

NESLi2: a report on progress

Updated from a briefing session given at the 27th UKSG Conference, Manchester, March 2004

This paper provides an overview of the Joint Information Systems Committee (JISC) journal activities, lead by the JISC Journals Working Group (JWG) from 2003 to 2004. These activities include the launch of the NESLi2 scheme for central journal negotiations on behalf of the UK academic community. NESLi2 builds on the best practice established in previous schemes, but incorporates new features including defined negotiating criteria and a transparent process for reporting to university libraries. Other areas of JISC journal activity include developing cost-effective content acquisition, which takes account of the dynamic nature of the journals marketplace. To this end the JISC JWG has provided pump-priming funding for open access publishing. The group has also commissioned a report on the use of electronic journals across the UK academic community and an evaluation of the benefits and disadvantages of the established and emerging business models used by scholarly publishers.



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The Joint Information Systems Committee (JISC)

The JISC is a committee of the seven higher and further education Funding Councils in the United Kingdom (UK). With funding from these councils, the JISC provides a centralized and co-ordinated direction for the development of the Information and Communications Technology (ICT) infrastructure and activities. The JISC commitment is to support and enhance modern ways of research, teaching, and learning.

Almost half of the JISC annual budget funds the JANET network. All UK colleges and universities, research council institutions and many other educational establishments connect to the JANET network, which itself connects to the equivalent academic networks in other countries and to many commercial networks in the UK and abroad forming part of the global Internet.

Other key areas of JISC activity include:

- creating new environments for learning, teaching and research
- developing an Information Environment

- supporting institutions in the use of Managed Learning Environments (MLEs)
- advising on digital preservation and records management
- providing national and regional support for services.

JISC Collections

The JISC also provides UK higher and further education institutions with a collection of high quality online research tools, learning materials and digital archives. The JISC Collections Team licenses this wide range of resources from commercial publishers and providers, and makes them available to the UK educational community on a subscription basis. Many of the resources in the portfolio are heavily subsidized by the JISC.

Eight Working Groups support the JISC Collections Team in acquiring online resources. Representatives of the educational community make up the Working Groups. The Journals Working Group (JWG) provides the JISC executive with leadership and advice in its journal activities.

The NESLi2 initiative

In June 2003, the JISC – through the JWG – launched the NESLi2 initiative. This is the UK's new national initiative for the licensing of electronic journals on behalf of the higher and further education and research communities. The objective is to negotiate the best possible deals with publishers for the access to journals, while meeting the agreed criteria and working within the framework of the JISC model contract and model licence.

NESLi2 continues with the best practice established by the earlier National Electronic Site Licensing Initiative (NESLI), firstly, by utilizing the JISC model licence which is used by JISC staff or its agents in all negotiations with publishers. A Publishers and Libraries Solutions (PALS) group that includes members of the Publishers Association (PA), the JISC, and the academic community, is currently reviewing the model licence in light of changes in the world of electronic publishing. In a small number of cases, individual publishers request minor changes to the model licence. Before the JISC or its agents conclude any publisher agreements, the JISC funds the legal work required to review and consider any proposed amendments.

The Negotiation Agent

NESLi2 differs from the earlier NESLI initiative in that the decision was taken to appoint a Negotiation Agent (rather than a Managing Agent) to act on behalf of the JWG. It was clear that if NESLi2 was to provide value to the educational community, it required highly skilled negotiators, with a deep knowledge of the journal publishing industry. Following a tender process in spring 2003, the JISC appointed Content Complete Ltd as the NESLi2 Negotiation Agent for the period June 2003 until December 2006. Content Complete is required to meet defined service level agreements that include the number of deals completed, the provision of a help desk and regular communications.

Under NESLi2 the Negotiation Agent's role is solely one of establishing the content requirements of the community and negotiating on their behalf. The Negotiation Agent does not provide a subscription service or interface for accessing content. Libraries are free to order and access content from either the publisher or an intermediary (if allowed by the publisher).

Content Complete established a partnership with MIMAS at Manchester, under which MIMAS provides the communication channel for distributing offers to the community, for handling enquiries from NESLi2 representatives and maintaining the NESLi2 web site. Pages requested from the NESLi2 web site amounted to 41,580 between the end of July when launched and December 2003. Content Complete issues an electronic NESLi2 newsletter and the dedicated web page is updated on a monthly basis. MIMAS also responds to enquiries from the educational community made by e-mail or phone within one working day of receipt of the enquiry.

NESLi2 content

In February 2003 the JWG commissioned a National Serials Requirement Survey to ascertain the publishers with whom e-journal negotiations should take place. The JWG used the results of this survey to focus resources on the publishers identified as most significant by the community. The survey results identified ten publishers with whom Content Complete would negotiate for 2004.

As a next step, the JWG established and published the negotiating criteria for the selected publishers on a secure area of the NESLi2 web site. The aim was to provide institutions with clarity about negotiating objectives, and to provide benchmarks for measuring the negotiating outcomes. Negotiation criteria cover issues such as:

- post-termination access
- cancellation of specific subscriptions
- price increases for 2005 over 2004 to be capped in line with UK inflation
- provision of usage statistics.

A weakness of the earlier NESLI initiatives was that the JISC-appointed negotiators had nothing to 'bring to the table'. Under NESLi2, institutions provide Letters of Intent, in which they indicate the journal deals they intend to subscribe to (providing of course the publishers meet the negotiating criteria). Although not binding, these Letters of Intent provide Content Complete with greater authority when negotiating with publishers.

In addition to the ten publishers identified through the National Serials Requirement Survey, the JISC agreed that Content Complete would also negotiate with The Association of Learned and Professional Society Publishers (ALPSP)

concerning its Learned Journals Collection – a collection of 250 titles from many of the publisher members of ALPSP.

Negotiations with the specified publishers commenced in late June 2003 and continued through to the end of the year. Content Complete reached agreement with nine publishers:

Association of Computing Machinery (ACM)
ALPSP
Blackwell Publishing
Cambridge University Press
Elsevier
Kluwer Academic Publishers
Oxford University Press
Springer
Wiley.

Potential access in 2004 is to over 4,500 journals (depending on options chosen by each institution).

Savings achieved through the 2004 negotiations

The overall savings to the UK educational community as a result of NESLi2 negotiations in 2004 are not yet available because of the length of time it took to reach final agreement with Elsevier. As soon as take-up of this agreement is known, this information will be made available on the NESLi2 web site.

In addition to the quantifiable savings made on prices for content and access, there are other savings more difficult to quantify, achieved through the setting up of NESLi2 and the appointment of a central Negotiation Agent. These include a single body to:

- handle negotiations for all institutions
- evaluate and negotiate the use of the NESLi2 licence
- distribute comprehensive offers in a standard format
- analyse the often complex nature of publishers' pricing models.

Negotiations for 2005

Content Complete has undertaken a survey of all NESLi2 members about which publishers they should negotiate with for 2005. The JWG has reviewed this and agreed a final list of publishers. All institutions will now have received the final list along with the negotiation criteria and Letters

of Intent. Content Complete started negotiations with publishers for 2005 in late April 2004. This is considerably earlier than last year's start date. The publishers with whom negotiations will be undertaken are:

Taylor & Francis
Oxford University Press
Sage
Nature
BMJ Publishing
American Chemical Society
Cell Press
British Psychological Society
Blackwell Publishing
Royal Society of Chemistry.

Content Complete carried out a questionnaire survey earlier this year amongst all the NESLi2 representatives in institutions, and also held five workshops in key locations round the country. These provided an opportunity not only for representatives to ask questions and raise issues, but particularly for Content Complete to get feedback on the key requirements of the libraries, for example, in areas such as the 'big deal', pricing, access to back-files, timings, moving to e-only, and channels of communication. These are some of the findings from those workshops:

- Offers need to be distributed to libraries as early as possible to ensure that decisions can be made in relation to renewals for 2005.
- There are differing views amongst librarians as to the benefits and disadvantages of 'big deals' for their institutions.
- Increasing numbers of libraries wish to move to online-only versions of journals but many still have concerns about archival access and the impact of VAT.
- Librarians emphasized the importance of publishers needing to be Athens and COUNTER compliant.
- The complexity of offers made by a number of major publishers can cause delays in evaluating them.
- Librarians are looking for flexibility and options in the offers from publishers.

If your library participates in NESLi2, your representative will be able to access a report on the workshops on the secure part of the NESLi2 web site.

Other JISC journal activity

The JISC's journal activities range considerably more widely than NESLi2. The Journals Working Group is responsible for developing and advancing strategy for cost-effective content acquisition and delivery for journals, which takes account of the dynamic nature of the journals marketplace and the changing and evolving needs of the community.

Open access initiatives

In order to address these issues and explore the potential of the open access model as a viable alternative option for the dissemination of electronic journals, the JISC has funded a number of initiatives and agreements.

The first of these was with BioMed Central (BMC) which provides immediate and free Internet access to the peer-reviewed biological and medical research it publishes. Researchers can submit research papers to any of BioMed Central's journals at a fee of \$525 per article for most of its journals, but \$1,000 for BMC Biology and BMC Medicine, and \$1,500 for Journal of Biology (from July 2004). In July 2003 the JISC and BioMed Central signed a 15-month agreement for UK higher education institutional membership, whereby all UK higher education staff receive a waiver for the normal charge for publishing in any of the 90+ BMC open access journals. The response to the JISC/BMC agreement has been very positive, with many researchers taking the opportunity to submit papers.

Following the announcement of the JISC agreement with BMC, the JISC received requests for support from other open access publishers. In response, the JISC developed a strategy to deal with these requests in an equitable way in order to demonstrate that the JISC will encourage publishers to pursue open access as an alternative economic model for the dissemination of electronic journals.

As part of this strategy, the JISC will seek to facilitate the adoption of open access and open standards through the provision of short-term funding. In December 2003, the JWG issued an 'invitation to tender' (ITT) so that scholarly publishers could bid for short-term funding to support or initiate a move to an open access model of publishing. Seven publishers applied for this

funding in 2004–2005. The publishers awarded funding in this year are:

Public Library of Science
Institute of Physics Publishing
Lancaster University
International Union of Crystallography.

Other Journals Working Group activity

A study of business models for journal content. Over many years, librarians have expressed concern that many of the established business models employed by journal publishers were proving to be increasingly expensive and inflexible and not meeting the needs of libraries and their users.

In order to address these issues and concerns in more detail the JWG has commissioned a study in this area.

The study will:

- i) identify the existing business models used by scholarly publishers in the international market place and analyse the benefits and disadvantages (including cost issues) of those business models to the library community. This analysis should include amongst others the following models:
 - the 'big deal' (which can be e-only or electronic plus print)
 - individual title licences
 - e-versions of titles held in print
 - subject clusters
 - core subscription plus pay-per-view
 - pay-per-view only
- ii) identify other business models, some of which are already under discussion within the library community and between librarians and publishers, and analyse the potential benefits and disadvantages (including cost issues) of those business models to the library community. This analysis should explore amongst other things:
 - usage-based charging models
 - open access initiatives.

The JWG anticipates that the analysis of the above will include interviews with librarians and users from a range of differing academic institutions and a range of scholarly publishers, as well as taking into account existing research and studies on these topics. The results of this study will be available by

the end of 2004, and will inform ongoing JISC Collections Team and NESLi2 negotiations.

Analysis of Usage Statistics Study

Most of the 'big deals' offered under the NESLi2 negotiated deals use a charging model based on a library's historic spend on printed journals, plus a supplementary charge for providing access to these journals in electronic format. Access to electronic titles not subscribed to in print is usually also covered by this supplementary charge.

There has been evidence during the latest round of NESLI negotiations that some publishers are wishing to change their charging model so that prices charged to individual libraries more accurately reflect actual usage, rather than historic print spend. They have been quoting instances where there has been significant use of previously unsubscribed titles as a justification of such an approach. The data they present tends not to include counterbalancing figures showing low or no-use titles.

With the advent of electronic journals, libraries now have the opportunity to obtain robust quantitative data about levels of use of their journals and to analyse how far the investment in their collections represents value for money for their institutions. The COUNTER initiative is now encouraging publishers to provide comparable and consistent usage data. Good analysis of such data could be a powerful tool in future negotiations with publishers when deals are to be renewed, and could help to inform thinking about viable alternative economic models for electronic journals.

However, in-depth analysis of this data is time-consuming for individual libraries and may not be cost effective in the absence of useful benchmarks. The Journals Working Group has commissioned a national overview to help inform future JISC negotiations on behalf of the community and assist institutions in assessing the value for money provided by such deals. It might also inform their purchasing decisions with respect to deals not currently covered by NESLi2 but of high importance to them. Data analysis will provide a representative picture of usage across the full range of institutions who subscribe to the NESLi2 journals. The results will be available in January and will inform future NESLi2 negotiations for journals.

A study of journal requirements in further education.

The National Serials Requirement Survey focused on the needs of the higher education community. The JISC would like to improve the process by looking more specially at the needs of the further education community. The JWG is undertaking a survey of all further education institutions to find more about needs in this area and how the JISC Collections Team can address them. The survey was open until the Easter, with the results available on the NESLi2 web site from May 2004.

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MEMBERS HAVE THEIR SAY

Over 150 personal interviews and web site responses to UKSG's membership survey endorse the growing and valued contribution of UKSG in a dynamic serials marketplace. The responses, very supportive of UKSG and its member services, were tempered by less flattering views of UMIST as a conference venue. Thank you for the feedback. Analysis of the responses is ongoing, and your views will determine future UKSG strategy.

