THE EXPONENTIAL VALUE OF ELECTRONIC PUBLISHING

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The electronic format adds value to the information in journals, notably through the potential for easier, integrated access. This format, however, raises new problems, such as licensing, archiving, ownership of intangible documents and standards, which have still to be solved. Kluwer Academic recognises that dialogue between the paticipants in the information chain is key to resolving these issues.

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First, I would like to focus on the researchers. The possibility to search for and find required information without having to get up from your desk is, of course, a fantastic improvement. One can have no doubt that searching through databases by means of sophisticated navigation tools works more efficiently than was ever possible in a print environment. Moreover, what was not thought possible some years ago has now become reality. Publishers, commercial and not-for-profit alike, are working together in Cross Ref to provide seamless reference linking from and to each other's databases, which shows the exponential value of integration of content and functionality. That is what electronic publishing is all about. In essence, the information, itself, mostly remains the same as when it is printed on paper, but the way in which the information can be delivered faster, searched for and retrieved, linked, accessed, downloaded etc – that is what makes the value different and obviously greater.

Electronic packages also have exponential value. Consortia licences, such as the NESLI arrangement here in the UK, are a prime example. They provide access to information to your customers 24 hours a day, seven days a week, and permit multiple/concurrent use in a way that is not possible in the print world. They facilitate navigation through databases in a much more efficient way. With regard to the administration involved in consortia and site licence arrangements, we realise that there are still improvements to be made here. John Cox[1] has made a valuable contribution in mapping out the elements which should preferably be addressed in licences.

One example where we think administrative activities may diminish due to electronics is in ILL. In the print world, ILL played a major part for libraries to service their customers. It could now play a smaller role in consortia as we experience that

more and more, also consortia at all levels aim to buy access to all journal titles available through our Kluwer Online. This implicitly then provides access for all participating institutions to all titles, which – for these institutions – takes away the need for, and the administrative aspects of ILL. Of course, ILL still exists. Electronic licences at present are still driven by print format: downloading, printing, sending or faxing. Interconnectivity between databases (such as the already mentioned Cross Ref initiative, but also, for instance, the gateways such as Swetsnet, Ebsco Online, etc.) again has positive effects both for libraries and for their users.

Having said all this, what other effects does electronic transfer of information have, or seem to have? Many talk about a paradigm shift. It is definitely the case, as we see it, that many questions, issues and possibilities arise in the electronic world which did not exist in the print world. The answers, consequently, do not always come easily to us either, but in close consultation between all parties progress is being made. For instance, using a term out of the accounting world, we can make a distinction between the tangible (i.e. print product) and the intangible (i.e. electronic product). One of the issues regarding the intangible product, which I know and understand concerns you, is whether when you buy , or rather pay for, access to the information do you actually also buy the information? At Kluwer Academic Publishers, we take the view that you buy the information, just as in the print world.

The archiving question

Then this, of course, leads to the question of archiving. Here is an interesting issue of possibly shifting responsibility. Whereas archiving is (I dare not say was) one of the prime tasks of the library, next to collection building, we all know that the digital archive is not immediately or automatically perceived to be the prime or sole responsibility of the library any more. In this 'gap of opportunity', some initiatives have already taken off – such as JSTOR and OCLC, which were not initially libraries, nor for that matter publishing companies. Kluwer Academic Publishers is actively involved in the Digital Library project of the Koninklijke Bibliotheek in

the Netherlands, which also has links to other National Library initiatives in Europe.

Another question that pops up every now and then – and I know that this could prove dangerous for me to mention this in this audience – is whether, given the accessibility to information from computers located anywhere it will be necessary in the longer term to still have or maintain bricks-and-mortar libraries. I agree it may be difficult to imagine for now, but the question has been raised, even by your colleagues. I personally still think that a library as a central meeting point where collections have been built up, which provides the opportunity to get advice on where to find information, and also on how to use a computer is valid and valuable. Because, although the proliferation of computers is increasing fast, it is still not the case that everyone who wishes to access information electronically owns their own computer.

In another shift of tasks, usage statistics have now been allocated mostly to the publishers. Where in the print world the publisher had no possibility whatsoever to track the usage of journals in the libraries themselves (other than asking librarians), now, both the library and the publisher can install software to track the usage of electronic journals. The provision of usage statistics to libraries is now perceived as the task of the publisher, and, indeed, it is a great service for us to be able to deliver. I admit that Kluwer Academic Publishers has as yet not provided usage statistics to our customers, but we will be starting to do so soon.

When searching for information via the screen, users tend to come across articles they wish to read, but may then run into the situation that their library has no subscription to that particular journal. Here the option of 'pay per view' comes in which creates more questions. Will the user be willing to pay personally for viewing the article, by means of a credit card, for instance? Or does this still go through the library to be allocated to the library budget? If so, how can the librarian control this budgetary use? The PEAK project, which was initiated by the University of Michigan and Elsevier, aimed to seek and find acceptable solutions in this field. Basically, it boils down to the question of who controls the access to the information – the librarian, or the user, or maybe both. In line with this, we see 'vertical

portals' arising with access to topical information geared mainly towards end-users. How do you, the librarians, view this segregation of content offering?

Finally, the question also arises in the electronic world: when does communication through the web become publishing on the web? And what effect does this have on archiving of material? I refer, for instance, to the pre-print servers, which contain the not yet or never will be peer- reviewed material. It has obviously been proven that the pre-print server activities have value. But they also raise the issue of ease of retrievability of information. This question is being discussed, for instance, at the Santa Fe convention of the Open Archives Initiative (' the important challenge is to increase the impact of the e-print archives by layering on top of them services – such as peer review – deemed essential to scholarly communication : this is the focus of the Open Archive initiative'). Again, can we, or should we, be speaking here of changing roles, responsibilities and tasks?

Meeting the challenges

There are many challenges facing us in the electronic world. We can read about the internet companies and the IPOs in the newspapers every day. Many books, such as, for example, *Blown To Bits*, by Evans and Wurster[2], have been written on the topic of the change of the traditional or conventional economy moving towards a new or electronic economy and the impact this has on organizations.

I think it fair to say that not all parties move at the same speed. It is clear that the requirements with regard to the use of information are changing: the possibility to 'slice and dice' whilst maintaining the certainty that you, as the user, do not miss any important information. The impatience – as we all recognize – with regard to the speed with which your screen shows what you want to see. To meet these challenges, it is imperative to have the technical infrastructures in place and for creative 'web intelligent' people to be in the right places. At KAP we realize this, and work at this every day. We recognize the 'new' players entering the field. Some are totally new, others not new at all but taking on an additional role, such as Stanford with HighWire. All this is

to underpin the development of scientific research in the electronic world.

It is imperative for ease of access to electronic information to create or adhere to standards. An example here could be the research and development done on DOIs: the digital object identifiers which will allow seamless and persistent linking of information in databases, so ensuring the retrievability of information. Another example is the previously mentioned initiative by John Cox to standardize the elements in licences.

Last, but not least, the need for continuity in this changing environment forces us all to maintain current processes whilst exploring the new possibilities that the Internet – as carrier – offers us.

Are there easy solutions here? Not really, but we are all working hard at finding and implementing them. To do this there is an absolute need for constructive dialogues between the parties concerned and in the experiments. This is currently taking place in the discussions around consortia licensing as well as with libraries on other topics such as streamlining thesauri and archiving. The increasing and different requirements with regard to delivering and accessing information are driven by, and supported by, the fast changing technological developments which at times seem to overtake the time available to implement them.

At Kluwer Academic Publishers, we are proud to have Kluwer Online as our first step. The development of increasing functionality in the systems is a prime focus for us. At present, we offer some 600 journals online. The headers are in SGML, the full text in PDF format. The access can either be arranged direct with Kluwer Academic Publishers, or through agents (I refer to Swetsnet and Ebso Online, etc), or, if required, it is also possible to store the information locally on the servers of the universities. As is known, we offer consortia licences as well as site licences, but it is also possible to pick some individual titles to start with. We do not bundle print and electronic in one package: if you want electronic only that is possible too.

What is next for Kluwer Online? We are in the process of making all the full text available in SGML format, which will improve even more the searchability of full text. We are also working on

introducing some vertical portals. To better service the researcher, we are developing authoring tools which should also improve the 'time to market' for their publications. It is our aim to create customer friendly and focussed 'Library pages' for yourselves on which you will be able to find your holdings and the status of publications. This project will be done in close partnership with libraries to ensure that the information provided is the information needed by yourselves. Furthermore, we will be linking reference works to our journals in Kluwer Online, to expand accessibility to topical information and not only focus on journal content. Then there is the issue of Books Online. Do you see a future in this, do you think this is useful? These are questions where we are asking librarians to guide us. In the mean time, we will experiment with 'established' parties such as NetLibrary.

So is the world turning upside down as sometimes is suggested? Are roles completely changing or even vanishing? And if so who will benefit in the end? Kluwer Academic Publishers does not think the world is turning upside down, but it is definitely changing, and it will take efforts from all concerned to adjust the roles which add value to the accessibility of scientific information. We feel we should not forget that the quality of the information and accessibility to the information are key factors in the development of scientific research. Who will benefit? If we all do it right, we all will. In line with this, it is our aim to facilitate easy access to high quality scientific information from wherever, whenever. This is the explicit exponentially added value of electronic publishing!

We want to explore and experiment in partnership with you with the opportunities the Internet provides to support and facilitate scientific research.

References

1. Cox, J. Standard Licences: Simplifying the Acquisitions Process, *Serials*, Vol.13, p78, July 2000

2. Evans, P and Wurster, TS, *Blown to Bits: How the New Economics of Information Transforms Strategy*. Boston (Mass.), Harvard Business School Press; London, McGraw Hill, 1999. ISBN 087584877x