



Interlending & Document Supply

Interlending and document supply: a review of the recent literature; 92
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Interlending and document supply: a review of the recent literature; 92

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Abstract

Purpose – This paper aims to review the current Library and Information Science (LIS) literature for document supply, resource sharing and other issues such as open access that have an impact on the service.

Design/methodology/approach – The approach is based on the scanning of about 150 journals, reports, websites and blogs.

Findings – Open access continues to grow and, hence, the impact of document supply. There is a particularly useful progress report on open access in the UK which is widely relevant.

Originality/value – This paper is the only regular review of LIS literature in this subject area.

Keywords Document supply, ILL, Open access, Ebooks, Big Deals, Mass digitisation

Paper type Literature review

Introduction

You will note that the vast majority of referenced material in this literature review is open access (OA) or otherwise freely available. This reflects the fact that most material that in my opinion is relevant to readers in the interlending and document supply service is now freely available: although I must acknowledge that the chief exception is this journal. Still if you are reading this, then you almost certainly have a subscription and thus can read the other articles in it if you wish.

The hubris of modern information technology raises worrying issues about our dependence on it – dramatic power failure is an obvious one. A more mundane one that is worryingly alive and active today – or perhaps alive and decaying would be a better way of putting it – is this:

All text is ephemeral. Some texts are more ephemeral than others. The web has proved to be among the most ephemeral and changing of information vehicles. The research note revisits Koehler's original data set after about 20 years since it was first collected. By late 2013, the number of URLs responding to a query had fallen to 1.6 per cent of the original sample. A query of the 6 remaining URLs in February 2015 showed only 2 still responding (Oguz and Koehler, 2016).

Big Deals and open access

What follows is an unusual view of Big Deals and OA – arguably the two biggest game changers for the Interlending and Document Supply (ILDS) service. As the author of the article comments “Typically, if Big Deals are discussed in the same space as Open Access (OA) in the library literature, it's to suggest OA as a way out of the Big Deal”.

The current issue and full text archive of this journal is available on Emerald Insight at: www.emeraldinsight.com/0264-1615.htm



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Reversing this, the Association of Universities in The Netherlands (VSNU) have negotiated deals with Wiley, Springer and Sage in which VSNU would continue to pay large fees for access to a complete or nearly complete bundle of journal content. “The twist is that any articles by VSNU authors published in fully or hybrid OA journals from these publishers would be published as OA but without the usual Article Processing Charges (APCs)”. The VSNU are now squaring up to Elsevier with a threatened editorial boycott of its journals. However, as the author points out:

It is possible that the deals (*already agreed MM*) could result in more Dutch authors choosing to publish in journals included in the agreement. That might be most interesting if Elsevier is left out of the scheme. If enough pressure is applied at the national level to publish OA, authors might steer away from publishing in Elsevier journals that would require hefty APCs for Gold OA (Bullock, 2015).

Watch this space for the outcome!

Open access

Developments in OA have been so dramatic and rapid in the past few years that a pause for breath and an overview is not only useful but essential. And so a report in February 2016 to the UK government by a key player in the development of OA in the UK is more than welcome. It is worth quoting from extensively. The author starts with an uncompromising statement that:

The UK is widely recognised as being the leading nation in the OA and Open Data movements. This is both underpinned by, and underpins, the UK's position as second only to the USA as a leading research power.

He backs this up with the following statement:

By April 2017, almost all journal articles published by UK university academics will be available under Open Access routes. Of these, approaching 20 per cent will be available on the date of publication and without any further restriction. These figures are higher than anywhere else in the world.

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This is explained by:

- Clear mandates and, in some cases, financial support from RCUK, the Funding Councils, and major charitable funders.
- The development of a dense network of institutional repositories at universities, complemented by subject repositories.
- The development of new routes to Open Access by publishers and Learned Societies.
- The development of an underpinning infrastructure.

The cost of this achievement is high – “UK universities currently spend an estimated £33m on Open Access charges and, without mitigation, this is estimated to rise to between £40m and £83m by 2020. The total cost of (*all*), publication to universities is estimated at £168m (or over 11 per cent of the value of QR (*Quality Related*) awarded across the United Kingdom). Non-academic institutions spend a further £127m”. Notwithstanding this cost, the message is to continue with the present strategy with a few tweaks. One of the impressive results is that “In 2014, 6 million articles were downloaded from UK university repositories”. However, the rapidly rising costs of Gold OA as publishers continue to “double dip” and the clear success of institutional repositories in giving access to material leads to the recommendation “the current UK ‘strong policy preference’ for ‘Gold’ could usefully be inflected as a ‘preference for Gold’”. It is difficult to capture in a few lines what is a very dense report with a mass of interesting statistics. If you are interested in OA – and you should be – the report is well worth reading even if you are not based in the UK (Tickell, 2016).

The conflict between those who wish to see all published research freely available to all (the good guys) and the commercial publishers who want nothing more than to carry on collecting the golden eggs from the goose (the bad guys) continues to mature. The “bad guys” have finally realised that OA is here to stay and have rapidly developed the Gold OA model thus collecting even more golden eggs (I have always had a weakness for metaphor). The good guys continue to develop repositories, OA journals with low or no APCs and authors and editors and reviewers engage in fairly low-level boycotts of commercial publishers (Elsevier being the biggest and baddest “bad guy”). A two-part piece describes, amongst other things, this latter development showing that it has a long antecedent and referencing a long list of mutinous editors and editorial boards. The latest, discussed in some detail, is *Lingua* published by Elsevier. It has no less than six editors and 31 editorial board members all of whom have resigned and will be starting a new journal *Glossa* (Herther, 2016a). In Part 2, the author continues her look at the current state of play and notes that:

[...] the *Lingua* case may be far more than a relatively insignificant skirmish – but a sign of a much more dramatic, broad-based seismic shift in scholarly publishing, brought on by the increasingly commercial, profit-centered business models and the ready availability of technologies that provide viable options and easier analysis of publishing trends.

This two-part article is full of perceptive quotes from industry leaders and strong views are expressed on both sides of the fence. She concludes, perhaps inevitably, with a fence sitting conclusion:

Can libraries that are ill-prepared to finance the purchase of journals be able to develop the infrastructure and resources to take on high-quality journal

publication themselves? Are we really ready to drop the traditional roles of libraries in information discovery and provision (in favor of publishing) just as the information age becomes a global reality? Are publishers and other key stakeholders willing to cede this profitable sector? Time will tell.

Well worth reading and free! (Herther, 2016b) The *Atlantic* weighs in on the same theme of publishers’ high subscriptions and APCs and reports the campaign for lower APCs by *Cognition*, another of, you have guessed it, Elsevier’s journals. There are more juicy quotes and the author concludes with (the editors) “are staying silent about their long-term plans, but their request sends a clear message to publishers: Scientists are ready for change” Hu, 2016).

A report on OA from Outsell is only potentially interesting as its price of US\$2595 is rather beyond this reviewer’s pocket. However, there is a freely available Power Point presentation at www.casalini.it/retreat/2015_docs/auclair.pdf One slide shows that OA has 4 per cent of the journals market, but as market is defined in financial terms this is clearly a significant underestimate of its importance. The market growth of OA has slowed to 15 per cent, but a key reason given is the lack of funder support for APCs – which seems odd given the well-known support offered by funding bodies. Only someone with money to spare may be able to unpick this conundrum. Some light is shone on the knotty issue of compliance with funder mandates (available incidentally for zero USA\$s!). The author sets out his intention “. . . from the perspective of an academic researcher, to shed some light on the OA compliance gap. What are the pressures on academics and what is limiting the successful transition to full compliance? What are the pinch points in the process from an academic viewpoint? What are academics looking for from publishers and repositories to help them in their research?” The issue is emphasised by some UK figures the author quotes “although theory tells us that 96 per cent of outputs could be published OA, the actual level achieved might be closer to 12 per cent. So why is there such a big gap?” This is a fascinating piece by a working academic with great insights into the issues that researchers face when publishing. The author identifies “A four-point plan for improving OA compliance?” the question mark perhaps suggesting a degree of diffidence. The points are as follows: take academics out of the loop/improve the tools/ask for things once/go for Gold. You need to read the article to understand these points fully – the first three of which are sensible but the fourth elides the issue of who pays the APCs for Gold – especially, in the less well-funded research areas indeed in those areas where no funds are available (Hubbard, 2015).

University College London has been in the forefront of the OA movement and has now launched the UK’s first OA university press. Paul Ayris, Director of UCL Library Services and Chief Executive of UCL Press, gives a brief description of the context for launching the Press noting the good compliance record of UCH with OA mandates. In referring to the LIBER conference on Open Science held in London in 2015, he notes the importance of the Higher Education Funding Council’s new policy:

This . . . introduces OA at an earlier stage in the publication workflow: OA must be at the point of acceptance, not at the point of publication. This development, if it is implemented, would make a huge difference to academics and to the research workflow. It would also be a game changer in terms of the levels of OA compliance in British universities. REF 2014 allocated £1.6 billion per annum in research funding and no university can

risk losing its share of such income. Hence, the OA requirement in REF 2020 could be pivotal in changing academic behaviour in terms of dissemination of research outputs.

Indeed – although, commercial publishers will fight tooth and nail to prevent free access to these accepted articles. The setting up of the UCL Press is described by the Publishing Manager and:

During the first 18 months, the Press received over 100 proposals for books, and started discussions for four or five book series. In addition, proposals have been received for nearly 20 journals, both established and new.

A fascinating insight and confirms this writer's view that "UCL has a reputation as a disruptive innovator" (Ayriss and Speicher, 2015).

Mass digitisation

Mass digitisation of journal back files has gone quiet in recent years but the transformation that has occurred has had a significant impact on document supply. And yet such is the speed of change that since about 2008 – "For many large publishers, this digitisation work is now complete". The quote is from a fascinating study from Wiley, and I would suggest replacing many with most, if not all. And are they used? – Wiley answers with a "resounding yes". Research determined that:

Usage statistics analysis of publisher platforms in the STM sector revealed that about 20 – 25 per cent of downloaded articles were at least 5 years old. The percentage of old article downloads was higher in biomedical areas than in humanities.

Which to this writer at least seems a bit counterintuitive. The scale of use of backfiles is vividly illustrated "In fact, research published in the 1990s was the most frequently accessed across all Wiley journals, with articles published in this decade accessed over 28,600,000 times." However nowhere in the report does it explain why the 2000s are not the most used. The Wiley drum beating can be a bit irritating but its well worth reading, not only for the usage figures which are impressive, but also for the description of the very real transformation that has occurred in access to older literature – and it is freely available" (Wiley Library Services Team, 2015). Needless to say the backfiles are not free – for example the list price for the full Elsevier backfile can be over €1 million. That is a lot of document supply requests but not as convenient for the researcher. Given the importance of the ease of access to older material it is also worth looking at a research article that goes deeply into the issue but via citation analysis. The authors conclude:

There are three major conclusions from our study. *First*, the impact of older articles has grown substantially over 1990-2013. Our analysis indicates that, in 2013, 36 per cent of citations were to articles that are at least 10 years old and that this fraction has grown 28 per cent since 1990. The fraction of older citations increased over 1990-2013 for 7 out of 9 broad areas of research and 231 out of 261 subject categories. *Second*, the change over the second half (2002-2013) was significantly larger than that over the first half (1990-2001) – the increase in the second half was double the increase in the first half. Third, the trend of a growing impact of older articles also holds for articles that are at least 15 years old and those that are at least 20 years old. In 2013, 21 per cent of citations were to articles _ 15 years old with an increase of 30 per cent since 1990 and 13 per cent of citations were to articles _ 20 years old with an increase of 36 per cent over the same period (Verstak *et al.*, 2014).

Interlending and document supply

We do not see many published articles from Africa, so we welcome one that was based on a presentation given at the 2015 International Federation of Library Associations and Institution (IFLA) Document Delivery and Resource Sharing section conference in Capetown, South Africa. It describes in detail the state of resource sharing in Kenya but concludes that:

Even though there have been many efforts that have been initiated to fuel information resource sharing activities in the country, these initiatives have not born much fruit in improving information resources sharing activities among university libraries in Kenya (Kasalu and Ojiambo, 2015).

The same conference heard a paper from India that described the global development of document supply, noted the important role of the British Library Document Supply Centre and then later the role of INFLIBNET and DELNET – both of which have featured in this journal, the former indeed having an article in the current issue. The authors conclude that "The technological advances have not reduced their demand (*for document supply*), only the mode of delivery might have changed" (Ramesha and Asundi, 2015). Continuing with the IFLA conference, a paper from the Library of Congress reminds us that:

Within the International Federation of Library Associations and Institution (IFLA) Guidelines for international lending, the Library of Congress lends, without charge, materials in its own collections and provides gratis photocopies of journal articles not available from the principle USA document suppliers.

In theory, this also occurs in all other countries affiliated to IFLA but it would be useful to have some research done on how many actually comply with this agreement. In 2014, 4 per cent (1,005) Interlibrary Lending (ILL) requests came from abroad. The five key challenges of the title are listed as ":

- 1 confronting fundamental demand for information;
- 2 knowledge of innovative processes;
- 3 copyright restriction and fair use;
- 4 preparing the workforce for digital curation; and
- 5 use of technology to reduce labor using digital formats".

These are expanded on to a limited and rather disjointed fashion (Townsend, 2015).

New Zealand has long had an innovative interlibrary loan service and this journal has published a number of articles over the years. A current survey of ILL librarians shows some interesting results – "Turnaround times for Te Puna Interloan libraries have continued to decrease with response times averaging 2.6 days over the last three years for Loans and an average of 2.0 days for Copies". Ease of use has improved in a number of ways including:

Introducing User Initiated Interloan. This allows patrons to submit interloan requests directly into VDX. Auto population also makes this an easy process for patrons. User Initiated Interloan is used by some university libraries who variously customise the level of mediation that is required. The service is viewed positively by interloan staff and patrons as it speeds up the process and allows patron tracking of progress.

and a "Get it" type link. Available in the local catalogue, these links then give the patron interloaning options without them having to find another page on the website to initiate an interloan. Sources used include the:

- "Use of commercial suppliers": Subito is the supplier most commonly used by academic and research libraries.

Librarians particularly value Subito's cost efficiencies (articles cost NZ\$8.60 compared to the recommended New Zealand charge of NZ\$14.00) and speed efficiencies (because of the time difference between New Zealand and Germany, requests placed from New Zealand are actioned overnight and available first thing the next morning). British Library Document Supply Service (BLDSS), National Library of Medicine (NLM) and Infotrieve are other commercial suppliers used.

- *Use of other interloan systems:* WorldShare ILL, OCLC's resource sharing network is used by seven New Zealand libraries primarily for international requests".

A detailed and well-written study and again freely available (Foran, 2015).

Ebooks

A vast amount has been written about ebooks, and some of it has been picked up by past literature reviews. An article in *American Libraries* which is based on interviews with "four prominent figures in the ebook sector" is worth looking at. The assumption is made that ebook sales have plateaued albeit at a very healthy 23 per cent of "total (*book*) publishing trade revenue". The four interviewees agree and suggest that the reason for the dramatic expansion has been variously the Kindle and the purchase of books already "loved", reference works and then current expenditure. Also, as one interviewee pointed out, ebooks are increasing in price. They all agree that expansion will resume but at a slower pace. Useful and readable, although its focus on the citizen consumer and the USA limits its significance for ILDS readers, (Inouye, 2016).

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