ACLS Humanities Ebook

Affordable Arts and Humanities Scholarly Resource

Preview Date: 21 November 2016

Recommendations	Comprehensive Review Recommended

ACLS Humanities Ebook (HEB) is a subscription ebooks database that cover the Humanities and Arts including Art History, Art Criticism, Philosophy, Film Studies, Music, Literary Criticism and more.   While some titles are fairly new, most are seminal texts that at least cover subjects and provide criticisms that are not outdated as are typical on research done in the fields of the Humanities and Arts.

Method

A CCL-EAR reviewer looked at the database during a trial at his institution. The reviewer observed students using the database as well as looked over all the features. In addition, the reviewer also reviewed the answers the vendor supplied via the vendor questionnaire, looked at their website at large, and looked at the current vendor offer via the consortium.

Preview

- **Content**
  ACLS Humanities Ebook contains 5,000 titles, Unlike most subscription ebook products, ebooks are rarely dropped (based on current count, a total of 157 titles (3%) were pulled since the vendor began the database product in 2002). The vendor claims to have 90% of titles that are not available in other ebook platforms. While like Project MUSE or JSTOR, scholarly level for some of these titles may seem advanced for community college students, most are still useful and in many instances would satisfy students' research needs for scholarly materials.

- **Interface**

The interface has a number of different searching options, though in most cases students would use the Basic Search. The Basic Search interface looks more like a "Guided Search" in other vendors with several different options. One option that is unfortunate is the "Select Series" pull-down selection for ACLS Humanities Ebooks vs. other scholarly collections. this is a drawback that should be familiar to any institution that only subscribes to particular JSTOR collections, but the interface can lead students to other collections. These other options shouldn't even be available if the institution is just subscribing to ACLS Humanities Ebooks.

Otherwise, the searching tool is intuitive. All ebooks have unlimited simultaneous access and when an ebook is selected, the student then selects the ebook and then can select a chapter. Once in, directly, a "reader" is available of which a student can read page by page via three options: Image, Text (which appears as plain text) and PDF. PDF's can only be viewed (and printed) in 10-page excerpts, but load and download swiftly. There are also options to download the ebooks by image or plain text.   Only PDF format may be printed or downloaded, and emailing content directly from HEB is not possible. .   Citations can be saved via the Zotero plug-in.

- **Accessibility**
  It is not at all clear that vision-impaired users would have adequate access to HEB's ebooks. The downloadable PDFs are images, so can't utilize Acrobat Reader's text-to-speech; while the "text" version can be accessed by a screen reader, it lacks the markup (headings, lists, block quotes etc.) that would be needed for a screen reader to

convey the book's structure.   When running pages of this cite via accessibility tool, WAVE, there were a few label issues that were caught as recognized issues.

- **Support**

  Help options unfortunately are not context-sensitive. For the general user, there is only a FAQ supplied from its Help pull-down menu, so assistance is very static. Librarians have a user manual they can download and there are YouTube instructional videos available that librarians can link to. Tech support is only to their general email and response time varies. MARC records are free and easily obtainable via a ZIP file from their site.

- **Cost**

  The cost is affordable and provides a strong addition for Arts and Humanities assignments students typically encounter at community colleges. One concern is as the collection grows, what would happen to the cost of the product in the long term with respect to cost increases?

- **Competition**

  While the EBSCO Academic and Community College collections and ProQuest Ebrary subscriptions do contain a substantial number of titles in the Arts and Humanities, there is no guarantee those titles will stay. The truer competition can be seen with Project MUSE's UPCC (University Press Content Consortium) JSTOR for their perpetual access options for ebooks in the same subject areas (JSTOR offers no annual access fee if you already subscribe to a journals product). Project MUSE has subject indexing and more newer titles (over 2,000 new titles from its list of academic publishers come out annually), but is more expensive. JSTOR has no subject indexing but has a known brand name of reliability to teaching faculty. While JSTOR does offer a patron-driven access model as an alternative (and librarians can purchase individual titles with either of these two vendors), neither offer subscription options like ACLS HEB for their E-Books. Of single academic publishers that either provide perpetual access or subscriptions to their eBooks, only eDuke Books provides a subscription at a price similar to ACLS HEB.

Recommendation

ACLS Humanities Ebooks provides an affordable subscription for institutions that need to fill in a gap for Arts and Humanities related research assignments. It also has a lot more stability with respect to dependable titles that will stay in the collection and especially has the status of

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providing seminal academic titles that remain timely to students and instructors years and even decades later. The database also appears to be, for the most part, user friendly to our students. It fills in a gap and need for scholarly material at the right price!

Other Reviews

Sanborn, Lura. "Academic Press eBook Collections." *School Library Monthly*, vol. 28, no. 8,

May 2012, pp. 35-36. *Professional Development Collection*,

search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=tfh&AN=86858689&site=eds-live&sc

ope=site. Accessed 19 Oct. 2016.