org/docs/default-source/reports/scholarlycommunicationssummitreport_dec03.pdf); Muihsuan Huang and Yu-wei Chang, "Characteristics of Research Output in Social Sciences and Humanities: From a Research Evaluation Perspective," *Journal of the Association for Information Science and Technology* 59, 11 (2008): 1819–28; Matthew P. Long and Roger C. Schonfeld, "Supporting the Changing Research Practices of Art Historians," Ithaka, 2014, <http://dx.doi.org/10.18665/sr.22833>; Jennifer Rutner and Roger C. Schonfeld, "Supporting the Changing Research Practices of Historians," Ithaka, 2012, <https://doi.org/10.18665/sr.22532>; "Tenure without a Book in the Humanities?" *Chronicle of Higher Education*, May 31, 2009, <https://www.chronicle.com/forums/index.php/topic,60757.0.html>.
  14. William H. Walters, "Citation-Based Journal Rankings: Key Questions, Metrics, and Data Sources," *IEEE [Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers] Access* 5 (2017): 22036–53, <http://ieeexplore.ieee.org/stamp/stamp.jsp?tp=&arnumber=8063396>.
  15. The difficulties unique to e-books include the need to support multiple file formats; reliance on proprietary software; lack of standardization in license terms; the need to make annual payments for content that does not change over time; delayed publication; the absence of selection tools specific to e-books; limited availability of high-quality catalog



records; difficulties managing the addition and removal of titles from e-book packages; restrictions on library circulation and course-related use; digital rights management through technological means; limits on the downloading, printing, or transferring of files; and the use of nonstandard and counterintuitive user interfaces. See, for example, Roncevic, *E-Book Platforms for Libraries*; Walters, "E-Books in Academic Libraries: Challenges for Acquisition and Collection Management"; Walters, "E-Books in Academic Libraries: Challenges for Discovery and Access"; Walters, "E-Books in Academic Libraries: Challenges for Sharing and Use."

16. Juliya Borie, "New Forms of Scholarship and a Serials (R)evolution," *Serials Review* 41, 3 (2015): 176–79; Leonard Cassuto, "The Rise of the Mini-Monograph," *Chronicle of Higher Education*, August 12, 2013, <https://www.chronicle.com/article/The-Rise-of-the-Mini-Monograph/141007>.

This mss. is peer reviewed, copy edited, and accepted for publication, portal 18.3.