Where Are the Periodicals?
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dot or hyphen or letter—the link in our catalog will not function, and users cannot access.

The need for many small details to fall together correctly both at our end and the vendors’ end requires the Serial Resources Department to maintain an enormous amount of information. The types of problems that once occurred in delivery, lost mailings, or traditional accounting errors have now been exacerbated by computer applications—services, including access, are shut down electronically with no notice, electronic billings are lost, URL’s are changed, and entire systems, at both the staff and public level, can and do stop functioning.

Finally, invoice management/payment consumes an inordinate number of person-hours in any serials department—even when backed up as well as we are by an Operational Services Department. Many bills for both printed and electronic resources arrive with too little data about what is being billed. Given the breadth and depth of the University Libraries’ serials collection, we deal with hundreds of invoices in foreign languages and currencies. We must master the abbreviated language and use of acronyms that might, for example, bill us multiple times for LNM1705. We even once received a $19,000 invoice with no information on what was being billed—it turned out to be an engineering database, INSPEC, but this took considerable time to uncover.

This tale, as do serials, could go on, but the bottom line is that an academic research institution must have a strong and comprehensive “serial” collection of journals, yearbooks, and other ongoing research that reflects the latest published data on hundreds of subjects—in print and now, on the WWW. Those essential resources are there and accessible to you because of a team in Serial Resources working closely with a Cataloging Department, a Web Office, and others behind the scenes. This effort makes it possible for the reference librarians, as well as other public services staff, to have all the information necessary to explain “where the periodicals are.”

“The fact of knowing how to read is nothing, the whole point is knowing what to read.”
—Jacques Ellul

Where Are the Periodicals: A Brief Guide to Locating

By Laurel Grotzinger

To complement Marcie Kingsley’s analysis of how to manage serial resources in the University Libraries, an introductory user guide to finding serials at WMU follows:

FINDING JOURNAL/MAGAZINE ARTICLES: To locate an article on a particular topic, click on Research Resources on the Libraries’ Home Page (http://www.wmich.edu/library/). Then select Databases and Indexes. If you know your database title, go directly to the alphabetical listing and click on it. If not, use the dropdown menu to select a subject area and identify an appropriate database or index. When you reach the search screen, enter your keywords and identify articles that you wish to locate. Electronic or e-journals are also found on the Research Resources page, and can also be searched alphabetically or by keywords.

RETRIEVING JOURNAL/MAGAZINE ARTICLES: Selected databases and indexes offer full-text articles by clicking on a heading that indicates that the online full-text is available. In such cases, you will then see the text of the article on the screen. You can e-mail it to yourself or print it right from the screen.

If the citation to the article does not indicate that full-text is available, you must check WestCat, the online catalog, to learn if the University Libraries holds the volume and issue that contains the article. Be sure to note title of the periodical (not the article), volume and issue number, date, and pages for each article that you want to locate before leaving the database or index that you searched. Click on Home and open WestCat. Open the Author/Title/Subject Index and mark the box for “Journal Title.” Type in the journal title. If the Libraries has the periodical title that you have typed in, you will either get the descriptive entry, or a list of related titles. Select the one that matches your citation (the date typically ends in 9999) and open that entry. Once a title is open on the screen, scroll down to a classification number, holdings, and current issues listing. Missing issues, serials shipped out to the bindery, and other useful data are included there. Guides to location of the various Library of Congress classifications are found throughout Waldo and the branch libraries. In the event that the periodical is not found in the University Libraries, you can also place an interlibrary loan request online or fill out a card at any reference desk.