

Licensing: Dealbreakers, Negotiation and Communication with Vendors

Licenses serve as the backbone for our electronic collections. Their terms direct everything from how our users can use resources, to how we retain long-term access, to how we protect our libraries from potentially devastating liability. Librarians are rarely also lawyers, and formal training in the licensing process is rare. Instead, licensing skills are often picked up on the job. The way I approach licenses now is very different from how I approached licenses when I started my librarian career 14 years ago. But the way I approach licenses now is also different from how I approached licenses five years ago. Part of this change stems from my experiences as a librarian, and from changes in the field. But part of this change stems from talking to other librarians about their own licensing practices. This table talk is an opportunity for us to get together and talk about the way we license resources: what we focus on, how we negotiate and how we communicate our needs to vendors.

- How does licensing work at your library? Is it done in-house, or is another department responsible? What challenges does this approach bring to your library?
- Do you have any dealbreakers for licensing? Where do those dealbreakers come from (e.g., legal requirements, university procurement offices, library policy)?
- How have your licensing concerns changed over time? Are there new technologies or bad experiences that have pushed you to add or remove terms from licenses moving forward?
- How do you approach negotiation in your library? Do you focus primarily on cost? Do you negotiate for added features or products?
- How do you communicate your needs with vendors? What do you find helpful? What do you find challenging?