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International Dateline - Electronic Journal Management in the Corporate Sector

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International Dateline — Electronic Journal Management in the Corporate Sector

Discussion of a meeting — Electronic Journals in the Corporate Environment, held in London, November 30, 1998.

by **Martin White** (Principal Consultant, TFPL Ltd, London) <Martin.white@tfpl.com>

Please note that British spelling has been retained.—KS

Introduction

Over the last couple of years the academic library community in the North America, the UK, and in other European countries, has devoted considerable effort to evolving solutions to ensure that the problems associated with the management of electronic journals do not offset the advantages. As a result some degree of consensus is emerging about the terms and conditions of licensing agreements, assisted by a more open attitude on the part of some publishers and a great deal of effort by the leading subscription agents and document delivery companies.

The focus of this attention has been on the academic institution market, and commercially this is as it should be, because of the scale of the market from the viewpoint of users, librarians, intermediaries and publishers. However, there is now a gradual realisation by publishers and by subscription agents that the requirements of the corporate market are rather different in a number of important respects. Revenues from the corporate sector may only account for less than 10% for most STM publishers, but at a time of deeper discounts to the academic market this is a market that cannot be ignored.

This was undoubtedly why over 150 delegates attended what was probably the first ever conference on **Electronic Journals in the Corporate Environment** in London on 30 November 98. The conference was organised jointly by **TFPL Ltd** and the **UK Serials Group**, and attracted publishers, subscription agents, and librarians from both science and business-based companies. The proceedings will appear in *Serials* in due course, so in this article I will outline the main issues that were discussed at the conference.

Academic versus corporate

Although there are always special cases, in general it is reasonable to say that academic use is largely limited to a single site, though there is a need to accommodate off-site use, perhaps by academic staff and students working abroad. As a result, publishers have developed site licence agreements for electronic journals which are written within the contract framework of the country concerned. Although there has been considerable discussion about what constitutes an academic site,

there is general agreement that the concept is basically sound. In the UK the groundwork for this approach has been laid by **CHEST**, and developed further in the **Pilot Site Licence Initiative**, and more recently by the **National Electronic Site Licence**.

For major companies in the corporate sector this approach is usually totally untenable as the company often has many sites worldwide. Many of these may be sales or local production units. Only a few of these may need access to the services of the information department that has traditionally acted as the purchasing point for journals, and at each site it may be only one or two managers who would benefit from access to electronic journals, rather than all the employees on the site. This makes any licence based on a site concept, or number of employees (cf. students/academic staff) of little value.

The impact of global infrastructures

At the heart of the problem is the global,

or at the very least multi-country operating environment of even quite small companies. This creates at least three problems. The first is that no one individual may have a view of the level of demand for a particular title across all sites, and this information may be quite difficult to obtain. The next issue is that companies may operate globally, but have national-level purchasing and budget management. Deciding who has the responsibility to sign off on a global purchasing agreement, and how the subscription costs are to be allocated internally will probably involve legal, purchasing and accounting staff having to create special procedures for a purchase which in corporate terms is almost invisibly small.

It is also important at the early stage of discussion to involve the IT and telecommunications departments. Apart from the need

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to accommodate the printing of PDF files, many publishers rely on IP addressing to identify subscribers. Many companies have one global IP address as far as the outside world is concerned, or may also have set up dynamic IP addressing to make the best use of a few IP addresses. Both may give rise to very substantial problems in redistributing material and in tracking either usage, or downloading. Several speakers referred to the very close extent to which they now had to work with IT departments.

Another issue that arises in the corporate environment is the way in which subsidiary and associated companies are treated within the agreement. It is quite often the case that a company may have a number of subsidiaries in which it holds less than a majority share, and this situation may give rise to some difficult legal and commercial problems. Another aspect of this is where there are national marketing agreements with distributors. Pharmaceutical products often contain reprints of articles as part of the documentation support to the medical profession, and providing these electronically, including the requirement to archive them for legal and commercial purposes raises another set of problems.

The global business infrastructure may also cause problems with existing relationships with subscription agents. Although all agents like to think they can operate globally, the reality is that certain agents have strengths in particular markets, and indeed companies may have negotiated favourable terms on this basis. What happens if it makes sense to have an agreement with just one agency in order to provide a consistent user interface with electronic versions of journals from a number of different publishers?

Acquisition management

Corporate libraries subscribe to far fewer titles than academic libraries, and the 'churn' rate is much higher, with perhaps 10–15% of titles being changed each year. This is the result of the constant review of expenditure on periodicals against current research and development activity and makes it difficult for a corporate library to commit to more than a one-year subscription period. The pharmaceutical industry is just one industry that has seen high levels of merger and acquisition activity, which also plays havoc with long term license agreements. Because of the smaller number of titles, and the high degree of subject specificity, it is probable that companies will only subscribe to a small percentage of

titles from even quite large publishers, but may well subscribe to all the titles from certain professional society publishers.

The level of increase in print titles is already causing significant acquisition problems, without any additional costs of electronic versions, especially in the UK where print products are zero-rated for value-added tax (VAT), but electronic products are rated at 17.5%. Although companies can pass on VAT to customers, it still makes the gross cost of acquisition look very high. However, if a business case can be made for a new electronic service then budget may be able to be allocated to purchase it, and this case-by-case justification is also a feature of the corporate market.

In academic libraries there is a defined serials management function. In the corporate sector this role is

"...the corporate sector would much prefer the subscription agent to be the clearinghouse for contract information and negotiation, as there is just not the staff resource available in even the largest corporate libraries."

often taken by a member of the information centre staff who also has other roles and responsibilities. Even for experienced acquisitions librarians sorting out the problems of the equivalence (or not) of print and electronic titles, the extent of the backfile, and establishing a need for a combined print and electronic subscription package are difficult enough. For the corporate sector these problems come at a time when there is already pressure on staff numbers, and the training courses that are available are geared very much towards the academic sector in terms of advice and solutions. What became clear from the conference is that the corporate sector would much prefer the subscription agent to be the clearinghouse for contract information and negotiation, as there is just not the staff resource available in even the largest corporate libraries.

Another major difference is the extent to which commercial information services are used by corporate libraries, especially news services. Although not "electronic journals" in the accepted sense, there was a general feeling at the conference that business information publishers were also not understanding the requirements of the corporate sector, and apart from anything else this was adding to the overall burden on library management. Moreover, licence agreements had to meet in the middle, with broadly equivalent definitions in the licences from both types of publisher.

Some commonalities

There are some issues of common importance. Academic and corporate librarians regard it as the responsibility of the publisher

to provide an electronic archive. Even with the computing power available in large companies, the technical issues of establishing an archive are too complex and costly to consider. It is also common ground that users in both markets want access to a cluster of related titles, and rarely to the total output of one publisher. Again, both academic and corporate libraries would like access to usage data from publishers, though there are some concerns about maintaining confidentiality about research interests from both the scientific and corporate sectors.

Finally, there is the need to accommodate the widespread use of intranets and extranets. Although some academic institutions do have intranets, the use of these within research-dominated sectors is very significant.

Pharmaceutical industry

The extent of the problems are of particular concern to the pharmaceutical industry, the largest industry sector in terms of research journal subscriptions, and for some time now the **Pharma Documentation Ring (PDR)**, a group of the leading European information professionals in the industry, has been monitoring developments. In May this year they held a two-day meeting to exchange experience, and to hear from publishers, agents and document delivery companies. At this meeting a document entitled *Licensing Principles for Electronic Publications—Requirements from the Pharmaceutical Industry* was tabled. This had been developed by **Jane Whittall (SmithKline Beecham)** and **Henning Nielsen (Novo Nordisk)** based on input from PDR members. As a result of the meeting, Jane and Henning have had preliminary discussions with a number of publishers with a view to creating a model licence framework for the industry. This is now being discussed with a number of major serials publishers.

The three basic principles that were laid out in the draft PDR document were

- Publishers need to understand the global nature, the organisational structures and the business processes in which their electronic publications are to be used.
- The pharmaceutical industry needs to understand and appreciate the protection measures necessary for the publishing industry to defend their business and their intellectual property rights.
- The common understanding is that both parties want to benefit from the newest information technology and that licensing must be reasonable and flexible enough to reflect the new means of data publishing as well as the new means of usage.

Communicate and educate

The overall consensus of the conference
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was that the traditional distribution chain in serials publishing had had the effect of keeping publishers, agents, libraries and readers/authors in isolation from each other. The processes of evaluating and deploying electronic journals requires all parties in the chain to have a much greater understanding of the other environments. To date this has not happened, and it was clear from the meeting that this was to the overall detriment of the level of service being provided to the ultimate user of the information, the reader, who also needed considerable support and training. The way forward in the corporate sector may be for individual industry sectors to start to develop some generic guidelines for licensing agreements, along the lines of the pharmaceutical industry, but there are also issues here of resourcing these initiatives.

If nothing else, publishers left the meeting recognising that there was much still to be done, librarians were recognising that everyone else had the same problems, and subscription agents were working out how to take advantage of the situation. 🐼

On the Road from page 82

we New Englander's say when we see an alligator on the golf course.) We are used to finding cows, moose, deer, foxes, bears, and squirrels, but I have never run into an alligator!

I probably won't see another alligator this year, especially since we've already seen snow. But, I do look forward to next year's conference and a reunion with the "ATG" Alligator that I met this year on the seventh hole. 🐼

Adventures in Librarianship from page 83

"Yes I know. It's out of stock with the ven ..."

"Atlas of the Birds of Peru."

"Yeah, it's out ..."

"Not in Spanish, in English."

"The vendor doesn't have it."

"Yes. We don't have it either. That's why I ordered it."

Every word a land mine, so as I write this I pray you will understand, that I haven't done anything humiliating with the language, anything that future generations of Krafts will have to carry with them, their heads hung low. You measure your audience. You chose your words. But every act of communication presents a million possibilities, a million opportunities for misstep. If I have tripped, will you forgive me?

"Ned? This is Carlos. Are you still there?" 🐼

And They Were There from page 62

ing quarters in separate buildings. Among other things, they share staff development activities. With every gain there may be an expense, but for now they are satisfied with the way things are going.

Final panelist was **Ann Palkovich**, Deputy Director, Department of Instructional Improvement and Instructional Technology (also Anthropology Instructor), **George Mason University**. George Mason presents another model. They have created a triumvirate, which includes the computing center, library technology, and instructional technology services. All this is directed by the non-academic campus administrator for information technology. Ann's speech was very positive and energetic. She feels that the merger has eliminated redundant services and brought about better communication. At this time, she also feels that the model is working well and the departments are meeting their goal of providing as much information as possible to as many as possible as quickly as possible. 🐼



Innovations from page 74

nect the screen and hold it in portrait view as a lightweight reader?

Initially the novelty will appeal to those who are gadget oriented. It will take a year or two to amass a sufficiently large number of titles to attract readers. The standards

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issues that will enable any book to be read on any machine once you've bought it also need to be resolved. For the readers to go mainstream, however, they will need to deliver some increased level of functionality that enables us to more easily manage the rapidly growing amounts of information in our lives. 🐼

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