
Interlending and document supply: a review of recent literature – XLI

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Keywords

Computers, Document supply, Performance management, Licences, Public libraries

Abstract

Reviews recently published literature in the field of resource sharing and e-journal access. Considers recent articles on the value of consortial membership and licensed access to electronic journals. Also looks at published articles in the area of aggregators, reference linking, performance measurement, document delivery in public libraries, and new trends and developments in a number of countries world-wide.

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Introduction

This review of recent literature takes a look at significant journal articles, monographs and conference papers in the area of ILL, document delivery and access to publications. This time, a lot of material has been written on the pros and cons of belonging to a library consortium, either for negotiating licensed access to e-journals or for more traditional resource-sharing activities. The value of “bundled” access rights to electronic publications is also under discussion, and the restrictions imposed by publishers’ inflexible pricing models also comes under fire. There has been a useful selection of reports on performance measurement, and new steps towards offering improved electronic access to material for public library users are also considered.

Balancing journal subscriptions and ILL

Until now, there has never, surprisingly, been any in-depth research into the effect of document delivery on journal subscription rates, nor the effect of journal subscription rates on document delivery services.

According to Brown (2001), arguments in both directions up to now have been:

... based on assumptions and apocryphal events which have supported one business model or the other.

Now new research in the UK by the ingenta Institute seeks to establish if there is a correlation between document delivery and journal subscription models.

Although the full results have not yet been published, an initial report indicates that some 15 per cent of all document requests come from libraries that already subscribe to the journal title being requested. A library’s journal collection now forms only one part of a researcher’s reading material, alongside document delivery articles, e-prints and reprints. In addition, the author cites another new addition to the document delivery process: the downloading of articles from licensed publisher sites as part of the user’s site licence. It is estimated that demand at the British Library Document Supply Centre (BLDSC) has fallen by approximately 10 per cent as a result of the NESLI national site licensing initiative, but it is unclear just



how long this level of site-wide licensed access can be maintained by publishers.

That author suggests that the issue of document delivery versus journal subscriptions has been the cause of “considerable emotion and conflict over the years” among both publishers and libraries. In an article that aims to “state the case against legalised free copying”, Godfree (2001) argues that library privileges allowed by UK copyright law punish the small scientific publisher to such an extent that they are obliged to raise prices to compensate. According to this author, the “mire of morally dubious copying” by big document suppliers such as BLDSC favours commercial researchers who are able to obtain copies of virtually any journal article without paying a copyright fee. Worse, he says, BLDSC actively encourages libraries to avoid paying a copyright fee whenever possible, and those fees that are paid are “totally inadequate to recompense for . . . lost subscriptions”.

In response, Russon, former deputy chief executive of the British Library, argues that it has been well-proven that ILL is not used as an alternative to subscription. In this article (Russon *et al.*, 2001) the authors point out that very few libraries would subscribe to the full journal title even if document delivery options were not available, and that BLDSC requests tend to be concentrated on a relatively small number of titles which have large circulations and are widely held by libraries. In addition, they point to the some £3.3 million collected in copyright fees in 2000, all of which is passed on to the Copyright Licensing Agency or directly to publishers, and is an additional rather than an alternative revenue for publishers.

Negotiating licensed access

So much for the small publisher, but what of the new options for negotiating licensed access to the journals of the large scientific publishers? Much has been written about new access options for electronic journals, but two contrasting articles present very different views on what one of the authors calls the “Big Deal”. In the Big Deal, libraries agree to buy electronic access to all of a commercial publisher’s journals for a price based on current payments to that publisher, plus some increments. In one of the articles, Frazier (2001) says that, once the package has

been agreed, the “bundle” of access rights becomes fixed, and no further cancellations or price reductions are possible. Frazier says:

... academic library directors should not sign on to the Big Deal or any comprehensive licensing agreements with commercial publishers.

In strong contrast, in another article, Sanville (2001) says:

These licenses are a positive evolutionary step for the library community . . . libraries and consortia should promote expanded journal access by taking advantage of a sustainable purchasing model that maximises information use.

Frazier puts forward the view that in the long term these bundled agreements will weaken the power of libraries to influence scholarly communication systems in the future, removing the element of choice and selection from library subscriptions, and handing all power to the publishers in terms of price and journal content. On the other hand, Sanville suggests that this increased dependence takes place on the publisher’s side too and, far from giving all power to the publisher, the relationship remains in balance, with a greater incentive for both sides to find common ground.

Sanville makes it clear that he sees the move to bundled licensed access as an evolutionary step in the role of libraries in providing the highest level of journal access possible. To deny the benefits of these publisher licences is to base the concept of access provision on outdated ideas:

The accumulated years . . . of dealing with the print medium gives us a legacy, a fixed perception of information needs, uses, and economics that inhibit our creating a dramatically improved reality (Sanville, 2001).

Although Frazier acknowledges the short-term attraction of bundled access in terms of increased number of titles, he encourages libraries – and authors – to seek alternative avenues to ensure the most effective access for users. As an example he cites SPARC, the Scholarly Publishing and Academic Resources Coalition, whose partner members offer alternative forms of scholarly academic publishing.

SPARC is described in a short article by Buckholtz (2001), in which she begins by stating that:

Scientific communication seems increasingly driven by factors that have little to do with researchers and more to do with commercial publishers’ profits.

SPARC aims to change that perception by introducing new forms of scientific publishing and by building partnerships with publishers “that bring top-quality, low-cost research to a greater audience”. The author mentions several instances where editorial teams have resigned from commercial publishers because of unreasonably high journal prices, and have launched alternative, successful journal titles on a not-for-profit basis.

In order to raise awareness of their activity, SPARC (Scholarly Publishing and Academic Resources Coalition, 2000) have recently published a handbook and Web site, which aims to advise editors on how to determine whether their journals are serving the community. If editors find on following the steps outlined in the guide that the research community could be better served by non-commercial journal publishing, then SPARC offers further advice on how this might be achieved.

Two more articles continue the discussion on bundled licensed access, and both point out the challenges of picking a way through the variety of publishers’ economic models. In one (Mendelsohn, 2001), two UK academic librarians discuss the pros and cons of providing e-journal access for their users. Once again long-term archiving is one issue that causes anxiety, but more challenging for these library staff is the proliferation of different pricing models. “The situation really is chaotic and extremely volatile”, says one, and suggests that the least popular model is the “all or nothing” option. “We need the ability to choose title by title what we can afford”, she says. Another challenge is to ensure that site-wide access really means that, since publishers often have scant understanding of how universities operate, and libraries need to provide equal access to all their users. Stanford University’s High Wire Press is singled out for praise in this article, as is JSTOR.

In another light-hearted but useful article, Krumenaker (2001) takes a look at the pay-per-view option, whose availability has expanded rapidly in very recent years. Again, the author looks at publisher pricing options and says that they are beginning to become more flexible. This author likes the option of pay-per-view, especially for the independent researcher, who can be penalised by the publisher’s penchant for large consortial licences, and again mentions High Wire Press

as one publisher offering alternative economic models.

Consortial resource-sharing

Group negotiation of publisher licences is just one benefit of consortial membership. In an article which provides a general overview of electronic consortia, Hiremath (2001) calls consortia “one of the most intriguing additions to the life of the modern library”! Naturally the many benefits of belonging to a consortium are outlined by Hiremath, including consortial licensing of electronic journals, strength in numbers over issues such as lobbying against threatened changes to copyright law, and licence negotiation. She also makes useful mention of a number of initiatives in this area, such as ICOLC (International Coalition of Library Consortia), some of the bigger consortia in the arena, and the Web-based *Library Consortia Documents Online*. But, according to this author, there is also a downside to consortium membership, such as the loss of freedom to make individual decisions on, for example, the cancellation of journal title subscriptions on a library by library basis. Nevertheless, this author believes that:

... the very survival of academic libraries is dependent on effectively co-operating in consortial efforts.

A rather less rosy picture is presented by Van Borm and Dujardin (2001) in their description of consortial developments in Belgium. Consortium development in Belgium has been influenced by the federal make-up of the country, and two independent regional consortia are emerging. The authors describe the ELEKTRON project of the Flanders region, which began in 1995. By 2000, the consortium offered access to bibliographic databases and, by 2001, full-text access had also been added. However, the consortium has not been without its problems, due mainly to the fact that initial generous funding from the Flemish government for the project has encouraged all participating libraries to expect high and unsustainable levels of service free. There have also been problems with the publisher licences accepted in the early stages by ELEKTRON, that do not support ICOLC and other licensing principles, and ELEKTRON is now reaping the poor

rewards of problems in the areas of ILL, walk-in users and use by non-teaching staff of the university hospital.

In the French-speaking community of Belgium, consortial activity began in 1998 with negotiations for electronic access to the titles of several major publishers. By 2000, this activity had crystallised into a non-profit group called *La Bibliothèque Interuniversitaire de la Communauté française de Belgique* (BICfB), which now co-ordinates the provision of electronic access to scientific information. There are major differences between the approaches of the two consortia, not least in their funding and in their composition, and the authors of this article are also not convinced that “the big deal” offers all the answers. They highlight a range of challenges for consortia, such as lack of choice for the individual libraries, high e-journal prices, the issue of perpetual access to electronic titles, and increasing market concentration. Once again, they suggest that the answer might lie in new forms of scholarly electronic communication such as the SPARC initiatives.

Couperin is a library consortium established in 1999 and in a short résumé, Reibel (2000) describes the steps in its development and the tasks it now undertakes. These include negotiation of e-journal licences with publishers, in which the relationship between print subscription and electronic access is a major consideration. The consortium consists of approximately 30 universities from all regions of France. Another article (Hormia-Poutanen, 2001) brings the reader up to date with licensed access to e-journals in Finland. FinELib is the Finnish National Electronic Library, formed early in 2001, which negotiates national licensed access to over 6,000 journal titles. This national consortium has responsibility for preparing pricing models, discussing licences, drafting marketing plans etc., and at the beginning of 2001 it consisted of 95 organisations, including all Finnish universities, polytechnics and regional public libraries and several research institutes.

But consortia have been around for longer than licensed electronic access to e-journals, and several articles remind the reader of the value of consortia in the more traditional task of (print) resource sharing. The Illinois ILL Assessment Project (Wiley and Chrzastowski, 2001) was recently undertaken to determine

the nature and scope of journal article interlending and borrowing within that state. There are many benefits to sharing resources within the state – the Illinois state resource sharing code, for example, encourages libraries to provide copies free – and this 11-month survey also studied the effectiveness of state-wide article supply compared with the supply of articles from outside the state. The authors state that:

... the goal for networking into the 21st century is to make *access* to Illinois collections equal to *ownership*.

This article provides many useful statistical results which reflect many of the qualities of an effective resource-sharing consortium, but the study also threw up some useful pointers for improvement.

Over 89,000 articles were borrowed for Illinois library users during the survey period, of which almost 60 per cent were supplied from within the state. Photocopy requests filled within the state were mostly for core, frequently requested titles, while those filled by libraries outside Illinois were more likely to be for single articles from single journal titles. The study also found a need for different types of library within the consortium, since each library can offer a different range of journal access. The authors also state that the study:

... reinforces the responsibilities libraries have in both recognising and meeting national and international needs.

Retention of last copies of journal titles was also found to be a key area, since the study found that Illinois libraries had previously cancelled many of the requested titles, and that no remaining copies were to be found within the state.

OhioLINK is known mostly for its patron-initiated request system, but Kuehn (2001) is keen to point out that the consortium still continues to provide more traditional ILL services to its members, and that numbers of requests handled have not declined significantly since the introduction of OhioLINK patron-initiated requesting. As many other authors have also said, Kuehn thinks that OhioLINK is being used in addition to traditional ILL. The main reason for this is increased access to bibliographic databases and widespread surfing of the Internet, which turns up many more references for students to follow up.

Traditional ILL tends to receive the more difficult of these references. Kuehn points out that there have been different effects of OhioLINK on the level of requests for returnables and non-returnables and, while traditional ILL is dwarfed by the scale of OhioLINK services, it still “maintains a viable role within the growing constellation of services offered”.

Aggregators and linking

An article by Hill (2001) offers a very useful description of the role of aggregators and a comparison of the scientific content of three major aggregator databases. The article begins with a description of aggregator databases, how they work and what they can do to make life easier for library staff. The main element of this article, however, is a comparison of the services of Bell & Howell's *Research Library*, EBSCO's *Academic Search Elite* and Gale's *Expanded Academic*. The author points out that the content of all aggregator databases is fluid, to say the least, but the comparison of these three took place in February 2001.

The survey studied the publishers covered by each database and also the subject coverage of each. Publisher inclusion differed between those indexed and those that provided full-text content, but in general there was very little full-text content from many of the major scientific publishers. One reason for this has to do with the embargo periods imposed by the publishers on full-text access via aggregators, in an attempt to minimise loss of income through their own subscriptions and e-journal packages. Hill reports that only one of the databases contains any full-text content from titles subject to embargo periods. The author then makes a comparison of coverage based on different scientific disciplines, and reports that, not surprisingly, each of the databases has strengths in different subjects. Overall, too, each database wins on different criteria:

- as an overall index of scientific literature;
- as an aggregator of full-text scientific content; and
- on cost and specialisation:

The database that is most appropriate is dependent on the needs of each institution.

In another article (Jascó, 2000), three more aggregator databases are compared, this time Electric Library, Northern Light, and Contentville.com. The author again compares the three for content quality, for ease and power of searching, and for cost of the full-text documents. For this author, Contentville.com has yet to prove its place in comparison with the other two similar services. Elsewhere, Turner (2001) briefly puts forward a strong case for a continuing need for subscription agents, or at least their electronic equivalents. He thinks that the use of intermediaries will inevitably reduce the cost to libraries of providing e-access and, so long as this is the case, there will continue to be a demand for their services.

Much, of course, has already been written about the evolutionary step of reference linking, of which CrossRef appears to be emerging as the front-runner. In a brief article, Brand (2001) describes CrossRef, which uses digital object identifiers (DOIs) as the link element, and comments that the crucial thing about DOIs is their permanence. Links using DOIs are fixed, regardless of whether changes occur in the journal title, publisher database or any other element. CrossRef currently (October 2001) has over 4,900 journal titles and 3.2 million articles in its system, and is expecting those numbers to continue to increase. And finally, in another article, Hoffman (2001) takes a wider look at the various issues surrounding linking systems, aggregators and the role that A&I services are playing in the e-journal environment.

Performance measurement

The important contribution to the improvement in ILL performance made by the ARL ILL/DD performance measures study has been widely recognised. Its results are still being reported and its influence felt in many corners of the world. In a brief article, Jackson (2001) reports on how the follow-up series of workshops have given ILL staff the confidence to make wide-ranging changes in working practices in order to improve their performance. The study had identified top performing libraries in both requesting and supply operations, and also identified the characteristics that made them so successful. The workshops have allowed other libraries to

compare their own ILL practices with those of the top-performers and to make improvements. Jackson comments that:

... an unanticipated outcome of the workshops was the empowerment of ILL managers and staff to feel confident to make the changes suggested by the study.

Australia's National Resource Sharing Working Group (NRSWG) has recently completed their own performance measures study, based on the ARL study. At the time of writing the final report of the study is not yet published but, in another brief article, Ruthven (2001) encourages all ILL librarians to look out for the final report and to act on its findings. Again, the key characteristics of high and low performing libraries will be identified, and the NRSWG will use the findings to develop strategies to improve the performance of ILL operations in Australian libraries over the next few years.

The report is awaited by, among others, the University of Otago in New Zealand, which recently carried out its own benchmarking study in ILL operations. Their study (Fisher, 2000) focused on turnaround time and the library joined the University of Wollongong Library as a partner in the study. In a repeat study carried out in 2000, ILL staff at Otago were pleased with the results, which showed that performance had remained high, giving a seven-day median turnaround time for non-urgent NZ requests and a median of next-day supply for urgent requests.

Another performance measure study based on the ARL report is also being carried out in the Nordic countries. At a similar stage to the Australian study, again the results are not available at the time of writing, but the study's leader (Vattulainen, 2000) suggests that it will be interesting to compare the results of the Nordic study with the US results, especially given the differences in ILL procedures between the two regions. The final report is expected by the end of 2001.

Finally, anyone considering carrying out a performance measure study for the first time could do well to examine a literature review compiled by Stein (2001) in the area of performance measurement in ILL. Unfortunately, although only recently published, this study covers literature only up to 1998, but is absolutely thorough in discussing trends and major recent studies. Stein says that there is general agreement that fill rate, turnaround time, cost and user

satisfaction are the four primary criteria for evaluating ILL and document supply, and she examines each of these areas, illustrating her review with comments on the major studies undertaken. She also comments that very little has been done to study why some requests fail and there is lack of agreement on whether failure rate should be used as another criterion. Her review will be followed by a supplement covering the years 1998-2000, now in preparation.

Document supply and public libraries

Most interlibrary requesting and supplying take place in academic libraries, and it would seem that ILL in public libraries remains a "Cinderella" activity. But several recent articles describe new initiatives to offer wider document access to the general public. In Florida, the Tampa Bay Library Consortium (TBLC) recently introduced the Anywhere-Anytime Library, called Alleycat (Stokes and Wilber, 2001). This offers a library catalogue, end-user requesting and document delivery for public library users in the state. So far, users in just four counties have access to the virtual catalogue from anywhere and at any time and can make requests for items they require. New developments will continue to be added, including designating OCLC as a "library of last resort". This will mean that libraries in the region will be able to share their own resources first, while offering a mediated ILL service for items not held within the consortium. The author says that Alleycat:

... eliminates many of the barriers in giving wide access to materials and information resources to residents of rural and urban communities via the World Wide Web.

A similar service has been developed in Berlin (Flodell, 2001). The *Verbund öffentlicher Bibliotheken Berlins (VÖBB)* is a consortium of 12 Berlin boroughs, the *Zentral- und Landesbibliothek Berlin (ZLB)* and the senate's department of science, research and culture. The consortium offers a shared union catalogue, and, among other services, an end-user request system with books being delivered direct to the user's preferred library or to a home address.

In Denmark, meanwhile, the entire population now has Internet access to the 14 million catalogue records of the major Danish

research libraries, a large number of public libraries, the Danish and UK national bibliographies and NOSP, the Nordic periodicals database. In addition, all users may make an ILL request for any item listed, and have that item delivered to the local library of their choice. Hansen (2001) describes this *bibliotek.dk* initiative which was opened at the end of 2000. The fundamental idea is that *bibliotek.dk* is accessible to everyone, although each participating library is able to determine their own service profile within the framework of the Library Act. The service is too new for one to be able to assess its full impact, but in April 2001 there were approximately 38,500 requests, of which 33,000 were made at the public libraries and the rest at research libraries. The number of ILL requests has increased significantly since the launch of this service, but so far libraries appear to have been able to cope with the increased workload, although the author says that a clearer picture will emerge when a full year's statistical data are available after 2001. In any case, it would appear that the demand for and use of traditional print materials will remain central to Danish libraries for the foreseeable future.

National updates

A number of reports on national ILL systems have been written recently, which can be useful for those working in the field to keep abreast of new developments world-wide. Creff (2001) gives a very useful update on the French ILL scene, which has improved enormously in the last couple of years. In particular, she highlights the recently overhauled *Catalogue collectif de France* (CCFr) and explains how interlending services are available direct from the *Catalogue*, although for the time being only for French users. For foreign requests, the *Bibliothèque nationale de France* currently plays the role of mediator in channelling requests to other supplying libraries within France, and ensuring high levels of service. It is expected that in future Web-based ILL services via the *Catalogue* will reduce the need for this mediation.

Other recently published articles by Guerrero and Mattes (2001), Lushchik (2000), Senovaitienė (2000), Cielava (2000), and Denisova (2000) describe the current

situation in Mexico, Estonia, Lithuania, Latvia and Karelia respectively. The ILL scene in Taiwan is described in two separate articles this time. Wang (2000) comments that demand for journal articles not available in Taiwan has increased enormously in recent years, but this demand is not yet being satisfied. The author makes the distinction between libraries that offer "incoming" ILL services and information brokers that offer ILDS services for profit. Foreign document suppliers include, of course, BLDS and DOCLINE and UMI in the USA. Wang thinks that there is enormous potential for both libraries and brokers to improve and widen the services they offer, and at present:

... there is no overall winner: brokers' services are faster and more cost-effective, but libraries offer a greater ability to supply foreign documents satisfying the greatest range of subject demands.

Elsewhere, Chen (2000) reports on the development of a mirror site in Taiwan, which aims to improve the level of e-journal access to library users. The *Academia Sinica* is the lead partner in this particular project, and Chen comments that:

The library has the opportunity to deliver electronic resources to its users and experiment with integrating the existing print and current electronic information seamlessly for patrons.

Finally, in another article, Tang (2001) reports on recent developments in mainland China at the beginning of this new century. Although this article is not confined to ILDS, it offers a useful update on library development in that country at this time.

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