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Interlending and document supply in the Czech Republic

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Abstract

Purpose – The purpose of this paper is to present an overview of the most interesting points and currently discussed problems in the context of developments in the Czech Republic (CR).

Design/methodology/approach – The paper describes the resource-sharing environment in the CR. It also presents some problematic issues of ILL and electronic document delivery (EDD).

Findings – There is a great potential of implementing IT technologies into providing ILL and EDD services, but the current state of copyright agreements partially limits the resource-sharing environment.

Originality/value – The paper presents a brief review of inter-lending and document delivery services in the CR based on statistics and surveys.

Keywords Document delivery, Electronic document delivery, Interlibrary loan, Resource sharing, Interlibrary lending, Czech republic

Paper type Viewpoint

Introduction

Inter-lending and document supply is an essential part of library services, as no library can hold all documents that are needed. The development of open access, digital libraries and the immediate availability of many electronic books and articles for purchase has partly shifted its role and requires an accommodation to the situation but does not lessen its importance. The topic covers a vast number of aspects, and this article does not aim to cover them all. Instead, an overview of the most interesting points and currently discussed problems is presented by the authors in the context of developments in the Czech Republic (CR).

Literature review

In 2012, the Czech Government approved the concept of the development of libraries in the CR for the years 2011 to 2015[1]. This strategic document provides a clear focus on quality and responsive services as two of the key priorities for the future of libraries. Priority Number 6 of this document states that it is important to “create a single interface for library systems with the aim of integrating all the services offered from each library” (Richter, 2012). This priority is tied to the idea of creating a Central Portal of Czech Libraries (Stoklasová, 2012). In 2013, two surveys were conducted in connection with this Portal focusing on the expectations and demands of users and libraries. The results showed that most respondents among users (83 per cent) wanted a unified space containing clear information about collections and easy access

to library services (Richter, 2014). The respondents from libraries identified as priorities the integration of information sources at one point (75 per cent), gaining access to the unused or previously unknown information resources (62 per cent) and the simplification of resource sharing and ILL (53 per cent) in the Portal (Pillerová, 2014).

The state of interlibrary services in the CR is also dealt with by the CR Library Association (SDRUK), namely, its newly created Section for Services. This issue was entrusted to them by the Central Library Board in 2014. The most recently discussed issues have been the financing of postal fees and the need for changes to the ILL guidelines (Kareš, 2015).

An integral part of the interlibrary loan services in the CR has been electronic document delivery (EDD). Its popularity arose mainly in the first decade of the new millennium. After some changes to the Czech Copyright Act, it was necessary to adapt the rules for providing EDD in the new situation which has resulted in a decline in the service (Richter and Smetanová, 2014).

History

The CR has a long tradition of organized public libraries. The first Library Act (Number 430/1919 Coll.) was issued just after the establishment of independent Czechoslovakia, in 1919. It provided the basis for the creation of an organized network of libraries, which was transformed into a unified system of libraries by a new Library Act (Number 53/1959 Coll.) in 1959. This document speaks about the “net of libraries” and made the State Library of Czechoslovakia (today’s National Library) the center of the system. The interlibrary loan services are specifically mentioned in this law.

After the political and social changes in 1989, the role of libraries also changed. But it took more than 10 years before

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the third Library Act was passed in 2001 (Law Number 257/2001 Coll.). Unlike the law of 1959, which was applicable to all libraries operating within the former Czechoslovakia, the 2001 Act sets out the conditions under which a library can become part of the system. There are two main points (Česko, 2001):

- 1 The operator of the library has to ensure equal access for all to the library, its information services and other services provided by the library.
- 2 The operator has to record the library in the register of libraries kept by the Ministry of Culture of the CR.

This law also imposes an obligation to provide interlibrary services, if a library is requested to do so, and sets the basic conditions for the service (Article 14).

Inter-lending system

The Library network consists of the National Library of the CR, the Moravian Regional Library in Brno, the K.E. Macan Library and Printing Press for the Blind, 13 regional libraries, specialized libraries and other public libraries. There are over 6,500 registered libraries in the CR. The National Library is the national center for the interlibrary loan service; regional libraries are responsible for the service and library cooperation within their territories. Specialized libraries answer for their own field of specialization.

The inter-lending system arises mainly from the Library Act, which defines the basic types of services and their principles classifying them into charged and non-charged. Lending within the CR is free; however, libraries can charge for postal services. Providing photocopies and international inter-lending are charged services. The corresponding Decree of the Ministry of Culture defines the essential parts of inter-lending requests and the libraries responsible for satisfying international interlibrary requests; the guidelines suggest optimal processes which reflect best practice and IFLA recommendations (Česko, 2002). Union catalogues, portals, scanned card catalogues and OPACs are used to direct the requests to the most appropriate libraries. It is suggested to libraries that they should process orders electronically to provide a speedy service. Most libraries have their own electronic forms or use orders integrated into their OPACs; e-mail orders are also generally accepted. The union catalogue of the CR and document delivery systems (e.g. EDDO, VPK) provides their own order forms which enable its users to generate data from records. Currently, there is no unified system for pricing, so each library decides its own charges and its own strategy for services.

Under the above-mentioned Decree of the Ministry of Culture, six libraries are responsible for international interlibrary services:

- 1 National Library of the CR[2];
- 2 Moravian Regional Library in Brno[3];
- 3 Research Library in Olomouc[4];
- 4 Academy of Sciences Library[5];
- 5 National Library of Technology[6]; and
- 6 National Library for Medicine[7].

Each of the centers has its own system for ILL including payment models, request forms, databases, foreign partners, etc.; Czech, as well as foreign, libraries can contact any of

them with requests for ILL or consultation; requested documents are facilitated by other libraries if not owned by the centers themselves. The favored means of payment for international requests are IFLA vouchers or the deposit accounts within cooperating libraries or system (e.g. the British Library). All centers accept e-mail and printed IFLA orders (which is a rare case) from international libraries, some of them also have online forms on their websites. In addition, the National Library of the CR deals with OCLC online orders. It is also possible to search WorldCat for holdings of Czech libraries. Books and copies are usually sent by registered airmail; carriers and commercial delivery services are not commonly used because of their high charges and other complications. Electronic copies for other countries are unfortunately not allowed because of our agreement with the CR copyright agency, but we hope that this will change in the future.

Resource sharing statistics

Figure 1[8] shows the proportion of international requests of the five centers for international services (data from the National Library for medicine was not available) and gives a quick overview of their activity. The data were taken from the electronic annual reports [9][10][11][12][13] from the year 2013 because not all libraries have published the data from 2014.

Figure 2 demonstrates one of the interesting trends in ILL services – the decreasing amount of ILL photocopy requests. Data generated from the ILL department in the National Library of the CR from 2000 to 2014 shows that while the number of requests filled as loans ranges between 3,000 and 2,000, the number of requests for copies in the year nearly 5,000 in 2000 to 2,500 in 2014. The main influence is considered to be open access, better availability of subscribed databases and the possibility of immediate purchase of electronic articles directly from the publisher. Only the future will show how long this trend will continue.

Figure 1 International requests in 2013

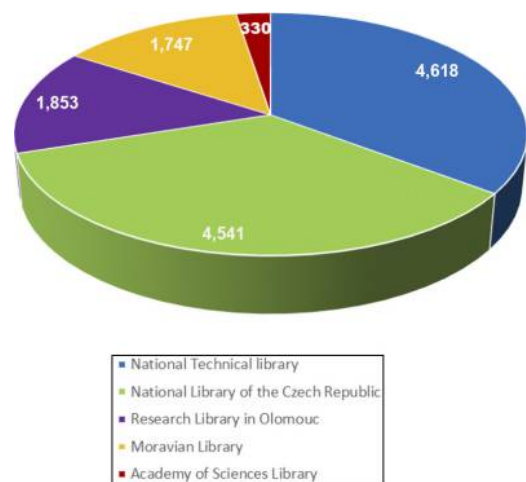
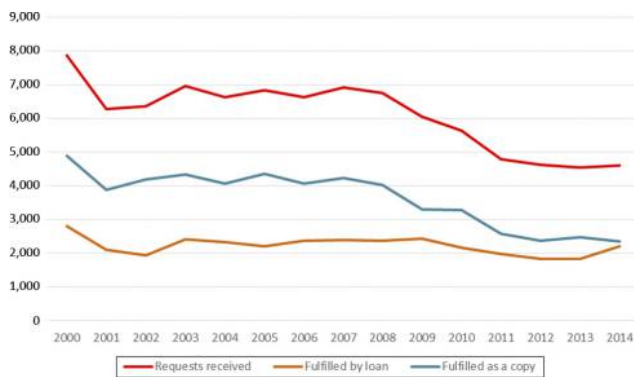


Figure 2 ILL requests in the National Library of the Czech Republic

Electronic document delivery

As said above, electronic document delivery has been an integral part of the interlibrary services for almost two decades. EDD was first developed in the late 1990s, and it matured early in the new millennium (Richter and Smetanová). Since then, the popularity of EDD has risen rapidly because it offered quick and easy access to a vast number of documents to both libraries and individual users. Obtaining copies was also easy, fast and cheap.

However, quite a big problem with EDD at that time was its unclear relationship to the Czech Copyright Act. It led to discussions between libraries and the Collective Management Organization, DILIA. The result was a contract valid from 2009, which re-defined the rules of EDD. Three years later, the contract was amended to its present form[14].

Unfortunately, this change in the rules caused a decline of interest in the service, because the contract with DILIA imposed various constraints in providing EDD. The most significant being the price increase, the limited number of pages allowed per order and the territorial restriction.

The EDD service is currently provided by the following libraries:

- Virtuální polytechnická knihovna (Virtual Polytechnic Library)[15], a cooperative system of more than 50 Czech libraries administered by the National Library of Technology.
- eDDO, the document delivery system of the National Library of the CR[16].
- e-PK (Electronic Library of Education)[17], a cooperative system of libraries focused on the field of education administered by the National Pedagogical Museum and the Comenius Library of Education.
- The Research Library in Hradec Králové[18].
- The Moravian-Silesian Research Library in Ostrava[19].

Perspectives

Currently, there are two significant issues – the effort to create a unified system for interlibrary loans and the need for better conditions in terms on copyright rules for document delivery.

The discussions which resulted from the surveys mentioned above revealed the need to create a single space for information resources. From the ILL point of view, it would be useful to unify the system for managing orders and payments. One way of achieving this has been to launch the

Central Portal for Czech Libraries[20] mentioned above. Its basic aim is to provide access in one place to all the resources and services offered from all types of Czech libraries. It is desirable to involve as many libraries as possible. The technical solution is based on the open source VuFind software[21] and the Moravian Regional Library in Brno is in charge of the technical development (Žabička *et al.*, 2015).

During discussions about the Central Portal, it was also decided to unify two ILL platforms: the Union Catalogue of the CR was connected with the Virtual Polytechnic Library (VPK) in a collaboration between the National Library of the CR and the National Library of Technology. Libraries using VPK for ILL orders may now start the search for a required document in the Union Catalogue. The search results will, then, direct them either to the VPK if it is possible to fulfill the request there, or they can place the order directly in the Union Catalogue, if it is necessary to contact a library outside the VPK. As a first step, the ordering of photocopies was made possible and book loans were added at a later stage. This connection may in the future become the cornerstone of ILL module within the Central Portal in the future. However, there is still long way to go.

The other topic in the field of resource sharing that we feel the need for change is further negotiations with our copyright agency. One very important issue is to achieve better conditions for sending electronic copies to libraries abroad. The current situation limits us to only providing printed copies sent by mail, which increases the cost for international interlibrary services and significantly delays the document delivery. Another topic for negotiation is the conditions under which EDD is allowed in the CR. In addition to discussions about the price, we would also like to open the theme of distance contracts with end users of the EDD service.

Notes

- 1 www.mkcr.cz/assets/literatura-a-knihovny/Koncepce_rozvoje_knihoven_2011-2015.pdf
- 2 www.en.nkp.cz/
- 3 www.mzk.cz/en
- 4 www.vkol.cz/en/
- 5 www.lib.cas.cz/en/
- 6 www.techlib.cz/en/
- 7 www.nlk.cz/
- 8 National Library of Technology gives numbers of fulfilled requests, other libraries either number of received requests or do not have further explanation.
- 9 www.lib.cas.cz/wp-content/uploads/Vyrocni-zprava-KN-AV-2012.pdf
- 10 www.mzk.cz/sites/mzk.cz/files/vyrocni_zprava_zkomprimovana.pdf
- 11 www.nkp.cz/soubory/ostatni/vz2013.pdf
- 12 www.techlib.cz/files/download/id/85474/vyrocni-zprava-2013.pdf
- 13 www.vkol.cz/data/soubory/vyrocni_zpravy/vz2013.pdf
- 14 www.dilia.cz

- 15 www.techlib.cz/cs/2892-virtualni-polytechnicka-knihovna
- 16 www.nkp.cz/sluzby/edodo
- 17 <https://epk.cz/app/uvod>
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- 20 www.knihovny.cz/
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