Interlending & Document Supply

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Interlibrary loan and document supply in The Netherlands

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Abstract

Purpose – This paper aims to describe the current infrastructure for interlending and document supply in The Netherlands.

Design/methodology/approach – This paper provides an overview of the current infrastructure for interlending and document supply in The Netherlands.

Findings – Document supply has declined dramatically over the past 10 years, and The Netherlands is going through a period of great change as OCLC moves its library services to the cloud based WorldShare platform.

Originality/value – This paper is the first overall description of the interlending and document supply system in The Netherlands to appear for a great many years.

Keywords The Netherlands, Statistics, Document delivery, Interlibrary loan, Infrastructure, ILL

Paper type General review

Introduction

1. The Dutch information infrastructure

The Netherlands has a longstanding tradition of interlibrary collaboration[1]. Koninklijke Bibliotheek (KB, national library of The Netherlands) and some university libraries laid the foundation of the Online Computer Library Center (OCLC) Central Library System (CBS), which started as a project for integrated catalogue automation (PICA) and yielded a shared cataloguing system (GGC), operational from 1978, as well as a national union catalogue with ILL functionality (NCC-ILL), operational from 1983. Organisationally, consortium gemeenschappelijke informatie infrastructuur (GII)[2], a consortium of public and academic libraries, safeguards the Dutch common infrastructure that provides services for all library types and ensures that library collections can be described, discovered and shared in the most efficient way.

As the internet evolved to a World Wide Web and unmediated library services became more prominent, Picarta was introduced. This Web-based end-user version of the national union catalogue, containing the holdings of the KB, university libraries, some larger public libraries and a number of research libraries, soon became a centrepiece of the Dutch library infrastructure. End-users are able to submit ILL requests, using a payment system with so-called "ILL-accounts". A clearing house system takes care of interlibrary payments of ILL services. The NCC-ILL system is provided with a quite sophisticated holding analysis algorithm that forwards ILL requests to the most appropriate library. Requests of public library users are primarily placed in regional public library circuits, but will be forwarded to universities if not fulfilled by a public library, while requests from university library users are primarily forwarded to university libraries.

1.1 Public libraries

The Dutch public library network consists of about 160 organizations offering services through about 1,100 branches. In spite of dramatic budget cuts caused by the economic crisis, there still is a fine-grained public library network, which is divided into 12 regions or "provinces". Libraries that form a regional network are mostly self-sufficient in providing access to the collections. At this time, the largest number of ILL requests is fulfilled within a regional network. The delivery of materials within a regional public library network is provided by provincial service organizations. The national tier is only addressed when requests cannot be fulfilled regionally.

The public library network is supported by a digital infrastructure that has been developed by Bibliotheek.nl, a non-profit service organization which was recently integrated in the KB. The incorporation of Bibliotheek.nl in the KB was the result of new library legislation, which became effective in 2015, and gave the national library nation-wide responsibility for the digital infrastructure of public libraries.

1.1.1 Discovery systems
In the past decade, public libraries have been using ProQuest's Aquabrowser which offered a national discovery service and a local version. Aquabrowser has been implemented in a large number of library websites – sometimes as an addition, but mostly as a replacement, of the online public access catalogue of the integrated library system (ILS).

In 2013, NBC+ was launched by Bibliotheek.nl[3]. NBC+ is a cloud-based search platform that is accessible through an application programming interface (API). The NBC+ data set contains references to around five million works that are available in Dutch public libraries and the KB, the 500,000-collection of the Centrale Discotheek Rotterdam (CDR), 125,000 spoken books for visually impaired readers and 11,000+ licensed e-books and hundreds of thousands public domain e-books. The NBC+ API can be implemented to create local and regional discovery services and will display physical as well as digital resources.

1.1.2 ILL systems

The multi-tiered service model for public libraries requires live connections with 40+ local and provincial installations of ILS. As this connectivity was not offered by the NCC-ILL system, a second system, VDX, had to be implemented to fit the needs of the public libraries. The VDX system, originally provided by Fretwell-Downing Informatics Group and taken over by OCLC[4], was introduced in 2006 (Figure 1). VDX contains a routing module, a connection to an authentication service and a number of features to support messaging to and from ILS's and local variations in pricing and borrowing terms. VDX has a gateway to the NCC-ILL system to transfer requests that cannot be fulfilled regionally to the national level.

1.2 ILL in university and other research libraries

Interlending of monographs has become a marginal activity for academic libraries. The demand for journal articles is decreasing but is still substantial, especially from

organizations that are not included in the big deals with e-journal and e-book publishers, such as non-university research libraries and institutes for higher education (universities of applied sciences). Academic big deal agreements mostly exclude delivery of scientific articles to commercial organizations. KB has an intermediary role for smaller organizations that do not have library facilities.

1.3 ILL stats

On the national level, the demand for interlibrary loan has decreased dramatically (Table I). In 2006, 306,000 requests were processed via NCC-ILL. Ten years later, in 2015, the total was 94,000 requests, a decrease of 69 per cent. With regard to fulfilment rate, libraries perform rather well: 81 per cent for loan requests and 91 per cent for copy requests. The introduction of ILL accounts has made unmediated ILL requesting common practice: in 2015, only 13 per cent of loan requests and 42 per cent of copy requests were entered by library staff.

1.3.1 Loan requests

Loan requesting has decreased 66 per cent in a period of 10 years. In 2006, 131,000 loan requests were submitted, declining to only 44,000 requests in 2015.

The lion's share of loan requests is fulfilled by UKB[5], a group of 13 university libraries and KB, and PLUS[6], a group of 13 larger public libraries. PLUS mainly serves public libraries, while most of the requests from academic users are fulfilled by university libraries – (Figure 2). On top of that, CDR in 2015 handled 100,000 ILL loan requests for sound recordings (mainly CDs), which are processed by a system that is not connected to the NCC-ILL system.
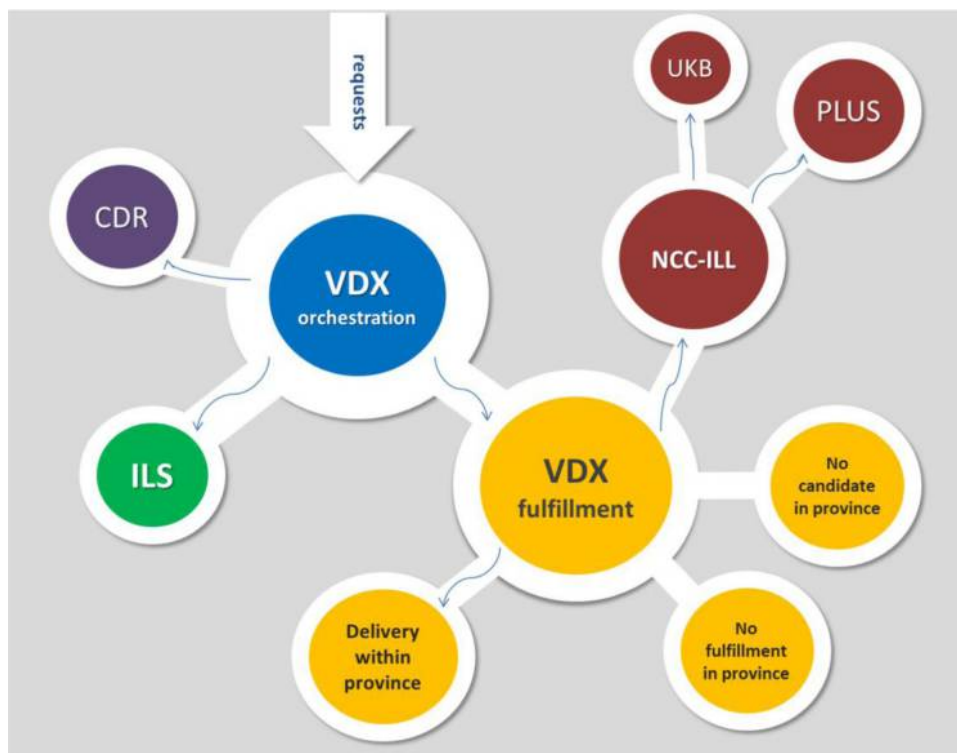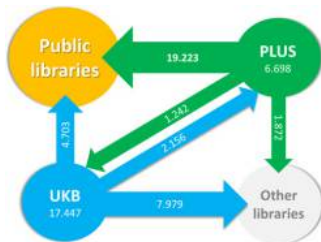
Figure 1 VDX system overview

Table I NCC-ILL requests 2006-2015

Year	Copy requests	Decrease (%)	Loan requests	Decrease (%)	Total	Decrease (%)
2006	175.420	12	131.180	5	306.600	9
2007	155.764	11	120.224	8	275.988	10
2008	135.739	13	105.740	12	241.479	13
2009	108.908	20	99.527	6	208.435	14
2010	90.891	17	85.215	14	176.106	16
2011	79.195	13	74.575	12	153.770	13
2012	65.623	17	64.006	14	129.629	16
2013	58.499	11	57.128	11	115.627	11
2014	54.416	7	49.290	14	103.706	10
2015	49.825	8	44.030	11	93.855	9

Figure 2 Who serves who? NCC-ILL loan deliveries 2015 ($n = 44.030$)

1.3.2 Copy requests

After the large-scale introduction of academic e-journals, the demand for copies of journal articles has dropped enormously. In 2006, 175,000 requests were handled, in 2015 only 50,000 – a decrease of 72 per cent in 10 years.
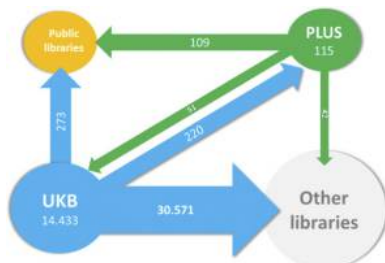
The large majority of deliveries were done by university libraries, mostly to special libraries. The number of copy requests from patrons of public libraries is negligible (Figure 3).

1.3.3 Provincial ILL

Not all ILL requests pass through the NCC-ILL system. In 2013, regional ILL in public libraries accounted for approximately six million deliveries (Figure 4).

An interesting development is to be seen in the upscaling of ILSs to the provincial level. Seven of the 12 provinces libraries have abandoned their standalone systems to join a single, multi-tenant provincial system, which makes regional requesting and delivery between libraries easy. Five other provinces still have a patchwork of library systems that have to be interconnected to establish a regional ILL service with a full coverage. As explained

above, VDX does the complicated trick of interconnecting ILSs in networks that have a more or less fragmented ILS landscape (Figure 5).
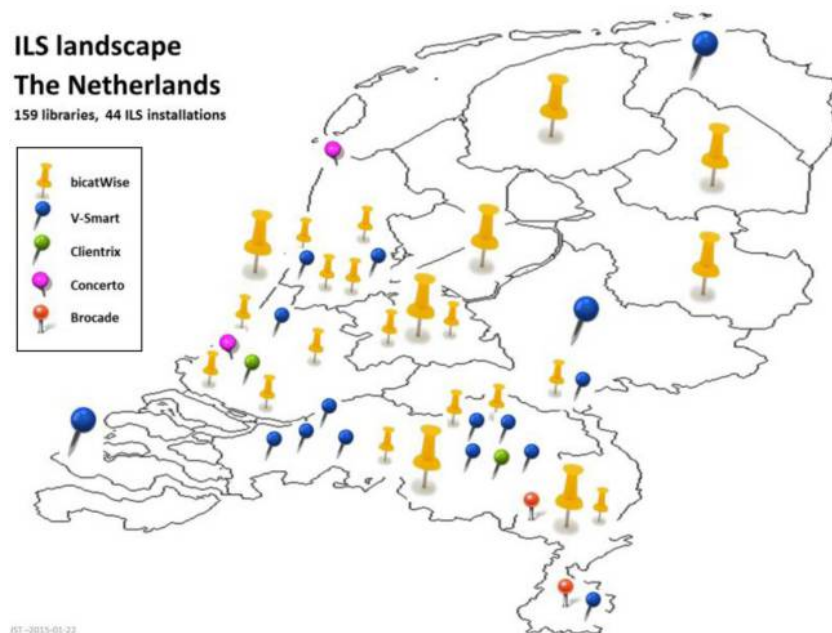
2. Future developments

In the coming years, the central role of the PICA-CBS infrastructure will change, as OCLC is moving their library services to the global, cloud-based WorldShare Platform. In 2016/2017 KB and university libraries (UKB) will migrate their metadata management activities to WorldCat. It is expected that the public and other libraries will follow UKB to the WorldShare cloud and that GGC will get the function of a metadata hub. This migration will impact ILL. After fulfilling ILL-duties for more than three decades, the NCC-ILL system will be replaced by WorldShare ILL[7]. In addition, OCLC has announced that it will end its support of VDX. This could have an impact on ILL in regional networks with multiple ILSs, because WorldShare ILL will not support connectivity features that are currently available through VDX.

Collection management and interlibrary loan are tightly connected. Through ILL, gaps in local collection are filled by the network collection. As a consequence of the new library law, KB is in the process of establishing a national collection plan for public libraries. The plan will become effective in 2016 and will most likely contain performance indicators with regard to local, regional and national fulfilment. It will also include measures to protect the long tail of the collective network collection that will safeguard the availability of less requested materials. As the upscaling of ILSs is in progress, loan transactions are decreasing and efficiency in IT-solutions becomes a firmer requirement;

Figure 3 Who serves who? NCC-ILL copy deliveries 2015 ($n = 49.825$)

Figure 4 Multi-tiered ILL network for public libraries in The Netherlands, indicating the volume of transactions

Figure 5 Dutch ILS landscape 2016 (public libraries)

thus, libraries are more willing to consider the idea of establishing a nation-wide library management system. Once collections are managed in a shared environment, efficiency in resource sharing and interlibrary lending will become much easier.

At the moment of writing, a European court case is pending about the interpretation of copyright rules with regard to e-books and the right for libraries to lend e-books on the same legal conditions as physical books[8]. The Dutch academic world has pressed scientific publishers Elsevier and Wiley to adopt an Open Access policy[9][10], which would give free access to about 30 per cent of the articles included in the big deals. Both developments could have an impact on the accessibility of e-content and might have effect on future interlibrary loan and document delivery services.

It is a safe conclusion that the Dutch library infrastructure is facing some interesting challenges, the outcome of which will be reported in *Interlending & Document Supply*.

Notes

1 For a history of PICA and Dutch library collaboration, see Anton Bossers' book 'Samenwerkende bibliotecarissen en technische innovaties : Pica van 1969 tot 2002', available at: http://oclcpica.org/content/1496/pdf/Picavan1969tot2002.pdf (Dutch only)

2 Available at: www.kb.nl/gii (Dutch only)

3 Available at: http://bibliotheek.nl (Dutch only)

4 Available at: http://librarytechnology.org/repository/item.pl?id=11865

5 Available at: www.ukb.nl/english

6 Available at: www.plusbibliotheken.nl/ (Dutch only)

7 Available at: www.oclc.org/worldshare-ill.en.html

8 Available at: www.eblida.org/news/judgement-district-court-of-the-hague.html

9 Available at: www.vsnu.nl/en_GB/news-items.html/nieuwsbericht/241 and www.vsnu.nl/en_GB/news-items.html/nieuwsbericht/243

10 Available at: www.magazine-on-the-spot.nl/openaccess/eng/index.html

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