



Member Survey Response and Forum Discussions – News and Newspapers

To inform the discussions at the 2015 CRL Global Resources Collections Forum: "[Shared Resources / Common Vision](#)," we issued a series of questionnaires aimed at measuring the importance to CRL libraries of prospective licensing, assessment, and digitization efforts. Below we summarize the responses we received between March 17 and April 20 and the conclusions we drew from the survey results and the input from participants at the Forum.

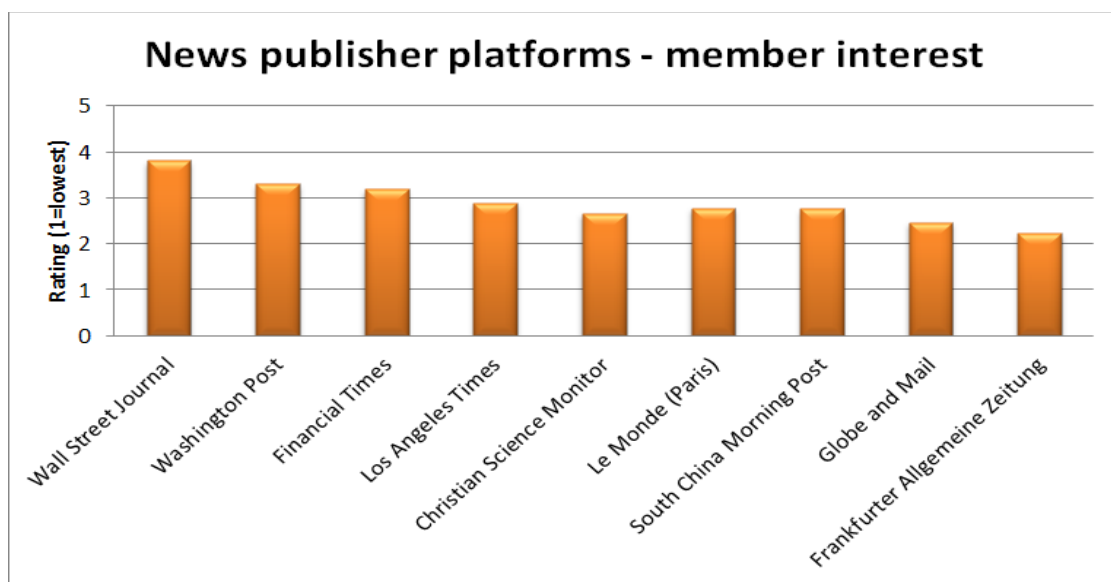
As an outcome of the 2013 Global Resources Roundtable: "[Beyond the Fold: Access to News in the Digital Era](#)," CRL identified a new [cooperative agenda for news preservation](#). The agenda identified cooperative action that research libraries could take to ensure the continued accessibility of the journalistic record, and the strategies CRL would pursue to support that action.

Survey Question N-1: Licensed Access to Online News

The 2013 cooperative agenda called for research libraries to exploit the leverage of their collective purchasing power "to obtain greater functionality, exposure of more data on the contents and usage of news databases, greater interoperability among news platforms, and other concessions from the publishers, aggregators, and vendors of electronic news."

As the *Financial Times* and other major news producers move content behind the "paywall," and layer traditional news output with rich multimedia content, features, and functionality, collective bargaining for licenses to those databases appears to be the best way for CRL to support member libraries in this area. To that end, CRL continues to explore with publishers terms for campus-wide subscription access to current online news databases provided directly from publisher platforms. The [New York Times Academic Site License](#) was CRL's first foray into this emerging area.

We asked respondents to rate their interest in academic site licenses for nine major newspapers identified as important by CRL libraries in the past. The level of interest was expressed on a scale of 1 to 5, with 5 being the highest.



38 responses

Responses (summarized above) indicated interest in access to major U.S. publisher platforms, with less interest in regional papers and non-U.S. titles. Other desirable titles mentioned in comments included the *Boston Globe*, *El Pais* (Spain), other major French dailies, and the *Times of London*.

Several respondents indicated that pricing models will be a critical factor in deciding whether to purchase access. Current pricing for many of these titles, including *The New York Times* academic site license, does not scale well for all library budgets. This is in part because libraries are not a major market for most news publishers. In fact, many major U.S. publishers are reluctant to offer institutional site licenses, as their business model is largely geared toward individual subscribers.

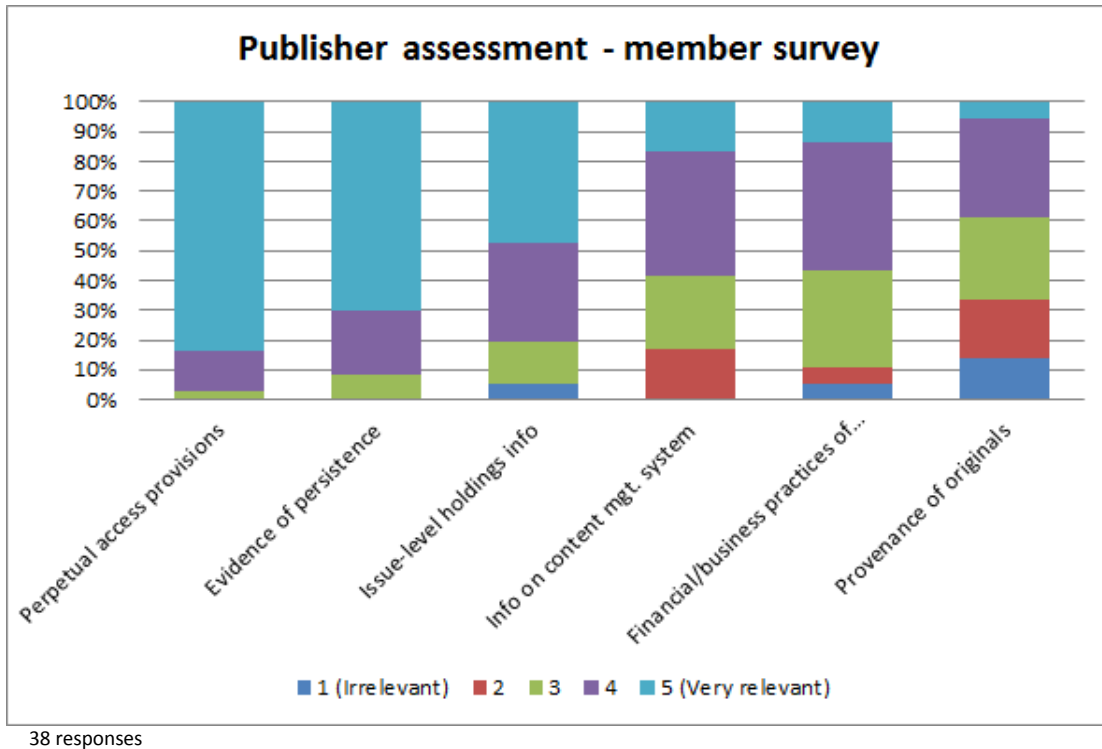
Given the absence of any other meaningful provisions for long-term access to online news, such as legal deposit or comprehensive web harvesting, collective academic site licenses will continue to be a CRL priority. Our focus will be on the most highly rated titles. At least one major paper has expressed interest in further discussions, and we will keep member libraries informed on our progress on [eDesiderata](#).

Survey Question N-2: Database Assessment and Transparency

The 2013 cooperative agenda also called for “increasing the amount and quality of data available on digitized news back files and the contents of news aggregator databases.” CRL has been gathering such data to inform member library acquisition decisions. The [International Coalition on Newspapers](#) (ICON) Database is now the largest source of data on the paper and microform newspaper holdings of major research libraries, and the contents of major newspaper databases. We are now also beginning to collect information that sheds light on “persistence”: how digital content is managed and maintained for the long term by publishers and aggregators.

In our survey we sought member input on what kinds of information we should gather, specifically about databases of digitized print sources such as ProQuest’s [Historical Newspapers](#), Readex’s [Twentieth Century American Newspapers](#), and others. We asked respondents how relevant each of the following types of information is to their decisions on acquisition of major news databases:

- Detailed (i.e., issue-level) identification of gaps and missing database content
- Provenance or source of the physical materials digitized (i.e., location of print copy or source of microform scanned).
- Information about the publisher or vendor’s digital content management system and capabilities
- Information about the financial and business practices of the publisher or vendor
- Details about “perpetual access” provisions of the vendor or publisher
- Evidence of the publisher or vendor’s commitment to persistence and integrity of content



The results, shown in order of importance above, indicate that libraries are most concerned about persistence of access to content, especially publisher provisions for “perpetual access” as well as the commitment of the publishers themselves to long-term content access and integrity. Also ranked highly was more detailed information about newspaper database holdings: 80% of the respondents indicated that granular information on the contents of news databases was desirable. This type of information would be particularly useful in determining gaps in collections as well as overlap with other resources.

Other suggested relevant/desirable data points included accessibility and ADA compliance, interface features, compatibility with mobile devices, lending rights, and information on access fees.

In the interest of transparency and informing library investment, then, we will continue to press the major producers of news databases, including Gale, Readex, ProQuest, and others, for more granular information on the contents of those databases, for inclusion in the ICON database. We will also urge these publishers to disclose more information about the provisions they have in place for ensuring the long-term persistence and integrity of those databases and their contents. CRL will endeavor to obtain this latter kind of information, through a TRAC-style assessment of the publishers’ technology and business platforms and processes, adding it to the [publishers’ repository profiles in eDesiderata](#).

Additional thoughts on the survey questions and CRL’s findings may be sent to Bernard Reilly (breilly@crl.edu) and James Simon (jisimon@crl.edu).

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