A National Serials Collection in the Netherlands

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A NATIONAL SERIALS COLLECTION IN THE NETHERLANDS

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Introduction

With budget cut-backs and up to 20% per annum increases in subscription rates, the library director is confronted, sooner or later, with the dilemma: which journals must be terminated if I am to stay within my budget. It is a headache for many if not all library directors at the moment. They will probably come to the conclusion that those periodicals specifically and often used by their own clientele must be kept and that the terminations must fall in those areas that are less relevant, are used less often, are considered to be a poorer quality, or are in less accessible foreign languages. In practice all librarians make these decisions. They can do little else alone. Considered on a nationwide basis, the result is that the more important core journals run little danger of being taken out of the national holdings, but a cold wind blows through the larger periphery of journal existence that may mean the end of many a subscription. This is especially true of the category "unique periodicals", that is, the periodical represented by one subscription in the whole country.

This is the situation in the Netherlands, and probably will not differ much from other countries. The erosion of the Dutch holdings of periodicals has been shown in a study done by the Central Technical Catalogue: between 1979 and 1980 more than 3% of the unique titles in this union catalogue had disappeared.

In the Netherlands there is an increasing realization that only through acceptance of a cooperative responsibility for the national serials collection, can a general erosion of the whole collection be prevented. Before describing how the problem has been tackled, something has to be said about the Dutch literature provision and specifically, the union catalogues and interlibrary lending.

Literature Provision

All important academic and research libraries in the Netherlands are
governmentally funded, although, with the exception of the Royal Library this is paid indirectly through the institution of which the library is a part. These institutions are quite autonomous in the way they account for their funding; in other words, the government can not determine how much of the funding must be allocated to the library, neither can it prescribe specific cooperation projects between libraries, nor can it prescribe services that should be provided to third parties. But within these institutions, the library directors are reasonably autonomous in their collection building and making material available to parties outside the institution. This is also generally true of numerous special libraries associated with research institutes which are not part of specific academic institutions, but are still funded by the government. However, there is pending legislation which will allow the government to establish certain directives for the board of academic institutions concerning the cooperation between their libraries, especially for interlibrary lending.

Union Catalogues

There are three main union catalogues in the Netherlands, each with its own history, its own circle of suppliers and, partially, subject directed. They are the Central Catalogue for Monographs (CC), Periodicals (CCP) and Congress Reports (CCC), the Central Technical Catalogue (CTC) and the Central Agricultural Catalogue (CLC). All important academic, research, special, and public library collections are included in one of these catalogues. The cooperation of the participating parties with the union catalogue is generally good.

Approximately 20% of the monographs listed in the union catalogues is machine-readable (mostly documents from the last 10 years), the rest is available in card form. The serials collection is completely machine-readable; in fact, computer printed lists are regularly published. Actually, the largest part of the interlibrary lending is directed by these union catalogues. Table I gives more detailed information on each of these union catalogues. In 1980 a National (Dutch) Central Catalogue (NCC) was inaugurated and will eventually incorporate the three above mentioned union catalogues. This NCC will have online search facilities for the participating libraries and hits can be automatically printed at the appropriate library for handling the requests. The system distributes the loan request according to a distribution algorithm in which the interlibrary lending working load of a library forms one of several variables. The relative importance of the
variables can be changed daily by changing weighing factors belonging to each of the variables.

The NCC-ILL-system will become operational for serials this year, for monographs in 1984. Libraries are gradually being connected now. It is expected that in a few years 250 libraries will have terminal connections with the National Union Catalogue and that the NCC-ILL-system will be completely operational.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>union catalogue</th>
<th>under the auspices of</th>
<th>scope</th>
<th>participating libraries</th>
<th>no. of libraries</th>
<th>no. of titles</th>
<th>no. of holdings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>C C</td>
<td>Royal Library The Hague</td>
<td>general</td>
<td>universities</td>
<td>134</td>
<td>6,000,000</td>
<td>160,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C C P</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>human &amp; social science institutes, public libraries, government</td>
<td></td>
<td>-24,000,000</td>
<td>?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C T C</td>
<td>Delft university of technology library</td>
<td>science technology</td>
<td>technological universities, industry, science R &amp; D-institutes</td>
<td>161</td>
<td>450,000</td>
<td>36,600</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C L C</td>
<td>Wageningen university of agriculture library</td>
<td>agriculture</td>
<td>agricultural university agricultural institutes</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>260,000</td>
<td>12,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1. Dutch union catalogues

Interlibrary Lending

Dutch interlibrary lending is based on a voluntary cooperation of libraries of all types and it is reasonably liberal; most of the libraries asked to participate are willing to do so. In principle, it is free, one has to pay only the return postage for the material loaned or the copy costs. Thus there are few expenses for the consumer, although defraying the costs have come into the picture more lately.

In 1977 about 750,000 requests were handled through interlibrary lending. This has only increased since then because of decreasing financial means for individual collection building. And although hundreds of libraries cooperate in this interlibrary traffic as suppliers and receivers, there is little or no cooperation in collection building. The reason is that up to a few years
ago, most libraries had sufficient funds for the acquisitions they wanted, and if the necessary literature could not be found in their own collection, they could make use of the interlibrary lending and even request material from foreign sources such as BLLD and TIB.

The Netherlands could take care of its literature needs in this way quite well, and a cooperative collection scheme was only discussed theoretically.

National Subject Libraries

Traditionally, there are Dutch libraries that have been able to build up good collections in a broadly defined but related field, and to make these available without restrictions to library users connected to or outside the parent institutions. Actually, these libraries could function as the UB/TIB Hannover or the NLM in the US.

In 1978 the Minister of Science and Education introduced the term "zwaarte­puntbibliotheek" (national subject library) and applied the term to the Royal Library and the libraries of the Royal Dutch Academy of Arts and Sciences, the Delft University of Technology and the Wageningen University of Agriculture. Being a "national subject library" had so far little influence on the financial position or the personnel of the libraries. The Minister however was prepared to "earmark" certain parts of the ministerial budget sent to the parent institution since a part of the libraries' function could be considered a "national task". In fact, this kind of financing has been applied to the Academy library since 1980, and 70% of Delft's budget will be earmarked in 1984. The Royal Library however, being the national library, has since long been financed directly by the ministry. In this way, financing could be independent from the parent institution and this would provide the national subject library with greater certainty, especially in times of budget cutbacks.

SALINFO

The above mentioned CTC study was a reason for two national subject libraries to get together, those from the Royal Dutch Academy of Arts and Sciences and Delft, to discuss how to stretch their resources for new science periodicals by preventing unnecessary duplication and adjusting their services to each other. In 1981 Wageningen joined the group and they formally set up a network, the SALINFO (Science Literature and Information Network). The goal of SALINFO is not only coordination of new materials but also retrospective coordination in order to have the most varied periodical collection
possible for the total available money. The reference librarians from the three libraries have regular meetings to discuss which library will subscribe to which new journals and which subscriptions will be cancelled. They must constantly keep in mind that the more important science journals should not be allowed to disappear from the national collection and that all important new journals will be subscribed to in at least one place.

Since 1981 when SALINFO was started the economy has worsened and even the national subject libraries feel the pressure. Compensation for increased subscription rates for example, is not carried through in the funding. This means, in actual fact, shrinking resources. SALINFO was afraid that eventually even periodicals that are held in only one of the three libraries would be terminated. Therefore, it would seem necessary to expand the number of libraries willing to cooperate within the project.

**Star Project**

A cooperative scheme for three libraries works well as I have just described, but if more libraries take part, it becomes more difficult. Another approach would have to be chosen.

To check into the interest for a wider approach, SALINFO took the initiative to contact some of the participating CTC libraries which had previously shown concern about the threatening erosion of their periodical collections. A steering committee was formed, named: LBM (Steering Committee for the Literature Provision in the fields of Science and Medicine). From the discussions in the committee it became apparent that only on a voluntary basis could coordination become a reality.

If imposed from above, if this were possible, it would surely be rejected. The idea is that Dutch libraries will share the responsibility for the Dutch serials collection together. Each participating library will, as it self sees fit, take on the responsibility for a number of periodicals.

How can this cooperative effort be carried out? An experiment was started with the following:

Each of 26 selected libraries received a list of its own holdings as recorded in the CTC. The library was asked to make any necessary adjustments in the list and then to mark up to 40% of the collection with an asterisk. This means the library will be prepared to keep these titles starred with an asterisk to the bitter end. This list has been sent back to the LBM secretariat with a signed declaration of intent. In this, the library declares itself prepared to take on the national responsibility for the starred serials, that is, the responsibility for the subscription, storage, and quick accessibility of these documents to
anyone who requests them. The person responsible for the library facilities signs the declaration.
As I have just mentioned, only 40% of the titles in one library's collection may be starred. The idea was that with shrinking financial means, enough room should be left to cancel a number of serial subscriptions and still not bring the starred subscription titles into the danger zone. The CTC has the administrative task of reporting the starred serials in its serial database. The next printed list from the CTC (fall '83) will then show which titles are "protected".
Considering the fact that libraries in research institutes can not always predict drastic changes in their financial means, especially in long term planning, it must be possible for them to reverse their decision. For that reason, the declaration of intent states that, under special circumstances, starred periodicals can be terminated if the LBM secretariat has been notified of the pending action at least one year in advance. The LBM then has a chance to find another "home" for the specific periodical.

What are the results of the experiment up to now and is there an indication that we should continue along this path or should we make some changes? Of the 26 libraries that were contacted 23 responded by starring a number of their periodical titles, as stated in the declaration of intent. The other three have not refused, but for various reasons have not yet sent back their lists. Obviously everyone sees the necessity for working together. Tables 2, 3 and 4 give some statistical material and results from the * project in this first phase.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>no. of particip. libraries</th>
<th>no. of serial titles</th>
<th>no. of holdings</th>
<th>average no. of holdings per title</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CTC libraries</td>
<td>161</td>
<td>36,651</td>
<td>109.428</td>
<td>2.98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>* project libraries</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>26,058 (71%)</td>
<td>36.006</td>
<td>1.38</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2. Numbers of titles and holdings in the collections of the 23 participating libraries compared with those of all CTC libraries.

Due to the fact that two national subject libraries take part in the project, the * project libraries cover such a high rate (71%) of the total amount of CTC titles.
Table 3. Distribution of starred holdings in the serials collection of the 23 participating libraries.

This table shows that 32.5% of the serial titles has been protected by one or more stars as a first result of this action; that is 23% of the total number of titles in the CTC serials list.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>no. per title</th>
<th>% of titles starred</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>*</td>
<td>26 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>**</td>
<td>5 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>***</td>
<td>1 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>****</td>
<td>&lt; 0.5 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&gt; ****</td>
<td>&lt; 0.1 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>32.5 %</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4. Preliminary results of the * project re safeguarding current and unique serial titles.

It appears that:
- Unique titles are decidedly less starred than non-unique ones, in other words, the unique titles fall into the danger zone. After our experience with the CTC a few years ago, this is not surprising. The unique titles are clearly considered being of less value and in some case, nobody is aware of the fact that these are unique titles for the Netherlands.
- As expected, current titles are more often starred than discontinued titles.
Taking everything into consideration, the results are not exciting: 70% of the current periodical titles have not been starred, at least not in this phase, and that goes up to 84% of the current unique titles. In all fairness, the results must be considered in the light of the random choice of technically oriented libraries, that took part.

The main conclusions of the project so far can be summarised as follows:

- The willingness to accept a national responsibility for a number of periodicals is there;
- The number of participating libraries is too small; something we could have expected. For example, the unique titles are widely distributed, most of the CTC libraries possess some unique titles.

Therefore, it has been decided to continue along this path, be it with some adjustments.

These would be:

- Twenty or so other CTC libraries will be contacted about joining the project. These libraries will be selected because of the large number of unique titles that they possess, each has more than a 100. A few large industrial libraries are included in this group.
- But even if these twenty-some libraries decide to go along with the project, then the number of relevant CTC libraries is still not large enough to reach the goal of the project, that is, safeguarding the nation's science periodicals. There will have to be an even greater expansion of the number of participating libraries to include the non-CTC science faculty libraries of the universities and the non-technical science research institutes. But then the National Union Catalogue (NCC) will have to be operational before this can happen, including the starring system, and that will be at least 1984, maybe 1985. In any case, the NCC has agreed to cooperate with the star project. In the meantime, the Central Catalogue for Periodicals (CCP), which does include the science faculty libraries of the universities and the non-technical science research institutes, has sent to its participants a list of unique periodical titles that each library has. With this is the recommendation from the Dutch Library Council to be very careful with these periodicals and if there must be a cancellation of one of them, to please notify the CCP in time.
- It is highly recommended that the participating libraries, especially the SALINFO libraries, review the list of titles they have starred. The importance of keeping relevant unique titles in the Dutch serials collection must be pointed out.
The 40% maximum will have to be raised. Especially the SALINFO libraries will have to take on the national responsibility for a greater number of serials. And that should be possible when one considers the recent statement of the Minister of Science and Education that he is prepared to continue the facilities for the national subject libraries, even in the face of general budget cut-backs.

Participating and non-participating libraries should be encouraged to check the CTC list and the new NCC database before making any decisions about terminations. Their choice should be so determined that no subscription is terminated that turns out to be the only one available in the country or is unprotected.

In this way we have tried to protect our total serials collection on a voluntary basis. But in the end, there will still be titles for which no library will take on the national responsibility. The LBM secretariat will then have to become more active in the coordination of the more important but not yet starred periodicals. This could be done by approaching individual libraries about starring specific titles, even if it means dropping others which are starred elsewhere. Eventually SALINFO could be asked to subscribing to periodicals which nobody else wants to take. This is especially true if participating libraries announce that they are forced to stop some of their starred unique subscriptions.

The advantages of such a cooperative effort on a voluntary basis are:

- Politically the coordination is neutral, it is not a matter of competency, it is not superimposed, and any loss of autonomy is negligible. The guarantee for a national serials collection has become the responsibility for all and all contribute to it.
- The coordination asks little effort from the participants and there is no discussion necessary.
- The more active coordination initiated by the LBM secretariat concerns only the non-starred titles.
- The consequences of decreasing budgets for serials, nationally considered at least, can be eased.

The project as described here allows for a number of the many duplicated titles available in the Netherlands to be reduced in a coordinated way without endangering the quality or diversity of the national collection as a whole. In as much as the libraries will be dependent on each other for service, it is absolutely necessary that the participating libraries continue to provide good service, at least in making their starred periodicals available, and further to keep to their declaration of intent.
This description so far has told only of the attempt of the LBM to protect the serial titles that are at this moment available in the Dutch libraries. SALINFO periodically sends out a list of new or forthcoming titles to the *project libraries. The three SALINFO libraries can then direct their collection development activities towards those titles not yet claimed. In a later phase, the NCC will probably have ordering information in its database and this will provide a new coordination instrument for the national collection.

In this way we are trying in the Netherlands to arrive at a national science serials collection, a collection that is protected even in bad times by a group of libraries voluntarily sharing the responsibility. At this moment it is not known if the libraries in the humanities and social sciences will also take part in this *project in the future. If the results are positive, and at this moment it looks like they will be, it would be an incentive to join of course.

Abbreviation used

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CC</td>
<td>Central Catalogue for Monographs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CCC</td>
<td>Central Catalogue for Congress Reports</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CCP</td>
<td>Central Catalogue for Periodicals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CLC</td>
<td>Central Agricultural Catalogue</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CTC</td>
<td>Central Technical Catalogue</td>
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<tr>
<td>LBM</td>
<td>Steering Committee for the Literature Provision in the fields of Science and Medicine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NCC</td>
<td>National Union Catalogue</td>
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<tr>
<td>SALINFO</td>
<td>Science Literature and Information Network</td>
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