



Clarivate announces plans to phase out one-time perpetual purchases of e-books

by Britt Amell | 13 June 2025 | English, Observations, Observations and Responses



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This observation was written by Brittany Amell, with special thanks to INKE Partners Evelyn Feldman, Susan Haigh, and Rowena Johnson for their contributions.

At a Glance

Key Participants	Clarivate, Research Libraries
Timeframe	2025
Keywords or Key Themes	Open access; scholarly publishing; licensing agreements; research libraries; scholarly communication

On February 18, 2025, Clarivate **announced** their plans to phase out one-time purchases of print and e-books by the end of 2025. According to Bar Veinstein (President, Academia and Government), Clarivate is “addressing libraries’ evolving needs by breaking down barriers and delivering seamless access to . . . curated content. [Clarivate’s] goal is to make learning and research more accessible and affordable at a large scale, unlocking opportunities for every library, in every classroom and at every research department” (**Press Release**).

In response to this announcement, EBSCO (one of ProQuest’s largest competitors) **issued one of their own**, reaffirming their “unwavering commitment to supporting libraries with diverse acquisition needs, including perpetual access to e-books, print book fulfillment, and flexible acquisition models like Evidence-Based Acquisition (EBA) and Demand-Driven Acquisition (DDA).”

Reactions to Clarivate’s announcement were immediate (e.g., **Enis 2025; Haime 2025; O’Donovan 2025**), as librarians and library-aligned took to various channels, including Bluesky and LinkedIn, to voice their concerns and frustrations. On LinkedIn, Anthony Sinnott (Access and Procurement Development Manager at the University of York) **wrote**:

This feels more like an attack on the sector rather than a business strategy. To be clear, this means that dozens of universities will now have to deal with the fallout of losing perpetual purchasing on one of the biggest e-book supply platforms (that is actually several platforms because of our already circular supply chains) and retool and re-align workflows and processes at the busiest time of the year for us.

Also on Linked in, Jason Harper (Head of Library Research Services at the University of Bath) **wrote**:

The timescale for the drawdown (by end of October 2025) adds salt to the wound, coinciding as it does with summer ordering and starts of academic term. Ripping out key services, products and workflow integrations (shelf-ready, evidence based and demand driven acquisition) in favour of subscription-based products and platforms indicates they have placed profit margins above customer needs.

In an **opinion piece written for the UKSG**, Siobhan Haime (University of London) shared similar concerns:

the transition to subscription-only access represents more than a change in purchasing models – it fundamentally undermines the ability of academic libraries to build collections that serve their specific institutional needs. It is likely to impede our ability to maintain comprehensive research — let alone teaching — collections.

Clarivate’s “Letter to the Library Community”

In early March, Clarivate released a follow-up entitled “**Our letter to the library community**,” in which they stated:

This letter is to address the recent changes we announced regarding purchasing of print and perpetual access to electronic books for libraries. We recognize that the absence of community consultation created frustration, during already challenging times for libraries and higher education. We sincerely apologize for this and are committed to learning from this moment and doing better. (Clarivate Analytics, March 4, 2025)

This **second announcement** clarified that access to previously purchased books through E-book Central would be preserved, and that Clarivate would extend the ability to make perpetual purchases through till June 30, 2026. Clarivate also indicated their commitment to increasing their investment in enabling title-by-title purchases through the “Rialto” marketplace—a web-based service owned by Clarivate that uses “a marketplace approach” to enable the selection and acquisition

of “library resources fast, accurate and transparent” (Clarivate, May 30, 2024).

Writing for Katina, a digital magazine written by and for librarians (according to its masthead), Sunshine Carter called the response from Clarivate “hollow.” Many librarians took to Bluesky (a.k.a. “Skybrarians”) to vent their frustration:

“I normally do try to offer people the benefit of the doubt here, but what in the ChatGPT is this apology from Clarivate?” (from @panoptigoth.bsky.social)

“Who loves libraries most? Clarivate loves libraries most! That’s why they deliver long-term value to libraries—by extending your ability to purchase books by a whole year.” (from @libraryfutures.bsky.social)

Re-interpreting digital ownership?

In a guest blog post for *The Scholarly Kitchen*, Isaac Wink (March 4, 2025) likens Clarivate’s announcement to moves made by other companies like Spotify and Apple music—the latter launched in 2015 as a subscription-based service, around the same time Microsoft announced it would stop producing versions of Windows. Clarivate’s announcement, Wink writes, coincidentally comes:

just a week before Amazon ended users’ ability to download their Kindle purchases to a computer. While it feels to many consumers like buying an e-book means they have purchased a file that they can use as they please, in reality they have bought the right to access the book through approved methods. Amazon’s removal of the ability to download books is signaling that it is cracking down on the former interpretation of digital ownership.

Unfortunately, libraries have been contending with this issue since, well, arguably their beginning, though e-books particularly have presented a challenge over the past two decades (Deschamps 2024; Kambitsch, 2011; Nowakowsky & Voy 2024). Take, for instance, the following quote written by Tim Kambitsch (then-Director of Dayton Metro Library) in 2011:

‘Purchasing’ eBooks may be overstating the actual relationship to the materials we select and offer our patrons. The concept that libraries buy-to-own eBooks is more conceptual than factual. We select titles; we pay different prices for

titles that seem to have a relationship to the hardcopy price of the title. However, marketing materials and licenses agreements we sign don't give one that warm and fuzzy feeling. It might be better to refer to these as titles we have licensed access for our patrons.

Prior to e-books, libraries were generally able to purchase and lend as many print copies of books as they had available on their shelves to patrons. However, the introduction of e-books allowed publishers to trial new lending models that ultimately left publishers with even more control over libraries' lending and acquisition processes ([Nowakowsky & Voy 2024](#)). Clarivate's announcement is yet another challenge for overworked and underfunded libraries to navigate.

In a response to this piece, Evelyn Feldman (Head, Acquisitions and Electronic Resources, University of Victoria Libraries) wrote:

This move by Clarivate raises concerns around several issues, such as trust in our vendor partnerships, market consolidation, and ownership of e-books, which is essential for libraries to maintain stable collections for current and future research needs. [The International Coalition of Library Consortia's (ICOLC)] [statement](#) reflects my own concerns on these issues. (Note: You can read Evelyn Feldman's response in full by scrolling to the 'Responses from the INKE Partnership' section below.)

Similarly, Susan Haigh (Executive Director, CARL) and Rowena Johnson (CARL Visiting Program Officer for Copyright and Digital Access, Copyright Officer, University of Calgary) shared the following:

The Canadian Association of Research Libraries (CARL) was disappointed with Clarivate's announcement and pending changes to its print and eBook offerings, namely removing the option for libraries to make one-time purchases and forcing a subscription-only model on universities. The Clarivate decision illustrates many of the issues libraries are facing in the digital environment, including their ability to own, preserve and develop robust diverse collections based on the needs of their users – students, instructors and researchers. (You can read Susan Haigh's and Rowena Johnson's response in full by scrolling to the 'Responses from the INKE Partnership' section below.)

Key Questions and Consideration

Clarivate's news raises several questions and concerns, and likely will continue to, as libraries grapple with what to do next.

The sustainability of collections in the face of looming and ever-increasing subscription costs is an issue that surfaces repeatedly. For instance, the UKB—a joint venture consisting of 13 Dutch universities and the National Library of the Netherlands—raised this concern in a recent [statement](#):

UKB shares global disappointment at these announced changes. The new strategy runs counter to UKB Libraries' collection strategy, which aims to build permanent collections and promote library biodiversity. University libraries strive for sustainable collections that closely match their specific teaching and research profiles, which is severely hampered by such subscriptions. (UKB, March 31, 2025)

Haimé (2025) has pointed out that content “can be removed without library input or prior announcement”—though Clarivate (March 18, 2025) indicates that off-cycle removals are only conducted occasionally, due to “legal reasons or loss of publisher rights” (p. 6). The unforeseen loss of materials in the middle of an academic semester might be distressing for libraries with budgets for emergency solutions, but smaller libraries without financial flexibility will be left in the lurch, as will the patrons they serve.

The removal of content raises other concerns amidst the current global political backdrop; namely, the ambiguity of the phrase “for legal reasons” leaves room for interpretations that infringe on the role of libraries in society more broadly (see: [CARL 2022](#)). For instance, Gosart (2024) has shared that the Russian government intends to make it “make it illegal to read books in Ukrainian on the occupied territories” (p. 1). What would Clarivate do in cases like this? Or in others related to censorship?

Alongside these concerns are hopes, too, that Clarivate's announcement will intensify international actions to move towards diversifying collections, supporting open-access publishing, and mobilizing collective action: “Our response to these changes may shape the future of academic library collections for years to come – and hopefully for the better” (Haimé, 2025).

Responses from the INKE Partnership

Evelyn Feldman, Head, Acquisitions and Electronic Resources, University of Victoria Libraries:

Our national library consortia CRKN has endorsed a statement published by the International Coalition of Library Consortia (ICOLC), *Aligning E-Book Offerings with Library Needs*, which highlights concerns about Clarivate's decision. This move by Clarivate raises concerns around several issues, such as trust in our vendor partnerships, market consolidation, and ownership of ebooks, which is essential for libraries to maintain stable collections for current and future research needs. ICOLC's statement reflects my own concerns on these issues.

Regarding ownership, like most academic libraries, we prioritize perpetual access to books and journals to ensure ongoing availability of research materials. Clarivate's decision to remove the option to own research materials contradicts those core values of our collections and limits libraries' ability to secure stable access to crucial resources. We will continue to build our collection around perpetual ownership, which will mean turning to publishers that still support that model.

Susan Haigh (Executive Director, CARL) and Rowena Johnson (CARL Visiting Program Officer for Copyright and Digital Access, Copyright Officer, University of Calgary):

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The Clarivate decision illustrates many of the issues libraries are facing in the digital environment, including their ability to own, preserve and develop robust diverse collections based on the needs of their users – students, instructors and researchers. While the shift to a predominantly digital environment has benefited libraries in terms of providing access to patrons regardless of geographical location and facilitating access to heritage content, it has also resulted in libraries losing control over their collections. The prevalence of curated subscription-only collections removes the ability for libraries to select

and own materials. Such models also generally come at a high cost, exacerbating budget issues for many libraries. Furthermore, these collections generally include restrictive terms of use and technological protection measures that allow content providers to lock down materials, preventing and curtailing uses that are permissible under Canadian copyright law.

CARL is committed to working with our partner organizations, such as the Canadian Research Knowledge Network (CRKN), and our member libraries to understand and seek solutions to the issues posed by subscription-only models. CARL will continue to advocate nationally for fair and equitable access to materials and raise awareness of issues related to ownership in the digital environment which includes: reinforcing the premise of technological neutrality in the Copyright Act; ensuring creator and user rights are balanced; and promoting and encouraging open access to help eliminate the barriers created by subscription models. This work is essential in ensuring member libraries can fulfill their mandates and support robust teaching, learning and research environments that foster innovation and contribute to Canada's success globally.

About CARL – CARL is a bilingual, not-for-profit organization that provides leadership and strategic collaboration for its membership. Its members include the 29 major Canadian university libraries and three federal institutions. CARL's mission is to increase capacity to advance research and higher education. CARL promotes effective and sustainable knowledge creation, dissemination, and preservation, and advocates for public policy that enables broad access to scholarly information. ([Read more about CARL here](#))

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