

Scandinavian Inter-Library Co-operation in Computer-Based SDI Services and the Online Use of INIS for User Training

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SCANDINAVIAN INTER-LIBRARY CO-OPERATION IN COMPUTER-BASED
SDI SERVICES AND THE ON-LINE USE OF INIS FOR USER TRAINING.

by

ELIN TÖRNUDD

Technological university libraries in the Scandinavian countries often have a dual function as university libraries and as national central libraries of technology. This applies to Helsinki University of Technology Library which, in conformity with statutory law, extends its services to any institution, enterprise or individual requiring scientific and technical information. The national responsibility includes library services and information services as well as user training. The daily routine therefore includes the provision of reference services and manual literature searches for industrial users. These, however, do not satisfy the current awareness needs of scientists and engineers engaged in research and development.

Fate of In-House SDI-project

The first computer-based SDI-project was initiated in 1969 using a multi-disciplinary service, PANDEX, put out by the CCM-corporation in New York. During the one year research project gratis service was offered to 400 clients who each week received their tailor-made bunch of reference cards. From the beginning of 1971, which marked the end of the experimental phase, SDI-service from PANDEX was offered at an annual subscription price of about \$70. The majority of the experimental SDI clients were, however, not willing to pay this, and only 65 clients made an order. The subscription income covered less than 15% of the total expenditure which was \$37,000 a year divided in the proportion of 1:2:2 between the subscription price of the data-base, computer-time, and personnel costs. Although information services cannot be expected to be operated on a profit basis in a small country, a subsidy of 85% clearly was too high and the in-house SDI-service was discontinued.

Introduction of Parasitology

The Royal Institute of Technology Library and the Biomedical Documentation Centre of Karolinska Institutet in Stockholm agreed to take over our 65 clients, who thus were secured continuous service and better service. The great number and variety of data-bases processed by these two centres naturally offered a superior service to that provided by PANDEX alone.

Co-operation was based on an agreement according to which marketing, customer service, profile formulation, coding and refinement, dispatch of weekly reference lists and supply of ordered photocopies is carried out by the information staff of Helsinki University of Technology Library. The Stockholm centres act as wholesalers, starting with punching profile cards, running them together with their own customers' profiles and mailing the combined output to the Helsinki centre. The

Stockholm centres have also taken care of the training and retraining of our information staff, the latter being necessary after system refinements and acquisition of new data-bases. Parasitology is not the correct term for this co-operation. Symbiosis is more descriptive considering the fact that computer-based information services become cheaper per client, when the number of clients increases.

The present situation

At present Helsinki University of Technology Library has 118 clients receiving SDI-service from the Swedish centres. The distribution, as regards their institutional environment is as follows:

Helsinki University of Technology	21	17.8%
Other universities	17	14.4%
Research Institutes	29	24.6%
Industrial companies	51	43.2%
	<hr/>	<hr/>
	118	100%

Several clients' profiles are run on more than one data-base. The distribution of clients on the different data-bases is tabulated below:

Nuclear Science Abstracts	54
Science Citation Index Source Tape	54
Compendex	34
Inspec	21
Chemical Abstracts Condensates	18
Mechanical Engineering of the Royal Institute of Technology Library	16
Metal Abstracts Index Tapes	13
Food Science and Technology Abstracts	3
ERIC Master Files	3
WOOD of the Royal Institute of Technology Library	2
Biological Abstracts previews	2
	<hr/>
	230

The number of photocopy orders prompted by the SDI-service exceeds 2,000 a year.

Evaluation of the SDI-services

The clients are supplied with an evaluation form together with each dispatched reference list, and most customers carry out the evaluation of each list using the standard Cutter scale. This is an invaluable aid in the refinement of search profiles (1).

Automated services seem to require as close contacts with the clients as do manual services, and personal contact between the information officers and the clients is maintained as frequently as possible. In addition an interview study which covered 32 clients and 16 questions was made (2). The most important results of these interviews can be summarised as follows: The main benefit from SDI-services was considered to be their timeliness and the time saved in scanning literature, the average being two hours a week. Inadequate recall was, according to the clients, compensated by the fact that SDI-service often supplied them with references to publications with which they otherwise would never have been confronted. A further benefit from SDI-services was the clients' better conscience with regard to the effort devoted to current awareness. One of the amazing findings was that even in cases where the relevance of references was below average, the service was often considered good. As a rule industrial clients showed a greater satisfaction than those in universities and research institutes. This might be explained by geographical circumstances and by a greater time pressure in industry than in the ivory towers.

The use of an on-line INIS-system for user-training

For educational purposes at a university, and research interests within the library some in-house operations are necessary. Helsinki University of Technology Library has carried out systems development since 1969. The latest achievement is a general interactive on-line system which can be used on a time-sharing basis by all universities in Finland. The data-base to which the system has been applied is the International Nuclear Information System. INIS was selected because Helsinki University of Technology Library provides the Finnish output to this system. Retrospective searches are also carried out for clients in the other Scandinavian countries.

The educational and demonstration benefits of the system have proved substantial. Third and fourth-year students of the university are every year offered four elective courses in the use of information media and information services in different fields. These courses contain 13 hours of lectures and demonstrations as well as assignments and a final examination in each. During these courses each student carries out a retrospective search using the on-line system by means of a video terminal connected with a line-printer.

This method has proved more efficient than batch searching, which was used earlier. The level of success in the final examination has risen and the interest in participating in the elective courses has grown substantially. During the academic year 1972-1973 300 students embarked on these courses and close to 200 took the final examination. At present the courses are video-taped to meet the needs of extramural clients.

Conclusion

In a university of technology, with a strong department in information processing, computer-based information services are life-savers as regards both training the students and the staff, and establishing the state of readiness to offer information services to a growing number of both intramural and extramural clients.

Co-operation in a computer-based information service between technological university libraries and information centres has proved beneficial to all parties concerned. A wider use of this method is recommended regionally and internationally. This method of operation also paves the way for on-line networks which already seem to be emerging.

References

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2. Kuusiniemi, K: Study of the usefulness of computer-based SDI-service. Thesis for the course in information science 1971-1972. (In Finnish).
3. Törnudd, E: Modern information service in continuing education. UNESCO/FEANI-Seminar on Continuing Education of Engineers. Preprint VII A. Helsinki 1972.

DISCUSSION

V. WEHEFRITZ: The original service required a staff of two Information Officers and a part-time Secretary. How was the staff position affected by the transference of tape handling etc. to Sweden?

E. TORNUDD: We were able to reduce the staff since the number of customers decreased from 500 to 120 when the services ended.

A.J. EVANS: The number of profiles originating from Helsinki University of Technology seems to be rather low. Can Miss Tornudd say why this is so? It would be interesting to hear how people are attracted to use the system and whether the service is paid for by the Departments or Institutes, by research contracts or centrally by the University itself?

E. TORNUDD: There has not been a strong enough attempt to 'market' these services and financial provision varies considerably. Profiles for University people are paid for by their Institutes. Overall we have not noticed financial difficulties among customers.

A.J. EVANS: Will money be allocated from the Library budget to pay for SDI services? At Loughborough we have set aside a sum for this purpose.

E. TORNUDD: Our Library has no grant with which to subsidise services although the staff dealing with them are, of course, paid out of the library budget. The INIS system is partly paid for by the Atomic Energy Commission and uses the library's own quota of computer time.

V. WEHEFRITZ: Dortmund University has no SDI service at present but will install one in the near future. We have had discussions over the question of payment and the Library Committee decided that the University Library should meet all costs from its own budget. Scientists in the University will contribute nothing.

Organisations selling tapes usually make restrictions about passing the information on to others. This problem has not been mentioned by our speakers so far.

E. TORNUDD: Pandex had very strict rules. Our Library said that we would not subscribe to Pandex if we had to conform and nothing further was said about the restrictions. INIS has no restrictions, since it is created through international division of labour.

B.V. TELL: Some data bases impose geographical restrictions, which can be circumvented by setting up specific agreements. In one case restriction was removed because it became clear that it was preventing the establishment of a market for the tapes.

H. SKOV: The data base manufacturers (with the exception of CAS and MEDLARS) are facing difficulties in developing their markets. Our tactics have been to criticise the content of the data bases - for example Compendex should be ten times as large if it aims to cover the whole of engineering, - and to point out how such policies are restricting their markets. The data bases are not in a strong bargaining position. Their development should be influenced by the Common Market. In Denmark we have tried several experiments to help promote the SDI services, such as print-outs of Danish authors and supplying lists to the Research Council, and these have helped in developing an interest in the whole idea.

R.A. WALL: Miss Tornudd has suggested that each technological university should have an in-house SDI service of some kind. On what basis should this be done? There are such breadth-of-interest problems for all universities that there would seem to be two possibilities:- a) sharing titles not covered by the commercial bases with other co-operating universities, and b) making interdisciplinary files according to local specialities or excellences (as in Particle Science).

E. TORNUDD: Both these suggestions are excellent but neither is what I had in mind. My remark related to selecting any available data base for educational purposes and for TR research. A recent Helsinki experiment provided, however, a KWIC listing for local industry of articles in the Finnish language journals not covered by international systems. We have not yet analysed the reaction to this.