

EXPLOITING NATIONAL SERIAL RESOURCES IN FRANCE

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This paper will first present an overview of the major collections of serials in France; then it will focus on interlending and other cooperative activities

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National heritage collections in the Bibliothèque nationale de France

Serials received under legal deposit

Over 50,000 titles are currently received through mandatory deposit from publishers: they include newspapers (national and regional titles, with all their local editions), magazines, journals, bulletins from associations, trade-unions, government and administrative serials.

All titles received are given an ISSN and are fully catalogued in the BnF database (BN-OPALE), with 6,000 annual updates for new serials or title changes. As for all printed items, records of serials are available in the printed bibliography, on CD-ROM, and online via Internet.

Two copies of each serial title received by legal deposit are retained by the library: one is stored in the stacks at the Tolbiac new site, for readers of research level, while the second copy is stored in Marne la Vallée, and serves as an archive copy, for preservation purposes.

Retrospective holdings and retroconversion

Altogether, national heritage collections include 160 000 periodical titles received since 1960 (French and foreign items). The older records for periodicals (from the earliest date to 1959, representing over 217,000 records, mostly French ones), were 'retroconverted' recently, and are now available on CD-ROM, soon to be commercially available. This operation was part of the massive retrospective conversion of the records of all printed materials in the BnF and it was given a high priority within the programmes for the new library, to offer wider access to the general catalogue of the BnF, both locally and remotely.

Serials collections in academic and research institutions

Like elsewhere in Europe, serials are mostly acquired by academic and special libraries. Because of the steep increase in prices of some highly specialised titles, not many libraries can afford to

maintain large collections, and the situation was very critical until we began to witness a recent improvement: serial subscriptions increased by 3.9% in 1991, 7% in 1992 and by 9% in 1993, with a special emphasis on French titles.

Academic and research institution libraries hold 376,000 serial titles, out of which 125,000 are current titles. Two thirds are acquired on subscription. 50% of the titles acquired on subscription are foreign titles.

Sixteen large university libraries hold over 6,000 titles on average, while the 32 medium size ones hold between 2,000 and 6,000 titles. The last group of thirty-four libraries are mostly newly built and under-graduate university sites. They have smaller collections not exceeding 2,000 current titles each.

The CADIST libraries (centre for acquisition and dissemination of scientific and technical information)

In the mid-eighties, a national policy of shared acquisitions to accelerate interlibrary loans was set up. The CADIST network was established, based on important academic or special libraries, with rich and coherent collections. Twenty of them were selected as CADIST, each in one particular subject (German studies, management and economics, religious studies, pharmacy, etc).

They were granted specific resources to maintain and improve their collections, both in French and foreign literature, for interlibrary loan purposes only. In fact, foreign literature represented 93% of their 1993 accessions budget (which was 20m francs).

Periodicals represent 58.6% of the total CADIST accessions expenditure. The average subscription price to a foreign serial title in the humanities reached 650 francs and 2,550 francs in pure sciences.

As expected, these libraries are very active in interlibrary loan.

INIST (Institut national de l'information scientifique et technique)

This institution, located in Nancy, is run by the Ministry for Scientific Research, and acts as a database producer (for example, the PASCAL and FRANCIS bibliographic databases) and as a

document supply centre for scientific and technical literature (grey literature, doctoral theses, conference proceedings and periodicals).

It therefore acquires a great number of serials, which are referenced and abstracted in the databases, and which are used for interlibrary loans, in France and abroad.

The figures concerning serials for the year 1994 are as follows:

- over 25,000 titles in total
- 12,000 current titles received
- over 8,000 titles abstracted
- 900 titles are digitized (those most frequently requested by ILL), and stored on a 'système d'archivage numérique' - SAN - thus providing 20,000 digitized articles.

The INIST serials collection is one of the largest after the Bibliothèque Nationale.

Interlibrary loans

The national union catalogue for serials (CCN-PS)

Created in 1983 by the Ministry for Education and Research, the CCN-PS is at present managed by ABES (Agence Bibliographique de l'Enseignement Supérieur), located in Montpellier. Its aim is to provide as precise locations as possible for periodicals collections.

The system includes a bibliographic database, holdings and locations, with the following figures (1995):

- 682,000 bibliographic records of French and foreign titles held in French libraries, (records retrieved from the ISSN International Centre database)
- 280,000 bibliographic records with holdings and locations
- 1m holdings records
- 2,800 libraries of all types, with their full address, conditions of access, etc.

The CNN-PS is an administrative and computer network, with thirty-four regional units, which collect and update the information concerning titles and library members on a regional level.

Ways to access this union catalogue are diverse, ranging from online access, or on

videotex (minitel), to a CD-ROM version (*Myriade*), with two updates a year.

Although all types of libraries are present in the CCN-PS, most holdings are those of INIST, academic and special libraries, and the BnF. This tool is of course used for ILL, but also as a means of rationalising serials collections, and allows a library to check titles before cancelling a subscription, or weeding.

The National Union Catalogue for Serials has marked an important step in document locating, and it has stimulated demand for locations for other types of material. In the medium term, it should be part of the 'catalogue collectif de France', the French general union catalogue for all types of documents, currently being built up at the BnF. It will enable users to locate any document recorded on the various databases which will be part of the catalogue, and should route the requests towards the more appropriate address. The CCF will join together all libraries participating in ILL, from the BnF to any medium size public library, with a notable special collection.

Interlibrary loans

Interlibrary loan requests for periodical articles mostly come from academic and research libraries, and are sent either to INIST, or to academic libraries:

- INIST delivers almost half of the total number of annual requests (600,000 requests received in 1993).
- The academic network received 723,000 requests (593,000 coming from university and higher institution libraries). Five university libraries handle 25% of the total requests. The CADIST libraries have received 26.7% of the requests in the academic network, with a satisfaction rate of 80%.

(NB: the exact number of ILL requests for serials is not available, and the above figures cover all types of documents. Periodical articles, however, represent by far the highest percentage of these requests.)

Let us also mention the third resource for serial articles widely used by French libraries: the BLDSC at Boston Spa.

National and international co-operation

Resource sharing in academic libraries

Resource sharing for collections is not very well advanced in France, where collection development plans started to be introduced 10 years ago, but are still not widespread. However, the National Union Catalogue for Serials has contributed to a sharing of resources, and has helped some libraries decide whether to keep certain titles or not.

This year, the Ministry for Education (Sous-direction des Bibliothèques), opened the *Centre technique du livre* in Marne la Vallée, adjacent to the BnF building. In this centre, also called 'book silo', older collections, or rarely requested material from libraries who no longer have space, will be stored and returned upon request. This should aid cooperation by helping libraries reorganise their collections, helping them weed out what they no longer need on a current basis, and by grouping scattered elements into coherent collections, for lending purposes.

Electronic delivery

Today, most ILL documents are still sent by mail, but all supplying institutions intend to move rapidly to electronic delivery. Together with PICA, BLDSC, and TIB, Hanover in Germany, France is engaged in the European project EDIL (Electronic Document Interchange between Libraries), based on the work of GEDI (Group on Electronic Document Interchange), and the standards for ILL which were defined in 1991. The French company Télésystèmes is the project coordinator.

In March 1995, six workstations (486 PC and a laser printer) were installed at INIST and at five university libraries (borrowers and lenders); these sites have started experimenting with electronic delivery between them and the first results are quite positive. Before the major journals become available online, electronic delivery is awaited impatiently by librarians and end-users - provided the costs are not prohibitive!

Electronic publishing

Electronic publishing is flourishing everywhere, and journals are starting to appear both on CD-

ROMs and on the Internet. Currently, approximately 150 serial titles have been traced on the Internet with a French 'publisher' or 'producer', fifteen of which have been assigned an ISSN record at the BnF.

Of course, the emergence of 'parallel' editions, on several competitive formats, creates new problems, and makes librarians hesitate in choosing between the various options.

More attention has been paid to serials in recent years, especially by librarians in public libraries. In academic institutions, a halt has been called to the drastic cuts in subscriptions, but collections are still below the levels of German or American university libraries. In this context, ILL should continue to grow, in spite of readers' complaints about the cost of photocopies, and the delays when an article has to be obtained from abroad.

In a few years' time, however, these points will probably seem irrelevant in the context of online publications! What will we even understand by the term 'serials' in the future.

Selected bibliography

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Selected INTERNET web sites

ABES: <http://www.abes.fr>
BnF: <http://www.bnf.fr>
DISTNB: distb.mesr.fr
INIST: <http://www.inist.fr>