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Kicked Off by Katrina: The 15-Year Serials Journey of an Academic Health Sciences Center

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Background

The LSU Health Sciences Center New Orleans Library's move from a print to an electronic journal collection happened practically overnight. The morning of August 29, 2005, changed everything. Hurricane Katrina not only affected the city and region permanently, but it also meant the Library had to respond, and it did so with a radical shift in its journal collection policies. To serve a patron population now scattered throughout the state and to alleviate the problem of the print collection being inaccessible for ten months, the wholesale move to online was the solution. In addition, whereas journals were predominantly acquired via a subscription agent, direct agreements with publishers and the incorporation of journal packages quickly became the new normal and has guided journal acquisition in the years since that fateful day.

Lessons Learned

Not all journals are created equal!

- Always check access rights
- Identify and reaffirm what years are covered in your current access. For example, we had to re-subscribe and repurchase some years of early online-only subscriptions that disappeared a decade later
- Review perpetual access terms regularly. Access is not always guaranteed for transferred titles
- Pay attention to the post-cancellation policies

The "we can't NOT get that" policy of the print era is not adequate for electronic retention and acquisition

- Check your usage statistics and denial reports to chart value of your subscriptions
- There is an ebb and flow to subjects and journals, so stay on top of those trends to best provide the literature your patrons need

Evaluate your archives and set priorities for future acquisitions and cancellations

- Be ready to purchase backfiles when the opportunity arises
- Monitor your ILL usage statistics, Copyright numbers, and journal denials

Don't be afraid to think outside of the box, and do so frequently!

- Stagger your packages and multi-year deals if possible to allow flexibility for swaps and additions to your collections
- Those "big deals" don't need to be scary and can ultimately benefit your users. Libraries can maximize journal expenditures through direct agreements with publishers and the addition of large packages. For example, our per-title subscription cost has gone down with the added value of titles acquired via packages


A la carte subscriptions are a great way to maintain flexibility

Consortia provide obvious benefits for both small and large packages: negotiating power, cost savings, assistance with technical support, and streamlined renewals

New reporting methods are necessary not only to provide a more meaningful overview of your collection but also can be used to get more support from your funding sources

- Transitioning from print to online transformed our financial reports and major adjustments were needed to accommodate those changes
- Our budget was once focused on two things: journal subscriptions and book purchases. We now report on a myriad of factors including format, access term, and acquisition model

About the Numbers

 2005: The year of Hurricane Katrina

In 2005, before Hurricane Katrina, print was still the preferred and default journal format. In that year, 1,304 titles were acquired in print and only 36 were online. We had just started to incorporate online resources into our collection and were not ready to cancel print by any means.

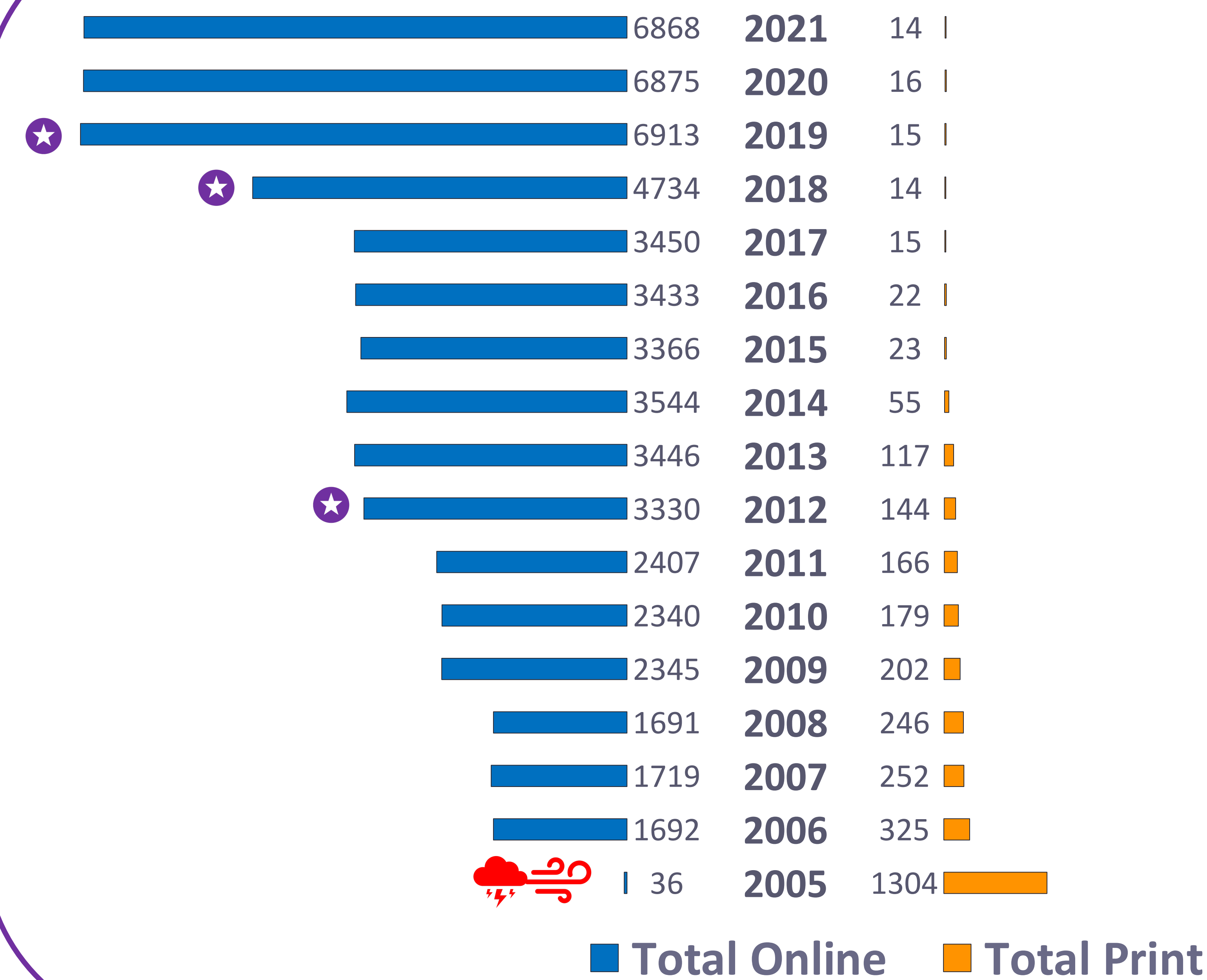
After Hurricane Katrina, our 2006 renewal reduced print subscriptions by 25%, down to 325, increased online subscriptions by 47% to 1,692 AND boosted our total title count by 677.

By 2021, the print had declined to just 14, with 6,868 online subscribed journals for a total of 6,882 titles.

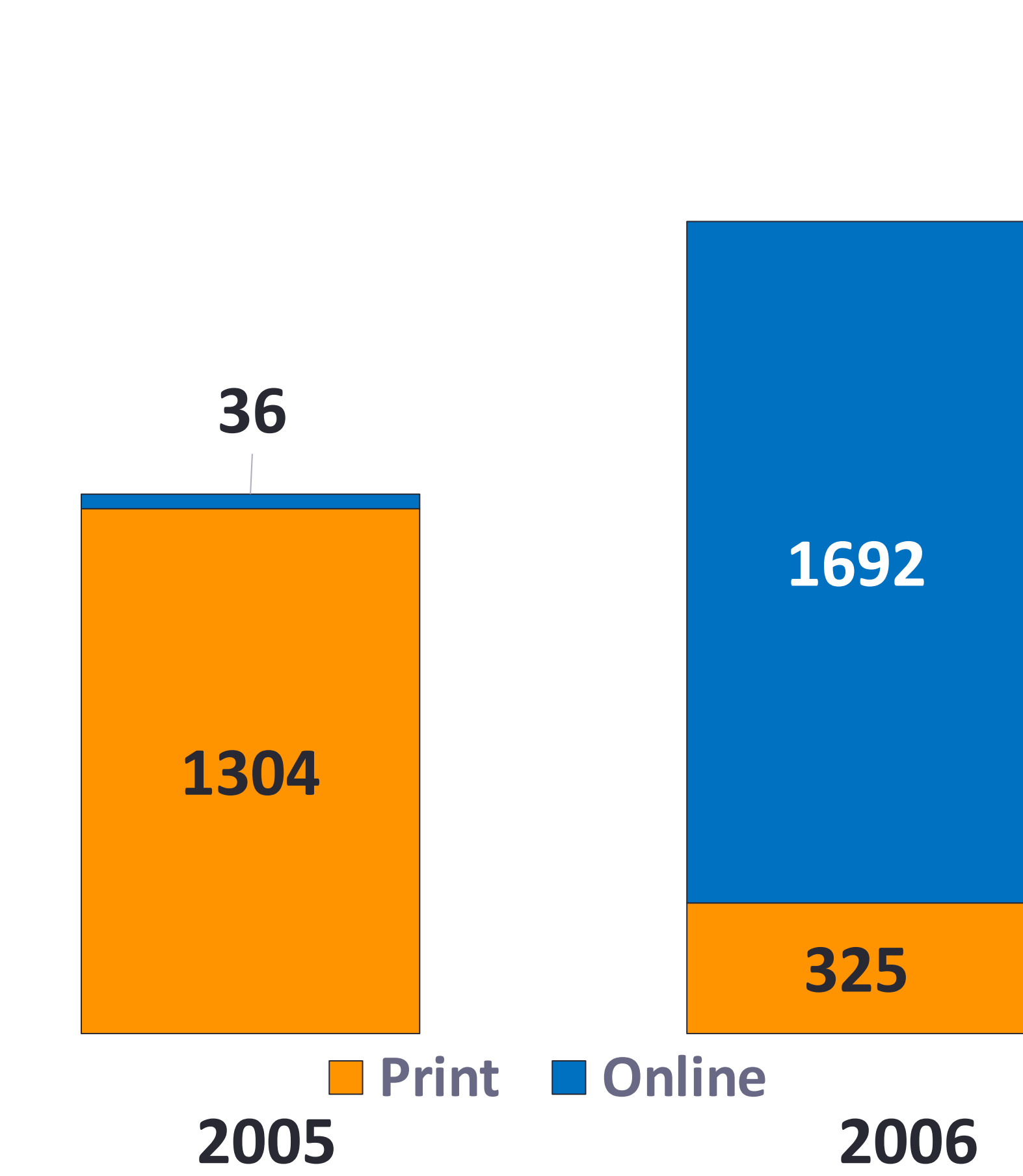
★ Jumps in total online titles are affected by the adoption and continued subscription to packages, with SAGE Premier starting in 2012, Wiley Database Model in 2018, and the ScienceDirect Freedom Collection in 2019.

The Move from Print to Electronic by the Numbers

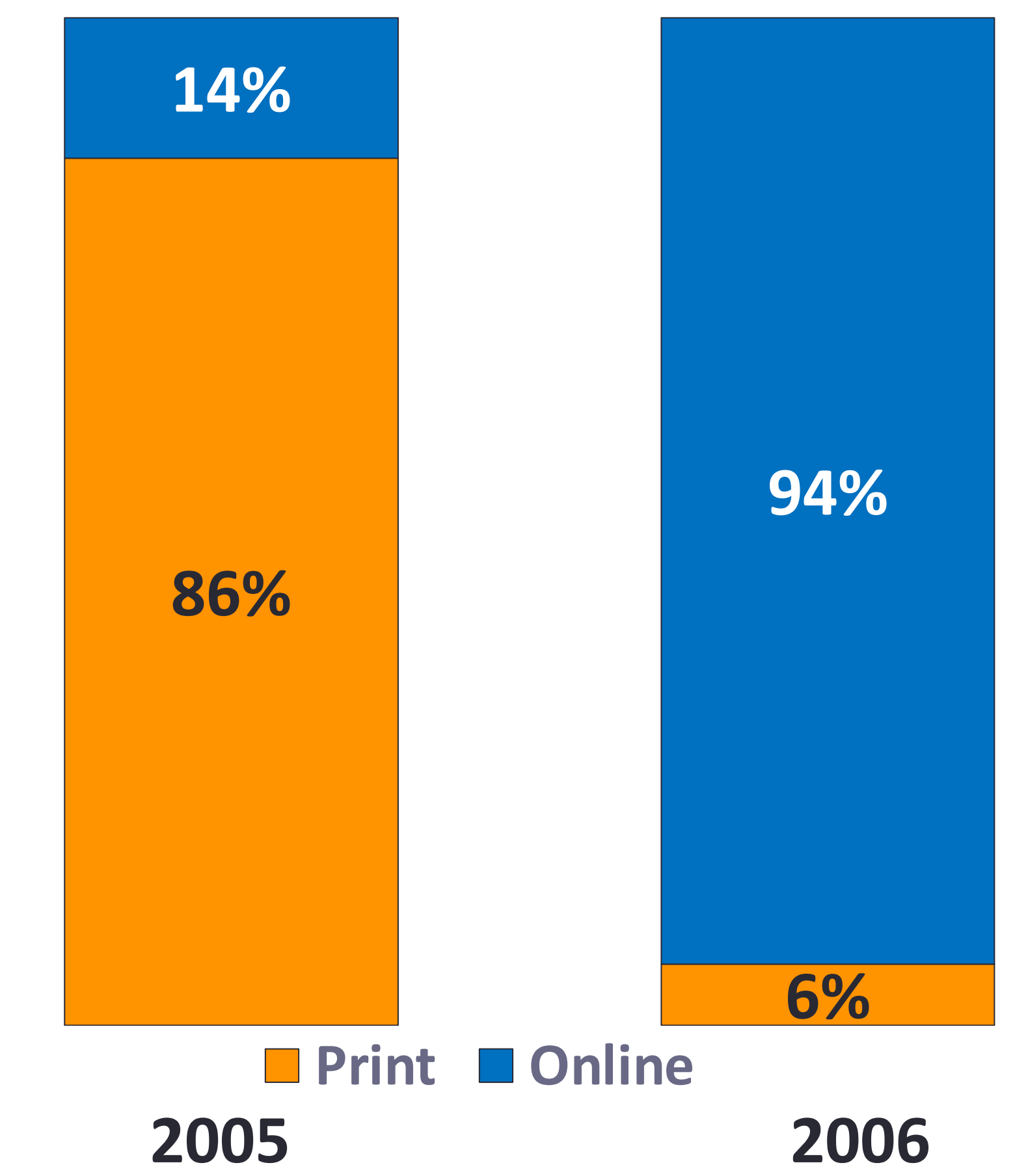
Subscribed journals by format



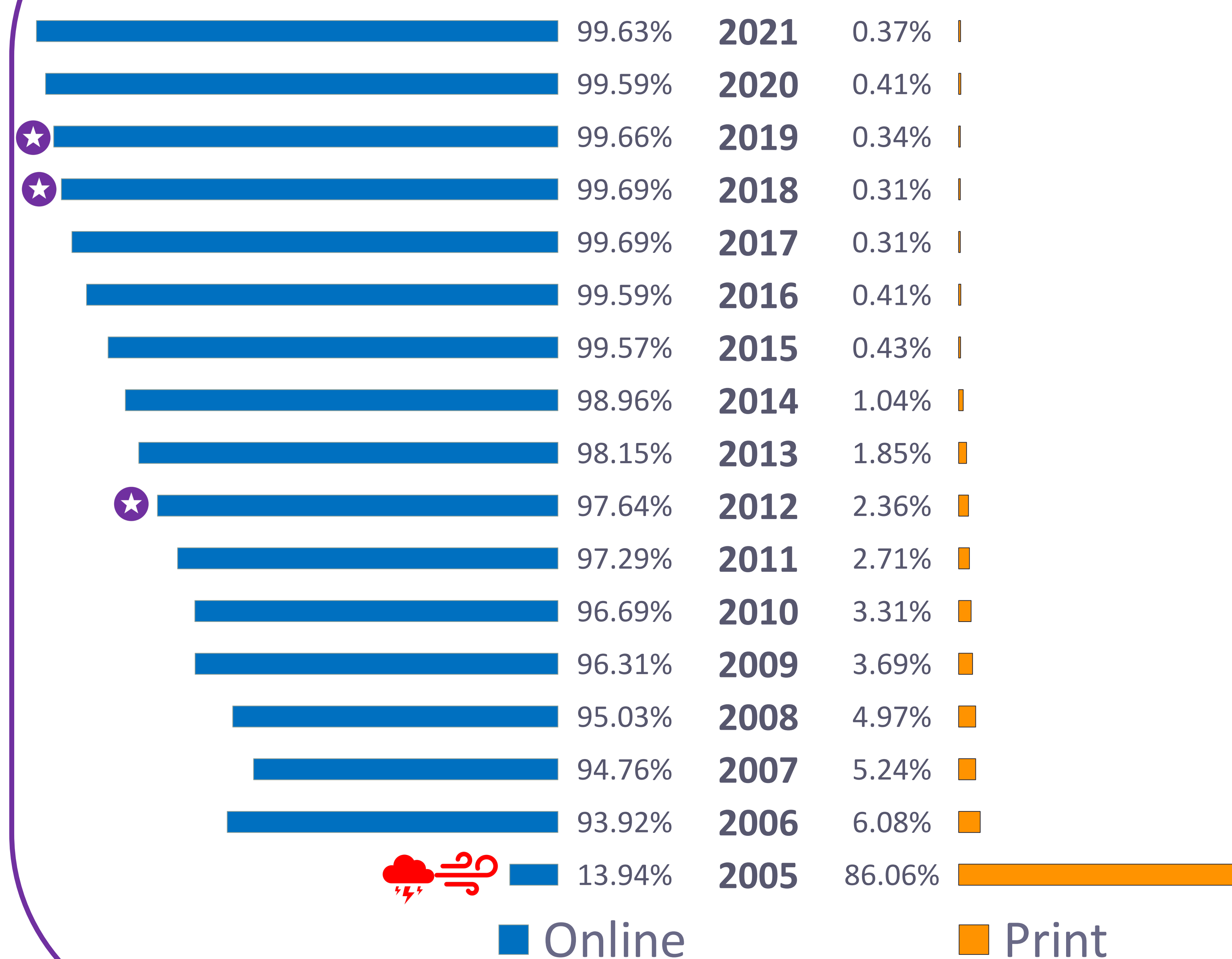
Number of journal titles by format before and after Hurricane Katrina



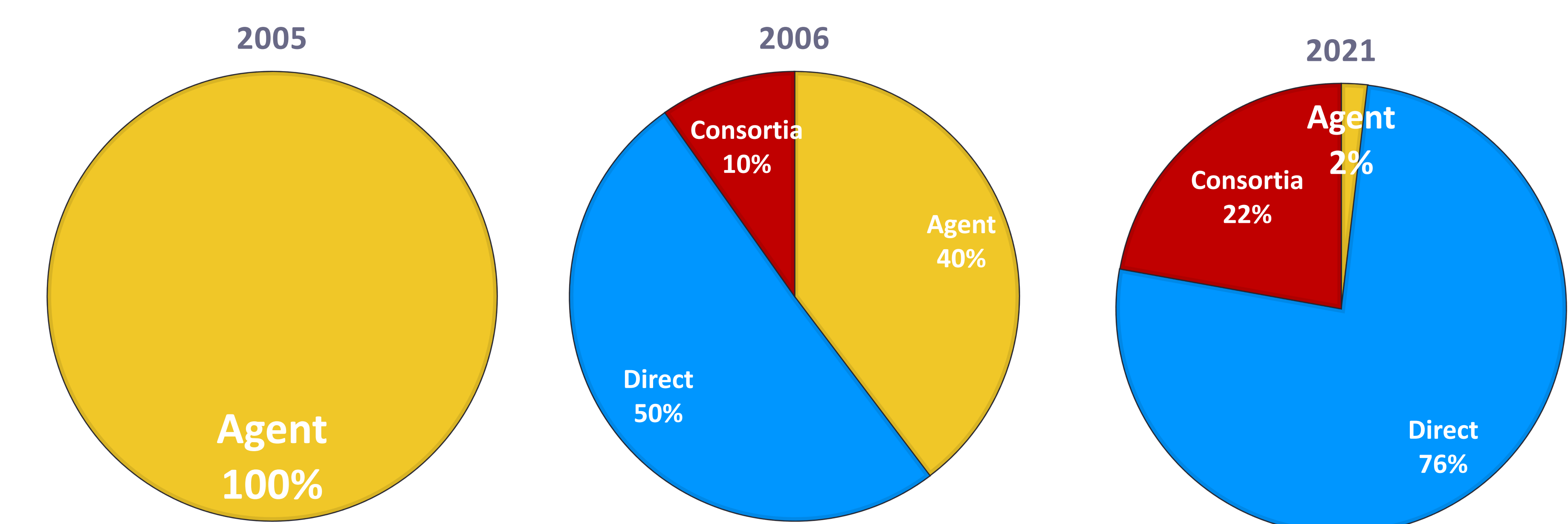
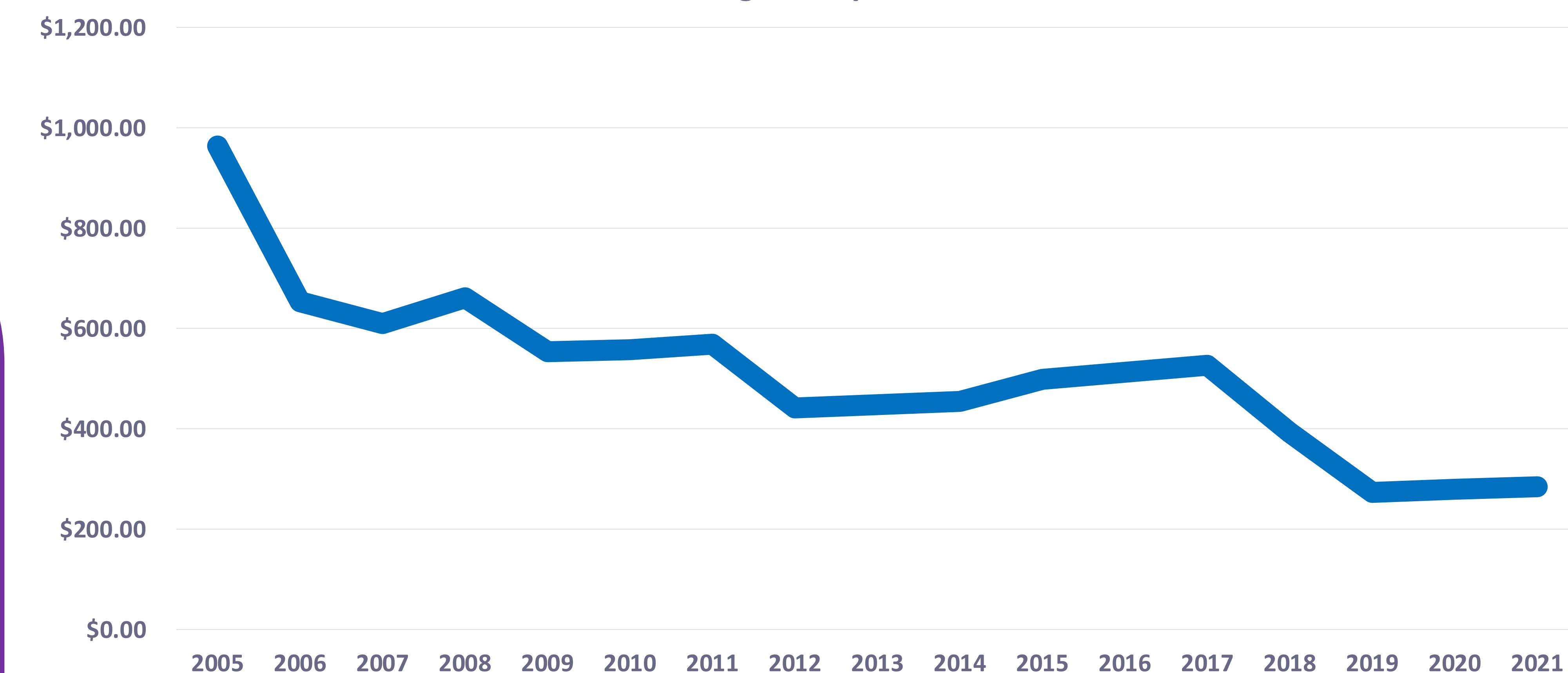
Percentage of journal expenditures by format before and after Hurricane Katrina



Journal expenditures with percentage of journal budget



Average cost per title



Subscriptions by source

