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Whither Electronic Journals?

by **Judy Luther** (President, Informed Strategies) <jluther@earthlink.net>

When I decided to update the June 1997 *ATG* article on "Full Text Journal Subscriptions," (see *ATG*, June, 1997, p.18-24), I knew that the landscape had changed in the last three years, with new players, evolving roles and innovative business models. However, I didn't appreciate how rapidly the Web had impacted economic models and trends.

While some publishers are offering their journals collectively as part of a database, others are contracting with new players, such as **HighWire**, **ingenta** and **Catchword**, who provide the technology and support to offer electronic journals. The "journal" is increasingly dissolving into a "database" of content being offered by a publisher or aggregator and the article is emerging as the unit of choice.

The value of indexes as a tool was acknowledged in the last few years as publishers began linking them to fulltext. Not only is this a logical connection, but it offers the added benefit of generating demand for the article. Fulltext searching of journal databases and reference linking also serve to help users identify pertinent resources.

The Chart

The chart that accompanies this article began as a result of a conversation with **Phil Wallas**, VP of Publisher Services for EBSCO Publishing, as we tried to sort out the sources of electronic journals available over the Web today. Following Katina's suggestion, I sent the chart out to each company on the list for feedback and the accompanying layout is the result.

Players are grouped into categories based on their origins to provide an overview of the industry and the changing roles of various players. Primary publishers who had specialized in content are offering search engines on their Websites that provide subscribers keyword access to the electronic versions of their journals. Secondary publishers who had specialized in creating indexes are finding ways to link directly to the fulltext of the journal.

New entrants reflect a blend of capabilities. Government initiatives with **PubMedCentral** and

PubScience potentially offer new sources of competition to secondary publishers. **BioOne** and **ingenta** are public-private partnerships that focus on converting print to electronic formats. **CrossRef** is a not-for-profit cooperative among primary publishers to link directly to each other's documents via citations in the footnotes of the articles, typically a function of secondary publishers. No wonder we're confused.

In an attempt to provide a coherent perspective, this article is focused on Web-based electronic journals for the academic market. It does not address the established legal, business, news, and reference services which have a different history in the online environment.

I'm grateful to the MANY contributors who helped produce this current snapshot. One of the revelations is how quickly the market is changing and the realization that this overview will soon be dated.

Chart Notes

Origins: their original business, their roots

Product: the one that contains the largest array of fulltext journals online

Market: to whom the product/service is sold

Value Add: primary value to the customer, ASAP=as soon as publishable

#Titles: limited to the # of journals in fulltext (some files included other content or they indexed more journals—this number is solely the number of fulltext journals a user could connect to using this service)

Back file: how many years are included, even for an added fee

Unit searched: tables of contents (TOCS)/ Abstracts/ Fulltext

Unit of sale: what is being sold to the user (collection/journal/article)

URL: for reference

Trends in Collections

Remote access to content. In an electronic environment it is more efficient and cost effective, for both libraries and publishers, to house large electronic files in central locations and provide access via the Web. Electronic collections represent the migration from a physical library to a virtual one. This has deep implications that impact content selection, space planning, measuring usage and serving users remotely.

We are beginning to see the "outsourcing" of collections with the licensing of databases of journals (ie: **Academic Press's Ideal**) and books (ie: **netLibrary**). With the increased

popularity of approval plans in the last decade, academic librarians have found it more efficient to allow book vendors to manage the selection process within given and detailed guidelines. In licensing journal databases, the library accepts a selection of titles in the same way that libraries have accepted the selection of indexing and abstracting services, only today it is influenced as much by which titles are in electronic format and can be licensed.

Hosting vs. linking. It's useful to note that publishers, aggregators, and most of the publishing services host content whereas subscription agents, some of the software vendors, and secondary publishers will also link to content. This may have implications for archiving. There are also various means for indexing fulltext depending on level of access and file format.

Subject portals. Publishers and vendors are focusing on discrete audiences and accumulating content in specific disciplines. **EI Village** was the first example of this and **ingenta** is developing portals in nutrition and veterinary medicine. **Ovid**, **BioOne** and **HighWire** are focused on life sciences. As publishers seek to increase the value of their offerings to selected market segments, they will incorporate additional services such as pertinent news, related Websites, conference schedules, moderated discussions.

Trends in Access

Article level. In addition to providing a filtering process (ie: selection), indexing and abstracting services have created access points to articles that would otherwise remain unknown to potential users. The ability to link from a citation in an article to the fulltext of the article online and back to an index creates a constellation of sites that are cross-linked. Both indexes and links generate demand for articles by identifying and providing ready access to a retrospective body of knowledge.

Users want information which currently is packaged in a journal article. They can find an appropriate journal article in several ways: 1) browsing, 2) searching in a structured subject index, 3) searching in a fulltext journal database, 4) searching aggregated bibliographic information or metadata in a TOC database, 5) linking from the citation in the back of an article, 6) learning about a reference from reading or from a colleague.

Backfiles online. Electronic files may not be fun to read online but they are very efficient at locating previously read articles as users can conveniently scan a large amount of data. As publishers convert back years of content, users are adapting to a subscription

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model that allows them to use the print as a current awareness service and refer to the backfile when they want to reread an article. Personalized and customized features such as filing cabinets support end users in referencing articles of use to them.

Database. The amount of database usage and ultimately user satisfaction is determined by the quality of the interface and level of access provided for the content. Neither of these problems existed in a print world. If the user becomes frustrated with the navigation or download speed, they are likely to leave before getting to the items needed. If searching is by keyword in fulltext with no thesaurus or classification scheme, the user is likely to miss information that he/she needs.

Like the Web, journal databases can offer "an" answer. However, both the provider and the user will be best served if the qual-

ity and level of access can deliver "the" answer. Primary publishers are new to the task of providing access to their publications and tools are developing that will benefit users and affect usage levels.

Trends with Users

Understanding usage. Information in digital form has functional properties that can save users time and provide value. We know that data can be indexed, searched, forwarded, filed, and processed. However, it is increasingly important for both librarians and publishers to understand the information "context" of users so that additional capabilities can be developed that will deliver new levels of efficiency.

Some publishers and vendors have begun to study workflow as they develop new systems. By understanding the application, we can deliver the highest level of support.

Segmenting users. In contrast to a print world with one subscription price, the elec-

tronic world can expand access to all potential users at all levels of use. Publishers are most familiar with the subscription model which represents their core users.

Document delivery has been handled by other vendors for those transactional users who discover an article that they want to acquire. However, there is a growing segment of users who may want an electronic alerting service and a selection of articles from a larger database of content. This approach means creatively offering different business and pricing models.

References

"Database Selection: One Size Does Not Fit All," by DeeAnn Allison, Beth McNeil, Signe Swanson from the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. *College & Research Libraries*, January 2000, pp 56-63.

"Full Text Journal Subscriptions: An Evolutionary Process," by Judy Luther. *Against the Grain*, June 1997, pp 18-24.

Access to Electronic Journal Content

3/9/00

Origins	Company	Contact	Product	Market	Value Add	Full Text Titles	Backfile	Unit Searched	Unit of Sale	URL
Aggregator/ Sec.Pub	EBSCO Pub	Phil Wallace	EBSCOhost	Library	Selection/Subject search	3500	1994	Index/full text	Collection	www.ebsco.com
Aggregator/ Sec.Pub	Gale Group	Joy Cropper	InfoTrac One File	Library	Selection/Subject search	3100	1993	Index/full text	Collection	www.galegroup.com/library
Aggregator/ Sec.Pub	Bell & Howell	800 5210600	Proquest	Library	Selection/Subject search	3600	1992	Index/full text	Collection	www.bellhowell.infolearning.com
Secondary Pub	H.W.Wilson	Geoff Worton	WilsonWeb	Library	Selection/Subject search	1325	1994	Index/Abs	Collection	www.hwwilson.com
Software	OVID	Debbie Hull	Full Text Online	Library	Linking from index/Standard interface	400	1993	Full text	Collection/ Journals	www.ovid.com
Software	OCLC	Andrea Keyhani	ECO Elect Collections Online	Library	Linking from index/Standard interface	2500	1997	Indexes/Abs	Journal	www.oclc.org
Software	Dialog			Library	Standard interface			Indexes	Article	
Software	Silverplatter	Carol Meyer	Silver Linker	Library	Linking from index/Standard interface	4200	1996	Indexes	Index	www.silverplatter.com
Publisher	Academic Press	Chrysanne Lowe	Ideal	Library consortia	Linking, more content	235	1993/2000	TOC/Abs	Collection	www.academicpress.com
Publisher	Elsevier	John Tegler	Science Direct	Library	Linking, more content	1100	1997	Index/full text	Collection	www.sciencedirect.com
Publisher	Kluwer	Adam Chesler	Kluwer Online	Library	Linking, before print	600	1997	TOC/Abs	Collection/ Journals	www.wkap.nl
Publisher	Springer	Howard Ratner	Link	Library/ Subscribers	Linking, ASAP	400	1996	Full text	Journal	link.springer-ny.com
Publisher	Wiley	Eileen Dotan	InterScience	Library/ Subscribers	Linking, ASAP	300	1997	TOC/Abs/full text	Journal	www.interscience.wiley.com
Publisher	MCB	Bev Bruce	Emerald	Library/ Subscribers	Linking, more content	130	1989	Full text	Collection/ Journal	www.mcb.co.uk
Publisher-Society	IOP	Jerry Cowhig	Elect Journals Service	Library/ Subscribers	Linking, ASAP, archive	34	1991	TOC/Abs	Collection/ Journals	www.iop.org
Publisher-Society	ACM	Bernie Rous	Digital Library	Members/ Library	Linking, ASAP	24	1985	Full text	Collection/ Journals	www.acm.org
Publisher-Society	ACS		ACS Web Edition	Members/ Library	Linking, ASAP	27	1996	Full text	Collection/ Journals	www.acs.org
Publisher-Society	AMS	Don Babbitt	Journals	Library	Linking, ASAP	8	1996	TOC/Abs/Full text	Journal	www.ams.org
Publisher-Society	IEEE	Barbara Lange	IEL Online	Library	More content, linking, before print	130	1988	Index/full text	Collection	www.ieee.org/ieeexplore
Pub Services	AIP	Doug LaFrenier	QJPS	Publisher	Data conversion, linking	92	1991	TOC/Abs	Journal/article	http://qjps.aip.org
Pub Services	Highwire	Vicky Reich	Highwire	Publisher	Data conversion, linking, electronic files	178	varies	Full text	Journal/article	http://highwire.stanford.edu
Pub Services	Catchword	Chris Beckett	Catchword	Publisher	Data conversion, distribution, linking, portals	617	1995	Full text	Journal/article	www.catchword.com
Pub Services	BioOne	Adrian Alexander	BioOne	Library/ Consortia	Data conversion	64	varies	Full text	Collection	www.bioone.org
Pub Services	Project Muse	Mark Nolan	Project Muse	Publisher	Data conversion	113	1995	Articles	Collection	www.press.jhu.edu/muse.html
Web Company	Northern Lights	Susan		Consumer	Free search			Articles	Article	
Web Company	Net Library	Brian Stern								
Archiving	JSTOR	Heidi McGregor	JSTOR	Library	Data conversion	126	varies	TOC/Abs/Full Text	Collection	www.jstor.org
Pub Services/Gateway	Ingenta/Uncover	Christine Lamb	Ingenta Journals	Publisher	Data conversion, distribution, portals	2000	1994	Articles	Journal/article	www.ingenta.com
Second Pub.-Gov	NCBI/NLM	Liz Pope	PubMedCentral	Library	Comprehensive Access	12	varies	Index/Full text	Database	www.pubmedcentral.nih.gov
Second Pub.-Gov	NLM	Liz Pope	PubMed/Medline	Library	Comprehensive Access	400	1996	Index	Database	
Second Pub.-Gov	Dept of Energy	Wanda Parks	PubScience	Library	Comprehensive Access	1000	varies	Citations	Database	www.oasi.gov/pubscience
Primary Pub - Gov	Los Alamos Nat'l Labs	Paul Ginsparg	PrePrint Server	Library	Preprints	0	1991	Full text	Database	eprints.lanl.gov/lanl
Secondary Pub	PILA (Publishers Internat'l Linking Assoc. Inc.)	Ed Pentz	CrossRef	Publisher	Connects research			Citation	Article	www.crossref.org
Secondary Pub	ISI	Jay Trolley	Web of Science	Library	Comprehensive Access		varies	Index	Database	www.isinet.com
Sub agent	EBSCO	Mark Williams	EBSCO Online	Library	Manage subs & access	3900	varies	TOC/Abs/F ul text	Journal	www-us.ebsco.com/ess/services/online.stm
Sub agent	Rowecom/ Faxton	Sandy Gurshman	Information Quest	Library	single interface	2437	1997	TOC/Abs/Full text	Journal/article	www.informationquest.com
Sub agent	Swets/Blackwell	Mike Markwith	Swetsnet	Library	single interface	3000	1996	TOC/Abs	Journal	www.swetsblackwell.com