

CAUL statement on ProQuest Book purchasing models

27 February 2025

Australian and Aotearoa New Zealand (AoNZ) university libraries voice serious concerns over ProQuest's recently announced changes to their book sales models

The leaders of university libraries across Australia and AoNZ express serious concern about ProQuest's recent announcement to discontinue demand-driven and evidence-based acquisition models and phase out perpetual eBook and print purchasing in favour of subscription-only eBook packages.

Although ProQuest has presented this change as an effort to focus resources and investments to better support libraries, in practice, it diminishes critical services developed in partnership over many years. These sweeping changes prioritise profit over customer needs and disrupt established workflows and collecting strategies that have been central to the client-focused provision of scholarly resources for many libraries in the university sector.

CAUL and its Members highlight the following specific concerns with the recent announcement:

1. Elimination of perpetual ownership

Perpetual ownership is required to support enduring access to scholarly materials. By ending one-time perpetual purchases for both eBooks and print, ProQuest forces libraries into a subscription model, compromising our ability to build and provide access to collections critical for long-term research, teaching and learning.

2. Dismantling of evidence-based acquisition and demand-driven acquisition programs

The dismantling of evidence-based acquisition and demand-driven acquisition programs will significantly impact libraries' abilities to curate and build collections that reflect the needs of their communities. This change undermines our commitment to financial responsibility by hindering our capacity to make efficient and targeted purchasing decisions.

3. Lack of pricing transparency

Transitioning to a subscription-only eBook model erodes the transparency of title-by-title pricing, potentially forcing libraries into protracted negotiations for new 'big deals' of unwanted bundled content. Again, this significantly challenges libraries' ability to develop relevant collections and manage budgets efficiently and responsibly.

4. Introduction of operational uncertainty

The abrupt closure of current eBook marketplaces combined with the discontinuation of evidence-based and demand-driven acquisition programs disrupts longstanding, integrated workflows upon which libraries have based major resourcing decisions. The unreasonably short timelines for implementation—which includes cut-off dates in 2025 for eBook and print book purchases—pose substantial operational challenges for libraries in Australia and AoNZ. At a time when universities face mounting financial pressures, these changes heighten the risk of significant disruptions not just to resource planning and budget allocation but also to the provision of critical resources needed for teaching and learning. The impact on students and academics is anticipated to be significant.

5. Insufficient consultation and communication

ProQuest's decision-making process appears to have occurred without meaningful consultation with the university library community in Australia and AoNZ. This lack of consultation—including with Clarivate's own Asia Pacific Advisory Board, on which many CAUL Member institutions are represented—has denied the sector the opportunity to share operational insights and support ProQuest in developing more client-centred solutions before the decision was finalised.

6. Prioritising profit over customer needs

Clarivate (ProQuest's parent company) has forecast an Adjusted EBITDA profit margin of 40.5–42% for 2025, underscoring a strong focus on maximising profitabilityⁱ. During the Q4 2024 Earnings Call on 19 February 2025, Clarivate's CEO explicitly noted that the decision to implement these changes to eBook models were driven by the goal of increasing recurring revenue rather than a commitment to enhancing services for the university sector. This clear emphasis on profit over customer needs undermines the quality and appropriateness of services provided to universities.

7. Misleading marketing claims

ProQuest's tagline, "*Curated by librarians, for librarians,*" is misleadingⁱⁱ. Far from representing a cooperative effort, these changes run counter to fundamental library values by restricting institutions' capacity to provide reliable, affordable, and enduring access to scholarly content.

8. Loss of trust with a key library partner

ProQuest has long been recognised as a key partner by the university library sector, working with libraries to develop client-centred product offerings and efficient, integrated workflows. For more than a decade, libraries have worked in partnership with ProQuest to create and adopt evidence-based selection as a crucial element of eBook collection development strategies. By abruptly abandoning these established workflows and discontinuing evidence-based acquisition, ProQuest's recent decision calls into question their commitment to libraries and the partnerships built over years of cooperation.

Libraries in Australia and AoNZ have consistently championed flexible and diverse acquisition strategies to meet the requirements of universities in the regionⁱⁱⁱ. We remain committed to providing access to scholarly materials in a financially responsible manner. ProQuest's radically degraded eBook product offering removes libraries' abilities to curate relevant, inclusive and responsive scholarly collections for the long term. While these changes will impact all CAUL Member institutions, CAUL is concerned that these changes will disproportionately jeopardise resource provision in smaller institutions.

We call on ProQuest to reconsider these plans and engage directly with stakeholders to develop a more collaborative and sustainable solution. Any new model must support the diverse needs of the university community. Most critically, we call on ProQuest to preserve the right for libraries to build and maintain permanent collections for the long-term benefit of their communities.

This statement reflects the unified stance of the directors of university libraries in Australia and Aotearoa, New Zealand. As a sector, we remain resolute in safeguarding access to knowledge for current and future generations. Me mahitahi tātou mō te hauora o te katoa. We work together for the well-being of our university communities.

This statement was collaboratively authored by CAUL Council Members following Member consultation and approved by the CAUL Board.

About CAUL

The Council of Australasian University Librarians (CAUL) is the peak collegiate body for the leaders of university libraries in Australasia and Oceania. It facilitates connection and collaboration and optimises its collective knowledge, expertise, and resources to achieve strategic outcomes at scale in priority areas for the university library sector. CAUL is the trusted voice of the university library sector in the region.

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ⁱ Clarivate. (2025). *Clarivate reports fourth quarter and full year 2024 results* [Press release]. Retrieved February 24, 2025, from <https://ir.clarivate.com/news-events/press-releases/news-details/2025/Clarivate-Reports-Fourth-Quarter-and-Full-Year-2024-Results/default.aspx>

ⁱⁱ ProQuest. (2025). *Introducing ProQuest eBooks: The world's largest scholarly eBook subscription*. Retrieved February 22, 2025, from <https://about.proquest.com/en/blog/2025/introducing-proquest-ebooks-the-worlds-largest-scholarly-ebook-subscription/>

ⁱⁱⁱ See [CAUL Procurement: Statement on eBook provision by publishers](#)