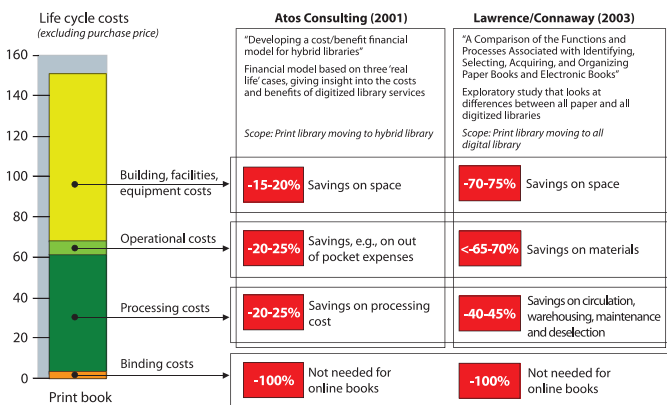


# Study shows migration to online books saves libraries money and increases usage

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The availability of digital journals is without doubt one of the cornerstones of today's academic library. Thousands of STM journals are currently accessible via increasingly sophisticated electronic platforms like ScienceDirect. Now, many publishers, including Elsevier, are making significant progress in bringing book content online.



Two recent studies looking at the life cycle costs of online books have shown they offer significant life cycle cost reductions. This graph presents data collected by Atos Consulting in 2001 and Lawrence/Conaway in 2003, and shows where an academic library could realize cost savings when migrating from print to online books.

The proliferation of online books presents libraries with a number of decisions. Indeed, it is crucial that close attention be paid to the quality, accessibility and value of an online book collection. Cost/benefit analysis before and after a transition to online books can help libraries make well-founded decisions concerning their online book strategy. To look at the value of online books from a quantitative perspective, the ScienceDirect team asked Atos Consulting to conduct an independent research study in 2007.

The primary goal of the 2007 Atos Consulting study was to explore the following questions:

- What is the value of online books compared to print books for libraries?
- How does the cost of online books compare to the cost of print books?
- How does the usage of online books compare to the usage of print books?
- How is the adoption of online books progressing?

The study analyzed costs and usage figures based on:

1. Acquisition costs of print books and online books
2. Libraries' recurring costs related to print books and possible savings online books offer
3. Comparison of online book usage over print book usage
4. Growth in the number of online books libraries have in their collections

Cost factors analyzed included the one-time acquisition cost per book; annual book

handling costs including binding, preservation, ILL and cataloging; and annual operational costs relating to maintaining space for books and providing staffing to manage books.

Historical data (1998–2006) from 300 academic libraries was sourced from the Society of College, National and University Libraries (SCONUL) in the UK, the Association of Research Libraries (ARL) in the US, and the Council of

Australian University Libraries (CAUL). Also data gathered during research conducted in 2001 by Atos Consulting at academic libraries in Utrecht, the Netherlands, Bremen, Germany and Luleå, Sweden was considered.

### Factors to consider in moving to online books

The 2001 Atos Consulting study determined that though purchase price could be a significant cost associated with print books, it is in fact only a small percentage of their total life cycle cost. The graph shows savings that could be realized on other costs (e.g., space, processing, binding) by an average academic library that converts to electronic books.

### Usage of online books is growing

Although usage per online book differs widely between libraries, the Atos Consulting analysis has shown that online books are used significantly more than their

print counterparts and therefore offer more value to libraries and their patrons.

For example, in 2006, the average book series title on ScienceDirect was used six times more than the average (loaned) print book at SCONUL libraries and 26 times more than the average ARL (loaned) print book. In the same year, the average online handbook on the ScienceDirect platform was used 155 times more than the average ARL (loaned) print book.

### Online book collections are growing

To get an understanding of the rate of growth in established online book collections as well as the rate of growth in the number of institutions adopting online book collections, a look at data from one particular country can be instructive. SCONUL data, examined by the ScienceDirect team in 2007, showed established online book collections in the UK growing at a much faster rate than print. There the average online book collection increased in size by 65% in 2005 (the average number of online books per UK library was 1,861 in 2004 and 3,065 in 2005), while the average print book collection grew by only 5% during the same period. And, according to the SCONUL data examined, online book collections in the UK are not just growing in size per institution; they are also growing in number. The number of UK libraries without online book collections is diminishing rapidly.

### Conclusion of Atos Consulting study

The primary conclusion derived from the Atos Consulting study conducted in 2007 is that libraries can save money while creating value by establishing online books as an additional medium for patrons to access high-quality research content. Taking into account the life cycle costs of online books (31% lower than for print books) and usage advantages (at least six times higher than with print), the value of online books to the average academic library is significantly more the value of print books.

For additional information regarding the 2001 or 2007 Atos Consulting study, contact [marketing@sciencedirect.com](mailto:marketing@sciencedirect.com). LC

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