Out and about on the Conference and Seminar Circuit

INTERNATIONAL COALITION OF LIBRARY CONSORTIA (ICOLC)

European meeting, Cranfield University, 10-11 December 1999

Although a relatively recent arrival on the international serials scene, the International Coalition of Library Consortia (ICOLC) is already making its presence felt. It began life in the United States as the Consortium of Consortia in 1997, founded by Tom Sanville of OhioLINK and others, and has held six meetings in the USA, gathering once every six months or so. Its growing international dimension was reflected in an early name change, and its first European meeting took place at Cranfield University in the UK in December 1999, hosted by Hazel Woodward, Cranfield Librarian, and chaired by Fred Friend, Director of Scholarly Communication at University College London, who has attended a number of ICOLC meetings across the Atlantic.

Library consortia, particularly in the higher education sphere, have been developing fast in recent years throughout the world. Their basic purpose is to help their member libraries to expand, or at least to maintain, access to information – databases, reference works, journals, books – at advantageous rates, cutting negotiating costs both for individual libraries and for information providers. In the UK, regional consortia have been most active in negotiating the supply of printed journals and books, although CHEST and NESLI are good examples of negotiating agents, rather than true consortia, in the fields of databases and electronic journals respectively. In North America and elsewhere in Europe, on the other hand, consortia have been to the fore in arranging electronic access to the journals literature for their member libraries.

Consortia have themselves become a subject for journal articles. For example, MCB have recently launched, in 1999, the journal, *Library Consortia Management*, edited by Arnold Hirshon of the American NELINET consortium, a delegate at Cranfield; two recent special issues of Information Technology and Libraries (Vol 17, No 1, 1998, and Vol 18, No 3, 1999) have concentrated on consortia in North America and the rest of the world.

ICOLC originated as an informal grouping of representatives from primarily North American consortia, who felt the need to communicate concerning matters of mutual interest, such as licensing policies and practices, information on new electronic resources, pricing policies of information providers, and provision of management information and usage statistics. Although it remains an informal body, it has a full website hosted under the auspices of Ann Okerson of Yale University Library at http://www.library.yale.edu/consortia/index.html, and an active discussion list, although this is only open to participating consortia members.

There are currently over 100 consortia affiliated to ICOLC, from 21 different countries, including Australia, Belgium, China, Denmark, Estonia, France, Germany, Greece, Israel, Italy, Netherlands, Norway, South Africa, South Korea, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Taiwan and the United Kingdom, in addition to the United States and Canada. UK members include CALIM, CHEST, CURL, JISC and SCONUL, not all of which would perhaps be recognised as consortia in the traditional sense, but which indicate the

breadth and level of interest in ICOLC's operations.

In addition to its regular meetings, ICOLC is interested in encouraging the development of standards to improve information exchange. So far, two guideline documents have been issued (available on its website), on usage measurement (ICOLC, 1998), and on technical issues to consider during contract negotiations for electronic services, including content formats, system architecture and management, access control, security, and response times (ICOLC, 1999).

ICOLC's premier activity, however, remains its regular meetings. In their short life, they have already become well-known for their presentations by publishers and other information providers, followed by probing and sometimes quite determined questioning from the delegates, concentrating on consortia pricing policies and specific service developments. For example, at ICOLC5 in Arizona, in March 1999, there were presentations by ABC-CLIO, Cambridge Scientific Abstracts, Dun & Bradstreet, Disclosure, Gale, Oxford University Press, RDS, and Softline. At ICOLC5 there were also more general sessions, covering topics such as what vendors/information providers need to know from consortia, and vendor reactions to the ICOLC guidelines on use measurement and technical requirements. More details of this and earlier meetings are on the ICOLC website.

The European meeting at Cranfield followed a similar pattern. There were a few North American delegates to give us the flavour of the transatlantic ICOLC meetings, but the majority of the 50 plus attendees were representatives of consortia from almost all the European countries listed earlier, plus Finland, Hungary and Portugal. Most of the first day was taken up by presentations from consortia from different countries, such as Finland, Germany, Italy, Spain and Greece, together with UK presentations on NESLI (National Electronic Site Licence Initiative) and the DNER (Distributed National Electronic Resource, the strategy for co-ordinated provision of electronic information to higher education within the UK).

Several themes emerged from these talks, such as centralised state funding, which helped to facilitate agreements in Finland and Greece,

whereas its lack inhibited progress in Italy or the Netherlands. Archiving was also discussed at length, both in the sense of permanent national archiving of electronic resources, and in terms of libraries maintaining electronic access to titles where current subscriptions were no longer in force. The place of agent intermediaries in consortia discussions was another theme: the agent had played a helpful role in Greece for example, but was not felt to be necessary in Finland. Finally, different attitudes to 'bundling' of all a publisher's titles, as opposed to subscriptions to particular titles or subject clusters, were evident: most consortia have preferred the bundling option, whereas the UK's NESLI has tried to keep a balance between the two different approaches.

There was also a more general presentation from Hans Geleijnse of Tilburg University in the Netherlands. He stated the determination of the Dutch university libraries, in the face of continuing high journal prices and price increases, to move away from the traditional arrangements with publishers, by looking at co-operative copyright retention arrangements between different universities, and examining more closely the value added by publishers. The librarians have liaised closely with their university presidents, and several meetings had been held with publishers, but more details should become available in the first half of 2000. The 1999 policy statement, underlining their actions, is available at http://www.uba.uva.nl/en/projects/journals-pricing-ukb/policy.html.

More time at the conference was taken up by the now-traditional presentations by publishers. Five publishers – Elsevier, Springer, Kluwer, Wiley, and Oxford University Press – were each given 75 minutes, to present a relatively short summary of their policies for consortia, followed by a longer period of questions and comments from the delegates. Without going into too many details, both because it would be invidious to pick out particular comments, and because of the confidentiality of some of the information imparted, it was fascinating to watch the different forms of interaction between audience and publisher – it was obvious that some publishers were more at home in such a forum than others.

Different aspects of pricing policy were

unsurprisingly the most important subject under discussion, including topics such as 'no-cancellation' policies, whether electronic journals are or are not cheaper to produce than print journals, bundling versus individual subscriptions, pay-per-use models, 'basic' versus 'enhanced' access at different prices, one-year or multi-year agreements with price caps, etc. However, these matters were by no means the only items at issue, with provision of usage statistics and archiving policies also very popular themes. On the former, most but not all publishers now seem to provide or, at least to be moving towards providing, much more helpful information on use, perhaps encouraged by the ICOLC guidelines mentioned earlier. Progress on the latter is also evident, although this is a more complex area where policies and practice are still being developed. Policies on 'ILL' availability, and participation in the CrossRef project open-linking from references to fulltext articles, were also discussed by more than one publisher.

The final presentation was given by staff from Swets, putting the point of view of the subscription agent. They put forward a persuasive case for the continuing role of the agent intermediary in a world of consortia and electronic information, citing their involvement in 125 consortial projects.

Before dispersing, it was agreed to hold a second conference in December 2000, perhaps in Germany or Denmark, with a similar mix of topics, though possibly with more thematic discussions and fewer presentations. In any case, delegates were unanimous in declaring this first European ICOLC meeting to have been a success, packed with useful presentations, including essential interaction between librarians and publishers, and between members of different consortia, helping us all to co-operate and provide the best possible information services for the community.

References

International Coalition of Library Consortia (1998) Guidelines for statistical measures of usage of web-based indexed, abstracted and full text resources (available at http://www.library.yale.edu/ consortia/ webstats.html).

International Coalition of Library Consortia (1999) Guidelines for technical issues in request for proposal (RFP) requirements and contract negotiations (available at http://www.library.yale.edu/consortia/techreq.html).

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AMERICAN PUBLISHERS PROFESSIONAL/SCHOLARLY PUBLISHING DIVISION ANNUAL CONFERENCE 2000

Professional Publishing: The Cutting Edge and Beyond. February 6-9 Washington

This annual conference has been going for about two decades and now brings in over 330 delegates. There were 19 exhibitors. Catchword (fronted by Chris Beckett) and ingenta with Mark Rowse and David Brown in attendance presented side by side, not too obviously flying the flag, and striving to differentiate their offerings. For the record ingenta is a gateway but CatchWord is now a hub. Other UK attendees were headed by Bob Campbell (Blackwell Science), wearing his STM hat, Hugh Jones (PA legal counsel), Sally Morris (ALPSP) with associate husband, Tony Llewellyn (CABI) and Jerry Cowhig (IOPP). There were only two librarians present, both speaking.

The serials component in the programme was probably less than it would be if there should happen to be a similar European meeting but there were heavyweight treatments of the big theme in town - linking. PubMed Central, E-Biosci, PubScience and CrossRef were the subject of major presentations, which illuminated a little more than the excellent article in Science for 28 January and also demonstrated some fancy footwork. I am using my space to concentrate on these.

David Lipman's plenary for PubMed Central – generally regarded as his idea – is a good place to kick off because he has made the running. A Daniel faced by a lot of large (fat) cats, he was

unfazed even when his projector caught fire. His talk on "working together in the new millennium" was as eirenic as its title, and, as one listener remarked, the F-word ("free") was not mentioned. Lipman concentrated on building up a convincing picture of user needs for fully integrated information not just pointers. He is building books into the system, as well as databases and the two full-text journals up so far. His vision allows for lots of ways for publishers to make money "on the outside" but these were not articulated for a sceptical audience.

The other contributions to a debate that was never joined directly were in concurrent sessions, the first of which was elaborately entitled, "Links without Kinks: Publishing Issues in Researching for the Ultimate Interconnectedness". Frank Gannon, of EMBO, presented first. Since the Frankfurt Book Fair, when he first emerged among publishers, in a role new to him, as an "Alice at a Mad Hatter's Tea Party" (a little rude some thought), his views on PubMed Central appeared to have hardened. He saw the NIH scheme as likely to lead to confusion between peer-reviewed content and material not so validated: for him material that is not peer-reviewed should always be cited as a "personal communication". His intention for E-Biosci is that it should be current and complete and he cannot see how this can come about without working with publishers.

Tim Ingoldsby (AIP) gave the latest on CrossRef. There were a lot of smoke-filled rooms in Washington, where the mechanisms were worked on, with our own John Strange (Blackwell Science) providing a lot of practical wisdom: Tim gave the official position on these developments. What was new was the pricing for membership and usage. Initial projections suggest an annual fee for membership of $200 to $2000, depending on the size of the company, with non-members paying an annual administration fee. Article deposit fees for members will range from 60 cents for a current year article to 5 to 10 cents for a prior year article. Most interesting were the projections of fees for successful retrieval of DOI, with the initial (first year) fee for members being waived but an initial fee for non-members of 5 to 10 cents per article link. Publisher customers, for example libraries and library consortia, will pay very low fees to use systems. Where do intermediaries fit in? There was some murmuring.

The other concurrent session relevant to this theme happened the day before. Fred Spilhaus (AGU) chaired, what one might call a composite session on how "free distribution" impacts on your business model: the good, the bad on the ugly. Fred did not label his speakers but he had got hold of Dr. Walter L. Warnick, the Director of the Office of Scientific and Technical Information at the US Department of Energy – the inventor of PubScience. He made clear that his model was PubMed not PubMed Central and that he did not object to paying as such. In answer to a question about government intervention (presumably a bad thing), he argued that his scientists were not getting what they needed. He could not understand the negativity which some were showing.

There is a lot riding on CrossRef and not just for publishers. All must hope the model becomes a win/win/win for all parts of the information chain.

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