

# DOCUMENT SUPPLY: FUTURE TRENDS AND CHALLENGES FOR NATIONAL LIBRARIES

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## INTRODUCTION

At this conference in Glasgow, the Section on Document Delivery and Interlending is holding an Open Session entitled "Global access to information: For whom?" The keynote speech is of special interest here, given that the topic is "The culture of cooperation". Cooperation, or a willingness to participate in the sharing of resources, is not always a given. Some libraries remain reluctant to lend materials to those outside their specified community; some cultures see cooperation as an embarrassing admission of failure to be self-sufficient. Nevertheless, the fact remains that no library can serve all of its users needs from its own collections alone. Interlibrary loan or document supply remains essential, at least for the foreseeable future, because even if "everything" does become available on the Internet, who among us could afford to license it all? Sharing is critical.

By way of background, and very briefly, I would like to mention some of the traditional roles for national libraries in the area of resource sharing. First and foremost, national libraries must show leadership, particularly in the promotion of best practice and automation. This would include encouraging the use of automated interlibrary loan management systems, developing national codes and guidelines and benchmarks for service, creating and maintaining national library symbols and directories, and providing advice and expertise. National libraries are also involved in the creation of national resource sharing strategies, including the development of centralized or decentralized systems, union catalogues, cooperative collection development, and statistics.

Another area in which national libraries usually take a leading role is that of international relations, from acting as a clearinghouse for international requests, to providing support for international efforts like the IFLA voucher scheme, to promoting the use of standards for automated systems. National libraries are also often involved in lobbying for access provisions in national copyright legislation and in providing advice on interpreting the law. Sometimes, as in the case of the Library of Congress, they are even responsible for registering copyright.

## FUTURE TRENDS

Future trends depend to some extent on the existing degree of development of national resource sharing infrastructures. For example, union catalogues are common in North America, less so in Africa. The trends mentioned here are drawn from an admittedly Western perspective.

## **1      *PROTOCOL-BASED INTERLIBRARY LOAN MANAGEMENT SYSTEMS***

This is a trend dear to the heart of the National Library of Canada. In 1986, we implemented the first protocol-based ILL system in the world, based on an ILL protocol that we had developed and which eventually evolved into an international standard. Canadian libraries were quick to come on board, and by the early 1990's most of the larger libraries and library systems were using protocol-based systems, with the result that libraries using different automated systems could still "talk" to each other. However, it has been a long and slow road to implementation elsewhere. Happily, there are now a number of different protocol-based systems on the market and it has become clear to vendors that systems must be based on accepted standards before libraries will consider purchasing them.

## **2      *RECIPROCAL BORROWING AND SINGLE LIBRARY CARDS***

A few years ago, the National Library of Canada convened a meeting of influential librarians from different types of libraries from every region of the country to update the national resource sharing strategy that had been developed about five years before. One of the ideas the group was most enthusiastic about was a national library card, i.e. a single library card that could be used in any library in Canada. Unfortunately, when this group of visionaries returned home, their dream was rejected everywhere. Interestingly, though, we are now seeing the idea being implemented in pockets throughout the country. For example, the province of Alberta now has a province-wide card. It seems that this was an idea before its time that may gradually come to fruition, one region after another. Linked to this is the issue of circulation, especially authentication of users. The evolving NCIP (NISO Circulation Interchange Protocol) standard will, it is hoped, assist with the process of exchanging information among a variety of systems about users, institutions, items and/or access.

## **3      *INTERNATIONAL SHARING OF RESOURCES***

Fast and efficient electronic delivery systems now mean it is just as quick to receive a copy from a library on the other side of the world as it is to get it from the library around the corner. This development is timely, with most national libraries having faced a reduction in the purchasing power of acquisitions budgets resulting in a concentration on acquiring material relating to their own country. The need to share resources internationally is becoming more important so that users can access the world of information. National libraries play a key role in facilitating international access and acting as clearinghouses for international requests.

## **4      *NATIONAL SITE LICENSES FOR ELECTRONIC MATERIALS***

In April of 2001, the Icelandic Ministry of Education, Science and Culture, to which the National and University Library of Iceland is connected, announced that it had been successful in negotiating a license with ISI to provide access to its Web of Science journals to every resident of Iceland. Then in November, a similar agreement was reached with Swets Blackwell, giving access to over 2000 e-journals to all 283,000 inhabitants of Iceland. While many types of consortia have reached similar agreements with publishers, this marked one of the first times an entire country had been given this type of opportunity. National libraries who are able to negotiate agreements like this can provide access to a wide spectrum of materials not previously available to that sector of the population unconnected with a large library as well as wide-spread access to less commonly held material. In addition, national libraries can take on the role of administering a variety of licenses, providing expertise in contracting and negotiating to ensure provision of document delivery clauses in licenses.

## **5      *PATRON-INITIATED INTERLIBRARY LOAN REQUESTS***

An emerging trend is the ability of patrons to request items direct from a supplying library, commonly called unmediated requests. While I don't know of any examples of national libraries offering these services at the moment, it is happening in other kinds of libraries throughout the world. It seems only logical that national libraries will follow suit, at least for non-returnable items.

## **6 ELECTRONIC DELIVERY**

The days when users were happy to get something within six weeks are long gone. Same day delivery is not soon enough for many users. Electronic delivery of material, especially directly to the user's own computer, is becoming not only possible but expected. The widespread availability of inexpensive scanners and scanning software has made electronic delivery a reality for many libraries. This cuts days off of turnaround times and helps to meet user's ever-increasing expectations of timely delivery.

## **7 VIRTUAL REFERENCE WITH DOCUMENT DELIVERY EXTENSION**

While cataloguing and interlibrary loan have long been done cooperatively, reference is one of the last frontiers in shared library services. Virtual reference service is springing up everywhere it seems, from large projects with many partners like QuestionPoint to smaller, single library (with many branches) projects like that at the Toronto Public Library. The answer to a reference question, as you know, frequently is found in some document somewhere, not on the Web, which makes document delivery a logical extension to any virtual reference project. Some work is being done on investigating the possibility of embedding standardized bibliographic data into a reference response so that it can be automatically transferred into an interlibrary loan or document delivery request when required. Most of the electronic pieces required for this service already exist, from automated searching to electronic delivery of the material; it only remains to link them together into a seamless chain.

## **CHALLENGES**

### ***EQUITABLE ACCESS***

National libraries face particular challenges in trying to serve all of the citizens of their country. In a country the size of Canada, geography is an obvious issue. But even in smaller countries, those people who do not live near their national library are usually disadvantaged. The principle of equity of access also ensures that there are not information-rich and information-poor people within a country. Certainly the Internet has presented us with the possibility of delivering our services to wherever our citizens reside, but access to equipment, training, reliable and fast connectivity, and sustainability will remain issues for a large part of the population.

### ***SYSTEMS RESOURCES***

From hardware to software to actual human beings, does any one of us have sufficient resources to keep our systems up to date, never mind to accomplish innovative projects? Keeping up with changing formats and standards in accessing electronic resources, both physical and online creates its own set of challenges as well.

### ***COPYRIGHT***

In the ongoing discussions between copyright holders and those who want access to protected materials, it is the role of national libraries to ensure that some sort of "fair use" provision is included in national copyright legislation. While this is generally the case with print materials, we are seeing more and more attempts to restrict access to electronic documents. It is the position of IFLA that access to digital materials should be no different from that provided for print. In Australia, changes made early last year to their Copyright Act meant that they could deliver electronic copies directly to the user. Library users in the United States are similarly privileged. Unfortunately, this is illegal in many countries, Canada included, I am sorry to say. While electronic copies can be sent between libraries, the end user can only be given a print copy. National libraries should lobby for copyright legislation that would allow electronic delivery of "fair use" copies to the user's desktop.

## **COSTS**

A recently published Australian interlibrary loan/document delivery benchmarking study showed that staffing and charges by other libraries are the two major cost components of requesting and supplying items. The way to reduce costs is to have each staff member process more, and the way to do that is to automate every process possible, provide access to large, up-to-date union catalogues, and have well-trained and expert staff who know what they are doing. Automation itself (scanners, software, internet access) was less than 10% of the cost of a document supply transaction, so an investment in automation is cheap and leads to greater productivity (and hence cheaper costs). In order to reduce nation-wide costs, national libraries must work to develop best practice models, assist with the training and development of staff, and provide national union catalogues.

## **LEGAL DEPOSIT**

Legal deposit is one of the time-honoured ways in which national libraries have acquired collections of materials published in their own countries, materials that can then be shared with others. Electronic material, however, is not often covered by legal deposit regulations. National libraries must work towards expanding legal deposit to include electronic material in order to ensure long-term access to the often ephemeral materials on the web. A good example of the necessity for this is the Sydney Olympics site which the National Library of Australia "collected" on a daily basis but which no longer exists in any form on the web.

## **CONCLUSION**

It is a primary goal of the National Library of Canada to make its own collections and the collections of the more than 21,000 publicly funded libraries of all types that can be found across the country more accessible to all Canadians and to those people outside of Canada who have an interest in our country. National libraries in other countries may, of course, have a different mandate or vision, which could influence the types of trends and challenges they face.

Nevertheless, many challenges are commonly faced. We are all constantly striving to improve our services. Automation is both an opportunity and a challenge. And, who among us has sufficient funding to support everything we would like to do? Resource sharing enables us to meet the needs of our clients more completely.

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