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JUST IN CASE OR JUST IN TIME; EXPLORING SERIALS AND ELECTRONIC TECHNOLOGY ISSUES AT THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

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Introduction

A sub-committee of the Senate Library Committee of UBC examined the relationship between serials and electronic technology, and the principles, which should underlie HOLDING or ACCESSING journals and PRODUCING electronic publications locally. The work was done during the summer of 1994 and a report published by the end of that year. This article is based on my experience working on this task group and do not mirror the final report. Since the *EBSCO Executive Seminar* in August 1994 things have moved along slowly but steadily as they do at Universities and I have updated the information where necessary.   Recommendations have been made regarding critical factors which the University will need to address as it moves in the direction of a "virtual library".
The relationship between serials and technology is complex and multi-facetted, embracing the Faculty member as author, the University as employer, the interactions between copyright and publishing, the academic tradition of freedom in knowledge exchange, and the long held notions of appropriate use and fair access.

THE RESULT?

Libraries are caught between these issues, user demands, and ever increasing subscription costs. At the UBC Life Sciences Libraries (LSL) we have cancelled 28% of our subscriptions between 1992 and 1995. Data prepared by the ***TASK FORCE ON A NATIONAL STRATEGY FOR MANAGING SCIENTIFIC AND TECHNICAL INFORMATION*** (1994) show a similar trend for Academic Libraries in general, i.e. more spent on serials (yet, buying fewer titles), less and less spent on books and staffing.

"Just in case" collections

Serials collecting has been driven by the "just in case we need it " rational for a long time, furthermore Noll and Steimmuller (1992. p.33) observe that

"The demand for journals is driven by two factors. One is the budgets of University Libraries, and the other is user demand within the academic community... The fundamental factor determining faculty demand for academic journals is the desire by faculty to have their work published"

Over time this resulted in a *TRADING RELATION BETWEEN SUBSCRIPTION COSTS & JOURNAL USAGE*:

- the number of journals continue to grow
- new journals are more specialized with low circulation
- publishers have to charge more to retrieve first copy costs
- with added competition, production quality rises to include more colour, etc., and costing more
- libraries are under great pressure to subscribe to ALL journals, just in case a faculty member might use it in future
- utilization studies points to two tiers of journals; a PRIMARY TIER considered important to all academics, and a SECONDARY TIER considered important to a small sub-set of academics
- this "secondary market" is unprofitable for both publishers to publish and libraries to buy
- until recently, faculty has been insulated from the financial consequences of continuing to purchase expensive but little-used journals
- librarians added to this deception by cutting into monograph budgets to protect serials collections.

In the LSL we have begun a process to define the Core and the Areas of Strength journal lists. Over fifty faculty representatives on four library advisory committees provided four years of input into our cancellation projects. This information has been added to our serial records and each title is coded with a so-called "Value to collection code" (VLC) based on the accrued information, ISI Impact Factors, and use statistics. VLC 1 denotes the Core List, VLC 2 and 3 the secondary list (which will eventually make up the Areas of Strength list), and VLC 4 and 5 denotes what is slated for cancellation this or the following year.

Author-Reader problem

Over 60,000 journals are currently published (UBC subscribe to about 27,000). It has been discovered that, of this prodigious volume, a small percentage of scientific journals are ever read by any sizable audience, and any given article is likely to be read by less than 1% of the journal's readers (Mahoney, 1985) and cited even less often. See also Odlyzko's work (1993, and later) on the utilization of mathematics journals.

Electronic journals and document delivery technology

Journals in electronic format, whether transformed from paper format (scanned) or produced only electronically, can potentially be browsed for usefulness, read in electronic format, or found useful enough to be subscribed to in hard copy. This broadens the range of access options available to libraries. The "RightPages"(TM) program being developed at AT & T represents a further step towards creating customized individual and institutional collections (Hoffman, 1993) and paying for only what you use.

Hard copy publishing resulted in bulky publications that are expensive to produce and maintain. A huge publishing infrastructure has evolved around the reporting of scholarly work, editing, proofreading, printing and distributing journals. Another large infrastructure has evolved of libraries acquiring, processing, shelving and making these journals accessable. " In short, paper

journals are not convenient" (Odlyzko, 1993, p.10). Electronic publishing offers many more possibilities for academic exchange. With the development of multi-media, and extensions to the WWW, it is easy to concieve of "journals" which include sound, manipulable graphics, text, direct e-mail access to the author, and his or her picture!

Local University electronic publishing is feasible and will increase once such published products become acceptable for promotion, tenure and salary increases. An early role for the University as publisher could be to serve as a site for FTP of pre-prints and other manuscripts, while local documents are already being "published" on GOPHERS and WEB Pages. Since this talk, the University of Virginia Library announced their "Online Scholarship Initiative" which enables UVa faculty to make available on the Internet pre-print copies of articles to be published, and post-print copies of articles already published. This move is inevitable as the source of almost all scientific publishing is Academic faculty and researchers (who are the legal copyright holders in the first instance).

Quinn (1994) sees every research library as an e-publisher, i.e. permanently maintaining a file of reviewed and edited papers, freely accesible over the Internet. The Universities would manage the editorial structure to maintain standards. Departments would become "sponsors" of e-journals. Such a system may result in savings for libraries and an additional role for Vendors (eg. as collection agencies).

Important Challenges

1. **New ways of working**
When information in its richest form is immediate then "Learners in the new networked environment will be able to marshal faculty, libraries, laboratories and other resources at their own pace, according to their own schedule, in a setting of their own choosing and in close contact and cooperation with other learners" (Peters, 1994) In other words, the library is now involved with "mind-to-mind" contact vs. the library as place. This will require new roles for librarians.

2. **Free or for a Fee?**
These concepts creates some fundamental changes in the way we think about accessing information at universities, where information is regarded as free regardless of the form it takes. The university will have to exercise great care in deciding what information will remain free and what mechanisms for obtaining information will be "billable".

3. **Copyright**
The development of a comprehensive, integrated rights management system(s) is essential to guarantee a fair return on intellectual and financial investments. What I like to call charging for "chunks" of information, i.e. only that which one finds useful.

4. **Preservation and security**
There are three possibilities for change in electronic texts that confront us with the need for intellectual preservation techniques: accidental change, intended change that is well meant, and that is not well meant (i.e. fraud).

5. **Principles of access**

In the new paradigm the University will have to continue to adhere to principles of freedom of information and access inherent to the academic exercise

WHAT SHOULD WE BE PREPARING OUR CAMPUSSES FOR?

In the final report of our task group we made only two over-arching recommendations to the University Senate. I am taking the liberty of extrapolating these into more specific issues to be addressed on North American campuses.

1.   Develop and execute a public, university-wide education plan regarding changes in scholarly publication and dissemination of scientific information.
2.   Establish a list of Primary Tier journals ("Core list") through a credible, university-wide process.
3.   Establish a list of Second Tier journals in "areas of excellence"
4.   Get agreement to purchase only journals from 2 and 3. Develop ongoing criteria and processes for additions and deletions.
5.   Re-allocate funding and develop sophisticated processes for rapid, "just in time", access to the rest of the world's knowledge.
6.   Provide incentives to encourage faculty to move from local to remote access so that the library can develop in-depth collections in a few selected areas, but provide remote access to a broad range of other collections. These incentives will be needed in both hardware and software.
        6.a.   Appropriate wiring of all buildings and provision of a minimum number of intelligent workstations for each department should be a first step.
7.   Study the University appointment, promotion, and tenure processes to determine their contribution to excessive publishing. Join national and international initiatives to address these issues.
8.   Encourage local electronic publishing pilot projects in which the faculty and the University hold copyright and can maximize dissemination of such information.
9.   Authors (and their universities?) should retain copyright of their work wherever they publish.
10.   Start local accessing and archiving of useful e-journals currently available for subscription or free on the Internet.
11.   Initiate a pilot project to scan unique or rare material (e.g. a recently microfilmed collection on the history of B.C. at UBC) and make it available on the Internet.
12.   Encourage and support national and international initiatives to improve security, integrity and longevity of electronic information.
13   Collaborate with other Universities and Associations in resource sharing and rapid document delivery, in the management, cataloguing and ongoing maintenance of e-texts and e-journals (e.g. CIC project), and in joint ventures with industry/publishers/vendors

I also believe that the re-packagers of information, Librarians, may end up as the most important players because of our traditional ability to search out "chuncks" of useful information, which can now be customized, packaged, and sent to the customer's workstation. Chunking and customizing saves the scientist time which is better spent on creativity, innovation, and research. I anticipate that vendors will become gatekeepers, tracking the use of such information chunks so as to collect and distribute fees. Some traditional roles for vendors and libraries will continue for a long time.

For instance, the 20% of serials that accounts for 80% of the in-house use will most likely still be published and acquired in the traditional manner.

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