



# EBOOK ARCHIVES

and the changing shape of Montana State University Library

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# eBook Archives and the changing shape of Montana State University Library



Montana State University is home to almost 17,000 students and 900 faculty. It has been classified by the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching as one of 108 research universities with “very high research activity.”

In 2016, MSU Library purchased a collection of 56,000 eBooks from the Springer Book Archives. The collection dates from 1842–2005 and has made a large number of previously rare or unavailable print titles accessible to the university’s students, researchers, and faculty. We spoke to **Hannah McKelvey, Electronic Resources and Discovery Services Librarian and MSU graduate**, to find out about the impact of the Springer Book Archives on the library, its staff, and its users.

## What impact have eBook archive collections had on the physical space at MSU library?

The library at MSU attracts a lot of visitors and its popularity with students, faculty, and researchers is growing every year.

In the spring of 2019, the library took on an inventory and deselection project that involved moving portions of our print collection, mainly serials and periodicals, to an offsite storage facility called the Annex (located about a mile away from the main library building). The goal of the project was to create more student study space.

We’ve made a lot of progress in creating accessible spaces in the library with the addition of both sensory seeking and sensory avoidant spaces for our users. With the offer of group learning spaces we’ve definitely seen a shift towards more collaborative study and it’s really important that we encourage and support this style of learning.

## How much do print collections actually feature at MSU library?

There’s still demand for works in print. We have reference works, periodicals, and other print books that support the curriculum. But moving to online collections, such as the Springer Book Archives, has meant that we’ve been able to shrink our print collections and free up more study space.

We do have a very popular print collection called Bobcat Browse near our coffee shop that features books recommended by students, faculty, and staff at MSU. This collection celebrated its 10th anniversary last summer (August 2023), and it is the most well-circulated collection in the library. The circulation statistics of this collection have continued to grow while we see a decline in the overall usage of the rest of the print collection.

## What were the library’s main motivations for purchasing Springer Book Archives?

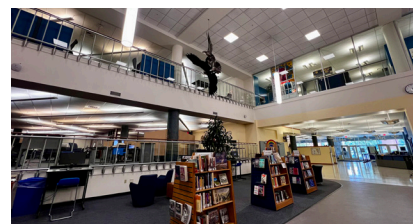
Space was a big factor, but it wasn’t the only reason for our purchase of the Springer Book Archives. When we purchased the eBook archive, and well before the Covid pandemic, we were already seeing an increase in online learning at MSU. With such a large collection of archive eBooks covering the full range of MSU disciplines available digitally, the Springer Book Archives enables us to support a growing number of distance learning students and really give them an equivalent learning experience to those on campus. Digital book archives also really help our library staff when they’re training distance learners and those based at other sites.



*“We’ve definitely seen a shift towards more collaborative study and it’s really important that we encourage and support this style of learning. The extra space created by moving print collections out of the library has had a big impact on this.”*

**Hannah McKelvey**

■ **Montana State University is one of 108 research universities with “very high research activity.” (Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching)**



Another really important factor for us was having 100% confidence that the Springer Book Archives platform was stable so that access to the collections would never be disrupted for users, regardless of their location. If we weren't convinced that the platform was robust enough, we would have been more hesitant about purchasing it.

## In what ways do the Springer Book Archives help your students and researchers?

With digital book platforms there's much less of an issue with limited copies of titles and students having to wait to get access. The trend of moving away from traditional textbooks to Open Educational Resources (OER) and unrestricted eBooks has continued to grow since 2016, so the more content we can provide that meets these criteria, the better.

Earlier in the transition to eBook archives it was more common for us to have to convince students that the content they find in an eBook is the same content they would get from the print copy. But the comfort level with eBooks as an information format has improved on campus, and users seem much more familiar, comfortable, and confident with eBooks.

One challenge that we still see is that our students access a lot of different content platforms that vary widely in access restrictions and ease of navigation, so we often need to provide quite a lot of training and guidance. For me, the really important feature of Springer Book Archives is the simplicity of the platform. A big part of this is that there's no Digital Rights Management so our users have no restrictions to accessing, downloading, or sharing titles and that level of freedom is so valuable.

Having robust, complete access to eBook content where our patrons can access older or more current publications without disruptions is important to us. It's beneficial to have older content available in a stable, online format to support researchers in completing literature reviews or studying trends, for example. When our users need this content, it's there, but it's also not collecting dust and going unused in the physical library collection.

## What benefits do you see for the library and its users when you compare Springer Book Archives to print collections?

A huge benefit is that MSU's curriculum is very much aligned with the eBook archive disciplines as well as contemporary eBook content from 2005 onwards. The usage of the eBook archive specifically demonstrates this alignment. There have been 364,735 total chapter requests between 2016 and May 2024, which shows that our users are making great use of this content, reaffirming that this was an effective purchase.

Another big plus of the eBooks archive – for students in particular – is the print on demand option. Faculty will often recommend students get a physical copy of some titles and they can buy these for a fraction of the full price with the print on demand service. So our users really have the best of both worlds: they can access digital versions of eBooks from an extensive archive collection without restriction, and print versions are more affordable than before.

Following the purchase of the Springer Book Archives, we can compare backfile data from the platform with our print collections and use this to inform weeding decisions. This means that we can be strategic about the print titles we remove from the library – we can free up space, whilst being confident that we're retaining the right print collections for our users.

The availability of eBooks archives usage data also helps to identify what content we own outright, what platform it is from to ensure long-term stability, and how it's being used to inform her decisions about deselection and maintenance of the print collection.

■ We are able to support a growing number of distance learning students



*"I've found the stability of the Springer Nature platform very reassuring - it gives me the confidence that there'll be no disruption to access for our users."*

**Hannah McKelvey**

I've found the stability of the Springer Nature platform very reassuring – it gives me the confidence that there'll be no disruption to access for our users. And the assurance of unlimited, unrestricted access to comprehensive collections for our entire university really is the biggest plus of Springer Book Archives. Knowing that these collections are easily accessible to any user, anywhere and anytime is so important.

### How to you maintain the holdings information for your library's eBook Collection and keep it up to date?

We've taken advantage of the automated holdings options in Alma (Ex Libris) which sends a library's holdings file directly to Alma and quite often use import profiles to load our specific eBook collection MARC records to Alma. This ensures that we have more accurate holdings information for our users.

We're also utilizing our database list to share information that is specific to each eBook collection such as concurrent users, printing allowances, and helpful information like links to publisher tutorials, app information, and specific to Springer, we link to the MyCopy service for students that might prefer print to electronic. The idea is to make everything about eBooks as transparent and easily findable to our users as possible. Additionally, in our discovery layer, we've added an 'Access for Users with Disabilities' icon on every record to make it simple for any user needing a different format to request it.

### Measuring the impact of archive content

MSU owns more than 56,000 Springer Book Archive eBooks. Before purchasing the Springer Book Archive, almost 6,000 unique titles were being viewed or downloaded between 2013–16. In 2016, following the purchase, MSU saw a total of 35,000 chapter downloads. In the 8 years since the Springer Book Archive purchase (2016-2024), the average yearly chapter download from archive content has been 43,335.

I didn't necessarily have any expectations or predictions of usage for the book archive. I do find it interesting, though, to think about the usage of electronic resources we've bought in perpetuity. What does that data tell us and how can it inform future purchasing decisions? While we're not yet seeing a negative cost-per-chapter (CPC) request since we've purchased the book archive, we are seeing an average of \$0.94 CPC request which seems like a good value to have consistent, stable access to 56,000 unique titles.

## Product Information

### Content from over 160 years of publication – the Springer Book Archives

The Springer Book Archives consists of high-quality digital versions of books from Springer (and around 40 imprints) published between 1842-2005, including many previously out of print titles. Among the imprints are Vieweg+Teubner Verlag, Birkhäuser Basel, Chapman & Hall, Humana Press, D. Reidel Publishing Company, Kluwer Academic Publishers, Martinus Nijhoff Publishing, Physica-Verlag HD and Plenum Press.

Available as one-off purchases with continuous access in German, English and Palgrave packages, the titles included are digitized to a high standard with optimum metadata.

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**Hannah McKelvey**



**22% of Montana State's unique title requests were from eBooks from the archive purchase, which resembles almost 10,000 unique title request uses of the archive between 2019 and 2024**

Contact us for more information on Springer Book Archives

