2018

Project MUSE Ebooks [e-product review]

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CCA Review Template

The average review will be 1,500-3,000 words in length.

Title of Product or Resource: Project MUSE Ebooks
Product URL: https://MUSE.jhu.edu/

(If more than one, indicate each separately)
Author:
Author Affiliation: include position title, institution, city, state
Email:

Original Date of Review:
Date Last Updated: Only put a date here if the original review is being updated

Producer/Publisher/Vendor: Johns Hopkins University Press
Address: 2715 North Charles Street, Baltimore, Maryland USA 21218
Email: MUSE@press.jhu.edu
Phone number(s): (410) 516-6989
Producer URL: https://www.press.jhu.edu/

Free Text Keywords: Separate words or phrases with a vertical bar |
ebooks
Primary Category (put an X in one box only):

	Art & Architecture
	Business & Economics
X	Ethnic, Gender, and LGBTQ Studies
	General Reference
	Government Information
X	History & Area Studies
X	Humanities
X	Language and Literature
	Library and Information Science (LIS)
	Medicine, Nursing & Health
	Multidisciplinary (or interdisciplinary)
	Music, Theater, Film Studies
X	Philosophy & Religion
X	Political Science & Law
	Science, Technology, Computers, Engineering (including Environment)
X	Sociology, Education, Anthropology, Psychology
	Other

Secondary Categories (put an X in as many boxes as apply):

	Art & Architecture
	Business & Economics

	Ethnic, Gender, and LGBTQ Studies
	General Reference
	Government Information
	History & Area Studies
	Humanities
	Language and Literature
X	Library and Information Science (LIS)
	Medicine, Nursing & Health
	Multidisciplinary (or interdisciplinary)
	Music, Theater, Film Studies
	Philosophy & Religion
	Political Science & Law
X	Science, Technology, Computers, Engineering (including Environment)
	Sociology, Education, Anthropology, Psychology
X	Other

Type of product being reviewed (put an X in as many boxes as apply):

	Abstracting & Indexing
	Aggregator database
	App for mobile devices
	Bibliographic tool
	Biography
	Blog or social media
	Data sets
	Discovery tool
	Image database
X	Ebook collection
	Ejournal collection
	Encyclopedia/Handbook/Directory
	Library tool
	Newspaper or news source
	Primary source digital content
	Publisher or Organization content /repository
	Reports
	Software
	Statistical database
	Streaming video
	Website
	Other

Target Audience (Put an X in as many boxes as apply):

	Secondary
	General public
X	Undergraduate (including community colleges)
X	Graduate/Faculty/Researcher

Access (put an X in one box only)::

X	Open Access (OA)
	Hybrid (some OA)
X	One-time purchase
X	Subscription

Abstract

Project MUSE's ebook platform offers access to approximately 54,000 ebooks from over a hundred scholarly presses, primarily in the social sciences and humanities. Pricing is available by subscription, purchased subject collections, individual titles (through GOBI or OASIS), and Evidence Based Acquisition. Per book cost ranges from <$1- $5 for subscribed books, and $25-$27 for titles in purchased collections. All books are in a DRM-free, enhanced web-ready PDF format, searchable and retrievable at the chapter level. Unlimited downloading and printing of book chapters is allowed. Although usable by mobile devices now, automatic rendering will provide more functionality upon the site's redesign in summer 2018. Browsing or filtering search results by subject is confusing, and there is no way to restrict results to specific subject collections purchased by a library. In addition, the relevance ranking algorithm is poor. Yet, display of book content is clean and neat, with a minimalistic design that is pleasing to the eye.

Pricing Options

Pricing is based on Carnegie classification for an institution. There are two subscription models available to institutions. A current subscription provides access to all books on the Project MUSE platform for the current publication year and prior two years, and an archive subscription for all titles more than three years old. Rolling walls apply to both models. This reviewer's institution, Northern Michigan University (NMU), falls within the tier 4 Carnegie classification by Project MUSE, or Master's I. A cost for a current subscription for this tier is $45,800 and includes approximately 8,900 books. An archive subscription is $35,300 and includes about 45,000 books.

Purchase options for books are available by publication year and include the following collections:

- Complete Collection - All books available on Project MUSE's platform, from all publishers, including titles that do not appear in subject and area studies collections.
- Subject Collections - Thirteen different subject areas available
- Area Studies Collections – Cross-disciplinary books for studying world regions
- Archival Collections – Books dated 2010 or earlier, including select subject areas, area studies, or Complete collections
- Series Collections – Books from a single publisher focused on a specific theme
- Supplement Collections - Additional books from publishers in a given publication year that are not included in the complete, subject, or area studies collections

For NMU the cost for the smallest subject or area studies collection—U.S. Regional Studies, New England and Mid Atlantic (19 books)—is $528 for 2018 titles. The cost for the largest subject collection—History (576 books)—is $14,232. The cost for the Complete collection (2863 books) is $75,048, or approximately $26 a title.

Evidence Based Acquisition (EBA) is available with a twist on traditional Demand Driven Acquisition programs. Libraries commit a set amount of money upfront and work with staff at Project MUSE to determine length of term and content filters. Libraries download MARC records and patrons have access to DRM free, downloadable PDF chapters as if owned by the institutions. Throughout the negotiated term librarians can review usage statistics for evaluation purposes. At the end of the term, libraries must select books for purchase up to the price originally paid. In this way, libraries can select the most relevant content for their patrons.

Single title publishing is available through the third party library vendors, GOBI and OASIS. Over 80% of participating publishers offer at least some titles, and more than 33,000 titles are available for individual purchase. The average cost of single purchase titles is less than $100.

Consortia pricing is available, usually with a 10% discount, but titles cannot be shared amongst institutions. Each institution has to subscribe or purchase their own collections.

Product Overview/Description

Project MUSE is a leading provider of humanities and social science content, and a division of Johns Hopkins University Press (JHUP). This review focuses on their ebook content. Project MUSE's ebook origin arose from the efforts of the University Press e-book Consortium (UPeC), which met in 2009 to explore the feasibility in creating a university press ebook initiative. UPeC entered into a partnership with JHUP to offer ebook collections, with the first content offered in 2012.[1] Currently, book content is provided by over 100 not-for-profit scholarly presses, with over 54,000 books available by the end of 2018.

All books are in a DRM-free, enhanced web-ready PDF format, searchable and retrievable at the chapter level. Unlimited downloading and printing of book chapters is allowed. Some might find chapter access as separate PDFs annoying. However, this decision was made by Project MUSE in consideration of publisher's concerns about their intellectual property.[2]

URLs to chapters or book title pages are stable, and Project MUSE encourages direct links to books and chapters for electronic reserves and courseware systems.

Mobile devices can access Project MUSE books through a PDF reader, but the current site is not mobile friendly. It was useable on an Iphone, but somewhat frustrating as content had to be increased for visibility, thereby narrowing screen view. Project MUSE is in the process of

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[1] John's Hopkins University Press, "Books on Project MUSE."
[2] John's Hopkins University Press, "Book Collections on MUSE - Frequently Asked Questions."

redesigning their website, which will allow automatic rendering on any device, e.g. tablet, laptop/desktop, smartphone.

Books are available for subscription as collections, single titles, and evidence based acquisition. Subject collections consist of thirteen disciplines. Collection size varies amongst subjects, depending on the number of publishers partnering with Project MUSE and the amount of content they make available. However, collection sizes are generally fairly stable from year to year. Complete title lists are available as downloadable spreadsheets for the entire Project MUSE collection or specific subject/area/series collections. The approximate number of titles added per year for subject collections are listed below (based on 2016 and 2017 title lists).

Archeology and anthropology (175 titles)	Higher education (90 titles)	Philosophy and religion (335 titles)	Public health and health policy (new in 2018)
Ecology and evolution (85 titles)	History (600 titles)	Poetry, fiction, and creative non-fiction (225 titles)	
Film, theater, and performing arts (155 titles)	Language and linguistics (45 titles)	Political science and policy studies (315 titles)	
Global cultural studies (360 titles)	Literature (280 titles)	Psychology (22 titles)	

One subject collection—Classics—is only available as an archive collection. There were quite a few classic titles when Project MUSE first launched, justifying the creation of a subject collection, but not enough new titles were being published to keep it as an ongoing collection.

Area studies are represented by the following subjects [average titles based on 2016 and 2017 title lists).

African Studies (120 titles)	Jewish Studies (70 titles)	Native American and Indigenous Studies (75 titles)	U.S. Regional Studies, New England and Mid Atlantic (60 titles)
American Studies (175 titles)	Latin American and Caribbean Studies (115 titles)	Russian and East European Studies (55 titles)	U.S. Regional Studies, South (105 titles)
Asian and Pacific Studies (140 titles)	Middle Eastern Studies (50 titles)	U.S. Regional Studies, Midwest (55 titles)	U.S. Regional Studies, West (45 titles)

There are four specialized series of books focused on particular themes. The Booker T. Washington collection has the complete 14 volume set of the writings and correspondence of this influential African American. The Dietrich Bonhoeffer collection offers the definitive English translation of the German editions of this notable Protestant theologian. Hermeneia is a fifty volume, authoritative interpretation of the earliest biblical books. Finally, there is a definitive English language edition of all the completed works of Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, published during their lifetimes or since, including complete correspondence and newly discovered works.

There are currently only a few open access titles available on Project MUSE, primarily twenty classic titles from Cornell University Press. These out-of-print titles were selected by subject experts for their enduring scholarly impact, and the digitization was funded by a grant from National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH).[3] Project MUSE is currently working with a number of other university presses receiving NEH Open Book grants to make their content available. In addition, Project MUSE will be converting a number of open access books to their platform, originally made available through the Knowledge Unlatched initiative, and offering numerous other titles as part of the MUSE Open initiative funded by a grant from the Mellon Foundation. All told, hundreds of open access titles will be available on Project MUSE's new website in summer 2018.[4]

User Interface/Navigation/Searching

[Note: Project MUSE was undergoing a site redesign during this review. The following comments are based on the beta version, which according to Melanie Schaffner, Director of Sales & Marketing, does not include all the features that will appear with the site launch, sometime during summer of 2018].

Access to the collections is via a browse button or search box <**Image 1**>. Clicking on the browse button gives you an option to browse books, journals, or publishers. Using the same visual display for all three content types, books are listed first with cover art for a half dozen highlighted titles. You use an arrow to scroll through additional books, or click on a link to view all books or book series <**Image 2**>. View all books displays all books on the Project MUSE site. Filters include the starting letter of the book, publisher, series, and research area <**Image 3**>. Within the publisher, series, and research area facets, headings are listed in order of results.

The single search box allows you to enter one or more terms. By default terms are searched with the Boolean AND and across the full text of all books and journals. Upon retrieving results, you can filter to books. Other features present upon viewing results are an expanded search area with additional fields to combine terms and change where terms are searched, e.g. content, title, author, publisher. The same filters are present as with browse, plus additional facets of author, language, and publication range.

Results are ranked by relevance by default, but can be changed to oldest or newest first. If you haven't filtered the books to owned/subscribed content, distinctions are made through a red

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[3] John's Hopkins University Press, "Classic Cornell University Press Books Available, Open Access on Project MUSE."
[4] Melanie Schaffner, email message to reviewer, "RE: Review of Your Book Platform."

padlock symbol for locked content and a green checkmark for accessible content. Particular books can be saved to "my MUSE library", a personal space where you can add/delete content, export citations to RefWorks or EndNote, or save, print, or email citations in MLA, APA, Chicago, or EndNote styles. Saved citations are purged after your session ends.

Once you click on a title, you receive a summary of the book, and have the opportunity to browse, view, and save sections as PDFs, including the copyright page, dedications, figures, table of contents, introduction, chapters, etc. <**Image 4>**. Opening a PDF reveals a Project MUSE cover page, providing a brief citation of the work and an image of the work's cover, followed by chapter or section content. All documents can be rotated, enlarged, printed, downloaded, or searched (CTRL + F) within an internet browser.

Project MUSE provides a link to their Voluntary Product Accessibility Template (VPAT), which indicates relevant federal guidelines are supported with some exceptions.[5] Web Content Accessibility Guidelines 2.0 (WCAG 2) indicate Project MUSE is compliant with Level A and much of Level AA. In addition, Project MUSE's web pages are designed to work with all assistive devices, allowing assistive devices to skip over repeated text, be navigated with only a keyboard, offer alternative text and captions, and feature text that can be enlarged by 200% or more.[6]

Critical examination

Viewing books on Project MUSE is a simple and enjoyable experience. That is, if you are comfortable viewing chapters or sections within a book instead of a unified work. The content is diverse, abundant, and representative of many scholarly presses. Although books on science are present—biology, biotechnology, ecology, evolution, mathematics, paleontology—the majority of content is in the social sciences and humanities, and in these areas the content is robust, with more titles than many competing products. Another great feature is content is available to simultaneous users without clunky Digital Rights Management (DRM) requirements. The PDFs, are downloadable and Project MUSE has reasonable use policies.

The greatest disappointment is with discoverability features of Project MUSE. Although the current site allows browsing by research areas <**Image 5**>, the beta site only allows search or browse results to be filtered by research area. Even worse, these research areas are presented in descending order by the number of books corresponding to each area <**Image 6**>. This makes finding a particular subject difficult. As with many filters, there is a search box at the top of this filter, but searching for preset research areas is limiting.

In addition, research areas do not correspond to subject or area studies collections available for for purchase. According to Schaffner, research areas preceded books on the Project MUSE platform. As a result, finding content for a particular purchased collection, e.g. U.S. Regional Studies, Midwest, is not possible or has to be done imprecisely through similar research area headings.[7]

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[5] John's Hopkins University Press, "VPAT: Voluntary Product Accessibility Template."
[6] John's Hopkins University Press, "Project MUSE Accessibility Guide."
[7] Melanie Schaffner, phone call to reviewer.

Another concern mentioned earlier is there are different filters present on the results screen for a search than a browse. The former adds limiting by author, language, and publication date, all valuable filters when browsing too.

A final issue is poor relevance ranking when searching. For example, some of the highest ranked books from a search on "Lincoln assassination" didn't even have assassination in the title. A book focused on this topic—*Lincoln Assassination* by Edward Steers—was listed significantly after titles like *Lincoln and Medicine* and *Lincoln before Lincoln: Early Cinematic Adaptations of the Life of America's Greatest President*. Also, it is hard to tell where your search terms are found in the books retrieved. Some books have an expandable link titled "show chapters", but not all books. Upon clicking on this link you get a list of chapters, sometimes all chapters, sometimes a few chapters, but no indication these represent where your terms are found.

All these concerns may be fixed upon release of the final site in summer 2018, but since most are present with the original site this reviewer has doubts. An important consideration is most users will access Project MUSE content through their institution's web discovery tool, and Project MUSE has several discovery and linking partners.[8]

Competitive Products

Other vendors that offer a comparable number of books from university presses or scholarly providers include Ebsco's eBook University Press Collection (34,000 titles), Proquest's University Press Ebook Collection (24,000 titles), Cambridge University Press's Cambridge Core (34,000 titles) platform, and JSTOR Books (50,000 titles, mostly university presses) and Oxford University Press's University Press Scholarship Online (25,000+ titles) and Elsevier's ScienceDirect Ebook Collection (37,000+ titles)

Purchase & Contract Provisions

Project MUSE allows interlibrary loan of chapters for purchased content, but not content available through subscriptions. General contract provisions allow users to download and print one copy of each chapter for personal use and archive contents on their personal computers, email or print a copy of a chapter for students in a class or send to someone at the subscriber's institution, and use a persistent URL to a chapter in course management systems. Re-use of content for commercial use is prohibited, along with sending content to users outside of the subscriber's institution, and using computer programs or robots to download content.[9]

MARC records are available at no cost and downloadable from Project MUSE's site. Libraries that purchase books as single titles may obtain the MARC records in GOBI or OASIS. Usage statistics are compliant with Release 4 of the Counter Code of Practice, and available in Excel or XML format and in book reports 2, 3, 4, and 5.[10] All books in Project MUSE are archived in Portico, to ensure long term preservation and access to content.

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[8] John's Hopkins University Press, "MUSE Discoverability Partners."
[9] John's Hopkins University Press, "Project MUSE Institutional Book Purchase Agreement."
[10] John's Hopkins University Press, "Project MUSE Usage Statistics."

Authentication

Access by authorized users is supported via the following methods IP authentication, referring URL, and Shibboleth. Project MUSE does not support institutional access via ID and password.

References

John's Hopkins University Press. "Book Collections on MUSE - Frequently Asked Questions." Project MUSE, 2017. http://muse.jhu.edu/about/faq_books.html#chapter.
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Melanie Schaffner, email message to reviewer. "RE: Review of Your Book Platform," December 8, 2017.
Melanie Schaffner, phone call to reviewer, March 16, 2018.

About the Author

Kevin McDonough has been a reference and electronic services librarian at Northern Michigan University since 1997.

Scoring

Please provide a numeric score between 1-5 (one being the lowest and 5 the highest). The score can be as granular as one-half point intervals (e.g. 3.5). Please avoid a perfect score of 5 in any category unless the product is virtually perfect with no room for improvement. If a product is open access please score the Pricing and Contract options as N/A (not applicable).

The composite score should be an arithmetic average of the four scoring categories.

Composite Score:	4	

Content:	4	Provides nice coverage in the social sciences and humanities. Science coverage is limited. Over a hundred participating publishers, mostly from university presses.
User Interface/Searchability	3.5	Searching is quirky with poor subject limiters and ineffective results ranking. Display of books is clear and simple, and provides easy access to content. Not a lot of added features. My MUSE Library allows temporary saving of books and management of citations.
Pricing	4	Pricing per book is very low if subscribing ($1-5 a book) or purchasing subject collections ($25-27 a book). Average title cost for individual purchases is less than $100. Evidence Based Acquisition is unique and a welcome change from limiting DDA.
Purchase/Contract Options	4.5	DRM free and allows downloading and archiving of individual chapters. Allows linking to chapters in Course Management Systems. Emailing of chapters is permitted to students in courses. ILL only for purchased content.

Special Instructions for Screenshots and Tables

Screenshots or other images may be included in a review if desired. Care should be taken not to include too many as they are more likely to be cut if space is needed in the final layout. The online version of the journal will show images in color but images in the printed version will be converted to grayscale.

- Please submit all screenshots in color
- Screenshots must be delivered as separate numbered image files in .jpg format
- Screenshots should be captured at the highest resolution available
- Place a numbered call out in the Word document where the image is to be inserted such as **<Insert Figure 3 here>.**
- Make sure that the separate .jpg images are given file names that correspond to the call-outs in the text

Tables (created by the author, not screen captures) may also be included in reviews.
- Use tabs to separate columns (NOT multiple spaces)

- Use paragraph returns to separate rows