

# ELECTRONIC JOURNALS – THE DANISH MODEL

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*The Danish Electronic Research Library (DEF) has been working since 1996 to promote access to electronic information in Denmark. This paper looks at the past, present and future of electronic journal implementation from the viewpoint of a member of the Danish National Licence Committee, and University Institute Librarian. The issues addressed include the problems of publisher pricing, differential contributions of consortium members, usage statistics, use of agents and central administration, and future consortium plans for financing and acquisition policies.*

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## History

In Denmark there has been considerable recent discussion about the administration of electronic journal subscriptions. The overall hope is obviously that by working in unison, the libraries can press the publishers to provide better solutions. Denmark is a rather small country, so there is a need for allies – there have been attempts to work at a Scandinavian level, but even that does not mean a lot to the bottom line of the publishers. To make matters worse publishers in general believe that the Scandinavian libraries are "rich" and can afford whatever they suggest.

The experiences in this paper come from an employee of a University Library with national obligations including "library of last resort", and also as a member of the Danish National Licence Committee from its inception.

The Danish National Licence Committee has been working for over five years and was established by the the Conference of Directors of Research Libraries, which can be compared with SCONUL, and works on a consultancy basis to DEF (The Danish Electronic Research Library). Three ministries fund the DEF project and it aims to promote access to electronic information for both researchers and students. The budget for the five years is about 200 million Danish kroner.

This committee decides which licences to subscribe to on a consortium level and recommends the subsidies for each licence. These subsidies are essential, as the individual libraries have to pay the majority of the costs out of their own budgets. DEF does or did pay part of the extra cost for online access to get the licences started – but that only covers part of the total cost. The libraries are also legally bound by the contracts.

## Achievements

Some of the results that have been achieved so far are:

- DEF has signed 42 licences providing access to 57 products covering about 7,200 journal titles in full text;
- Every library has access to between 1 and 52 licensed products;
- 106 libraries (sites) and institutions at present participate in the licence co-operation and the licences cover an additional 194 institutions/hospitals.

The majority of these products are licences for full-text journals, but it also includes some rather important major databases such as ISI Web of Science, CrossRef and Derwent. Licences for PCI and JSTOR have also been signed. Another important result is the co-financing of backfiles by DEF for electronic journals as well as databases.

The importance of DEF, besides providing access to full-text journals, is illustrated by the following examples:

- 22 smaller libraries have been able to upgrade their library systems. Some of the smaller ones, for instance hospital libraries, have done so in co-operation with larger university libraries. This is definitely a success. The Danish National Library for Science (DNLB) is today hosting the library system/catalogues of 32 smaller libraries, all in the medical and scientific field. Using this approach, smaller libraries have been able to upgrade to fully integrated library systems – systems they normally would not have been able to afford nor been able to maintain.
- Retrospective conversion of about 2.5 million catalogue cards from 14 research libraries is being carried out at a total cost of about 20 million Danish kroner.

## Different models within the consortium

Some of the licences date back quite a long way. Most of the contracts signed today run for a year. This practice was established mainly to follow the libraries' fiscal year, but also because the electronic world is changing constantly, which in itself makes it necessary to change the contracts.

The committee has also become wiser, and is starting to see a usage pattern which has to be taken into consideration in demands to the publishers. Another important tool is the usage statistics, which will be used for next year's contracts and for setting the acquisition policy.

Statistics have, however, been a bit of a problem to get hold of. A lot of publishers – even the major ones – do not provide reliable material, which can be used as an indicator of real-time use, and some publishers provide no statistics whatsoever. It should be obvious to the publishers that statistics are of real importance to the libraries. If the libraries cannot document the use of documents and data, they do not receive any budget and therefore there can be no renewal of the contract. The limitation to one-year contracts is partly because there is a need for more information to discuss the terms for participation.

## Demands for future models/contracts

In February 2002 the committee discussed the demands being made of the publishers to form the basis for the negotiations for 2003. The following are some of the requests that have not yet been met in the contracts:

- New Titles: within the contract period – who will pay for the establishment of access? Can the publishers manage the actual use? Pay per view per library?
- Missing supplements: According to a Norwegian study by Oddvin Heggstad, no less than 114 out of 598 (i.e. 19%) supplements were missing. This is not acceptable – quite often these supplements contain subject issues, which are much in demand.
- Enhancements: Because of financial issues there needs to be the opportunity to choose a cheaper access method to material – quite a lot of libraries have spent time and money to integrate the titles into their own graphical interface and are not using all the nice but expensive enhancements some of the publishers have made. To be able to keep up a subscription, cheaper access must be a possibility.
- Price calculations: A new way of calculating the price, which is not the number of titles

which were taken by a specific library (for instance some libraries had more than one copy of a title)

- Sub-libraries: Some of these, which in many cases are part of the campus site, cancel their subscriptions due to either financial considerations or because they are happy with the online access provided by their mother library.

The initiatives by Springer and Wiley are a good example of changing the terms of payment. It does, however, require a lot of co-ordination and legwork by the consortium members to work on these deals, and there are still no deals which guarantee the individual library access to the number of titles they have actually paid for in the past if the library decides to leave the consortium. The Perpetual Access issue needs to be dealt with – as some publishers are making rolling backfiles as archives. Some libraries see this as a solution to the archives dilemma, but others worry that this will mean they will have to pay twice or more for the access.

#### **Dilemma inside the consortium**

There are also existing problems between the libraries themselves. This viewpoint is personal and may not cover the whole spectrum of different views shared by the consortium members.

The dissimilarities of the libraries, and their different approaches, mean that at this stage there is a distorted distribution of payment for the access and titles that are received. Some consortium libraries are smaller libraries, which cover many subjects with a few titles. Some libraries cover a few subject areas with few titles. Others again, like the Danish National Library of Science and Medicine, cover many specialised subjects with a great variety of titles. The issue of duplicates caused by libraries having several sub-libraries within their campus is also a concern.

At the beginning, it was quite simple. DEF paid for the extra costs of electronic access – this being in the range of 10-15% of the subscription price. This immediately made a whole range of journal titles available to the users, which was also the aim. The idea was that if DEF were to make the users more interested in electronic journals, the number of titles accessed should be greater than, for example, the 100 titles the

Danish National Library for Science provided access to in 1996.

Today most libraries provide access to about 6-7000 titles, which for some libraries is a greater number of titles than they have ever had before. For other larger libraries, this has increased by only about 10% the number of titles available. This due to the fact that some titles have had to be cancelled, and also reflects the way a library decides to provide access to full-text journals. DNLB has chosen to provide access from the web catalogue as well as the homepage to the journals, which cover the library's subject range. The users can, however, get access directly from the publisher's website to all the titles covered by the licence.

#### **Sharing policy**

As most contracts are based on the number of printed titles carried by libraries when the original contract was entered into, it is obviously the larger libraries that carry the greater expense. The smaller libraries are quite happy with this solution, which in reality means that they can provide access to the same number of online titles to their users as the larger libraries can, but for a small amount of money. A small library which in 1996 carried about 500 titles will now have more than 7,000 for the extra cost of about 10-15% of the original 500 titles. The larger libraries again – like DNLB – had about 7500 titles in 1996 and now less than 10 % more titles. Of these titles only about 1000 are online subscriptions only. (Interestingly, the use of the printed copies has not decreased at all.) This is a significant extra expense for the larger libraries for the same number of online titles. The usage statistics clearly show that the larger libraries mainly use the titles within their own collections, while the smaller libraries use titles from the collections of others. If the same price per download were to be used by the consortium as a means of calculating the costs the issue would be a total different one. But the smaller libraries state that they would not have the means to pay for their use if this method was to be used, and that the whole idea of electronic journals was to provide access to users all over the country.

The larger libraries cannot keep funding the same number of titles and pay for the extra cost

of about 10-15% for the electronic access, while the budget (in a good case scenario) increases by only 2-3% a year, and the cost of journals increases by 6-9% a year. Today DNLB uses about 40% of its budget for journals and books – printed as well as electronic – while a lot of the smaller libraries use only about 20% of their budget for acquisitions.

### **New acquisition policy**

So far the members of the Licensing Committee have agreed to try and find another way to make the publishers' titles available. The idea is that each library cancels the subscriptions to the titles which, according to statistics, are not being used much. By arrangement with the publisher, the titles which are no longer carried can be made available on a pay-per-view basis. But, of course, the needed statistics have to be provided by the publisher.

Once these titles have been selected by the libraries, a master list will be checked. If the libraries find it necessary, they can still choose to subscribe even if no other libraries are interested. In general, this would only be the case if a subscription is cheaper than the actual pay-per-view for titles outside the consortium.

Of course, this depends on the willingness of the publishers to accept cancellations, and acceptance of the concept that only one subscription for each title is needed in the consortium. It also needs the possibility to be able to get access by pay-per-view for titles outside the consortium.

This model is quite fair, especially as most of the larger libraries choose to maintain their most popular titles on an individual subscription basis. This means that the smaller can then carry subscriptions to the titles they find meet their demands. This will re-establish the acquisition policy for electronic material – which is seen as an advantage. It will also abolish the problems the present package deals have inflicted. This means that the days of the “either/or” policy (either the whole package or nothing) are numbered. One of the major unfortunate consequences of this policy has been that some titles outside the packages have not been subscribed to at all.

In addition to the internal discussions, the larger libraries as a group have tried to negotiate

with the publishers to find a solution which will take into consideration the resource problems which the larger libraries are having. But because the publisher's bottom line can't go down, this probably isn't going to happen. When are we going to see the decrease in prices the publishers promised us when they started to go electronic?

There is also an administration problem with libraries buying their printed subscription through agents and the online access being administered by the DEF office. DEF funds are being used for the administration of the online titles, and the libraries are paying an agent for the administration of the printed titles. It would be much better if the same amount could be used and the agents provided the administration of both. This would also make the in-house administration easier – for example, checking of subscription lists and prices. Most agents today have systems which can easily handle this.

An agreement on the administration issue has not yet been reached. The compromise has been that the individual library decides whom they want to manage the administration of their subscriptions. This is also a problem to the publishers and they have as yet not agreed to these terms.

An important part of this agreement is that major customers have been able to negotiate prices which have been more favourable than the prices a smaller customer has been able to get. Some libraries have also managed to get a prepaid discount. The differentiation between printed and online journals has meant that a lot of the larger libraries have not been able to take advantage of these deals – and this has been felt financially. Some libraries, however, do not have the problem as they have cancelled all the printed subscriptions.

### **Conclusion**

The conclusion is that, in spite of a lot of problems, the consortium as a whole has been of advantage to the libraries. More titles have been made accessible to a greater number of users and the use of electronic journals has increased dramatically.

At DNLB, for example, in 2000 the number of downloads from online journals was 80,000, and in 2001 this had increased to 280,000 – and this

increase has occurred without a decrease in the use of printed issues. Most of the technical problems have been dealt with, but the acquisition policy must be reinstated so that there is a reasonable management of funds within the consortium, and the publishers should be prepared to have flexible methods for calculating prices.

To get even greater access, it is getting to the stage where user access is needed independently of IP-addresses – this will increase use even more. From the users' point of view the only thing missing is access to journal titles which are not

subscribed to by the libraries – an improved pay-per-view solution.

The satisfaction level of the users is quite high in Denmark due to the fact that large numbers of titles are now available online. In the future there is hope for a more flexible model of calculating payment so that this development will continue, and the libraries will be able to maintain the right selection and the right level of subscriptions, especially if there are the vital statistics to justify the use and need to the grant-awarding authorities.