



## Interlending & Document Supply

Interlending and document supply: a review of the recent literature; 94  
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# Interlending and document supply: a review of the recent literature; 94

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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 (OA) 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** – OA continues to grow and, hence, the impact of document supply. Improvements in the Interlending and Document Supply service are satisfying.

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

**Keywords** Academic libraries, Document delivery, Copyright law, Open access, Higher education, Big deals

**Paper type** Literature review

## Introduction

After 15 years, this will be my last literature review as well as the last issue that I will edit. At 75, it is time to put down the editor's pen and turn to pastures new. All those books to read, those walks to walk, places to see and hopefully spend more time trying to make the world a better place – although I fear for all our children with the threats of resource exhaustion, climate change and war facing them. It is difficult not to be pessimistic.

However, as always, the world of scholarly communication brings new challenges and interesting developments. Some of these I will cover in a separate *vale*, but here I will just note some of the matters that have appeared in recent publications – journals, books, reports blogs, etc. and also some thoughts on trends that I have noticed over the years.

So first the trends.

This is impressionistic rather than rigorous, evidence-based research:

- The fairly obvious fact that ILL has decreased since I began editing *Interlending and Document Supply* in 2001. I say *fairly* obvious because, in fact, in some places it is increasing. Some universities have recorded increases as a result of cancelling journals on a large scale – although this effect is surprisingly small – others because they have introduced cheaper and more effective systems and others because they have reduced the price or made ILL free. Its decline has been principally because of the so-called Big Deals which have exposed a vast amount of material freely accessible to the researcher. Free to them but not free to

the library that can pay well over a million dollars, pounds or euros for Elsevier's Science Direct package. But a decline also because the Big Deals have engendered a culture of wanting nothing short of immediate access. Even electronic document delivery is not immediate, although in the UK this has been brought nearer to reality by the passage of legislation in 2014 that prevents publishers imposing contracts that override the relevant copyright law.

- I have been monitoring the percentage of articles and reports that are freely available to review for some years. That percentage had risen to nearly 70 per cent by mid-2015, but has now dropped to as low as 50 per cent and still declining. This is mainly because the commercial publishers have tightened their open access (OA) policies. So much so that very few of the articles that I have reviewed for this last issue are freely available.

## Open access

OA publishing continues to grow but in more complex ways and more slowly than anyone might have thought. A substantial piece of research sheds light on one aspect, the credibility of OA journals for potential authors:

The present work analyses the number of open access journals which have acquired impact factor in the years 2010-2012 and is intended to describe the trend of open access publishing, in order to give researchers appropriate information on the degree of reputation achieved by open access journals.

This is one of the key factors for why many authors continue to aim to publish in certain key journals irrespective of high OA fees. The methodology is described:

The *Directory of Open Access Journals* and *Journal Citation Reports* are two well-known tools for the identification of world's leading scholarly journals. To identify open access journals provided with an impact factor, journals were selected if they appeared in both databases and these were used for the analysis carried out in this study.

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



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After some interesting analysis that shows a significant increase in titles appearing in both the lists, the authors conclude that:

The open access paradigm, once conceived as a top-down disrupting strategy imposed on authors' heads, is gaining the status of a bottom-up methodology for communicating science operated by authors themselves to give a boost to the publishing market (Poltronieri *et al.*, 2016).

Elsevier arouses strong and mixed feelings – on the one hand, a publishing giant that abuses its quasi-monopolistic position with manipulative and high prices to generate super profits – about 40 in every 100 dollars, pounds or euros spent by a library goes straight to the shareholders who have no interest in libraries. On the other hand, millions of researchers benefit from free (to them), immediate access to millions of articles. So the buyout of Social Science Research Network (SSRN) by Elsevier will send a shiver up many spines – including information-savvy researchers, especially those with some knowledge of OA:

One such (OA) alternative for law, economics, and the social sciences is the Social Science Research Network. SSRN, a for-profit company, provides a venue to publish pre-print and other editions of scholarly works for free and allows users to similarly access this content for free [ . . . ]. SSRN has more than 2 million registered members and more than 670,000 paper abstracts from 300,000-plus authors.

Elsevier makes reassuring noises:

In a press release announcing the purchase, Elsevier indicates that it intends to strengthen the SSRN service by developing it alongside Mendeley, which it acquired three years ago. Mendeley is a free reference manager and collaboration network that allows users to store, access, read, and annotate their research data – not just articles, but references, documents, and notes – all in one location and through multiple devices. Mendeley also allows users to collaborate with other users, share feedback, form working groups, and connect with colleagues throughout the world.

Others are not convinced, and the article quotes law professor and blogger, Paul Gowder – who:

[ . . . ] notes a fair amount of wiggle room in the Elsevier press release, citing language that says, 'SSRN content will be largely unaffected' and that Elsevier will help researchers share post-submission versions of their work responsibly (emphasis is Gowder's).

This thoughtful article concludes:

Until (the current) model breaks down, there will be a continuing role, however criticized or controversial, for scholarly journals published by Elsevier and others. But Elsevier's purchase of SSRN shows that OA publishing platforms have gained more than a foothold in the universe of scholarly publication and will continue to play a role of growing importance (Pike, 2016).

There are many obstacles to developing a cost-effective framework within which researchers can make their work accessible to their peers. This issue is addressed in a paper written by authors from three UK universities with significant research activity – Hull, Huddersfield and Lincoln:

Many academic staff have been left confused, frustrated and stressed by new obligations placed upon long-established publishing practices and by the way in which these changes have been communicated. This paper describes the project's initial work undertaken in this area, with the aim of enabling academic audiences to better navigate the policy environment they find themselves in to comply and better understand the rights they have when using OA.

The authors certainly convey the complexities facing everyone from authors onwards and noting the various initiatives underway, particularly in the UK, is useful – more on global initiatives in this area would have been useful – for example, CHORUS and SHARES in the USA (Awre *et al.*, 2016). Gold OA (GOA) is often expensive because of high article

processing charges (APCs), especially where commercial publishers are involved. However, these articles are easier to find than Green OA articles – although if in hybrid journals it can also be difficult – try Elsevier if you do not believe me! A study looks at five publishers – Elsevier, Nature Publishing Group (pre-merger with Springer), SAGE Publications, Springer and Wiley and uses the new COUNTER tool “JR1-GOA (Journal Report 1- gold open access), which allows subscribing institutions to gather information on GOA usage of articles within a given journal”. Elsevier, for example, started its hybrid programme in 2006 and has 1,690 participating journals out of 3,696 and has 5.3 per cent GOA according to the COUNTER figure. A useful article for ILL librarians wanting to understand the trends in OA publishing and how much effort they should be making to check whether or not users are requesting articles that are freely available (Bobal and Emery, 2016). More research from the UK looks at the costs of making articles Gold or Green OA:

Using data from 29 UK institutions, it finds that the administrative time, as well as the cost incurred by universities, to make an article OA using the Gold route is over 2.5 times higher than Green.

“The study also demonstrates that the costs of complying with research funders' OA policies are considerably higher than where an OA publication is left entirely to authors' discretion.” This lengthy study concludes that “The findings of this study shed fresh light on the costs of the business processes associated with making articles OA via either the Gold or Green routes. They indicate that the Gold OA process (taking on average 134 minutes at a cost of £88 or \$133 per article) remains inefficient, with little or no evidence of economies of scale at the present time. The Green OA process is more established and does not require interaction between institutions and publishers, meaning it is correspondingly quicker and less costly (average 48 minutes at a cost of £33 or \$50 per article). It has also been shown how the costs of these two processes scale at a national level, with Gold OA potentially costing UK HEIs (Higher Education Institutions – MM) £12.3 million (\$18.6 million) per year for the entire UK article output of 140,000 articles, and Green OA £4.6 million (\$6.9 million)” – not cheap when the GOA APCs are added! (Johnson *et al.*, 2016). One UK mandate is likely to have a big impact on the accessibility of published articles that are eligible to be considered in the current Research Excellence Framework in higher education:

Since April 2016, journal articles and conference proceedings must be deposited in an institutional or subject repository within three months of the date of acceptance and made open within 12 months (STEM subjects) or 24 months (AHSS subjects).

The authors describe the work processes at Edinburgh University to achieve this goal and, whilst upbeat, are realistic about the enormous amount of work involved (Krzak and Tate, 2016). In the same journal issue as the previous article, appears an interview with Jeffrey Beale who I have referenced before in these pages when his work on OA journals was subjected to comprehensive criticism by Walt Crawford in his freely available journal *Cites and Insights* – <http://citesandinsights.info/>. Beale's views are an odd mixture of uncritical support for Elsevier and crudely reactionary politics; for example, in the interview he states that:

It's no secret that higher education in the West is dominated by "progressive" thought. This domination fosters the implementation of policies that restrict the freedoms of individuals and organizations. I think that the open-access movement is a manifestation of this tendency towards authoritarianism and the denial of individual freedoms. Open access "mandates" are an example of this, an application of coercion by the powerful over those with less power. Moreover, it's evident that the open-access movement has a big, personal hang-up with the publisher Elsevier, and many open-access advocates share in a collective fetish that centers on destroying the publisher. It's a very unhealthy, perhaps even pathological, collectivist groupthink.

The association of "those with less power" with "Elsevier" is extraordinary – a publisher that uses its quasi-monopolistic power to manipulate pricing, thus generating obscene levels of profit. I leave criticism of his crude politics to the reader to judge and suggest reading Walt Crawford's relatively mild, if exhaustive and indeed exhausting, critical analysis of Mr Beale. (Myllykosk and Beale, 2016).

And finally in this section – an excellent little article on the current state of play with OA and, in particular, APC charges published in the ever-interesting magazine *Research Information* – it quotes key players extensively especially from the UK, and the article closes with a quote from one of the interviewees:

For me, the headline message is that implementing open access at scale is a lot more difficult than any of us initially imagined. A lot of people jumped into open access saying "this is great" and have now discovered the realities of trying to make it happen.

There will not many who disagree with that insight! (Pool, 2016).

## Interlending and Document Supply

Users often request an item on ILL which is held locally in their library – a costly and unnecessary oversight. ILL librarians have various strategies for dealing with this, and one study notes that:

During the 2013-2014 academic year, Interlibrary Loan and Document Delivery staff received over 2,300 requests for items held in the libraries' databases. These requests accounted for approximately 24 per cent of the 9,508 article requests submitted by patrons.

This library used ILLiad which was the source of much of the problem. The "request from ILLiad" button was removed from EBSCOHost, which resulted in a significant reduction of 'false' requests. The authors conclude that:

Although removing the 'Request Item from ILLiad' link may successfully reduce the number of requests for items held locally, ongoing user education and technical improvements are needed to assure that our patrons are discovering the items they need (Johnston, 2016).

A useful article on the US Copyright Clearance Center's Get It Now button is not freely available, although readers interested in reading it, who do not have a subscription, could request a copy from the author or via ILL:

With journal price increases continuing to outpace inflation and library collection funds remaining stagnant or shrinking, libraries are seeking innovative ways to control spending while continuing to provide patrons with high-quality content. The Spencer S. Eccles Health Sciences Library reports on the evaluation, implementation, and use of Copyright Clearance Center's Get It Now article delivery service as a substitute for initiating new journal subscriptions over a 3-year period, from 2012 to 2015.

A well-conducted study with fascinating results worth quoting at some length:

[ . . . ] at the end of the initial trial period, EHSL calculated that it had spent an average of \$29 per article. This compared favorably with the estimated

average ILL cost of \$35 per article for the same set of requested resources. This represented a modest savings for EHSL, particularly as the estimated ILL costs reflect borrowing and copyright fees only and do not take into account staff time and overhead costs associated with ILL transactions. When compared with the cost of paying an annual subscription fee for each of the 23 journal titles accessed during the pilot program, however, EHSL reaped tremendous savings. As noted previously, an annual subscription to the included journal titles would have cost EHSL \$71,500. Although \$30,000 was set aside to pay for individual articles from these journals, in reality the cost to the library during the Get It Now trial period was a mere \$3,103.

The authors conclude "For selected content, EHSL has found Get It Now to be a viable, sustainable, and affordable method for providing users with rapid access to full-text articles from unsubscribed journals" (Jarvis and Gregory, 2016). We read little about the corporate or commercial sector, so a report that focusses on its needs is to be welcomed:

Ithaka S+R took on this project to examine how researchers within the corporate sector discover and access scholarly literature. We surveyed and interviewed librarians and other corporate information managers from nearly 40 companies, to understand where they perceive barriers exist.

There is a section on document delivery and altogether some interesting insights (Schonfeld, 2016).

All references are checked in Aug 2016.

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