

RUSA/BRASS Statement on Harvard Business Review Pricing & Access

All databases containing Harvard Business Review, a journal published by Harvard Business Publishing (HBP), became “read only” for 500 (HBR 500) of the most popular Harvard Business Review articles on August 1, 2013. Campuses may pay a premium to restore full access to link, save, and print the affected articles. EBSCO, exclusive provider to electronic Harvard Business Review articles, notified subscribers in spring of 2013 about this change. These new access restrictions will affect researcher’s ability to access and use these articles.

Librarians decry the erosion of full access to scholarly material. Members of the Business Reference and Services Section (BRASS) of the Reference and User Services Division (RUSA) of the American Library Association (ALA) have clarified the restrictions with HBP and EBSCO, considered implications for libraries, colleges and universities, and offer suggestions for addressing this newest access restriction to an electronic journal.

Not for course content: A business librarian contacted representatives from HBP and EBSCO for clarification. One Harvard representative stated that “material in EBSCOhost is not intended for use as assigned course material regardless of how that is achieved.”

A BRASS representative summarized further clarification with HBP: “The addition of HBR content to the EBSCO database was a convenience for users, but never meant to supplant Harvard’s business model of the sale of HBR reprints and case studies to academia. Harvard contends that there is abuse of their no linking policy. They feel that the abuse of the ‘no-linking to syllabi, not for use in course work’ policy is cannibalizing their sale of permissions.” In an October 17, 2013 letter to the Financial Times a HBP representative asserted: “Any associated licence fees are not incremental or new; they simply shift the payment for these articles from the school to the library.”

BRASS identified three main issues where libraries will be affected by these changes and offers suggestions for individual responses. A BRASS representative summarizes communication with HBP and EBSCO:

Charge a Premium:

and fail the market effect factor. In other cases as in Georgia State, the publishers could not prove their permissions business was that significant which worked against them. Remember that if Harvard could prove that schools were abusing the restrictions on use, they could sue.

RUSA/BRASS offers this g