WHAT HAPPENS NEXT? E-JOURNALS IN THE CORPORATE INFORMATION SERVICE

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This paper is based on the practical experiences gained in providing e-journals to a global corporation. The issues that are being addresssed in publisher negotiations, and the needs and requirements of customers are discussed.

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The lack of awareness of the corporate marketplace amongst some publishers was highlighted in the preceding publishers' panel (reported in *Serials*, 12 (1) 1999, 35-39) so it is very timely that the UKSG and TFPL have co-operated to put this programme together, and I am delighted to have been invited to present this paper.

The main topics I would like to address are: what are the practical realities of providing electronic journals (EJs) in a corporate environment, and what suggestions do we have for how to move forward, particularly on the licensing front? This, while keeping our customers' needs at the forefront.

Introduction

SmithKline Beecham Pharmaceuticals R&D (SB) is a transnational health care company with offices in most countries of the world. Pharmaceuticals R&D is centred in the UK and US, with a library at each of the five R&D sites. The library service is also transnational with an integrated Library Management System and services delivered increasingly via comprehensive intranets to customers' desktops.

We also have a Virtual Library Strategy, a central element of which is the EJ Strategy. Part of that strategy required us to assess the scientific and business benefit (if any) of EJs. This was important, because during 1998 we added many titles to our Web pages, many of which were on temporary free trial. We had no budget specifically for EJs, and if we were unable to demonstrate any cost-benefit from providing them, we would have little prospect of being able to fund them in 1999.

Why provide electronic journals at all?

Customer needs and expectations

Generally our customers are looking for high quality information with rapid electronic delivery to their desktop. On a scale of

relevance and importance, they rate the article above the journal title, and the journal title above the publisher. That is not surprising when you consider how research is carried out. It is the piece of information that is important not the carrier.

We ran a project in the last few months of 1998 with two groups of SB customers, where we provided as many full-text EJs in their subject area as possible for this period in order to assess:

- any business/scientific benefits in having access to EJs;

- any time savings by earlier access to material;

- degree of customer acceptance of electronic format

- any changes in customer information-gathering behaviour resulting from electronic availability;

- the level of support needed from library staff;

- the overall cost in terms of library, department and individual hard copy subscriptions.

A survey at the end of this project resulted in feedback from over 130 customers. This is a sample of the results:

- 99% of customers benefitted from having EJs available to them;

- 91% expect the EJ to be available earlier than the paper copy;

- 8% would be satisfied with the EJ one week after the paper copy;

- On average those customers were spending 65 minutes a week using EJs.

We also asked them to rank what EJ features they liked/disliked:

- 92% read the abstract on-line;

- 33% read the full-text on-line;

- 28% wanted a 2 year archive;

- 53% wanted a 5+ year archive;

- 63% wanted links to full-text of cited papers and to related articles;

- 80% wanted to search by keyword in the abstract;

- 28% wanted to search across one publisher's titles;

- 79% wanted to search across multiple publishers' titles.

A summary of customer feedback on the positives and negatives of EJs

Positive

- available earlier than hardcopy;

- available to everyone on R&D (including small remote sites) simultaneously;

- ease of access at the desktop;

- can download content and integrate into other applications;

- time saving.

Negative

- ergonomics/eye strain of reading on screen

- browsing and scanning difficult

- low 'critical mass' of titles (true in mid-1998, less so in mid-1999);

- slow printing of figures/graphics.

The overwhelming customer support for the provision of EJs, and the benefits they bring to the organisation, gave us the green light to proceed with our EJ strategy.

Implementing the EJ strategy

Title selection criteria

At an early stage we decided that we would only provide EJs that were the exact equivalent of the paper copy. EJs were then a new concept to many of our customers. If we promoted a journal title as available electronically, then their expectation was that it was at least as complete as the paper copy. But we expect that over time we will embrace all kinds of EJs, especially those that have no paper equivalent.

Other selection criteria included: Web-based access, IP address validation with no passwords, cost, subject relevance, requested by customers, fast access and download times, content availability, currency of content, what do you own in the end?

Technical issues

Intranets and firewalls: an understanding of the organisation's computing infrastructure is important. How are you linked to the Internet? How are your intranets linked? Who can access what? What IP addresses are registered to you and which ones are currently being used? These are all questions that require an answer. We drafted a

representative from Computing /IT onto our EJ team to help with these matters.

Support issues

EJs open up a whole new area of activity for library services. Apart from the negotiation of licences, these are the other areas where library staff are now involved: EJ Web page design and maintenance; customer promotion and publicity; Help Desk support; monitoring titles and content availability; usage statistics and reports; contract management.

The resources to support this operation are now considerable, necessitating some reorganisation of roles and responsibilities. But EJs are now an important part of SB's library provision, and need the same level of support that we give to other library services.

Licensing issues

This is where much of our current effort is being expended. We have particular issues to negotiate with publishers that are additional to most licences that are on offer. What are driving us are the expectations of our customers who cannot understand why it is all taking so long. "If I can access a personal subscription journal from home via a service provider, why can't the library provide me with access at work?" Those of us in the industry can understand why it is not that simple, but you can also understand customers' frustrations.

The corporate marketplace has been unable to take advantage of the deals on offer to academic institutions. Many publishers do not have an institutional licence to offer us, either because they are concentrated on the academic market and have not realised that corporates may need something different, or because they are uncertain how to price a licence for this sector and are stalling for time until they see how others deal with this. Either way, it requires us to spend time talking with publishers, explaining our infrastructure, and trying to help publishers assess the commercial 'risk' to their operations if they were to offer a licensed solution.

The areas where corporates may differ from academic institutions and where particular licensing solution need to be negotiated include:

- Defined customer groups in a secure working environment. There is little risk of unauthorised use, and there is no concept of a walk-in user in corporations.
- Corporations are increasingly global in their operations. This requires a global, not site, licensing solution.
- Need for unbundling of titles. We do not necessarily want every title produced by a publisher. We need to be able to pick those that have the highest relevance to our customers.
- Fast moving, adaptive, creative environments. Change is part of the culture. We cannot be held to long-term licences or non-cancellation clauses.
- May wish to access EJs through other information intermediaries such as secondary publishers and subscription agents.
- EJ content must be to a guaranteed technical standard and timescale. EJ availability **after** the paper copy is published is of little value.
- Want a pay-as-you go option to non-subscribed titles.
- Expect a guaranteed performance from the publisher's server in terms of minimum downtime, and ability of the server to consistently deliver content in an acceptable time. For example we are suggesting that a contents page should be displayed within 8 seconds of a request, and a pdf file should begin downloading within 20 seconds of the request. (Other variables such as internal delays and Internet traffic can be averaged out by comparing with other EJ publishers)
- Publisher should provide support for the product by way of Help Desks with 24-hour global coverage, and also pre-alert the licensee administrator to any new versions/releases/product launches, so that they in turn can alert their customers and pre-empt any questions that might be directed at the publisher.
- There is a need for regular, reliable usage metrics from the publisher. These will include the number and duration of sessions, number of abstracts viewed and pdf downloads, broken down by title.

There is one area I have not mentioned so far and that is cost. That is not an oversight, rather an acknowledgement that each corporation will have

its own idea as to the value of the information they are seeking to acquire electronically. If there is substantial business benefit to the corporation by the provision of EJs, then with a good cost-justification case presented to management, some additional funding may be provided.

If the points listed above have been negotiated and agreements reached with the publisher it would be unrealistic to expect to get that for the same price as the paper copy. But publishers cannot expect to present corporations with the licence that they have used for academic institutions unchanged, and expect an additional 25% for electronic access. Corporations will continue to walk away from such deals. Even the pharmaceutical industry is not the milch cow that publishers might think us to be. But if the price and licence terms together constitute a deal that offers value for money then it is much more likely to be acceptable.

Conclusion

These are exciting times for all of us and our customers, but to get to the next level there must be developments to seamlessly link all this access together, so that regardless of where the customer starts his information search, once a published article is identified, he is linked straight to it (if it forms part of that corporation's licensed content). Then we can truly say that we are providing a virtual information service.