



GUIDELINES

FOR VISION SCIENCE LIBRARIES

Compiled by [*The Association of Vision Science Librarians*](#)
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The appendices to this document consist of a collection of miscellaneous documents created by the members of the Association of Vision Science Librarians to serve as useful tools for vision librarians.

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INTRODUCTION

In 1976 the Association of Vision Science Librarians published *Guidelines and Standards for Visual Science Libraries Serving Optometric Institutions*.¹ In 1986 *Standards for Academic Visual Science Libraries*² and in 2000 *Standards for Vision Science Libraries*³ were issued separately, thereby allowing the *Guidelines* to be updated as needed to reflect current information. This is the sixteenth edition of the *Guidelines* to be issued separately, with previous editions issued in 1984, 1992, 1993, 1994, 1995, 1997, 2000, 2001, 2002, 2003, 2004, 2005, 2006, 2007 and 2008.

Although issued separately, the *Guidelines* are intended to be used in conjunction with the *Standards* in order to obtain a full range of qualitative and quantitative information about the collections and services of academic vision libraries. The *Guidelines* provide information of a quantitative nature, including monograph and serial prices and vision library statistics. In earlier versions of the *Guidelines* the source of much statistical information relating to vision libraries was the *Annual Survey of Optometric Educational Institutions*, published by ASCO -- the Association of Schools and Colleges of Optometry. However, this publication has not included a section on library statistics since 1994.⁴ Believing that there continues to be a need for statistical information about vision libraries, the Association of Vision Science Librarians conducted its own statistical surveys in 1999, 2000, 2002, 2004, 2006, and 2008, and the 2008 survey is one source of the statistics reported in this version of the *Guidelines*. A major improvement over the ASCO statistics is the fact that the AVSL figures apply to ophthalmology, industry, AND optometry libraries, while the ASCO figures applied to optometry libraries only. As such, a much more comprehensive snapshot of vision libraries in general is obtained, and the earlier bias toward academic optometry libraries is removed.

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VISION SCIENCE LIBRARIES

Librarians whose collections serve industry, hospitals, and schools of optometry or ophthalmology, and other vision-related institutions comprise the Association of Vision Science Librarians (AVSL), whose member libraries appear in [Appendix H](#). In the past AVSL has classified vision libraries according to three types:

A – an independent library which is not a part of a larger university,

B - a branch library serving a school or college of optometry or ophthalmology which is part of a larger university or other academic institution,

C - a combined science or health science library serving the school or college of optometry or ophthalmology as well as other schools, colleges or departments of the university.

While there still may be merit in classifying vision libraries according to these three types, AVSL broke with tradition several years ago by combining the statistics for all types of libraries into one table. See [Appendix I](#) for the results of the most recent survey posted in tabular form. It

is hoped that the survey's layout will enable viewers to make useful comparisons among sizes and types of libraries without having to distinguish among the traditional types A, B, and C.

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COLLECTION SIZE, CLIENTELE, AND STAFF

In order to determine relative collection size, vision libraries were asked to measure (or estimate, if time did not permit a measurement) the linear feet of volumes in class RE (for Library of Congress libraries), WW (for NLM) libraries, or the category corresponding to "ophthalmology" for libraries using other classification schemes. Both monographs and serials were to be included in this figure.

The following table includes information that was extracted from the overall survey, which appears as [Appendix I](#).

	MEAN	MEDIAN
ALL LIBRARIES	595.95	500.00
OPTOMETRY LIBRARIES ONLY (n=14)	754.86	548.50
OPHTHALMOLOGY LIBRARIES ONLY (n=4)	450.50	432.50

These figures represent *linear feet* of volumes in these classification numbers, and since only vision-related materials are measured, meaningful comparisons of all types of libraries are obtained. In addition, this method of gathering statistics allows vision librarians to gather statistical information without extraordinary effort. If one wishes to calculate the numbers of volumes represented by these linear measurements, a figure of ten volumes per linear foot could be used.

Obviously, some libraries hold many more volumes in their entire collections (vision and non-vision) than the figures here represent, while others' entire holdings will be much closer to these figures. The intent here was to identify a constant that could apply across a wide variety of libraries that might otherwise not be comparable. Using this technique, the vision holdings of large health libraries can be compared meaningfully with the vision holdings of small hospital libraries, regardless of the percent of the library that those holdings represent.

Several additional sets of statistics may be useful, particularly for those librarians who may be organizing new vision science collections or for those who would like to compare their libraries against an aggregate of similar libraries. The following figures also were derived from the AVSL statistical survey of 2006.

**TABLE 2: NUMBER OF PEOPLE COMPRISING VISION-RELATED INSTITUTIONAL CLIENTELE
2008**

	MEAN	MEDIAN
ALL LIBRARIES	1445.52	341.00
OPTOMETRY LIBRARIES ONLY (n=13)	2257.69	500.00
OPHTHALMOLOGY LIBRARIES ONLY (n=6)	151.20	120.00

**TABLE 3: NUMBER OF STAFF DEDICATED TO VISION-RELATED LIBRARY SERVICE IN FULL TIME EQUIVALENTS (BY TYPE OF LIBRARY)
2008**

LIBRARY TYPE	PROFESSIONAL		NON-PROFESSIONAL (NOT INCLUDING HOURLY)		HOURLY	
	MEAN	MEDIAN	MEAN	MEDIAN	MEAN	MEDIAN
ALL RESPONDENTS	1.37	1.00	1.74	1.0	1.15	0.80
OPTOMETRY LIBRARIES (N=15)	1.55	1.00	2.52	2.0	1.80	1.75
OPHTHALMOLOGY LIBRARIES (n=6)	1.23	1.00	0.38	0.15	0.21	0.13

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SALARIES

SALARY SURVEY

During 2007, Maureen Watson conducted her fourth staffing, salary, and status survey in order to update her previous studies, conducted in 1989, 1996, and 2002. Responses from the 2007 survey indicate that the percentage of librarians receiving paid vacation, sick leave, retirement, health insurance, tuition reimbursement, dental insurance, and vision plan is higher than in 2002. Support for professional travel expenses, sabbatical leaves, and continuing education is lower than in 2002. Mean regional salaries are highest in the west and lowest in the south. Mean salaries are also highest in corporate or non-profit libraries. The following tables are derived directly from information disseminated by Watson at the AVSL annual meeting in Anaheim in 2008.

**TABLE 4: AVSL STAFFING, SALARY AND STATUS SURVEY RESULTS
MISCELLANEOUS STATISTICS**

	1989	1996	2002	2007
# LIBRARIANS REPRESENTED	43	40	40	37
# INSTITUTIONS REPRESENTED	33	26	18	21
AVERAGE YEARS WORKED	6.8	8.7	9.4	14.26
MEAN SALARY	\$31,647	\$36,500	\$45,450	\$58,000
MEAN SALARY FOR DIRECTORS/MANAGERS	N/A	\$46,654	\$60,833	\$70,000

TABLE 5: MEAN REGIONAL SALARIES

	1996	2002	2007
NORTHEAST	\$34,625	\$43,857	\$59,200
SOUTH AND SOUTH CENTRAL	\$33,200	\$42,000	\$55,750
MIDWEST	\$38,115	\$52,286	\$55,846
WEST	\$45,500	\$55,333	\$63,667

**TABLE 6: BENEFITS COMPARISON
2007**

	1989	1996	2002	2007
PAID VACATION	98%	98%	90%	97%
SICK LEAVE	98	98	90	95
RETIREMENT	96	95	90	97
HEALTH INSURANCE	98	98	90	97
PROF. TRAVEL EXPENSE	94	75	88	81
TUITION REIMBURSEMENT	63	63	53	54
SABBATICAL LEAVE	22	20	23	22
DENTAL INSURANCE	76	90	90	97
VISION PLAN	50	60	78	81
SUPPORT FOR CONTINUING EDUCATION	67	87	85	81

**TABLE 7: MEAN SALARIES BY TYPE OF LIBRARY
2007**

	1989	1996	2002	2007
INDEPENDENT SCHOOL	\$30,000	\$34,786	\$41,052	\$55,800
BRANCH	\$32,476	\$41,857	\$65,333	\$57,000
COMBINED HEALTH SCIENCES	\$35,300	\$30,071	\$45,714	\$48,000
GENERAL UNIVERSITY	\$26,000	\$36,500	\$54,000	\$61,600
HOSPITAL	\$31,500	\$41,000	\$43,428	\$65,667
CORPORATE OR NON-PROFIT	\$34,700	\$39,125	NO DATA	\$71,000

LIBRARY ACQUISITIONS

It is helpful for individuals responsible for starting new vision libraries or for vision librarians requesting resources from administrators to be able to compare their local situation with a composite of similar libraries. The information in Tables 8, 9, and 10 also was derived from the 2008 AVSL statistical survey.

TABLE 8: ANNUAL MONOGRAPHS BUDGETS (BY TYPE OF LIBRARY) 2008		
	MEAN	MEDIAN
ALL LIBRARIES	\$12,548.82	\$11,094.00
OPTOMETRY LIBRARIES ONLY (n=15)	\$14,740.06	13,200.00
OPHTHALMOLOGY LIBRARIES ONLY (n=5)	\$7504.40	\$10,515.00

TABLE 9: ANNUAL SERIALS BUDGETS (BY TYPE OF LIBRARY) 2008		
LIBRARY TYPE	ANNUAL SERIALS BUDGET	
	MEAN	MEDIAN
ALL LIBRARIES	\$44,534.52	\$39,897.00
OPTOMETRY LIBRARIES ONLY (n=13)	\$59,542.23	\$51,456.62
OPHTHALMOLOGY LIBRARIES ONLY (n=5)	\$21,535.20	\$21,484.00

**TABLE 10: NUMBER OF PAPER AND ELECTRONIC SERIALS*
(BY TYPE OF LIBRARY)
2008**

LIBRARY TYPE	PAPER		ELECTRONIC	
	MEAN	MEDIAN	MEAN	MEDIAN
ALL LIBRARIES	72.33	70.00	61.58	58.00
OPTOMETRY LIBRARIES ONLY (n=15)	95.93	83.00	80.87	80.00
OPHTHALMOLOGY LIBRARIES ONLY (n=6)	36.67	40.00	41.00	51.50

*For ease of reporting, libraries holding paper and electronic copies of the same serial were asked to report one paper serial and one electronic serial.

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COST OF LIBRARY MATERIALS

MONOGRAPHS

For the year ending in December, 2009, the U.S. consumer price index is estimated to drop 1.0% over the previous year⁵. In recent decades it has been demonstrated that there is little correlation between the consumer price index and the cost of library materials. The general perception that price increases for library materials continue to be exorbitant can certainly be attributed to continuing serials inflation, but it now appears that monograph prices have started to rise, after a decade-long period of fairly constant prices.

Among areas of interest to vision libraries, U.S. hardcover book prices in education, and technology experienced moderate price increases in 2008, with a small decrease in the price of science books. The U.S. hardcover books in medicine price increased by 2.9% up from a decrease 4.3% last year. No subject area U.S. hardcover book prices increased as dramatically as education (+7.5%) and science (+6.0%) 2006-2007. The average percent change this year was 3.1%.

Table 11, derived from the Bowker Annual,⁶ shows 2004 average prices, 2005, 2006, 2007 and 2008 prices, the percent change from 2007 to 2008, and an index based on 2004 prices for U.S. *hardcover* books in several subject categories which are relevant to vision science. It should be noted that the index base was shifted to 2004 from 1994 which was the base for the 2006-2007 table. With this index base adjustment the yearly average prices increased for all previous years in all subject areas.

TABLE 11: U.S. HARDCOVER BOOK PRICES (Index Base: 2004=100) 2008							
SUBJECT	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	% CHANGE FROM 2007	INDEX
EDUCATION	\$101.26	\$93.08	\$103.86	\$109.01	\$110.25	+1.1%	107.7
MEDICINE	\$159.09	\$155.08	\$158.37	\$150.67	\$155.01	+2.9%	95.1
SCIENCE	\$172.53	\$172.81	\$168.87	\$174.11	\$170.96	-1.8%	102.2
TECHNOLOGY	\$154.91	\$167.17	\$149.01	\$140.41	\$144.24	+2.7%	94.0
ALL SUBJECTS	\$81.83	\$79.46	\$83.78	\$81.17	\$83.71	+3.10%	101.7

Table 12, also from the Bowker Annual⁷, records prices for North American *academic* books. It shows that in this area inflation is increasing. Education which achieved a double-digit increase last year increased moderately this year. Among all subjects inflation was up an average of 5.6% in 2007 from only 2.9% in 2006. Psychology and science experienced significant increases in academic book prices. Both moved from a decrease of -3.0% in book prices in 2006 to a marked increase of 6.8% and 10.2% respectively in 2007. Academic books in medicine experienced a minor increase.

TABLE 12: NORTH AMERICAN ACADEMIC BOOK PRICES (Index Base: 1989=100) 2007							
SUBJECT	1989	2004	2005	2006	2007	% CHANGE FROM 2006	INDEX
EDUCATION	\$29.61	\$47.47	\$51.30	\$56.86	\$58.83	+3.5%	198.7
MEDICINE	\$58.38	\$76.72	\$83.45	\$85.21	\$86.01	+0.94%	147.3
PSYCHOLOGY	\$31.97	\$50.67	\$56.85	\$55.27	\$59.04	+6.8%	184.7
SCIENCE	\$56.10	\$96.99	\$86.82	\$84.02	\$92.59	+10.2%	165.1
ALL	\$41.69	\$61.50	\$65.42	\$67.29	\$74.12	+5.6%	174.0

SUBJECTS

Table 13 reveals that inflation in prices for British academic books⁸ for all subjects increased by 2.9% from 2006 to 2007 but with wide variations in areas that are of interest to vision libraries, including one category with a double-digit increases and one with a double-digit decrease. There were no 2008 prices listed in the 2009 (54th edition) of Bowker's therefore inflation for British books from 2007 to 2008 could not be determined.

TABLE 13: BRITISH ACADEMIC BOOK PRICES
(Index Base: 1985=100)
2007
[in pounds sterling]

SUBJECT	1985	2005	2006	2007	% CHANGE FROM 2006	INDEX
EDUCATION	12.22	38.92	44.54	45.59	+2.4%	373.1
MISCELLANEOUS MEDICINE	22.08	49.31	51.28	51.50	+0.4%	233.2
NON-CLINICAL MEDICINE	18.19	43.80	38.64	47.78	-11.8%	262.7
GENERAL MEDICINE	21.03	50.53	54.02	55.00	+1.8%	261.5
PSYCHOLOGY	19.25	42.56	47.02	48.25	+2.6%	250.6
GENERAL SCIENCE	13.73	38.57	39.98	47.64	+19.2%	346.9
ALL SUBJECTS	19.07	43.37	45.09	46.39	+2.9%	243.3

This is the second year in which Doody's Core Titles in the Health Sciences has been used in the *Guidelines* as a source of price trends for monographs in science and medicine. *Doody's* breaks its content into specialties, which makes it much easier to focus on the economics of vision-related titles and to track them from year to year. In the long run this will afford a better summary of key economics factors facing vision librarians. Unfortunately, *Doody's* does not cover a very large number of vision titles, and this small sample size may not be an accurate picture of true vision monograph costs.

Under the category “optometry” *Doody’s* lists 24 core titles, and under “ophthalmology” it lists 58 in 2009. The average cost per title appears in the following table.⁹ Inflation has moderated considerably in the past year with respect to ophthalmology books dropping from 6.5% to 3.4%. Optometry books have dropped dramatically from +2.0% to -26.7%. It must be noted that the average cost is calculated for the unique books on each list contained in any category. Titles shared by both collections would not be included in the average cost calculations.

**TABLE 15: AVERAGE COST PER TITLE
2006-2008**

	2006	2007	2008	2009	% CHANGE FROM 2008
Ophthalmology	\$205.29	\$233.97	\$249.09	257.62	+3.4%
Optometry	\$120.50	\$159.46	\$162.49	119.10	-26.7%

While *Doody’s* does make the distinction between “ophthalmology” core titles and “optometry” core titles, it seems likely that any vision library will collect materials from both specialties. Not surprisingly, some titles appear in both lists; for example: Kanski, J. *Clinical ophthalmology*. 6th ed., 2007. Any meaningful attempt to monitor costs for vision-related monographs should consider both specialties.

The total cost per category appears in the following table.¹⁰

**TABLE 16: TOTAL COST PER CATEGORY
2006-2008**

	2006	2007	2008	2009	% CHANGE FROM 2008
Ophthalmology	\$10,059.45	\$11,230.64	\$12,703.39	\$14,941.75	+17.6%
Optometry	\$2,048.55	\$3667.65	\$3,574.70	\$2,858.50	-20.0%

The total price of optometry titles decreased again in 2009, while the sample size increased from 22 to 24 titles.

Future editions of the *Guidelines* will track changes in average cost of titles in these categories over time by compiling information from each year's edition of *Doody's*.

Doody's reports pricing trends according to major classification, most of which are relevant to vision libraries. The following table illustrates these changes in a category entitled "Health Sciences" (excludes Nursing) from 2005 to 2009.¹¹ Inflation has increased in "Associated Health Professions" and "Clinical Medicine". There was a marked increase in inflation for the "Basic Sciences" category.

**TABLE 17: AVERAGE COST COMPARISON BY GENERAL CATEGORY
HEALTH SCIENCES
2008**

CATEGORY	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	\$ CHANGE FROM 2008	% CHANGE FROM 2008
ASSOCIATED HEALTH PROFESSIONS (Chiropractic, Dentistry, Occupational Therapy, Optometry, Pharmacy, Podiatry, Speech & Hearing, Veterinary Medicine, etc.)	\$85.76	\$85.60	\$101.56	\$104.92	\$108.87	\$3.95	+3.63%
BASIC SCIENCES (Anatomy, Biochemistry, Epidemiology, Microbiology, Neuroscience, Pharmacology, Physiology, etc.)	\$96.15	\$110.29	\$126.90	\$129.49	\$161.04	\$31.55	+19.59%
CLINICAL MEDICINE (Allergy/Clinical Immunology, Anesthesiology, Cardiology, Dermatology, Family Practice, Nutrition, Ophthalmology, Psychiatry, Urology, etc.)	\$157.17	\$161.47	\$170.62	\$185.49	\$190.58	\$5.09	+2.67%
OTHER DISCIPLINES (Health Information Management, History of Medicine, Library & Information Science, Managed Care, Medical Ethics, Medicolegal Issues, etc.)	\$76.64	\$62.12	\$71.14	\$81.44	\$77.92	(-\$3.52)	-4.52%

SERIALS

The "Brandon/Hill List" documented huge sustained increases for journal subscriptions. Its bundle of 141 selected medical journals increased in price by 19.9% during the period from 2001 to 2003, following an increase of 18.8% during the period from 1999 to 2001--and 22.1% from 1997 to 1999. The average subscription cost of journals in the final edition of the "Brandon/Hill List" was \$391.92. Indeed, over the 38 years ending in 2003 the average price per journal subscription increased 2720%.¹²

Very few -- if any -- vision libraries experienced proportional growth in their serials budgets over that span of time. The reality is that many vision libraries have had to cancel serial titles (or are facing massive cancellation projects) in order to stay within their budgets. This fact is brought home by a search of the web on such terms as "serials" and "prices" or "serials" and "cancel." Hundreds of documents from various libraries discussing strategies for dealing with the serials crisis result from such searches, frequently including plans for local serials cancellation projects.

Prices for serials vary according to subject field, and those in the fields that are most closely allied with vision science tend to be quite volatile. American serials in chemistry and physics, for instance, increased by 6.6% from 2007 to 2008 down slightly from last year, while those in medicine and psychology increased by 9.9% and 8.9% respectively from 2007 to 2008 up from 7.6 in 2007.¹³

Serials in nearly all other fields also tended to increase at a rate much higher than inflation. American periodicals overall increased in price by 8.0% (including Russian translations) from 2007 to 2008, down from 8.5% last year. Given the consumer price index is expected to drop by 1% serials prices are still exceeding inflation significantly.

Table 18 shows year 2008 average prices for U.S. periodicals in several relevant fields.

SUBJECT	1984	2005	2006	2007	2008	% CHANGE FROM 2007	INDEX
----------------	-------------	-------------	-------------	-------------	-------------	---------------------------------------	--------------

CHEMISTRY AND PHYSICS	\$228.90	\$1,879.56	\$2,045.12	\$2,189.67	\$2,333.37	+6.6	1,019.4
MEDICINE	\$125.57	\$962.83	\$1,034.83	\$1,113.97	\$1,224.41	+9.9	975.1
PSYCHOLOGY	\$69.74	\$496.41	\$539.07	\$579.93	\$631.79	+8.9	905.9
ENGINEERING	\$78.70	\$552.02	\$592.99	\$634.85	\$688.98	+8.5	875.5
ALL U.S	\$72.47	\$449.69	\$484.18	\$518.55	\$559.96	+8.0	772.7

Ebsco estimated an approximate overall increase of 7% to 9% for a typical U.S. journal collection in U.S. academic and academic medical libraries for the year 2009.¹⁴ This seems to have proven to be an accurate projection as the average increase across all U.S. serials from 2007-2008 was 8.0%. Due to recent strengthening of the dollar vs. the pound and the euro, European journals are expected to increase by from 0% to 4% for American customers in 2009. There have been no more recent projections posted for 2010.

The decades-long continuation of serial cost inflation is no longer news for libraries. Librarians have grown resigned to annual 8% - 10% serial inflation rates in the past several decades, during an era when general U.S. inflation has been only between 1.3 and 5.5% annually. People contemplating beginning a new vision library (or indeed any library) need to be aware that they will have to master the art of creative fund raising or adopt unconventional serials acquisitions practices (e.g., pay-per-view, heavy use of interlibrary borrowing) in order avoid annual reductions in the number of serial subscriptions that they can afford.

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ELECTRONIC PUBLICATIONS

E-JOURNALS

The promise of electronic journals to hold price increases in check has not been realized, while publishers' profits continue to escalate. Nevertheless, vision libraries continue to increase their holdings of e-journals, from an average of 40.28 per vision library in 2002 to an average of 61.58 in 2008. While there is no evidence that the rapid growth in e-journals is reducing serial subscription costs, there are many positive aspects to electronic journals in libraries.

- There is evidence that access to a larger number of journals frequently accompanies conversion from print to electronic subscriptions by libraries, thanks at least in part to the

practice of “bundling,” i.e., the practice of many publishers of requiring the purchase of a “bundle” of e-journals in order to gain access to a single title.¹⁵

- Operational costs (as opposed to subscription costs) tend to be much lower in libraries for electronic journals vs. print journals.¹⁶
- Electronic journals are widely accepted by patrons and appear to be greatly preferred, particularly by students. One study demonstrated that users accessed the electronic versions more than ten times as often as the print versions during a six-month study period.¹⁷ However, at least one study showed that medical faculty largely continue to rely on print journals over electronic journals,¹⁸ which indicates that vision libraries should carefully assess the preferences of their patrons before making precipitous wholesale cancellation of print journals in favor of electronic.

Other factors to examine when considering migration to electronic journals include:

- There are more variables associated with the purchase of e-journals than p-journals.
- Price/contract negotiations are more complex.
- Management of e-journals may require more skilled (e.g., highly-paid) staff.
- E-journals are typically available earlier than print versions.
- Savings are realized in check-in, claiming, binding, shelving, and collecting statistics.
- Cost per use is less because physical storage space is not required.
- E-journals require more reference support.
- The permanent archiving of e-journals is uncertain.¹⁹

Vision libraries, particularly those that are not affiliated with larger university or institutional libraries, should consider the benefits of partnerships or memberships in consortia in order to obtain the lowest possible prices for e-journal subscriptions.

Open Access

Since the largest publishers continue to rake in hefty profits²⁰ at the expense of library materials budgets, the concept of open access has emerged as an attractive alternative. Currently, over 3800 peer-reviewed journals are listed in the Directory of Open Access Journals, but, alas, as yet only 13 in ophthalmology, plus a few more in other areas of interest—optics, for instance. Research has demonstrated that articles published in open access journals are cited earlier and more frequently than non-open access journals.²¹ The trend toward open access will be fought vigorously by publishers, but it continues to be the best hope of vision librarians for relief from outrageous serial price increases. Vision librarians should take every opportunity to urge their researchers and faculty members to publish in open access journals.

E-BOOKS

Vision libraries can no longer ignore the e-book phenomenon. During 2004 e-books comprised the fastest-growing segment of the publishing industry. During the first quarter of that year over 400,000 e-books were sold, which was an increase of 46% over the previous year.²² The use of

e-books will continue to grow within all libraries. In this new environment e-books clearly merit increased attention from vision librarians, despite the fact that they are typically more expensive for libraries to purchase than traditional print monographs.

E-books are associated with a unique set of advantages and disadvantages which librarians should consider.²³

- They are available 24/7.
- It can be unnecessary to travel to the library to use e-books.
- Multiple users may be able to access the same e-book simultaneously (although not all e-book suppliers allow this in their licensing agreements).
- E-books usually are searchable and have navigation features.
- E-books do not occupy physical space in the library.
- Processing and handling costs are lower with e-books than with printed books (or “p-books” or even “tree-books”).
- As with e-journals, publishers sometimes provide “bundles” of e-book titles.

Disadvantages of e-books include²⁴

- Use of e-books requires some sort of equipment.
- Particular e-book software may not be user-friendly.
- As yet, there is a lack of standardization of interfaces among e-book publishers.
- From a user’s perspective, it is difficult to have several open at the same time when writing or studying.
- The overall number of e-books is still limited.
- Many readers, if not most, still prefer to hold a traditional printed book in their hands.

Even if vision libraries do not embrace e-books on a large scale, they still must contend with the fact that some monographs now and in the future will ONLY be available electronically. Such e-books as Duane’s Ophthalmology clearly have an established place in vision libraries, and librarians must make them available to their patron population.

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ELECTRONIC RESOURCES ON THE WEB

A large and constantly increasing number of electronic resources relating to vision are available on the world wide web. An excellent list of these resources was composed by Trish Duffel, of the University of Iowa, and is maintained as an AVSL web page at <http://webeye.ophth.uiowa.edu/dept/websites/eyeres.htm>

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TECHNOLOGY

The current edition of the AVSL document "Standards for Vision Science Libraries"²⁵ includes a section that reviews the impact of technology on vision libraries and sets minimum standards relating to electronic technology that vision libraries should meet. These standards include such items as an appropriate electronic workstation, network access, and other capabilities that enable vision librarians to deliver the services that are required by contemporary information consumers. The following information consists of more specific information about the vision librarian's electronic tools than is provided in the *Standards*.

Each librarian and staff member in a vision library should have an appropriate electronic workstation (desktop or laptop), consisting of:

- CPU: The latest generation processor, at least 2 ghz
- 160 GB hard drive
- 2 GB RAM
- 64 mb ATI , Radeon X300 video card or equivalent
- DVD RW/CD RW
- 19" color monitor, 1280 x 1024 resolution, flat panel
- 1 MB L2 cache
- 10/100 Mbps Ethernet card and/or wireless equivalent
- peripheral storage as desired
- audio port on front panel and speakers or headsets
- networked or dedicated b&w laser printer or equivalent, minimum, 15 PPM. Access to a networked color printer.
- uninterruptible power supply
- USB connectivity
- access to a comprehensive suite of productivity and communications software
- optical mouse with scroll
- at least a three-year warranty on workstation CPU

The library should have an online catalog of its holdings which is available through online public access machines. These machines should also permit electronic access to the catalogs of other institutions via the internet, to relevant electronic indexes including minimally MEDLINE, [Visionet](#), and bibliographic utilities, either via web browser or via proprietary software, and to

the electronic journals, monographs, and other documents necessary to provide adequate service to the library's clientele. A similar machine also should be used as a web server, upon which the library's web documents reside.

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THE FUTURE OF "GUIDELINES FOR VISION SCIENCE LIBRARIES"

Readers of this document are encouraged to suggest other categories of information which they would like to see appear in future editions of the "Guidelines." Any other suggestions for improving this publication also will be welcomed. Contact the Chair of the Association of Visual Science Librarians with your suggestions and comments. Alternatively, you may pass your suggestions on to any AVSL member, and they will be routed to the appropriate officer for attention.

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