ACQUIRING ELECTRONIC PRODUCTS IN THE HYBRID LIBRARY: PRICES, LICENCES, PLATFORMS AND USERS

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This paper examines the main differences between the acquisition of paper and electronic products, with emphasis on licences, software platforms, cost, cataloguing, registration and user access.

The electronic information sources now available are many and varied in character. They include:

* bibliographic databases, e.g. MEDLINE, ISI
* full text sources, e.g. English Poetry, Database
* electronic journals
* electronic textbooks (still only available in small numbers)
* electronic 'add-ons' to journals and books: CDs, floppy disks or tapes, distributed with a paper publication
* interactive learning packages.

Any of these resources could be mounted on local servers within, or on remote servers outside the institution. Characteristic of all these sources is the potential for distributed access from any workstation on the campus attached to the campus network. Access can be from any library, not just the one with the subscription, or from workstations outside the library in a department, faculty or from home.

Our libraries now offer a changing mixture of paper and electronic sources in which paper products remain by far the highest proportion. The concept of the Hybrid Library is a recognition that we need to organise this mixture in a coherent manner and present it to the user in an easy-to-use form. As a part of this Hybrid Library module, we need to organise our methods of acquiring electronic products. The issues to be addressed in the acquisition of electronic products are:

* selection
* cost
* licences
* software platforms
* cataloguing/registration
* user access

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In principle the acquisition of electronic products is very similar to the acquisition of paper products. We have to select, order, receive, pay for, record and make available. There are, however, two additional issues to be addressed; viz. licences and software platforms. Moreover, the mechanics of acquiring electronic products can be significantly different from those for paper products, with more interactions between each stage of the process. For example, libraries have become involved in long drawn out and unsatisfactory correspondence with subscription agents and publishers over licences and passwords for accessing an electronic journal held on the publisher's server. Databases mounted on local servers can also give rise to problems. When a subscription to a CD product has been success-fully negotiated and the first disk has arrived, there may still be hurdles to overcome. If the software does not work, lengthy negotiations may be necessary between local technical experts and the supplier to resolve the problem. When the software is working, a disk may arrive in which the data is corrupt or incomplete, which in extreme cases may only be discovered by an alert reader.

Selection

Selection of appropriate content is the first, self-evident and critical requirement of any acquisitions process. If the reader wants the *Journal of Theoretical Politics*, then that is what they should get, *Hansard* is not an alternative.

Licences

Licences are a new element in the acquisition process for electronic products. The nearest equivalent with paper products is the present licence with the Copyright Licensing Agency to allow multiple copying, and a commitment to obey copyright regulations. There is an obvious need for a clear legal framework which recognises the legitimate rights of both information providers and users. However, current licences can contain conditions which are undesirable, ambiguous or unenforceable. We are also faced with wide variations in licence conditions for otherwise similar products, and with differences between what the licence appears to say and what our-selves and the providers understand it to mean.

The parameters which may be defined by a licence for an electronic product include:

◆   who uses the product and, in particular, whether it can be used by library users who are not members of the parent institution;

◆   where it can be used, in particular whether the members of an institution can have access off-site as well as on-site;

◆   the number of simultaneous users who can access the product especially with CD products for local networking;

◆   limitations on use, e.g. on the creation and use of paper or electronic copies;

◆   access control by individual password, institutional password, IP address or a combination;

◆   a requirement for individual registration with a signature which is a characteristic of current CHEST deals;

◆   the method of mounting the material which is authorised; in particular, whether the contents of a CD can be transferred to magnetic storage.

The restriction imposed by licences, and problems of interpretation and enforcement, can be illustrated by quotations from some of the licences which are currently in operation in many UK institutions.

Most licences negotiated by CHEST are subject to the CHEST General Licence Conditions[1] which state (para. 3.2) that:

> *Product may be used by any employee, student, or other persons authorised by the Licensee for the purposes of the normal business of the Licensee's organisation, whether or not they are located on the Licensee's premises.*
>
> *General exclusions:*
>
> *(i) consultancy or services leading to commercial exploitation of the Product;*
>
> *(ii) work of significant benefit to the employer of students on industrial placement or part-time courses.*

These conditions are normally interpreted by Higher Education Institutions as meaning that only members of the institution may have access to the product. Non-members who are registered library users are excluded. This interpretation is, presumably, a method of excluding *commercial exploitation* as the wording of the licence does not

explicitly exclude non-members. The CHEST licence also required (Clause 3.4): *all persons . . . . . provided with access . . . must have signed declarations.* This imposes a significant administrative burden on an institution which is not present in most other licences.

The JSTOR licence[2] recently negotiation between JISC and the Research Libraries Group (RLG) in the United States and administrated by CHEST, offers less restrictive licensing conditions and is more explicit in defining the rights of users:

> (Para. 1) *"Authorised users" means persons who are authorized to use the Licensee's library facilities who: (a) are affiliated with Licensee as students or employees of Licensee, or (b) are permitted to be physically present in the library.*
>
> (Para. 3.5) *It is understood that the Licensee may wish to use the Database for the purpose of fulfilling occasional requests from other libraries, a practice commonly called Interlibrary Loan . . . . . . Accordingly, Licensee may use Materials that have been printed from the Database in Interlibrary Loan until December 31, 1998* [arrangements beyond that date are being negotiated].
>
> (Para. 4.2) *Access to the database shall be controlled by the Funding Body through the use of IP addresses and/or passwords or other such means as the Funding Body may specify . . . . . .*
>
> (Para. 3.2) *. . . Licensee may not utilise the Database for commercial purposes, including but not limited to the sale of Materials, fee-for-service use of the Database or bulk reproduction or distribution of Material.*

This last clause is understood to refer not to individual users but to the library or institution which is not allowed to re-package the product for resale.

The HEFCE Pilot Site Licence Initiative (PSLI)[3] requires an institution to:

> (Para. 1.2.3) *make available in its library facilities a reasonable number of computer terminals for enabling users of the library, without regard to status as Members, to access and display the Database, **but not to print, download or otherwise copy any portion of the Database unless such user is a member.***

This clause explicitly allows non-members to use the database but then imposes a restriction on what they can do which is almost unenforceable

by libraries. As light relief the HEFCE licence also states (para. 1.4):

> For the avoidance of doubt the rights granted by this Licence:
>
> 1.4.2 *only permit electronic access to human users.*

SilverPlatter's Electronic Reference Library (ERL), provides an example of licence conditions for CD-ROM product. Their licence[4] states that:

> The 'Authorised User' is an employee, student, registered patron, or other person affiliated with, or permitted to use the facilities of, the customer . . . .

This clearly authorises use by users of a library who are not members of the institution. The position is confused because the licence for a minority of the products mounted on ERL, e.g. PsycLIT, is negotiated directly with the database supplier, not with SilverPlatter. As with the CHEST and HEFCE licences, ERL licence does permit remote access from off-site but this is subject to an additional payment, which for some databases may be zero!

Attention is drawn to three organisations which have been attempting to produce standard guidelines for licences for electronic products:

- the Committee on Institutional Co-operation (CIC) in the United States[5]
- the International Coalition of Library Consortia (ICOLC) group[6]
- Joint Information Systems Committee (JISC)/ Publishers Association (PA) Working Party on Model Licences[7]

The guidelines produced by the CIC are to be commended for providing an explicit and unambiguous statement of what most libraries would consider to be desirable conditions for a licence. The guidelines state that vendors should allow:

- *on-site use by walk-ins who may not be affiliated with the university*
- *. . . . . remote use . . . . by authorised users*
- *the library to make print copies of portions of the data for interlibrary lending purposes*
- [access] *by some secure means that does not require the library to maintain passwords*
- *library users to save portions of the data in an electronic format for use in the email, papers, etc. related to academic work and/or research*

This last condition is of particular significance, as the application of 'fair dealing' to electronic material is very unclear and licences frequently do not address the issue or do so inadequately. The result is to inhibit the incorporation of material acquired in electronic form into teaching materials, even though the equivalent process with paper products would be legitimate.

Software platform

The software platform is the second element in the acquisition of electronic resources which has no equivalent for paper products. When we purchase or lease an electronic source, we also acquire the use of a particular software platform with it. OCLC, ERL and Chadwyck Healey's *Patrologia Latina* all have their own characteristic search and display software. Given the right content, a user's view of service quality is determined by functionality and ease-of-use of the software. If a service does not offer the search capability required or if the capability is there but the user cannot discover how to use it, then this is an unsatisfactory service as perceived by the user.

Access, as distinct from ease-of-use, is dependent on the availability of the service from any platform on a workstation attached to the network - PCs, MACs or UNIX. With the early database services offered by suppliers such as BIDS and OCLC, this condition was fulfilled by the use of Telnet which does offer access from any platform. However, it does not offer the option of sophisticated graphical interfaces. The introduction of locally networked CD products did, in some cases, offer more sophisticated interfaces but such products have their own limitations. Software on offer was often proprietary and either available only on PCs or required separate mounting for other platforms. A multiplicity of such proprietary software overloads systems sections who have to mount and debug it, and users and librarians who have to learn to use the new interfaces. The possibility of a widely available standard graphical interface is provided by the World Wide Web which offers a standard delivery mechanism for both locally and remotely mounted databases, with Web browsers providing the new generic software, though still with some limitations on functionality. The benefit of products such as

SilverPlatter's ERL and OVID is that they allow a number of databases to be run with a common interface and offer a choice of platforms, including Windows and the Web.

Cost

What we pay for electronic resources is a complicated subject and a major concern but will not be discussed in detail in this paper. Suffice to say that we are having to pay for the added value, compared to paper products, of distributed access and sophisticated retrieval capabilities. As a result, electronic products are likely to result in additional costs. The current practice of bundling paper and electronic products, especially in the case of journals, means that there are usually no savings from cancelling paper in favour of an electronic equivalent, though there are exceptions to this rule.

An increasing number of databases are now being offered by more than one supplier on different platforms. Compendex (Engineering Index) is available both as a CD and as a BIDS service. Similarly, a number of versions are available of MEDLINE and of ABI/Inform. In comparing different versions of the same database and deciding which is the best value for money, a variety of factors need to be taken into account: ease-of-access; interface quality; the licensing conditions, including the effective number of simultaneous users, and the commonality of the platform with that of other products in the same subject area. Additional factors include:

- locally mounted databases carry substantial system overheads;
- the advantages and disadvantages of five-year commitments in the case of CHEST deals;
- the possibilities of Internet congestion for non-UK based services and server congestion for locally mounted databases.

Cataloguing, registration and user access

In acquiring electronic products, we have the same responsibility as with the paper equivalents to make sure that our users know that a resource exists, can find it and can use it. Ensuring that this is the case can be rather more complicated with electronic than with paper products. In future, we should look forward to all electronic products

appearing alongside paper products in our institutional catalogues with direct hypertext links from the catalogue entry to the product itself. If a user finds an electronic journal in the catalogue, a single click should give access to the server on which the journal is mounted. The present interim solution is the development of entry-level menus which provide the users with as coherent as possible a picture of what electronic sources are available and how to locate them. Entry-level menus must be able to cater for a wide range of users and user requirements. Quick access must be required for the user who is experienced in the use of electronic sources and has wide knowledge of a subject and its information sources. The menu must provide equally effective access for the user who has little experience in electronic sources or a subject area or both. A first generation example of such an entry-level menu is provided by OxLIP, currently in use in Oxford both within and outside libraries. OxLIP is a WWW application which offers a simple hypertext menu system for c.200 bibliographic and full-text databases available on campus, with links to electronic journal and newspaper listings and to Web navigating tools. It has three elements, a subject list and a title list, which are common to all implementations, and a local menu which can be customised to the needs of a library, a reading room or even an individual user. There are also links from these menus to separate listings of electronic journal titles and of newspapers available in Oxford, and to Web navigating tools.

The subject listing is a starting point for a user who has limited knowledge of resources in a subject area or wishes to examine alternatives to the normal sources. It offers 20 major subject areas in the arts and humanities, sciences and the social sciences. The science categories are biological, earth and environmental, medical, and physical and mathematical sciences, and the history of science. As an example, a click on Medical Sciences produces a list of 20 sources in this subject area. The list is inclusive, not exclusive. In addition to core medical information sources, such as MEDLINE, EmBASE and PsycLIT, it includes databases in related subject areas such as *Zoological Record*, and multi-disciplinary sources, such as *New Scientist* on CD-ROM, and the ISI database. A click on MEDLINE leads to a full page description of that database

with a further hypertext link to SilverPlatter's ERL (Electronic Reference Library). A further click opens ERL and gives the user a choice of MEDLINE files in different time periods, and other databases.

The second element in the entry-level menu, the titles list, provides 400 entries in alphabetical order from A-V online (on trial) to *Zoological Record*. Once again, it is inclusive, not exclusive. It includes synonyms and abbreviations for both databases and platforms. *Social Science Citation Index*, and *SSCI* are listed as is BIDS, the platform on which this database is available. *Beilstein*, *CrossFire* and *Xfire* all point to the same chemical structure database. A click on MEDLINE in the titles list transfers the user to the same full page description of MEDLINE as the subject list, but in one fewer clicks, bypassing the list of databases in the medical sciences.

The title and subject lists are multidisciplinary. The local menu is designed to provide the quickest possible access to sources likely to be of interest in a particular reading room or library. The Radcliffe Science Library local menu lists sources most likely to be of interest to the science user. These include the ERL platform, with the list of all the databases available on that platform, both Telnet and WWW access to BIDS services, and individual sources such as *Chemical Abstracts*, *CrossFire plusReactions*, *Metadex* and *New Scientist* on CD-ROM. A single click from this screen takes the user directly to the platform or database. All three menus offer a direct hypertext link to a listing of electronic journals available to Oxford University users. This provides direct links to the HEFCE Pilot Site Licence Initiative (PSLI), to the SuperJournal Project and to a trial OVID service, all of which offer access to a number of electronic journals. In addition the 750+ titles accessible on site are listed in alphabetical order with the name of the publisher or vendor offering access and a hypertext link to the server on which the journal is mounted. The subject and title lists also provide links to a list of electronic newspapers and other news sources and to a Web navigating tool.

Conclusion

Electronic products introduce new elements into the acquisition process - licences and platforms, but also link together the traditional elements of

acquisition - selection, ordering, receipt, payment, recording and providing access - in new ways. This emphasises that when we buy something, we have to ensure that it works, that the user can find it, and having found it, can use it. The electronic product may present a new set of problems in achieving this objective but it also offers a new range of opportunities for resolving these problems.

References

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