A nationwide solution for the management of electronic resources

In 1997, Denmark's Electronic Research Library (DEF) sought a national solution for the management of electronic resources in Denmark. This was a government backed initiative for the benefit of academic, research and special libraries. The project was executed in less than twelve months from selection to implementation. This article describes the project from its inception and the trial of different systems to the decision, negotiation, purchase and implementation of DEFNet, a gateway for consortia-purchased resources in Denmark.

ANETTE SCHNEIDER
Consortia Administrator
Danish Electronic
Research Library

Denmark's Electronic Research Library (DEF) started in 1997 as a five-year project to run until 2002. Three ministries (Ministry of Culture, Ministry of Education and Ministry of Science and Technology) joined together in creating the economic framework for the project. The vision of the project was for a network of research libraries to build up a virtual system making the libraries' collective information resources (digital and paper-based) available to users countrywide in a simple way. From 2003 the DEF project became fully operational and was included in the National Budget.

DEF has always had many areas of activity, one of which – licences – received a heavy focus since the start of the project. At present, agreements have been signed which allow access to about 130 products and databases and to more than 15,000 full text journals. Approximately 140 institutions of varying size participate in the licence co-operation. These institutions range from universities and research institutions to educational institutions.

The need for a common concept

During the project the need to find a way to make all electronic resources available to end users became apparent. It was not only necessary to show that there was access to a large number of electronic titles in Denmark, but also which libraries were actually subscribing to them. Many libraries did not wish, or did not have the resources, to include the large journal packages in their library catalogues. Therefore, agreements were negotiated so that one library was responsible for entering the package onto the Danish library catalogue (Danbib) so that other libraries could then draw records from there. Updates were also the responsibility of the library in question. Unfortunately, this project was not entirely successful and, due to lack of resources, several libraries started making individual lists on their web pages.

As a collective, operative list did not exist in Denmark, DEF started a project in association with the Technical Knowledge Centre of Denmark to create a list of all package licences with a description of who had access and to what. The list was updated every three months by the Technical Knowledge Centre according to information received from DEF. It quickly transpired that there were further requirements and wishes, such as improved search facilities; better subject registration and the wish for a pay-per-view solution for institutions that did not participate in any particular licence agreement. In terms of updating, the original solution had also become a problem which took up far too much time.

A solution was needed which could offer end users improved functionality in terms of search access and pay-per-view. These end users are mainly researchers and students attached to minor research libraries, hospitals and also science parks and research-based companies.

Pilot project – common solutions

The question was whether to develop an in-house system or buy an existing one. DEF's steering committee decided to launch a project in order to gain experience and insight into various journal directories and search engines.

The project was to emphasize the importance of focusing on the end user. In addition it would form the basis for an assessment as to whether there were any systems available which could meet the technical, administrative and search demands formulated by DEF. The system was to provide both a central journals directory and a means for maintaining data locally. Seven libraries of varying size offered themselves as a test group and four products (SwetsWise, EBSCO A–Z, ingenta and TDNet) were selected for testing. All were contacted with a number of requests.

The consortium required a collective list of journals with the facility for participants to add their own electronic holdings, such as those purchased outside the consortium, and print journals. Excellent support was received from all those involved during the test phase.

The purpose of the journal directory was to:

- give an overview of relevant journals to the DEF libraries with facilities for searching and browsing electronically accessible titles
- offer links to individual journals at various suppliers
- inform about the possibility of pay-per-view
- collect, convert and co-ordinate the data thus providing the DEF community access to an affordable and high quality database of journals
- make it possible for individual DEF libraries to register access rights for various user types by linking the directory with DEF's LDAP authentication and proxy service making end user access to journals independent of physical location
- facilitate administration both centrally and locally.

The project process

All libraries were given test access to the chosen products and each participant in the test was offered the opportunity to add local data to the system. The libraries concerned were given a questionnaire to answer, including questions about search, subject search and user-friendliness.

There was a strict time schedule in order to have a new journal directory by January 2004. Testing was carried out during the summer, and in September 2003 the project group was able to submit a report to the steering committee.

The test concluded that the most important functionality was to apply an administrative tool to the consortium journal directory where each institution could also get individual administrative accesses to their own journal titles, whilst providing a joint list where the DEF secretariat were to maintain all information on the DEF licence packages.

Based on the test results it was concluded that TDNet could meet the demand for both consortia and individual solutions. At the time it was felt that ingenta could only offer a total consortia solution and SwetsWise and EBSCO A-Z could only deliver individual solutions. However, it is important to emphasize that products which did not meet the requirements in 2003 have subsequently been further developed and would be able to do so today.

Decision

In October 2003 permission was obtained from the steering committee to continue negotiations with TDNet. A new list of questions and requirements were submitted and pricing negotiations commenced. In December 2003 a two-year agreement was signed with TDNet for a national journal directory named DEFNet (see Figure 1).

This decision meant that Danish libraries were divided into two groups: DEFNet users and DEFNet members.

DEFNet users include anyone wishing to search and find information on DEFNet (see Figure 2). If the DEFNet users are in the correct physical location they also have the opportunity of reading the full text (see Figure 3).

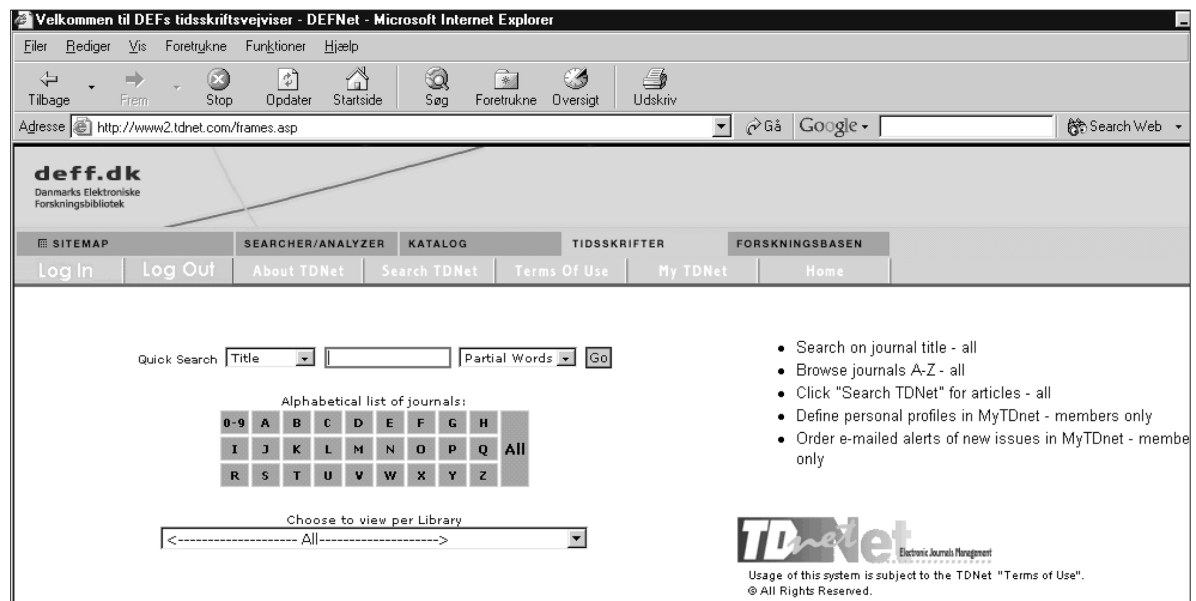DEFNet members are those libraries that have entered into co-operation with DEF and are then

Figure 1. Main page with quick 'search', 'browse' journals and 'choose' to select a library

Figure 2. Choosing library

able to personalize parts of DEFNet. Figure 4 shows how members are able to insert their own logo on their front page; they can also add their own electronic titles to the database and add links

to any printed journals. It is also possible for these libraries to create alert services and change the classification system. DEFNet members also have access to 'Search-Analyser', an additional analysis
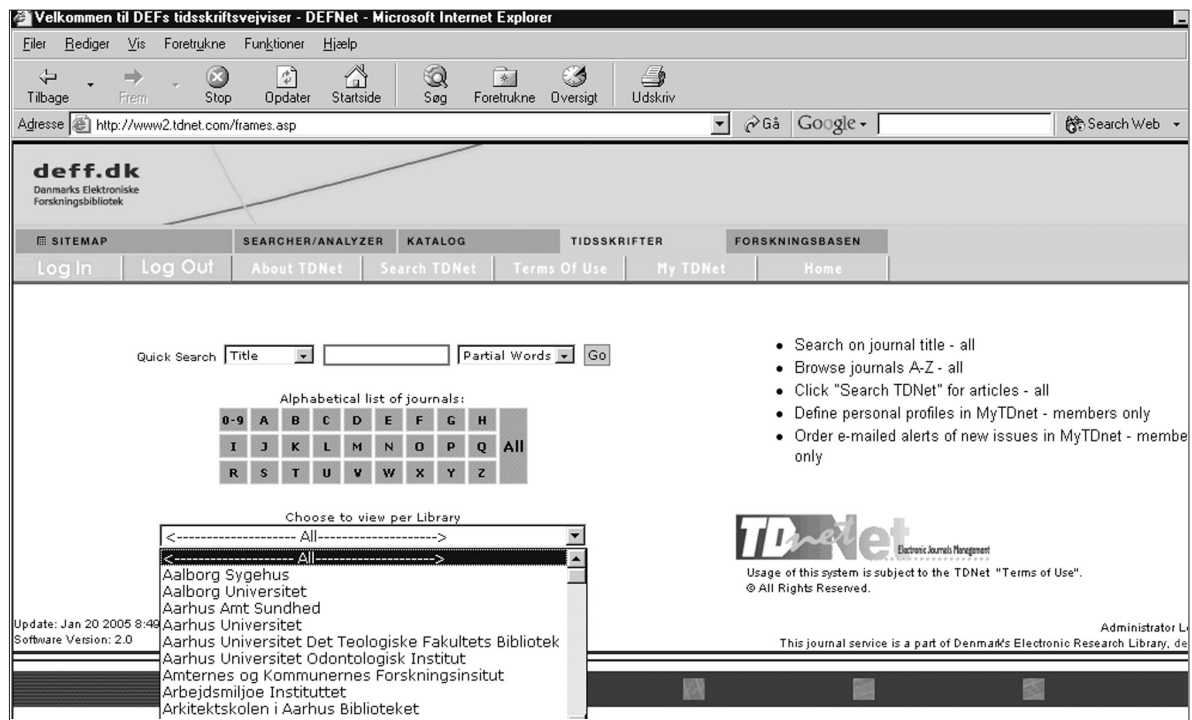
Figure 3. Journal record with subscribing libraries, packages, online holdings, publisher and link to full text
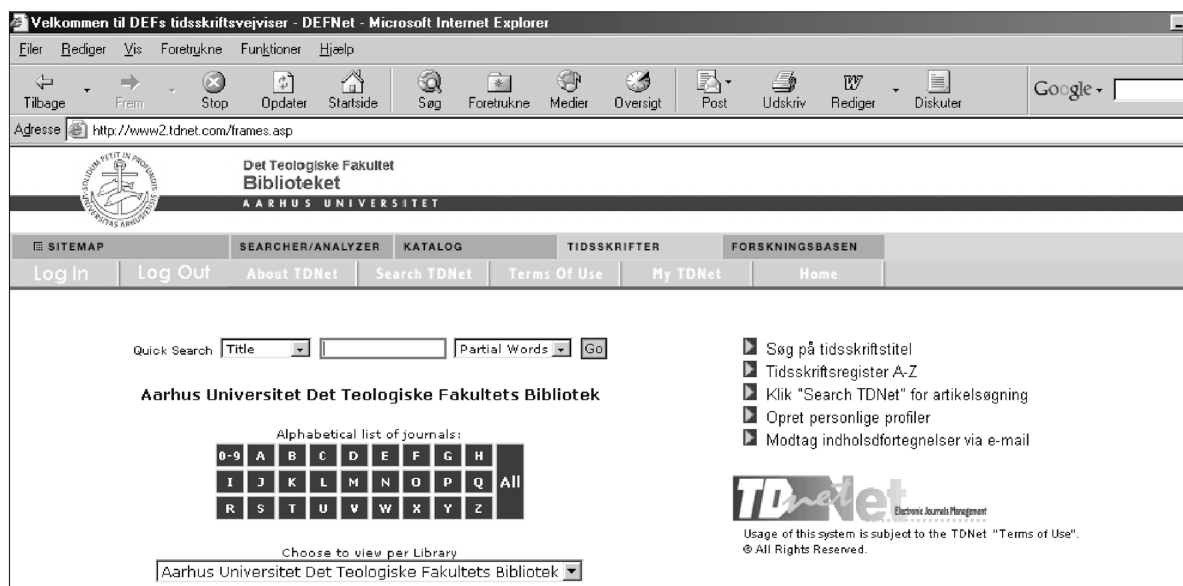

Figure 4. Personalized page (with own logo)

tool and cross-search product. Databases, journal search engines, internet resources and the national search databases are available via Search-Analyser. Users are given the opportunity to search across products and have their results analysed.

The DEF secretariat believes that the complete product gives the libraries value for money in every sense and it is hoped that those involved feel that they have a valuable tool.

It was intended to have the new journal directory ready by 1 January 2004. This was rather optimistic as the agreement did not commence until December 2003. Nevertheless, a system was in place at the beginning of 2004. A colossal effort on behalf of TDNet ensured that the majority of consortium licences were available with locations registered. January to March 2004 was spent correcting errors, updating the more complicated

agreements and producing marketing material. A number of libraries registered as DEFNet members from the start of the year and began to add their own journals to the database. In April 2004 DEFNet instruction and marketing began. However, there is still a question as to whether enough has been done in this area.

Experiences

For the most part, experiences have been positive. It can be concluded that things take time, and that at present not enough is known about the workload involved for the libraries functioning as DEFNet members. The DEF secretariat's experiences with TDNet have been good; they are a very professional firm who are quick to respond and correct mistakes.

Conclusion

The DEF secretariat has had access to DEFNet for nearly a year. There are about 100 DEFNet libraries, and about 40 DEFNet members. These members have a tool that provides participants with a total list of the institution's journals. Nearly all wishes and requirements have been fulfilled in relation to the journal directory. A journal directory is not a static system, but a system that requires continuous adaptation and further development; through co-operation with TDNet, DEFNet is a part of this development. A new update of DEFNet now offers many more possibilities in the administration module, which is something that will give the members new opportunities and even quicker updating.

Article © Anette Schneider

■ **Anette Schneider**
Consortia Administrator
Danish Electronic Research Library
Danish National Library Authority
Nyhavn 31 E, DK 1051 Copenhagen K
Denmark
Phone: +45 33 73 33 60
Fax: +45 33 73 33 72
E-mail: asc@bs.dk
URL: http://www.deff.dk