CCL-EAR COMMITTEE REVIEW
Springer eBooks
January 2013

Springer is a global publishing company known for its peer-reviewed journals, books, and more recently, its eBooks. Springer eBooks advertises itself as the "largest collection of STM [science, technology, and math] books online." Springer's purchase model is unique compared to many other eBook vendors as it includes no digital rights management (DRM), unlimited usage, concurrent users, perpetual access/ownership, and electronic ILL allowance. Reviewers had access to the previous Springer eBook platform and the new SpringerLink platform (launched in January 2013) to review this product. CCL has two Springer eBook collections offered for consortial pricing: copyright years, 2005-2012, or current copyright year, 2012. Libraries can also purchase individual titles from Springer.

OVERALL RECOMMENDATION for COMMUNITY COLLEGES: 3, 3
#1 --- Not recommended
#2 --- Recommended with reservations as noted
#3 --- Recommended
#4 --- Outstanding offer

RATINGS for SPECIFIC ASPECTS of the DATABASE:
The following features were examined and rated on a four point scale (1=Poor; 2= Needs Improvement; 3=Good; 4=Excellent):

DATABASE CONTENT/FORMAT: 3, 3

The Springer eBook collection covers science and engineering disciplines as well as social sciences and humanities. The collection also includes books published in foreign languages, including Dutch, French, German, and Italian. The name of the collection, Springer eBook, is a misnomer because in addition to books, book series and textbooks, the collection includes journals and major reference works.

The entire Springer eBook collection contains approximately 3,900,000 entries, including chapters of an eBook or articles in a journal. All Springer eBooks are listed and counted as unique, individual and full-text titles. Once purchased, all titles are accessible perpetually and as such, there are no title list updates. According to the vendor's questionnaire, "titles will never be taken away." When a library purchases a copyright year of eBooks, including primary source materials, they receive every book, book series, major reference work, textbook, brief and handbook that Springer publishes in that given year.

Reviewers conducted a scan through 21,206 book titles in the Springer eBook collection made available through CCL; all are monographs published between 2005 and 2012.Some of the titles seem suitable for community college level, such as *Arts and Technology (2012), Cloud Computing (2010,)* and *Gene Therapy of Cancer (2009)*. However, many of the titles seem too advanced for community college level, for example *Combinatorial Pattern Matching (2005), Pelvic Floor Re-education (2008),* and *Zebrafish Neurobehavioral Protocols (2011).* Springer is

also offering an additional eBook package of copyright year (2012) consisting of 4,725 eBooks, across all 12 subjects. See the CCL Springer Program Subscription Announcement for a list of the Top 100 most used Springer titles and subject areas for the projected 2012 collection.

SEARCH INTERFACE: 3, 3

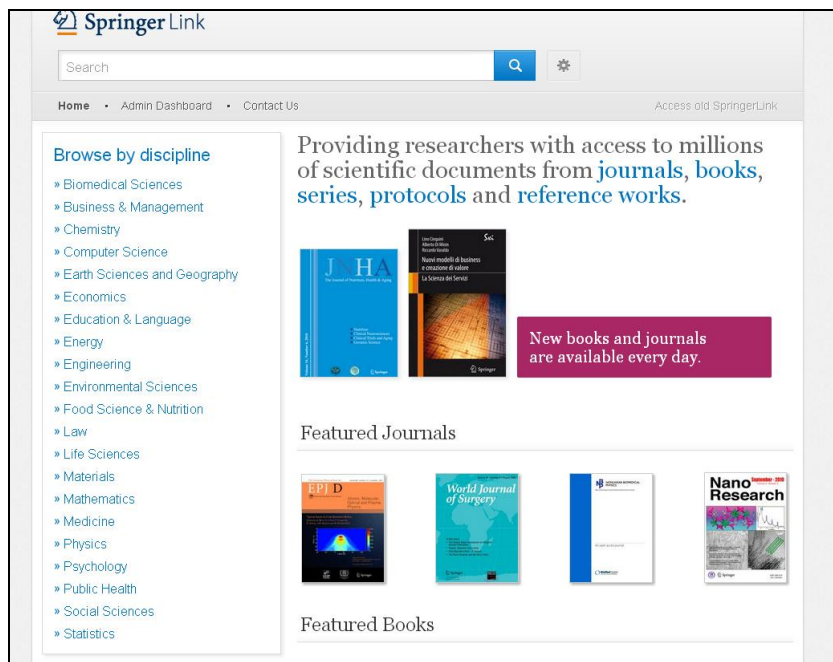The new SpringerLink interface is simple and clean (figure 1. Link.Springer homepage).

Figure 1 Link.Springer homepage

Users can search in SpringerLink by typing their search terms in a search box or browsing a list of 21 disciplines, including biomedical sciences, energy, law, and psychology. Users can limit their search results by publication type, for instance book, journal or reference work; discipline and sub-discipline; publication title; and language.

An advanced search feature is available from the homepage by clicking on the gear symbol to the left of the basic search box. SpringerLink advanced search appears very similar to Google Scholar advanced search options (figure 2. SpringerLink Advanced Search).

Most of the search features appears helpful for users including exact phrase, Boolean operators, title searching, and by author/editor. The feature for year searching may not be very helpful for
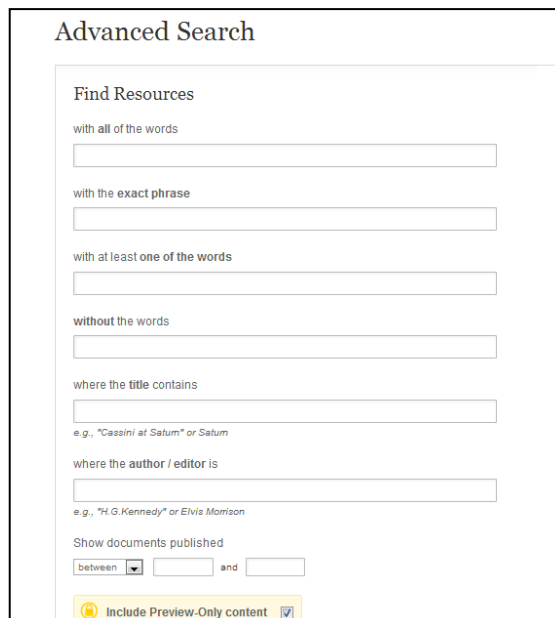

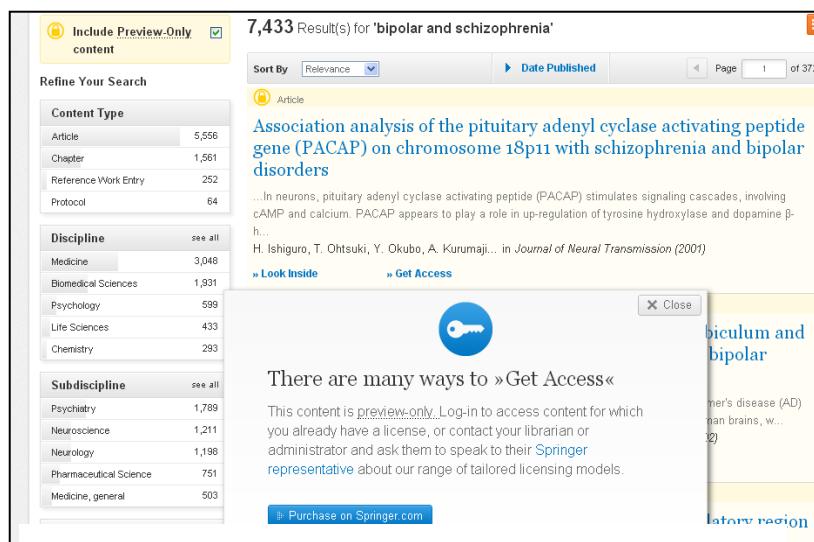**Figure 2 SpringerLink Advanced Search**

Figure 3 Springer Preview-Only content

colleges that only own one or two publication years of Springer eBooks. For example, if a college purchased only the 2011 package, searching by year would not limit results.

Searching in SpringerLink is set to search all of Springer's holdings including Preview-Only content (figure 3. Springer Preview-Only content). This is the default and currently **cannot be turned off** in library administrator settings.

If a library does not own many Springer collection years, the default search results can be misleading and frustrating for users. However, there is an option to unselect "Include Preview-Only content" at the upper left of the result screen. With "Preview-Only content" users can only access the first two pages of the article or chapter of an eBook. In order to "Get Access" to the full content, users are prompted to contact their librarian.

For books to which users have full access, they will see the chapters listed, with the options to view the chapter or download the PDF once they click on the title of the eBook (figure 4. Springer title level). Similar to the previous platform, there is no option to search for a term(s) within the chapter or eBook.
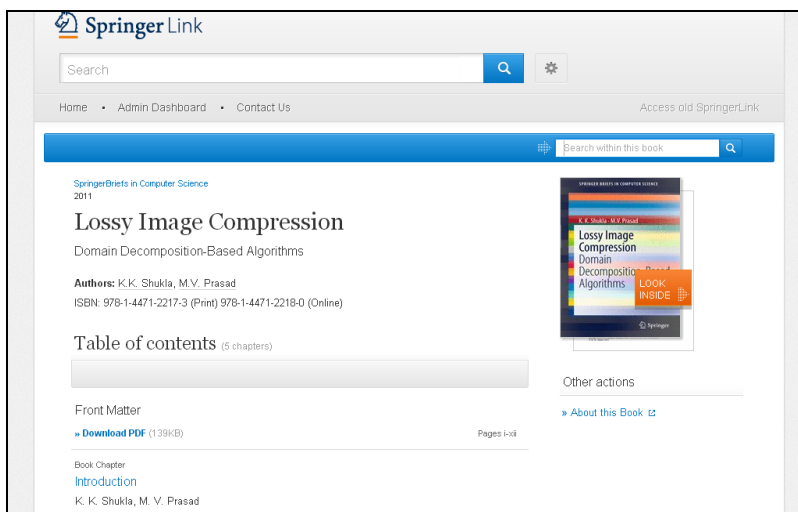

Figure 3 Springer title level

Springer claims that ads are only displayed in eBooks that are on publicly viewable sites. In the previous SpringerLink platform, reviewers found ads at the bottom of the screen when viewing eBook chapters (figure 5. Google ads in previous SpringerLink platform). This confirmed

feedback about Google ads reported by CCL Springer subscribers. However, when reviewers recreate the same search in the new SpringerLink platform, Google ads were not found when viewing chapters.

Figure 4 Google ads in previous SpringerLink platform

There is a citation tool in the new interface but it is cumbersome to use. Instead of an auto-generator that many databases utilize, users have to download the citation by selecting a citation manager, for example ProCite, BookEnds or EndNote (figure 6. Springer citation tool).
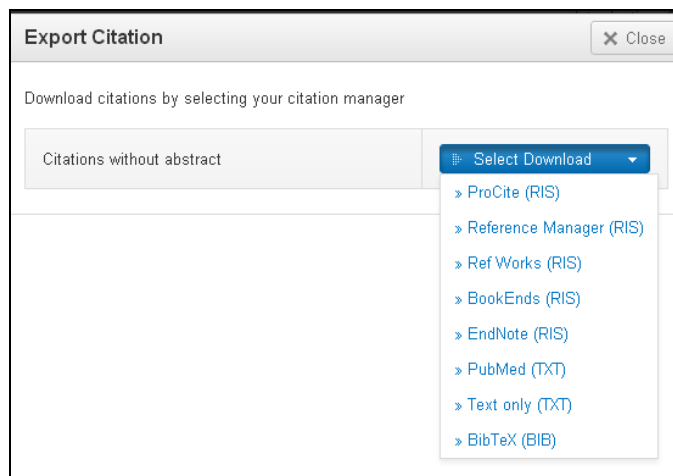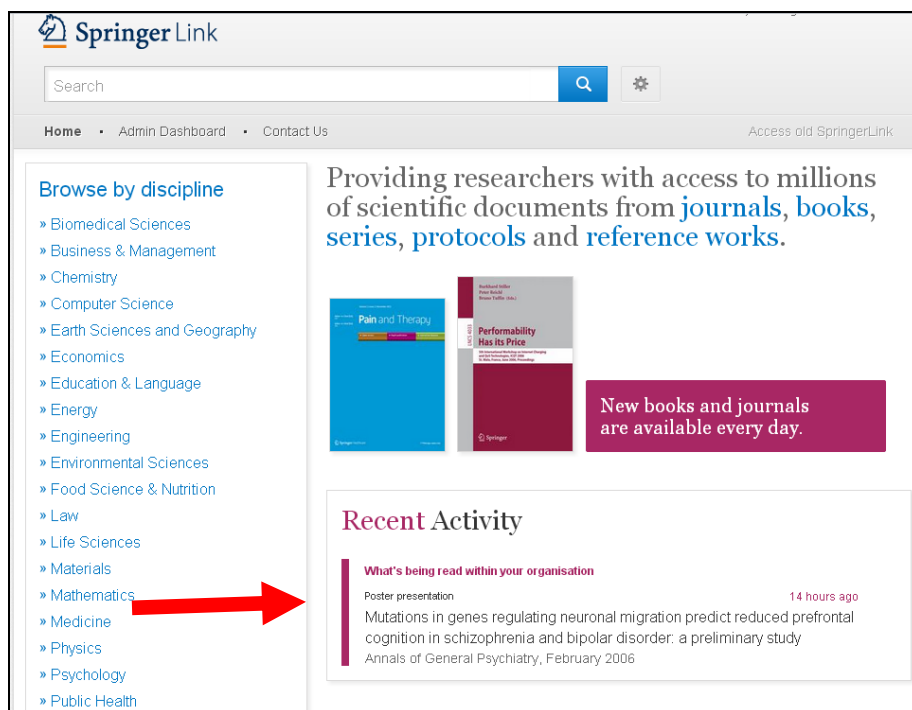

Figure 5 Springer citation tool

SpringerLink keeps track of recent searches within a school in "Recent Activity" and displays content on the entry homepage (figure 7. Springer recent activity – what's being read at your organization). This feature cannot be turned off and could be a useful collection management tool for librarians to see what titles or subjects are being accessed the most. Although no patron name is attached to the titles, this could be a privacy issue and be problematic. The reviewers wonder if users know that titles they have viewed will be displayed on the main page of SpringerLink, will they assume that other electronic resources will display what they searched and viewed to the entire school?

Figure 6 Springer recent activity - what's being read at your organization

As Springer is the sole publisher of their eBooks, they have no digital rights management (DRM). This means users are allowed unlimited printing, unlimited simultaneous usage and unlimited downloads. Students can print out a relevant chapter of a book for future reading. Faculty members can attach a link or PDF to Blackboard, or other course management systems, for use in their course. Librarians can email an entire book to a colleague for viewing on their home computer or tablet. Printing can be done directly from Springer's interface or from a downloadable PDF. SpringerLink has persistent links to its content and is compatible with all browsers as well as PC and OS operating systems. The full-text of every book is searchable both on the SpringerLink platform and on Google, Google Books and Google Scholar.

SpringerLink allows administrators to pull COUNTER compliant usage statistics, view their license and lists of entitlements. Administrators can also pull title lists in KBART (Knowledge bases and related tools) format. KBART is a standard for storing and retrieving metadata in a knowledge base. Library logos or graphics can be uploaded to the administrator panel for branding opportunities on the platform. The new SpringerLink (Link.Springer) platform is scheduled to launch in January 2013. It will have the same set of administrative features as the

previous platform, but may be updated on a weekly basis based on librarians' feedback (figure 8. Springer Admin Dashboard).

Figure 7 Springer Admin Dashboard

Springer lists their content with major discovery services, ILS and local holdings providers. Springer fully subsidizes the downloading of OCLC-enhanced MARC records for any library that purchases their eBooks. Springer also offers their own MARC records, if a library prefers to not use OCLC. More documentation on Springer Marc records is available on the CCL website (http://www.springer.com/librarians/e-content/springer+marc+records+%26+ebook+title+lists?SGWID=0-148802-0-0-0).

USER SUPPORT: 3, 3

Springer provides implementation documentation and support available on their website (http://www.springer.com). Online help is geared towards Springer customers and not individual users. The vendor currently offers free librarian training in-person or via webinars and states that they are in the process of developing short end-user focused training videos.

Springer provides an email-based, 24 hour HelpDesk to contact their sales team and recently added phone help 1-800-777-4643 during business hours. On their, "Contact us" page, Springer also has a web-based "share your idea" form that allows users to describe ideas, questions, problems, or praise. All customers will receive emails if there are any major changes in the database, such as migration to the new platform. Librarians can also opt-in to LibrarianAlerts, a more in-depth email notification system. Springer also maintains social networking sites

(Facebook, Twitter, etc.) that allow for discussion on specific topics (library marketing, etc.). CCL has a copy of Springer's license agreement.

COST: 4, 4

With unlimited concurrent access and remote access and no digital rights management, Springer eBooks appear to be very reasonably priced for community college budgets. Although many titles will not be relevant for the community college level in the current offering, there appear to be many useful eBooks, textbooks, and reference works in many different disciplines in the back file collections from 2005-2012. There is an additional package for titles published in 2012 at a lower total cost.

With perpetual access and ownership of eBooks, there is a one-time cost and an annual hosting fee after the first two years. Springer will waive the annual hosting fee for another two years if the library purchases an eBook or a journal subscription.

In addition, Springer currently offers a Print on Demand feature for any book a library owns for a very cost effective flat fee including shipping and handling. This feature could be helpful to students if faculty members adopt Springer eBooks as course materials.

AVAILABILITY/ACCESSIBILITY OF SERVICE: 3, 3

Access to Springer eBooks appears to be reliable and stable. Although Springer does not claim complete ADA/Section 508 compliance, the new platform employs many accessibility practices including structured HTML that can be easily read by screen-readers, HTML5, providing a non-JavaScript version, consistent "alt" tags, opening items in the same tab, etc. The vendor states that their new site is even more compliant than previous platforms and did not provide a timeline for full compliance. More information on Springer compliance is available from the CCL website (http://www.cclibraries.org/providers/508%20section/SpringerLink%20ADA%20July%202011.doc).

Remote access is available and authentication is supported via IP range (EZProxy, etc.) and the vendor can work within the constraints of each individual institution to grant remote access (tokens, username/password, etc.). Any currently enrolled student, faculty member or staff of an institution is an authorized user and includes walk-in users. Springer's eBook model is a purchase and even with cancellation, ongoing access to all purchased content is available in perpetuity. The vendor states that they are LOCKSS, CLOCKS and Portico compliant.

Springer allows electronic ILL of its material within CONTU (Fair Use) guidelines. Faculty members can attach a link or PDF to Blackboard (or any platform similar to that) for use in a course packet. Springer eBooks are accessible via an iPhone app (Android in development), a mobile WebApp, and as a PDF loaded onto any device. There is full access to all Counter Compliant statistics and Springer's sales associates can pull other statistics as requested (denials, etc).

OVERALL ASSESSMENT

Reviewers recommend Springer's eBook collection with its open-eBook model and quality publications in the sciences as well as other disciplines. It would be ideal if Springer can put together a package where the research level is geared toward community college students. The new SpringerLink platform slated for January 2013 release is an improvement from the previous platform. User support is adequate although Springer does not offer traditional online help manuals or guides. Springer is soliciting librarian feedback for improvements using the "Share an idea" feature on Springer's Contact us page (http://link.springer.com/contactus). The reviewers encourage the vendor to continue this practice and to utilize librarian feedback to enhance their product.

OTHER REVIEWS OF THIS PRODUCT

Ashcroft, L. (2011). EBooks in libraries: An overview of the current situation. *Library Management*, *32*(6/7), 398-407.

Burright, M. (2007). Springer eBook collection. *Choice*. *44*(9), 1500.

Woods, B & Ireland, M. (2008). eBook Loans: An e-twist on a classic interlending service. *Interlending & Document Supply*. *36*(2), 105–115.