



The role of backfiles in academic libraries' digital collections:

Case studies in the Asia-Pacific region

Discover how academic libraries can analyze the demand and value for older research content by examining success stories from universities in APAC.

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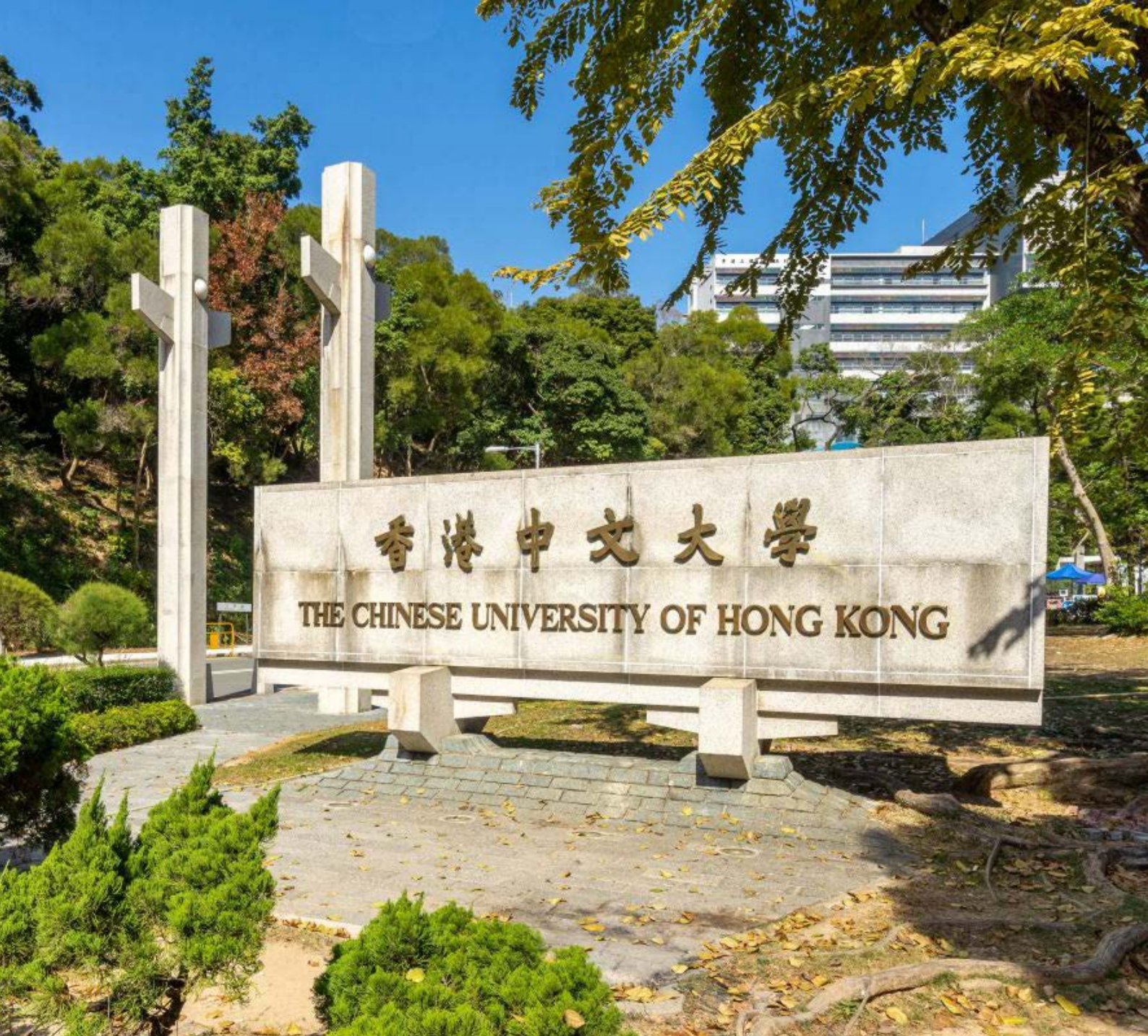
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Interview with

The Chinese University of Hong Kong (CUHK)

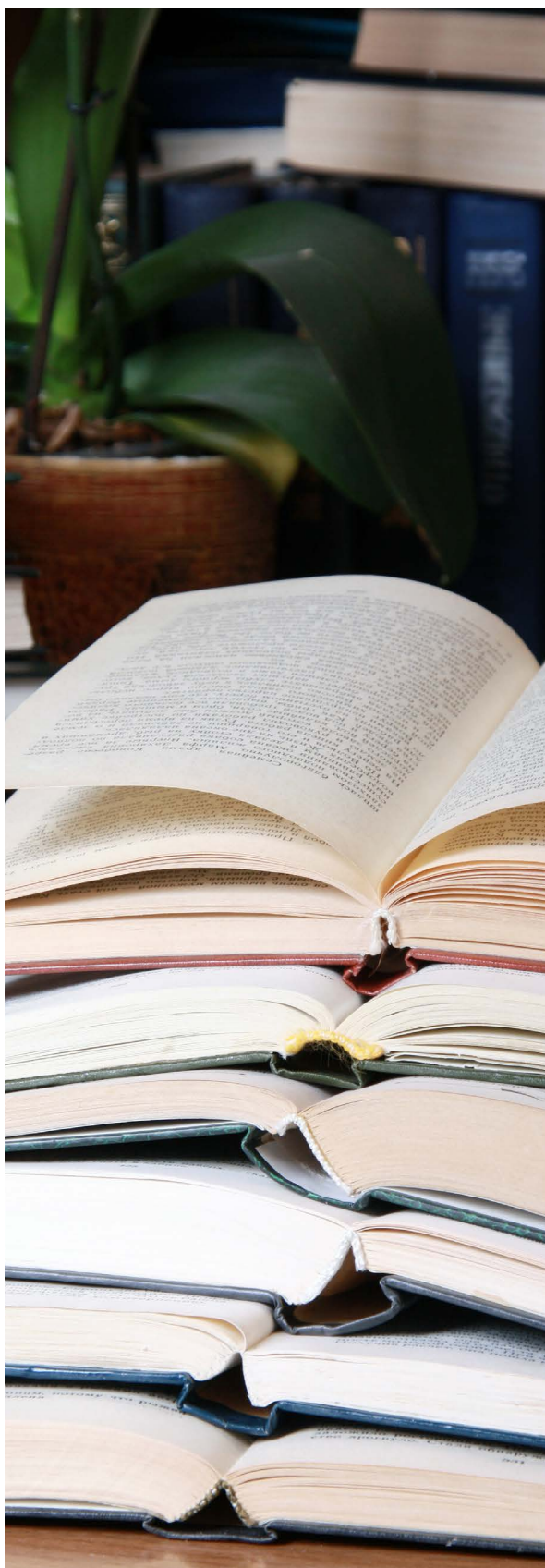
What's the librarian's goal in providing access to older content?

In this interview, Monica Young, Electronic Resources Librarian at The Chinese University of Hong Kong (CUHK) shares with us how her library supports its institution's research goals through programs and content acquisition initiatives.

“It will be great for libraries to provide a more comprehensive selection of content if the library has enough resources, and that includes backfiles. Collaborations can also be organised between universities if resources are a challenge for the library. The wider research community will benefit from having access to journal backfiles.”

- Monica Young, Electronic Resources Librarian,
The Chinese University of Hong Kong





Getting to know CUHK's librarian

Monica Young is an Electronic Resources Librarian at CUHK. She has been working at the institution for 10 years, and for almost 20 years as a librarian. Most of her experiences focus on acquisitions. In CUHK, she is responsible for the acquisition and management of electronic resources, including archives.



Strategic aims of the library

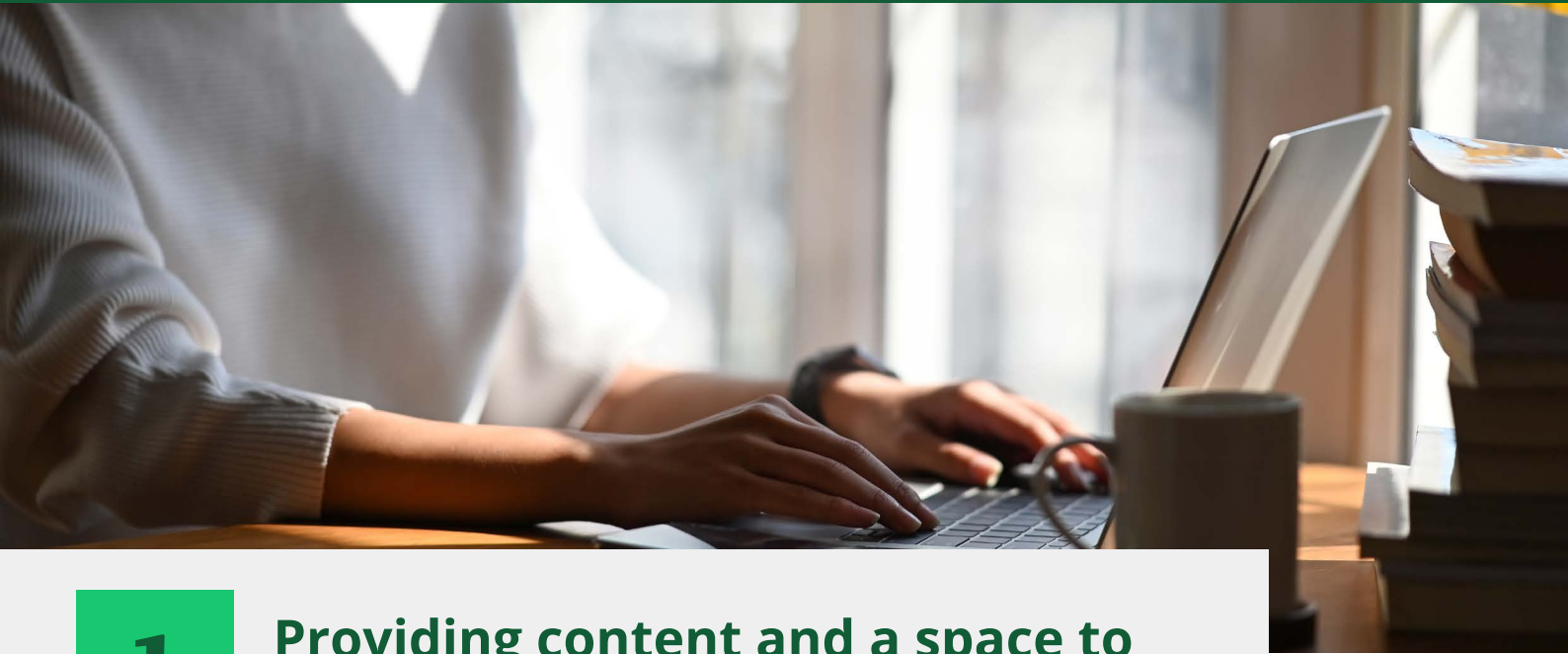
How does the library support research goals in CUHK?

Much like other universities, our library supports teaching, learning, and research activities conducted by faculty members and young researchers.

While research activities are dependent on whether library resources meet the research needs of users, the library also organises training and activities to encourage the exchange of ideas and discussions. The Research Café is an example of how the CUHK library brings young researchers from different subject disciplines together to do that.

Strategic aims of the library

The library has a few initiatives to support their research goals



1

Providing content and a space to exchange ideas for research

We provide materials to researchers based on their needs, interests, and research topics. The goal of the library is to make sure that users are equipped with the content they need to conduct research effectively.

The library is also home to the Research Café – a program that encourages the exchange of research ideas across different disciplines and presentation skills through short 15-minute pitches. Regardless of the type of research, ideas can be shared across various disciplines and the Research Café provides a channel for young researchers to do so.

“ Backfiles allow us to free up spaces so that we can reimagine and renovate the library to meet teaching and learning needs and demands. ”

Strategic aims of the library

The library has a few initiatives to support their research goals



2

Providing training to help undergraduates conduct quality research

We also want to train up undergraduates to conduct proper research so that they are well-equipped to get started with their first research paper. We do so through various activities organised by the library.

The library also works with publishers to organise training sessions for researchers, so they can gain tips from publishing experts on how to publish in quality journals. It is important for the researchers to publish higher quality articles to help the institution maintain our high research standards.

Assessing demand for older research

Does your institution receive high demands for older research from library users?

Requests that we received were general and not specific to any title. The enquiries that the library receives for older research usually revolve around subject disciplines like the arts and humanities.

“ Older research in the humanities helps young researchers build up their foundation and further develop their research. The library also sees substantial usage in backfiles relating to language and history. ”

In science and mathematics, backfiles are more commonly used when the research conducted requires the researcher to gain a better understanding on the subject's foundation.



Assessing demand for older research

What's your methodology for title selection?



Look for bigger publishers first. The general perception of renowned publishers is that the backfile titles are of better quality. Smaller publishers may not have backfiles to sell.



Select based on subject disciplines, such as the humanities.



Usage - judge demand based on access denials. Current year and historical access denial data will help evaluate if there is a consistent demand for any backfile title. **The option to purchase Wiley backfiles on a single title basis works very well in this case.**

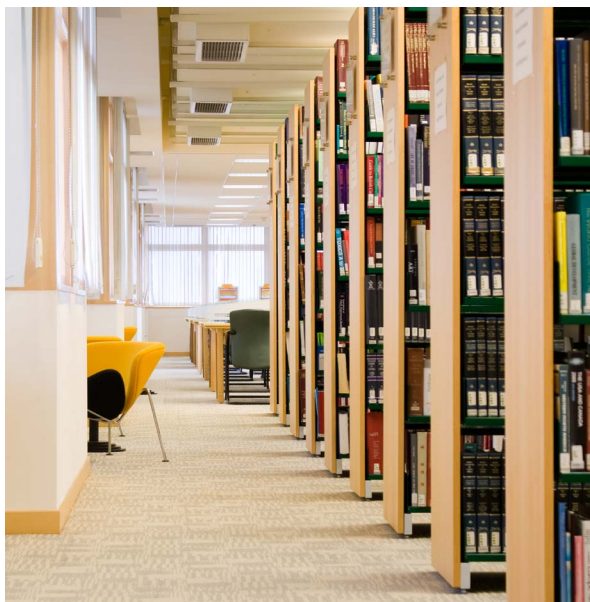


Do you see an increasing trend for older research in the recent five years, as compared to a decade ago?

While statistics from usage reports suggest that older research is still relevant today, more studies need to be conducted to tell if there is an increasing trend for older research. It would be interesting to do a deeper analysis on the data collected on usage and investigate users' behaviour around it.

Discovery layers also help users discover the resource they need, regardless of the content type.

Evaluating Wiley backfiles for CUHK



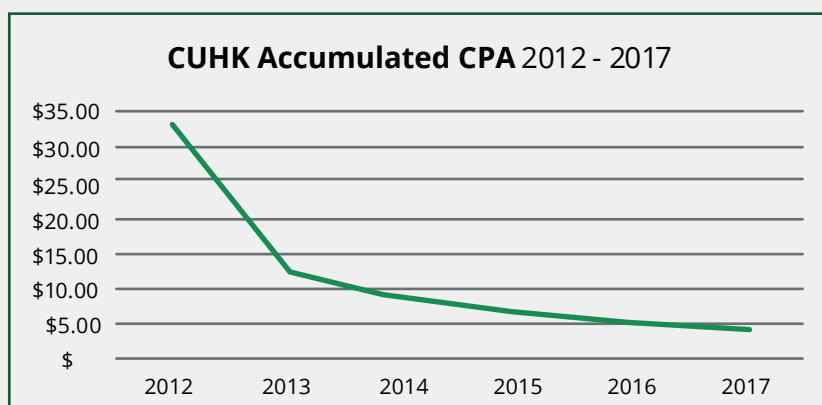
What intrigued you to explore Wiley backfiles for your institution?

The library uses Cost Per Access (CPA) to measure the success of the Wiley backfiles. CPA is the easiest way to identify if a title was well used. The library does not collect feedback specifically on backfiles.

Additional insights that can help libraries study user behaviour will be useful for the library to prove the success of Wiley backfiles. Relying on COUNTER reports is not good enough to tell user behaviour trends.

Note from Wiley:

Due to the one-time purchase nature of Wiley backfiles, libraries can enjoy lowered costs per access year after year. The CUHK library purchased a collection of backfiles in 2012 and saw its CPA for these backfiles fall by 88% by the fifth year of purchase.



Evaluating Wiley backfiles for CUHK

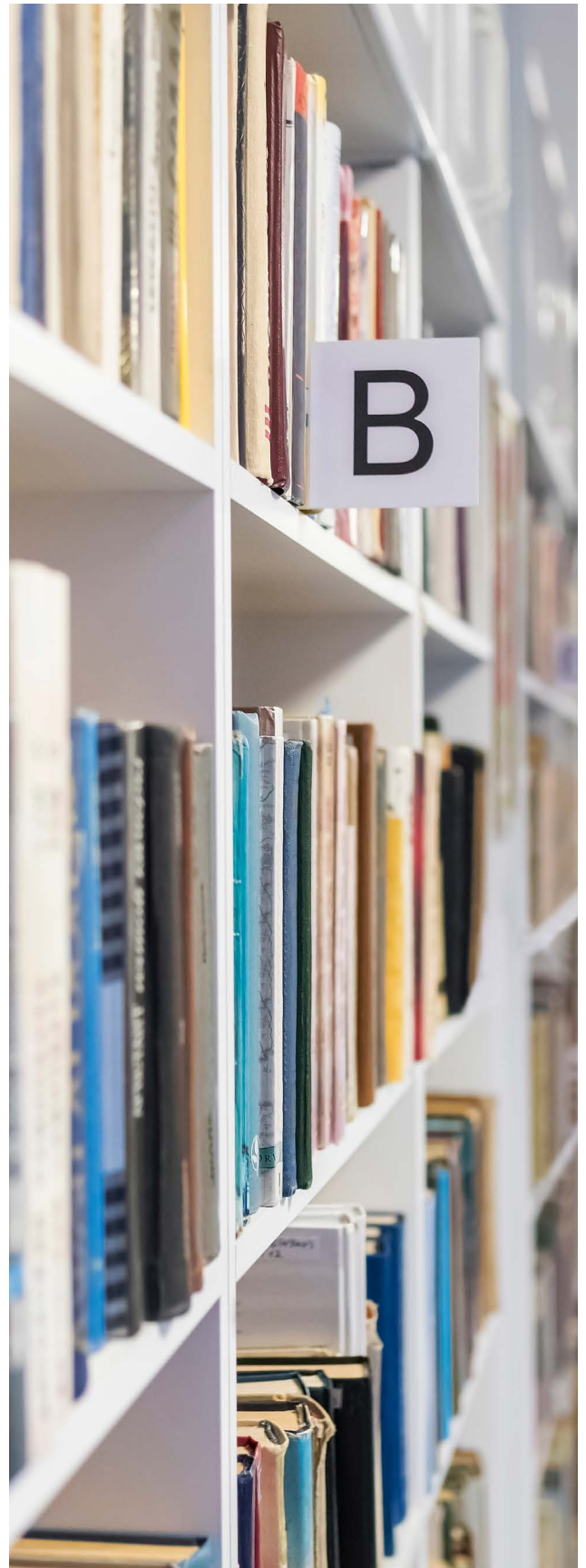
Did Wiley backfiles fulfill your expectations?

Would you recommend it to a fellow librarian?

It depends on the individual library's policy. CUHK's policy is to gain perpetual access for the content we subscribe to. Unlike print, the quality of electronic resources does not degrade over time. Offering perpetual access to backfiles can support interdisciplinary research that is happening today and in the future. Backfiles are popular among researchers in digital humanities and the possibility of cross-pollination across multiple subject disciplines are endless.

It will be great for libraries to provide a more comprehensive selection of content if the library has enough resources, and that includes backfiles. Collaborations can also be organised between universities if resources are a challenge for the library. The wider research community will benefit from having access to journal backfiles.

“Having backfiles and journals in the same format means that none of the older research will ever get lost in time. If a library has good support in terms of budget and manpower, backfiles would be a good investment for the long run.”





Interview with

National Chung Hsing University (NCHU)

What's the value of having a backfiles collection for university libraries?

In a 2019 interview with National Chung Hsing University (NCHU), the librarians shared with us that having a backfiles collection can support research development in universities, data performance, procurement purposes, and collaboration with publishers.

“With a limited budget, we try to provide faculty members and students with the research resources they need.”

- Tseng Hui-fen, Digital Resources Officer,
National Chung Hsing University





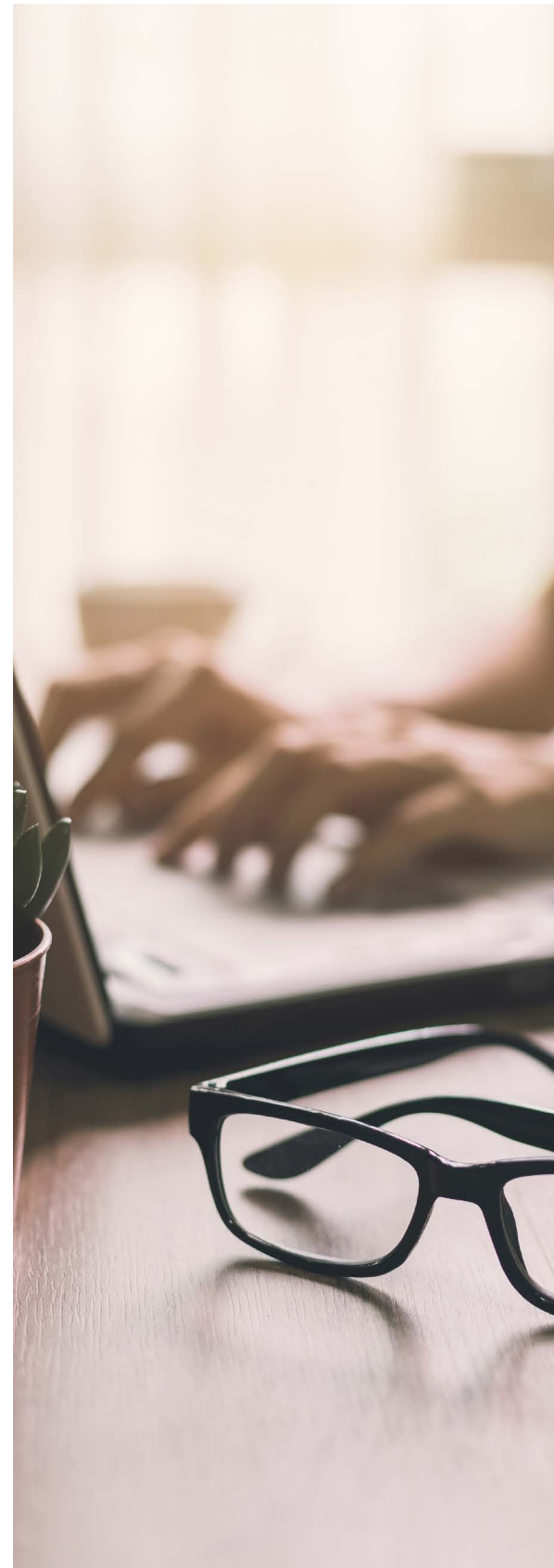
Getting to know NCHU's librarian

Ms. Tseng Hui-fen is a Digital Resources Officer at the NCHU library. She has served for six years in the digital resources department and is responsible for the collection, management, and usage of the institution's core journals and databases.



About the digital resources department

The NCHU's digital resources department was formerly known as the journals department. It's now responsible for the digital resources department is now responsible for the promotional activities of journals, collection maintenance, management and usage service.



How do university libraries support academic research?



1

Evaluate the benefits of using backfiles when considering to purchase

To determine the usage efficiency and the economic benefits of purchasing journals, an annual journal survey is conducted within the university. This also ensures the content is meeting the research needs of faculty and students.

2

Resource Utilization Education Program

We regularly communicate with relevant stakeholders and run usage activities to improve utilization rates for purchased content.

“There is an increasing number of resources but with limited budget, we have to consider how to purchase research content that meets the needs of faculty and students.”

3

Workshops for journals submissions

We regularly collaborate with publishers to co-organise workshops for researchers. Journal editors share their experiences and advice on enhancing researchers' writing skills and contributing to international journals.

Wiley UniDay Taichung's workshop titled "Our distance from fake journals". This is a writing workshop for journal submissions organized in 22 October 2019 at National Chung Hsing University.

我們與假期刊的距離
OA期刊投稿與防範抄襲期刊講座

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2:00pm-4:00pm

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3樓多媒體演講廳

主講人
沈宗雄 國立中興大學 圖書館系教授兼所長
James W. Murphy 前Wiley資深編輯顧問

主辦單位 協辦單位
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1 Methodology of choosing backfiles



Usage rate in university libraries

Look at usage rates when considering whether to purchase new backfiles or continue subscribing to a journal with a higher usage rate.



Analysis of library applications

Use the Nationwide Document Delivery Service (NDDS) to analyze for potential journals which are high in demand.



Based on the needs of various disciplines

Consider if there is a backfiles demand in the discipline. Decide based on the demand and price evaluation.

2 Do you receive high backfiles demand from the faculty and students?

The demand from faculty and students are mainly derived from the application materials of interlibrary cooperation. You can analyze the backfiles demand by comparing the year and name from the journals.

“We discovered a higher demand for backfiles usage. However, considering we’re unable to purchase all backfiles, we’d like to see if next year’s usage data is reduced or we could even explore the backfiles demand in other disciplines.”

Promotional activities in collaboration with publishers

We're not limiting the promotional activities to just journals. The partnership between university libraries and publishers could promote electronic resources to faculty and students.

We collaborated with Wiley for activities such as the Backfiles Quiz and Wiley UniDay workshop during Open Access Week, which explored publishing open access and avoiding predatory journals. These activities not only fortify partnerships between both parties but also strengthens the usage rates from faculty and students on library's electronic resources.

Open access week activity organised by National Chung Hsing University
and Wiley in October 2019



“The backfiles demand for life sciences is the highest and there is backfiles usage in other disciplines. We can do a comprehensive analysis after understanding the usage of journals and backfiles.”

Hear what other librarians in APAC say about backfiles



Strategic aims of the library:

How does your library support your institution's research goals?

“Our university library primarily focuses on supporting research and teaching. As the main e-resources needs for faculty, researchers, and students are academic journals, we strive to accurately procure resources that meet their research needs to achieve this goal.”



Chia-Chi Chen,

Digital Resources Librarian, National Chung Hsing University (Taiwan)

“Our library supports faculty's research activities by subscribing to selective academic online resources that helps them meet their research objectives.”



University Academic Librarian (South Korea)

“Kyushu University aims to contribute to solving social issues by conducting a wide range of research, from basic research to advanced research. The library provides resources for materials, places, and manpower as an academic information infrastructure to support these research activities.”



e-Resource Librarian, Kyushu University Library (Japan)

“City University's library supports our researchers in different stages of the research cycle, through 1) library's collections and services, 2) enhancing scholars' research visibility and impact, 3) promoting the University's research excellence, and more.”



Joanna Pong,

Head, Collection Development and Management,
City University Library (Hong Kong)

Hear what other librarians in APAC say about backfiles



What are your considerations in choosing backfiles from different publishers during the year end leftover budget cycle?

“ Consideration varies based on different subjects’ usage needs. For instance, areas like agricultural science, food science, humanities, and basic science literature have a longer half-life, indicating a continuous demand for older data. ”



Chia-Chi Chen,

Digital Resources Librarian, National Chung Hsing University (Taiwan)

“ Our library’s considerations to purchase backfiles include denial data, user demand (usage), budget status, and academic strengths of our institution. ”



University Academic Librarian (South Korea)

“ We look at existing journals frontfile subscription and the number of access denials for unpurchased backfiles. The price of the relevant backfiles (e.g. discounts) is also an important factor in determining the purchase. ”



e-Resource Librarian, Kyushu University Library (Japan)

“ We usually purchase digital backfiles when we have budget near the end of the financial year. Since physical space is very valuable to us, we tend to select titles where we have many years of print holdings, as well as those with high denial rates. After identifying the backfile titles for purchase, we send emails to major publishers for quotations. Wiley always responds promptly to our email. Most of the time, before we take any move to identify backfile titles for purchase, Wiley sends us information on denial rates and provides suggested titles for us to choose. ”



Joanna Pong,

Head, Collection Development and Management,
City University Library (Hong Kong)

Hear what other librarians in APAC say about backfiles



What metrics do you use to evaluate the ROI of backfiles?

“ We continuously evaluate the subsequent usage to validate the effectiveness of the procurement. ”



Chia-Chi Chen,

Digital Resources Librarian, National Chung Hsing University (Taiwan)

“ Usage and Cost Per Access (CPA). ”



University Academic Librarian (South Korea)

“ We consider based on prices and number of access denials. ”



e-Resource Librarian, Kyushu University Library (Japan)



Get started with Wiley content

For more information about Wiley backfiles or any Wiley products and solutions, please reach out to your Wiley Account Manager.

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