Interlending and document supply: a review of the recent literature: 63

Mike McGrath
Editor, Interlending & Document Supply, Leeds, UK

Abstract
Purpose – The purpose of this paper is to provide a review of the most recent literature concerning document supply and related matters.
Design/methodology/approach – The approach is based on the reading of over 150 journals as well as monographs, reports and web sites.
Findings – It was found that fundamental debate on the direction of scholarly publishing continues intensely. Electronic books remain a minority market but the literature at least remains optimistic. The mass digitisation of books continues apace and print on demand is becoming big business. Open access continues to grow but with continuing and widely differing views on its impact. Recent mandating decisions will mean a step change in the establishment of institutional and subject repositories. Publisher pay-per-view is starting to stir.
Originality/value – The paper represents a useful source of information for librarians and others interested in document supply and related matters.

Keywords Interlending, Resource sharing, Copyright law, Electronic books

Paper type Literature review

Introduction

Document supply
The 10th Interlending and Document Supply Conference was held in Singapore in October 2007 and was a great success, attended by 300 delegates from 34 countries. A report on it urges readers to put October 2009 in their diaries for the 11th Conference in Hannover, Germany (Patterson, 2008). Document supply has long been the poor relation in automated library systems, especially in countries such as the UK with centralised document suppliers. One response is of course to build in-house systems, and one such has been installed at the Mayo Clinic in the USA. The library serves 51,000 internal patrons and in 2001 it delivered about 164,000 articles to internal customers; “and more than 46,000 articles to external customers via interlibrary loan” (Farrell et al., 2007). The successful development of the in-house system is described. Useful for all those frustrated with less than adequate automated systems for document supply and with resources enough to do something about it. International document supply is a small but important aspect of this service and a survey of UK libraries (21 universities, three public libraries and one national) comes to some practical conclusions (Bradford, 2008):

• More information on web pages so that it is clear what libraries will do and will not do.
• Greater use of the IFLA voucher scheme. It would be good if an electronic voucher could be developed too. This has already been suggested to IFLA and it is possible that this may be developed soon.

IDS librarians lobbying the decision makers in their institutions and explaining why it is important for them to be able to use credit cards and handle foreign currency transactions.

• Lending returnables still poses the most problems. Speed and the cost of postage are the most difficult issues to resolve.

An increasing number of articles on library matters are emerging from China. One such deals with costs at a Chinese research library and how these have changed over time compared to the USA (Lee and Kim, 2008). The article provides an insight into how document supply operates in China and the universal importance of obtaining accurate costings.

The issue of compliance with site licences when delivering a document supply service has become significant. It becomes more difficult to manage as these licences increase in number and in complexity. A brief article with a US focus addresses the issue and makes some useful points (Long, 2007). Some of the conclusions of a report from the US-based Association of Association of College and Research Libraries (2007) are good news for document supply librarians:

7 “As part of the ‘business of higher education,’ students will increasingly view themselves as ‘customers’ of the academic library and will demand high-quality facilities, resources, and services attuned to their needs and concerns.

8 Online learning will continue to expand as an option for students and faculty – both on campus and off – and libraries will gear resources and services for delivery to a distributed academic community.

9 Demands for free, public access to data collected, and research completed, as part of publicly funded research programs will continue to grow”.

All of which underlines the need for libraries to be able to give access to and package information requirements for remote...
users – an appropriate task for document supply librarians. The experience of restructuring at an Italian university suggests more specific opportunities for them as libraries restructure (Vaglio and D’Urso, 2008). The authors describe the impetus given to restructuring by the introduction of a new automated system and some proposals for staff restructuring.

Open Access

Much is written about the success and inevitability of Open Access (OA), and it will certainly have an impact on paid-for document supply. However, notwithstanding the publicity and the seeming avalanche of mandates, the creation and populating of institutional repositories (IR) proceeds at a snail-like pace. A recent survey (Rieh, 2007) identified only 48 of 2,147 library directors mailed in the USA who have established an IR. There were 446 responses so the situation may not be so bleak for OA advocates. However, one would have thought that libraries with an IR would be more likely to respond. This issue is addressed in the success story of the IR at the University of Minho, Portugal, which could be used in order to encourage both the creation of IRs and their content.

“In this article we tackle the ubiquitous problems of slow adoption and low deposit rates often seen in recently created institutional repositories” (Ferreira et al., 2008) – and, it could be added, in many long established ones. The number of items registered since 2004 has risen from less than 1,000 in the first year to over 6,000 today and users from less than 1,000 to over 4,000 today. But the significant parameter is the near exponential growth in downloads, from 100,000 in 2004 to over 900,000 today. They describe the promotional plan and other measure to encourage usage. Very useful for all those involved in IRs and freely available from the D-Lib Magazine website at: www.dlib.org/dlib/january08/Ferreira/01ferreira.html. An excellent journal that needs our support as its very survival is at stake. (For more details on this see their web site.) A typically thoughtful and reasoned article comes from the pen of the Secretary General of IFLA (and once an editorial advisor on this journal). He identifies three factors that gave rise to the OA movement – “an economic crisis, a moral crisis and an enabling technology” (Lor, 2007). The first is well known to all readers – best known as the serials (price) crisis. The second factor involves the gulf between rich and poor countries – it is both technical and content access, but also “that the relationship between authors, journal publishers and users is out of balance and unfair”. He gives an admittedly extreme example of a book being still in copyright in 2001 even though the writer published it in 1860 and died in 1932. The third factor is the enabling technology of digitisation and the internet. He gives ten ways in which OA could make life simpler for librarians and he notes that “IFLA itself puts its money where its mouth is. The full text of all its publications, including its journal (published by Sage) and the IFLA publications series (published by K.G. Saur) is made freely available on its web site”. So no more paid-for document supply from those titles! He also includes the IFLA statement on open access. A different perspective on OA and its impact on paid-for journals is offered in a detailed article which looks at the implications of “the move of a highly prestigious journal, Nucleic Acids Research, from a subscription to an open access model” (Nicholas et al., 2007). By using their now well known deep log analysis, the authors conclude that “the rise in use of NAR over the survey period (140 per cent) could largely be attributed to the opening up of the site to search engines and that the move to OA had a relatively small influence on driving usage up further (less than 10%)”. However they also note that “The size of the impact could be explained in part by the fact that much content was free already”. And they forecast that the OA factor should lead to a further increase in usage of 20 per cent. In summary, search engines have a bigger effect on usage than open access – at least for NAR.

An article describing a conjoint study with 424 responses from librarians globally concludes boldly “that self archiving of refereed papers in under 12 months of publication will undermine subscription based peer review. A six month embargo has little effect” (Amin, 2007). Or more precisely in the original report:

How soon content is made available is a key determinant of content model preference in librarian’s acquisition behaviour; delay in availability reduces the attractiveness of a product offering. The survey tested the effect of embargoes on OA and licensed database content set at 6, 12 and 24 months; a significant impact on librarians’ preference for OA, and licensed database, content was seen when embargoes were set to 12 and 24 month. A 6-month embargo has little impact.

Given the important implications of the conclusions a look at the original report is recommended, freely available at: www.publishingresearch.net/documents/Self-archiving_report.pdf

After years of negotiating, the National Institutes of Health (NIH) in the USA will mandate the deposit of manuscripts in PubMed Central to be made publicly available and searchable no later than 12 months after publication in a journal. This arises because of the passage of the Consolidated Appropriations Act by President Bush. The news is covered in a number of journals – not least by Scholarly Communications Report. However, SCR is a paid-for subscription and a wealth of detail can be found in Peter Suber’s free and excellent newsletter:

It’s big because the NIH is big. The NIH is the world’s largest funder of scientific research (not counting classified military research). Its budget last year, $28 billion, was larger than the gross domestic product of 142 nations. As my colleague Ray English points out, it’s more than five times larger than all seven of the Research Councils UK combined. NIH-funded research results in 65,000 peer-reviewed articles every year or 178 every day.

The 12-month embargo will weaken the impact of the Act; however, Suber also points out that “Immediate deposit allows immediate release of metadata, enhancing the article’s visibility, and allows the NIH to switch the article from closed to open access, automatically, as soon as the embargo runs out” (Suber, 2008). The European Research Council has also made a similar declaration:

The ERC requires that all peer-reviewed publications from ERC-funded research projects be deposited on publication into an appropriate research repository where available, such as PubMed Central, ArXiv or an institutional repository, and subsequently made Open Access within 6 months of publication.

See www.ukro.ac.uk/erc/policy_docs_general/071217_scc_guidelines_open_access_revised.pdf for more details. Although with a smaller budget of about US$0.5 billion the mandate period is crucially shorter. Suber also includes a large number of responses to the passing of these mandates in issue No. 118 of his newsletter.

This step change in mandation will ensure that document supply librarians will need to be increasingly aware of the need to integrate open access articles, and in particular pre-
post-prints from repositories, into their work flow in order to avoid the need for priced document supply. Good news for library budgets but not so good news for big document suppliers – BLDS, INIST, CISTI, etc. – let alone the publishers. However, we should never underestimate the resourcefulness of the big commercial publishers when their bottom line is threatened. In the longer term – even in the shorter term, so fast is this sector moving – the vast expansion in repository content and developments in repository linking software will continue to cause upheavals across the whole field of scholarly communication. Where the balls will land is hard, if not impossible, to predict.

The costs of producing open access journals compared to conventional society and commercial journals has been much discussed and there have been numerous articles – often heavily biased – in the last couple of years. Another long and thorough article is worthy of attention – especially for the cost comparison tables – and it’s freely available (Clarke, 2007). One of his startling conclusions is the difference in charges between an OA and not for profit e-only journal of $730 per article and a commercial equivalent of $3,700.

Lasty one of the important players in the development of the Open Access movement has been the Directory of Open Access Journals (DOAJ). The Directory is given a positive and thorough review in The Charleston Advisor (Morrison, 2008).

**Consortial licences**

The impact of consortial licences on document supply has been dramatic over the past five years. Site licences begat consortial licences, and these begat national licences. The latest of the latter being Germany where TIB has bought access to all issues of Nature and the Deutsche Forschung Gemeinschaft (DFG) to the journals and databases of The Royal Society of Chemistry. A total of 480 journals from SAGE as well as the full backfile have also been purchased (Scholarly Communications Report, 2007c). At the other end of the spectrum an article from the USA describes the experience of a small consortium in signing up for Elsevier and Wiley. “The license agreements prohibit simply cancelling duplicate subscriptions but they allow any library to swap existing subscriptions for titles of equal cost” (Carr et al., 2007). One significant drawback that is often mentioned in the literature is the loss of archival rights for cancelled journal subscriptions. Publishers, being crafty coves, are not keen on bearing the equivalent of storage costs of no use material for libraries without payment: “By de-duplicating its subscriptions, MSU has lost archival rights to the cancelled journals. Accordingly, if ESIG and MEC’s license agreements are ever terminated, MSU’s users may lose online access to the content of the cancelled journals”. However “MSU dropped subscriptions to forty-eight journals that were available from MEC and ESIG partner subscriptions and gained online access to sixty new journals at no additional cost”. Although they did not have time to cover “interlibrary loan requests” there may well have been some saving on requests no longer made for the 60 new journals. The detailed description of the project will be useful to others carrying out similar exercises. The lack of attention to document supply issues when negotiating licences is bought home dramatically by a recent report. “The study presents data from 90 libraries […] The majority of the sample, 82%, had never attempted to negotiate any special language on the provision of interlibrary loan materials through email or other internet technology” (Scholarly Communications Report, 2007b). The full study is available from the Primary Research Group at: http://primaryresearch.com/200711071-Information-Science.html

Perhaps the complaints made about the restrictive use of DRM software are a little exaggerated if the vast majority of libraries do not even try to include clauses on document supply in licence agreements.

**Mass digitisation of books**

Electronic access to books, especially those out of copyright, proceeds apace. Two examples recently described in print are the scanning programme of the Open Content Alliance (OCA) and Amazon’s “Search inside the book”. These are both described in detail (Ashmore and Grogg, 2008). “OCA adds about 12,000 books a month […] totalling 200,000 so far”. The authors quote Brewster Kahle on costs – “it costs 10 cents a page to scan a book, assign metadata to it, compress it, run OCR on it, package it in a couple of different access formats, and host it on two continents”. My arithmetic suggests that with an average book length of 250 pages they need US$300,000 a month or US$3.6 million a year just for this processing. The costs for the larger Google and Microsoft programme must be much greater. All this expenditure without any research on what users actually want – nor do we yet have any empirical study on usage. No doubt someone somewhere is doing some cost benefit sums? OCA has apparently initiated interlibrary loaning of these digital copies although I can find only a one-line reference to this on their site: www.openlibrary.org. The authors also cover the Amazon project in detail and point out that the business model adopted “could make this project, unlike OCA and Google, a self supporting or even revenue making endeavour – something fairly unique for the library world, which generally has to rely upon grants and operating budgets to cover any new projects”. And mass digitisation begets print on demand. An interview with John Ingram of Ingram Industries conveys vividly the sheer scale of the demand already – “Ingram has 30,000 to 40,000 retail and institutional customers across the world, and they come to us every day electronically trying to order books. We printed our first digitized book in January 1998, and now we have over 400,000 titles that we have digitized”. And describing the print on demand service – Lightening Source – “[it is] […] Where we store books electronically (now 400,000 titles) and we make over 250,000 units a week. Our average run length (how many copies of the same book we make at the same time) is less than two”. Awesome, but it would have been nice to have seen some prices to compare with ILL costs (Hawkins, 2007). All this activity isn’t causing more than a ripple or two – at least in the literature.

**E-books**

The development of e-books has been a bit of a rollercoaster. Hype and failed business models coming in seemingly equal amounts. However, the interlibrary loan of e-books has now arrived. CISTI, in conjunction with Ingram’s MyiLibrary, has launched an e-book inter library loan service – an admirable initiative and it will be interesting to see how it plays outside of CISTI’s own researchers at the Canadian National
Research Council. This is described in detail (Woods and Ireland, 2008). The CIBER team at City University turn their attention to e-books and ask what faculty and students really think of them (Rowlands et al., 2007). The results are interesting and in some cases surprising. Generalisations are difficult with, for example, wide variations in response between departments. All 27,000 staff and students at University College London were e-mailed with a survey and 1,818 (6.7 per cent) were completed. Some key findings were: 44 per cent used e-books and 53 per cent did not (3 per cent didn’t know). A user was more likely to be a male graduate student. E-books were sourced from a library collection by 61 per cent and 35 per cent obtained them by themselves. Forty-eight per cent read from the screen, 13 per cent from paper and for 39 per cent it varied. However, in a separate question on advantages and disadvantages the authors conclude that “E-books clearly compare very unfavourably indeed with print titles for perceived ease of readings. The benefits of e-books cluster around convenience: ease of making copies, perceived up-to-datedness, space-saving, and round the clock availability”. The contrast with the earlier question where reading from the screen predominated is noted as requiring more research into actual user behaviour. A very solid piece of work based on a substantial sample of users, albeit a small percentage of the total audience. A worthwhile read for all those concerned with e-book provision.

**Journal usage**

Digitisation of back files is another of the factors that continues to contribute to the decline in document supply. Large users of document supply can often afford the very high prices. Researchers love the immediate access (no more browsing of dusty shelves, loved by a few, a waste of time for many) and the serendipitous discovery of other material increasingly linked to the full text. This latter factor is often used to explain the continued growth in document supply in the USA but it suggests that researcher behaviour is radically different there than elsewhere: room here for an international research project? JSTOR was of course in the vanguard of digitising back files back in the early 1990s. Its development is charted in a fascinating description of this and its current activities together with lots of interesting and well-presented figures (Spinella, 2008). Even nationally based empirical studies of back file usage are thin on the ground, so one from the USA is welcome. This one looks at the usage of pre-1993 published serial print material that was stored remotely. The impact of providing electronic access to backfiles is then assessed. “50% of the 79,827 requests (for this printed material) were for journal volumes published before 1986” (Starr and Williams, 2008). The useful highlights box notes that “Biomedical libraries should carefully consider [the] implications of eliminating on-site access to older journal literature for users and budgets”. And, “removing access to older journal literature may result in higher demand for interlibrary loan and document delivery services”. And finally, that “Biomedical libraries can safely substitute reliable electronic access to older literature to meet ongoing needs for this information, thereby creating space for other purposes”. A well conducted research project with genuinely useful results and food for thought for the UK Research Reserve project, which aims to store printed backfiles centrally at the document supply facility of the British Library at Boston Spa. (We will be publishing an article on this project in the next issue.) Yet another study, in this case of 31 journals from the American Chemical Society over a period of 12 months, demonstrates, inter alia, that many/most journals are very little used — let alone individual parts or articles: “over half the titles (51.61 per cent) had fewer than 10 users viewing some of their abstracts, with two titles receiving no view of this type” (Borrego and Urbano, 2007). Once again a cost benefit analysis of more flexible serial title purchasing combined with document supply is called for – but not by these authors. That said, it is a useful empirical study of journal usage in a small “big deal”.

**Copyright**

The increased restrictions on fair use provision derive both from digital rights management techniques – electronically locked doors – but also through changing legislation as a result of publisher lobbying. The impact of this lobbying is dramatically highlighted by contrasting the earliest Act with the latest:

The law that is acknowledged as the first Copyright Act was the statute of Anne, 1709. This was an Act for the Encouragement of Learning, by Vesting the Copies of Printed Books in the Authors or Purchasers of such copies, during the Times therein mentioned.

It is worth noting that “the times therein mentioned” amounted to 14 years. The first copyright law in the USA, the Copyright Act of 1790, also had a term of 14 years. The comparison with current law is striking – “the term of the copyright has expanded to 70 years” (McAllister, 2007). Even more striking, and not mentioned by the author, is that the 14 years was from the time of publication, (although this was increased to 28 years shortly afterwards) and that the current 70 years is from the date of death. The dramatic lengthening has been primarily brought about by publishers who have a direct commercial interest in extending copyright. indefinitely. Also worthy of note is that copyright passed to the purchaser of the books in the original Act – now that would cause waves if reintroduced! She then describes the constraints of DRM techniques on usage. The same issue of Incite has a number of brief but useful pieces on the Australian copyright scene. The knotty problem of copyright and fair use provision, nationally and internationally, is covered, including a section on the long-running saga of Subito, in a revised and updated article from a paper given at the ILDS conference in Singapore (Mueller, 2008). He looks specifically at licences and court cases that have occurred in Canada and Germany. Then considers the copyright situation in Canada, Australia, the USA, the UK and Germany. Very useful for all document supply librarians – especially those engaged internationally. The saga of Subito and the publishers appears to have been resolved with an agreement between Subito and some STM publishers:

These agreements will authorise Subito and its member libraries to use the content of published scientific journals for electronic document delivery. Publishers set a rate for the delivery of documents to private individuals and for businesses. Students, public and non-commercial libraries, as well as academics, will benefit from discounts under the agreement (Scholarly Communications Report, 2007a).

The charge to the first group is consistent with the new EU regulations now incorporated into individual country law. However it seems to suggest that the publishers will still charge the second group for what is normally seen as fair use.
provision. The Subito website (accessed 2 March 2008) states: “The issue of whether it is possible to deliver PDF files via e-mail without incurring royalties is currently under review”. However it also states that as far as deliveries to other (non-German speaking) countries is concerned, “The receipt of orders, making of copies and delivery to the users are all services subject to the copyright regulations of all those countries affected by these activities. The users are dutifully bound to observe all copyright regulations”. So can a user in, for example, the UK receive a document electronically under the fair use provision of the UK Copyright Act? It looks like even more work for the lawyers! The SCR piece concludes rather ominously:

… it is assumed that the focus of STM Association attention will switch to other national e-delivery centres whose e-delivery aims run counter to the growing pay-per-view receipts of the major commercial journal publishers. However the practice of a contractual licence agreement overriding national copyright laws may stick in the craw of some national document delivery organisations.

And we can add that if the price that publishers want to charge is above current fair use prices, as currently is often the case, then it will also stick in the craw of their customers. Whatever the outcome it is likely to boost the movement towards both the development and expansion of institutional repositories. Those following the long-running saga of the law suit in the USA on Google Book Search will have mixed views on the length it still has to run: “it is not expected to be resolved until the first half of 2009” (Pike, 2007).

Search engines

Google has become ubiquitous. This very ubiquity requires it to be of the highest quality if it is not to seriously weaken research outputs. A statistically large study covering 9,500 titles takes a fairly critical view. Although it is a little dated, the authors point out that “It appears that the index is not updated regularly” (Mayer and Walter, 2007). They conclude that German coverage is poor and that the coverage of Open Access material is poor: “Something that remains unclear is why journal articles which are freely available on web servers are not readily listed by Google Scholar even though they are searchable via the classic Google web Search”. And, rather damningly: “In comparison with many abstracting and indexing databases, Google Scholar does not offer the transparency and completeness to be expected from a scientific information resource”. Serious researchers please note.

And on a less than cheerful endnote . . .

“The end of the world is nigh”. A world without oil is depicted (certainly within 100 years) and the return of libraries to a monastic role – if we are lucky (Hecker, 2007). A welcome and very relevant counterpoint to the relentless evangelism of the Web 2.0 and “digitise it all optimists”. There are references which readers interested to learn more can pursue. My own would be a New Scientist article (Cohen, 2007) which covers resource exhaustion. For example, silver is due for exhaustion in 15-20 years, uranium in 30 or so (so no more nuclear power) indium 5-10 years (so it becomes difficult to make solar panels), etc., etc. There is a profound and tragic irony in the efforts being put into long-term digital preservation, when the energy and materials required to maintain and make accessible the vast databases will be exhausted within the lifetime of a poorly produced paperback book. What is to be done?

References


