Out and about on the Conference and Seminar Circuit

'A DAY IN THE LIFE OF A LIBRARIAN'

UKSG Seminar held at the University of London Library, 25 October 2000

The aim of the seminar was to give people working in publishing, subscription agencies and other serials-related third parties the opportunity to learn about the use and management of journals in different kinds of library, ranging from academic to industrial. Over half of the 36 delegates worked in publishing, and two of the major subscriptions agents sent three delegates each. Topics covered included: the expectations of library users; the impact of electronic media; factors that influence librarians' financial choices, and the effects of publishers' and agents' policies on serials use. A tour of the University of London Library periodicals section rounded off the day.

The seminar was introduced and chaired by Caroline Moss-Gibbons, Manager of Library and Information Services, Royal College of Physicians.

Serials and the academic/research library

Serials collection management
Paul McLaughlin, University of London Library

The key issues facing the academic library today include:
- how to manage electronic and print collections alongside each other (the "hybrid" library);
- how to present seamless services to users;
- how to balance the budget between competing demands – monographs vs serials,

different subject areas, print vs electronic, etc.

Online journals are not yet a major feature of the ULL (with the exception of abstracting and indexing facilities); they will set up online access, if this is free with print, but are not willing to pay a surcharge for this and have not purchased any NESLI packages. On the whole, their users prefer print, and there are problems with offsite use, which are often exacerbated by publishers' licensing policies. Archiving is also a factor.

Paul gave a useful summary of how stock management, selection procedures, budgeting, and prepayment work, and the possible role of the London Universities Purchasing Group in negotiating a consortium deal. During the tour later in the day, delegates were able to see the automated collection management system used by the library and how this works in practice.

Supporting the information needs of the research scientist

Rhona Floate, Horticultural Research International

The Horticultural Research Institute is funded by Research Councils and its library's customers include government departments, overseas development agencies and major supermarket chains. As well as the whole range of plant sciences, the collection includes statistics, maths

and GIS journals. The library exists to support research, and 75% of its budget is spent on serials since published research usually appears first in journals. The Inter-Library Document Service (ILDS) is used to supplement the collection, with around 3000 articles requested each year.

The research scientist is a demanding creature and expects desktop delivery, anywhere in the world and with seamless navigation, of all data relevant to his/her research, whether published or unpublished. However the library cannot benefit from HEFC-funded projects, such as NESLI, and so cannot offer the same range of online services as a university library. There is no budget to pay additional charges for online access, so only 65 of the 300 journals with paid subscriptions are available in electronic format.

Research scientists want to maintain personal "e-stores" (copies of articles held on their own PCs), currently outlawed by the copyright laws and licence agreements. They fail to see the difference between having a PDF file on their hard disk and having a photocopy on the shelf.

The positive features of online journals include timely delivery, savings in staff time and shelf space, and multi-site availability. On the down side are complex licensing agreements, a multiplicity of gateways and access procedures, and "bundling" – i.e. purchasing articles that you do not want (although it could be argued that this has always been the case with print journals). Users are not interested in publishers' own branding, only the journal title brand.

The preferred model for the future is online single-article delivery, with payment based on usage. Pre-print servers and new methods of peer review may make publishers redundant, unless they are prepared to open a creative dialogue with librarians on pricing, bundling and licensing.

Serials and the business library

Managing knowledge in a global environment
Robin Hall, Linklaters & Alliance

Linklaters & Alliance are a large law firm whose clients include governments, financial institutions and multinational companies. They have offices worldwide and provide legal

information based on local and global knowledge. As well as purchased information sources such as case reports and law journals, they have long employed what is currently termed "knowledge management" to make the best use of the knowhow and experience of their staff.

The library's clients are the company's 2000 lawyers. They want answers, and it is irrelevant to them whether the information comes from published sources or company knowhow. Lawyers are becoming more IT-literate and are putting pressure on their librarian to improve online delivery services, but site limitations imposed by publishers' licensing agreements are holding up the pace of change.

Currency of information is crucial and the library is prepared to pay accordingly, but value for money is still important.

The changing role of the information professional in an industrial setting

Carol Chambers, formerly BICCGeneral UK Cables Ltd

Carol described the sad decline of a once-thriving library/technical centre supporting a multinational company, buffeted from pillar to post through a series of mergers, divisions and relocations to its eventual closure earlier this month with very little notice. The lesson for publishers and agents is that large corporations do not always support their information resources as they should, they do not have unlimited resources, and agents/publishers should be more sensitive in such situations regarding up-front payment and cancellation policies.

Open forum and discussion

Caroline Moss-Gibbons, Royal College of Physicians

Prior to the open discussion Caroline described the role of the RCP library, which offers a historical archive and research facilities to the 15,000 Fellows and Members of the College, as well as to government departments and the NHS. Fellows working in the NHS or in universities cannot access the materials that they need from home, and though the RCP library would like to offer this facility it is unable to because (a) it cannot afford the subscriptions in its own right and (b) it is not part of the NHS nor an academic

institution, so is not entitled to access these resources via larger libraries or to receive HEFC support.

Points from the open discussion included the following:

- ATHENS access management system enables members of educational establishments to access their libraries' holdings online from outside the campus. Currently UK only, this facility will be available worldwide shortly – see «hyperlink http://www» for details.

· The plethora of branded front-ends and access procedures demotivates potential users of online journals.

- Articles are usually located via bibliographic searches, not by browsing contents lists. Publishers should concentrate their energies on making access easier, not launching more new products – i.e. users want larger numbers of journals in fewer databases.

- Home use of online resources will soon be as significant as library use. Home users want articles in HTML format, not PDF, because they are easier to download and search.

- Publishers are often working on behalf of learned societies, and it is the society rather than the publisher who makes the decisions, for which the publishers are criticised. An academic in the role of a researcher, who wants free unlimited online access, will have very different priorities when in the role of an editor wishing to protect his/her journal's revenue stream.

Conclusion

More round-table sessions between librarians, publishers and intermediaries would be invaluable, especially on issues such as licensing and bundling. Publishers need to be flexible about methods of content delivery, payment methods and licensing restrictions, which do not always match the needs of the "virtual library". On the other hand, librarians need to understand that publishers' policies are often formulated in response to demands from the academic community itself (societies and editorial boards).

Plenty of food for thought here for next April's conference!

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PROMOTION AND MANAGEMENT OF ELECTRONIC JOURNALS, UKSG SEMINAR 1ST NOVEMBER, 2000

Despite severe transport problems and a flu epidemic, the *Promotion and Management of Electronic Journals* seminar, organised by the UK Serials Group was able to rise above adversity to present a topical and wide-ranging review of the current situation, which was geared towards the practical needs of information workers. In the past, I have consistently been impressed by the range of speakers, which the Group is able to attract, and this event proved no exception. The fact that they came from institutions of varying size from both the academic, research and publishing sector enabled a variety of perspectives to be presented, yet it also stressed the common issues of licensing, cataloguing and archive access, which we all face.

In a comprehensive paper, Frances Boyle, from Liverpool University, gave an overview of the many technical and managerial issues involved in the selection and maintenance of ejournals in an academic library. This was complemented by papers from Frank Norman of the National Institute of Medical Research, who spoke on the difficulties of measuring the value of electronic journals in a research setting, and Sue Roberts from Edge Hill College who offered an insight into the experiences of smaller college libraries. It was particularly interesting to hear how she had been able to use the NESLI publisher deals to provide access to an increased number of journal titles and to some extent 'level the playing field' with the collections offered by larger university libraries. She also presented some thought provoking ideas on the future promotion of

ejournals to the academic community, focusing on the need to integrate their usage into the formal academic curriculum, in order to give a 'legitimacy' which would encourage student use.

Another innovative approach to electronic journal management was outlined by Melvin Morbey in his description of the development of his role as a dedicated Electronic Journal Co-ordinator at Reading University. Of particular interest was the way in which he had been able to operate and develop the position independently of the library periodicals department! The seminar was concluded by Lorcan Dempsey's paper on the future work of the DNER. This vision of expanded coverage and accessibility was a fitting conclusion to an interesting and thought provoking day.

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