

THE ROLE OF ELECTRONIC JOURNALS IN THE CORPORATE LIBRARY: A PUBLISHER'S PERSPECTIVE

Vincent Cassidy

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This paper argues that through permissive licensing arrangements with publishers the introduction of electronic journals will see the widening of the distinction between the corporate library and the academic library.

*At the time of this presentation Vincent Cassidy was with Academic Press. He is now Director of Marketing, Thomas Nelson, Mayfield Road, Walton-on-Thames KT12 5PL
vincent.cassidy@nelson.co.uk*

Introduction

It has been asserted that the advent of electronic journals will see a narrowing of the differences between the corporate library and the academic library, both in the way that information is provided to customers but also in the general role of the library within the organisation. This argument sees that with research material held on remote databases, the distinction between just-in-case to just-in-time information provision, which has tended to define the roles and use of resources in corporate and academic libraries, will begin to blur.

After discussing the limitations of the traditional model of business, the institutional print subscription, this paper will review the opportunities that online publishing offers in changing the business models by which research information is distributed.

Publishers will begin to develop a service, rather than commodity, approach to their corporate customers as online publishing becomes part of the publishing mix, and with that the offerings to different customer types will become differentiated.

The print subscription model

Over the last two hundred years the print subscription model has evolved as the primary means for publishers and libraries (mediated by agents) to distribute research findings, and has evolved with two defining characteristics. Being a 'one size fits all' model it takes no account of the needs of different customer types, or indeed of individual customers, but concentrates on the efficient management of transactions. It is a high volume/low value model. Its second broad characteristic is that it defines the journal as a finite commodity in the research and educational economy.

Both of these characteristics of the print subscription model focus on the *process* of distributing research findings, rather than on the specific value of the research to different customers or other non-research uses of the published material.

Before reviewing the specific needs of corporate libraries it is important to review the way that electronic publishing is providing publishers with the necessary impetus to change.

Electronic journals, business models and service

The emergence of online journal publishing is challenging many well established aspects of the publishing activity, from pre-publication processes, economics, business models and product differentiation through to issues of administration and finance.

The advent of electronic journals, has encouraged the development of new business models creating new configurations of products and customers. Consortia licensing schemes such as the Academic Press APPEAL license, have established the efficacy of low volume/high value models providing an attractive alternative value proposition in the academic sector. These models seek to use the high fixed costs in online publishing (around 98% of total costs) to provide a large aggregate of customers, entire nations or states, access to large aggregates of information, such as the entire database of journal issues. These models tend to construct a framework for resource sharing which is welcomed by academic libraries, funding authorities and users, since research information can flood an academic system without a proportional rise in costs.

However, although companies like Academic Press have been able to establish significant acceptance of consortia licensing in the academic and educational sector, there has not been a wholesale acceptance of a consortia style model by the corporate sector libraries. This is, in part, a result of publishers focusing their initial online efforts on the academic sector, but is also an effect of the print subscription model, as we have seen, obscuring the different needs of corporate and academic libraries. Publishers face a challenge in understanding the specific needs of corporate clients and create appropriate licenses.

The characteristics of a corporate licence

Research information

The basic corporate library requirement for journals is similar to that of an academic library, to provide customers with access to research

materials. However underlying this are some basic differences. Corporate libraries tend to have the need to access different tiers of information. While an academic library is required to provide archival access to a broad base of research (the aggregated content model fulfils this requirement) the corporate research environment requires immediate access to a relatively small number of journals which can change annually by up to 15% as research topics and product research developments change. In addition to this core provision corporate information managers provide awareness and document delivery services to supply articles from non-core journals.

A core component for an online license is to allow the information manager to licence access to a core collection of journals, together with access to a marginal journal collection, both of which may change over time. Licensing agreements offering quick desk top access to both core and peripheral journals are attractive in an environment where currency is paramount, but also will allow information managers to re-direct costs allocated to document delivery.

Corporate intranets

Many industrial and corporate libraries would like to provide online journals access to a widely distributed set of multi-national sites over a secure intranet. Publishers licensing such access will need to build models which factor in the number of researchers accessing both a matrix of 'core journal sets' in different geographical locations and also a mixed peripheral journal set.

Licensing archive rights from online journals

One of the most exciting potential uses of new media is the prospect of licensing uses of journal articles which have been costly to administer and maintain in the print era. Many companies, specifically those in the pharmaceutical industry, are obliged by law to maintain deep archives of articles which refer to products. These archives are often currently maintained in print, supplied through document delivery, or scanned into an electronic archive with the publisher's permission.

It is now possible for publishers to permit the creation and maintenance of a local digital archive from articles downloaded under licence from the online service. This is an effective use of journal

content in support of the patents, regulatory and legal processes of key customers and offers the information manager the opportunity to streamline archiving processes and perhaps make cost savings.

Internal customers/external customers

Many corporate subscribers to research journals have a complex network of internal and external customers for journals. In licensing research use to online journals over a corporate intranet, there are possibilities to license access to other constituents outside of the research process. For example the sales and marketing department of a pharmaceutical company may find access to research articles of great interest in understanding competitors.

Online publishing as a service and not a commodity

The earlier discussion of the print subscription model highlighted its tendency to emphasise the journal as a commodity in the information

economy, and this has had a profound effect on many publishers development of new media. It is apparent from the brief evaluation of the licensing possibilities available with online journals listed above, that publishers require a service orientated approach to respond to 'non-traditional' needs.

Conclusion

The print models of publishing that we as publishers, librarians and agents are used to working with, are linear in nature, with transactions completed resulting in physical goods despatched to libraries who archive them for users. With digital publishing it is possible to see new cyclical processes developing, processes which not only allow publishers to understand the specific needs of different customer types, but also allow them to provide new services licensed in innovative models.

The current challenge facing both corporate libraries and publishers is how to use the advent of the new media to define services and licensing models to their mutual benefit.