
Review Article

SOME 'HYBRID' FEATURES

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The Author

With a degree in Modern History at Cambridge John Sumsion spent two years at Yale (M.A. 1953) and Cornell studying and teaching Economics. After a long career in manufacturing 'K Shoes' he was appointed in 1981 to set up the Public Lending Right operation. Here he gained valuable knowledge of UK public libraries through operating and evaluating the PLR statistical sampling scheme and he developed new ways to analyse book loans and to describe the Buying/Borrowing features of the book trade.

He then spent five years as Director of LISU (Library & Information Statistics Unit) at Loughborough University – which included research projects in University Libraries (Follett Review), Special Libraries and Performance Measurement (Audit Commission and EC). On retiring from LISU in September 1996 he was appointed Senior Honorary Fellow in Loughborough's Department of Information Science - which is now his base for personal teaching, research and consultancy. Until last year he chaired IFLA's Statistics Committee and the Group revising the Library Statistics International Standard. Currently he also edits LIRN.

The Occasion

With no pressure on space for this number of LIRN, it seemed appropriate to take the opportunity to comment on research issues at the cutting edge of present dynamic developments involving the Hybrid Library concept and innovative network publishing. It may be a case of the generalist stepping in where specialists fear to tread – if it be intellectual luxury, then others are invited to follow!

Morris, Anne, Jacobs, Neil & Davies, Eric (eds.)
DOCUMENT DELIVERY BEYOND 2000.
London: Taylor Graham Publishing, 1999. 188 pp.
23 cms paperback. £ 30 /US \$ 55. ISBN 0 947568
76 X.

**THE HYBRID LIBRARY: THE NEW REVIEW
OF INFORMATION AND LIBRARY
RESEARCH** vol 4, 1998. London: Taylor Graham
Publishing, 1999. Pp. 171, 23 cms paperback £ 70
/US \$ 130. ISSN 1361-455X.

Soete, George **MEASURING JOURNAL COST-
EFFECTIVENESS: TEN YEARS AFTER
BARSCHALL.** University of Wisconsin –
Madison, 1999.
[www.library.wisc.edu/projects/glsdo/Cost-
Effectiveness.doc](http://www.library.wisc.edu/projects/glsdo/Cost-Effectiveness.doc)

Publishing practice and the provision of learned journals have been in crisis now for more than a decade – dominating the concerns, dreams and nightmares of academic librarians the world over. Is any feasible resolution in sight? How can librarians manage to meet a doubled demand with resources at standstill? How can research effort help? This is the core problem addressed by this, and much other research.

Decisions and strategic planning all need to be informed by the pace and direction of change as electronic delivery and electronic publishing develop. It is no easy task to keep practitioners and other researchers alert to research in the field. Not only library operations but also publishing practice in reporting research are at a cross-roads - of motorway proportions!

These two conventional publications are an interesting development in publishing practice and may turn out to be important and innovative. Both are reports of Conference Proceedings dressed up in monograph and serial format. The second revives an existing serial title but, like *Library Trends* and other US items, each issue will concentrate on a particular topic – and will appear once a year. Thus, despite their formal format, they can best be considered as self contained products. Another feature that they share is the presentation of ongoing research so that issues are considered against research results that are interim not final.

Three of the prime movers (Peter Brophy, Eric Davies and Peter Taylor) have a long and active history of involvement in LIRG. The venture is interesting in that these handsomely produced, well edited books are offered as an 'extra' to well developed web sites and conventional research journal articles. I suspect many managers and researchers will find it comfortable to have them, both to read and for reference, in this format – though lack of publicity and the rather high price may work against commercial success. The difference in price between the two is hard to fathom!

Web sites are, of course, plentifully referenced – so that these books can in a real sense be regarded as guides to electronic sources: certainly they should be seen as supplementary and not in competition with the web.

In contrast the www article from the University of Wisconsin represents the alternative 'electronically correct' format – problematic to discover, awkward to handle, but with brilliant content of substantial research significance.

Document Delivery Beyond 2000 reports an important two day conference held in London in September 1998 organised as an activity of the e-Lib project 'Focused Investigation of Document Delivery Options' (FIDDO). The scope is limited to academic libraries and to the provision of material for researchers rather than students. The seventeen papers are reproduced in full and there are summary reports of 'break out' discussion groups. There is no way of telling how stimulating the group activity was on the day: frustrating experience shows many do not live up to the good intentions of the organisers – though professional personal friendships may well be kindled in the process. But the way they are reported here does not work: ideas and comments would have been much better truncated for originality and relevance, and then placed with the papers to which they refer.

To give an international flavour two Americans and an Australian, though no one from continental Europe, contributed. However the emphasis throughout is principally on British experience, and this focus is sensible. To attempt a global overview

would be much more ambitious, and this summary of British experience should be particularly valuable to researchers overseas.

Three types of paper were presented: (1) overviews and forecasts; (2) reports of research and development projects; (3) explanations of copyright. In broad terms these correspond to the two main research questions: (a) if, how and when hard copy will be superseded by electronic networked resources and (b) how electronic techniques may be used to refine, expand and streamline conventional inter library lending.

Central to both questions is the copyright issue. Mark Wing and Graham Cornish give invaluable and masterly summaries of copyright developments in the 1990s. For many practitioners too busy to keep up with specialist papers, these alone could make the book worth having. However, they tend to stand too much on their own. Ideally more mention of copyright problems should have been made in the other papers – which could also have been specifically used to illustrate how copyright problems appear in practice. Here is an integration opportunity that has gone begging – owing to the separate nature of individual contributions to a conference of this sort.

Several overviews of the 'traditional v. electronic' issues were given. All made salient and thoughtful points. Terry Hanson's is especially impressive. Reading these overviews there is some duplication – that would be edited out in a good book – and the realisation that library and information professionals are much more articulate in describing these problems and prospects than are publishers and the other intermediaries. The suppliers might well say they are concentrating on action rather than discourse!

User surveys done as part of the FIDDO Project reinforced what must now be the generally accepted views of researchers' reluctance to forgo hard copy, the value of traditional browsing, librarians' views of resistance to change, and so on: little new here. But Anne Morris and Eric Davies develop from this four scenarios or development options (p. 26) starting with conventional ILL and ending with full text databases online for subscription payment.

There is a possible Scenario 5, or 4A, where subscription charges could be renegotiated in the light of actual usage recorded. Morris and Davies are particularly strong on the accounting complications in assembling use data. They rather assume that suppliers' data may not be complete or available. That may be the present reality – but it could become essential and feasible in future, and certainly worth development effort.

However well informed and elegant the overviews and the discussion of problems and issues, it is with a gasp of relief that we finally come to some statistics and description of actual experience in the contribution on the MANDOC Study – “meeting the needs of management research”. Here are results on “access to articles from an extremely diverse range of titles backed by electronic full-text or efficient document delivery” and some estimates of actual usage of journal articles.

Developing models has gone on for some time now – and there is a temptation to refine them ‘ad infinitum’. We should now move on in a big way to plot and analyse statistical results from those prototype experiments and initiatives where electronic subscription to full text has been made available. Some results currently becoming available [see, for instance, those mainly from US universities on liblicense-1@lists.yale.edu] suggest the electronic format leads to cross disciplinary use of material on a novel and substantial scale. Then there is the possibility that the electronic format might lead to a twofold (or even a fivefold) increase in reading use – and such a potential increase in turnover is what might finally break the supplier copyright log jam.

Mention is made of some FIDDO statistics – but they are not described here. It is not made clear how far the FIDDO Project will extend in this direction; but this is now partly answered in the form of an article by Anne Morris, Julie Woodfield and Eric Davies “Experimental evaluation of selected electronic document delivery systems” in the *Journal of Library and Information Science*, 31 (3), September 1999. And a whole book on the project is promised by Bowker Saur for Summer 2000.

Turning to the second main research question there are interesting reports of ways in which computers and networking have the potential to speed up and streamline document delivery to the user's desk. This is partly actual development and partly potential. Typical is Stephanie Taylor's description of the clever ARIEL software as used in the LAMDOC project. Copyright considerations seem at present to limit electronic transmission to the inter library stage: delivery to the final user has generally to be in hard copy – a ridiculously Luddite position to be in and one which we hope is but interim.

Cost and economic aspects need much more careful and extensive attention than they are getting – judged by this evidence. There appears from this survey to be considerable development work in progress on ‘electronic ILL’ – which will only bear fruit if matched by success in developing satisfactory systems of supplier remuneration – and that field is outside the scope of this work. Maybe a shift is called for research into this area in addition to the more accepted concentration on discovery and access to bibliographic information.

Finally, in reviewing *Document Delivery Beyond 2000*, we come to the question of timing. Although by conventional standards this report was produced quite soon after the event, the question remains whether it is valuable to produce such a conventional overview and summary of the state of research when much of its content will already be out of date? The answer has to be a qualified ‘Yes’. This book provides useful pointers to web pages and e-mail discussion groups – which are very lively in this area. American readers – leading the field in so many ways - are likely to be surprised by the amount of research described here. Periodic overviews of this type are useful in formulating future research strategy. And what a treat it is to have such diverse matters between the pages of a single handy volume!

Having said that, there are ways in which such a set of conference papers are more limited than a solid monograph. It would have been even better to have had the duplication removed and a more integrated structure. Paradoxically more space could well have gone to summarise the results of the FIDDO Project itself – which at present lie scattered across web site and several articles in different journals. But perhaps that could only have been done at the

expense of another six months delay – and that was well avoided. These are hot topics of great moment and of concern to a much wider field than the document delivery and ILL experts. For this wider audience, and for those plotting R & D for the next five years, the book is particularly recommended.

Turning to *The New Review of Information and Library Research* we find first an explanation of its new publishing policy – to focus on a single topic in each annual issue. [That has not excluded half a dozen quality reviews on diverse subjects.] The theme this time is ‘hybrid libraries’, and most contributions present interim results of projects funded under the current eLib programme centred on ‘Clumps’ and ‘Hybrid Libraries’. LIRN readers will remember the special issue (LIRN 69) last year devoted to eLib research – to which this is a valuable and more elaborate sequel.

The editorial team is led by Professor Peter Brophy and is based at his newly migrated research centre – CERLIM – at Manchester Metropolitan University. With their involvement in European Community research we can expect future contributions from continental Europe. None are evident in this issue – unless one counts a broad ranging ‘review essay’ on Genette’s paratextuality philosophy of the book. As with *Document Delivery Beyond 2000* readers overseas will find this valuable in updating them on current projects in Britain rather than for any global view.

Again the papers originate from a Conference held in London in December 1998 under the banner ‘Integrate, Co-operate, Innovate’. The introductory paper usefully explains the concepts of ‘Clumps’ and ‘Hybrid Libraries’ and outlines the major research projects under way.

The two most successful overview papers both hail from the Bodleian Library (Oxford University). Perhaps because they have such a wide variety of material and demand to manage they are well placed to see complexities in the larger picture.

Reg Carr, in his introductory address, explains both the research structure (Funding Councils, JISC, CEI, etc.) and the history of the last decade (JANET, Follett, FIGIT, eLib, UKOLN, etc.) with enviable succinctness and clarity. LIS students and researchers please copy! His look to the future

focuses on the Distributed National Electronic Reserve (DNER) - the ambitious concept which ‘will enable an academic to search for and obtain learned information at his or her desktop from a wide variety of resources with a seamless uniform interface’. The eLib ‘Hybrid Library’ projects are important to complete “the ambitious picture painted by these words.” We need frequently to be reminded of this ultimate goal.

The second Bodleian contribution comes from David Price under the title “The Hybrid Library and Collection Development”. He welcomes the term ‘Hybrid Library’ “as evidence of a refreshing new realism” – and the same can be said of his own quite excellent analysis, particularly his ‘Hidden costs and awkward issues’. Here are some of his more telling comments:

“but do they want the network to be acting simply as a gigantic photocopier, delivering facsimiles of a hardcopy publication, or do they want searchable, structured text, links to cited sources, and authors’ data, Multimedia, etc.?”

Amongst other publishing and financial models worth noting is ‘electronic with annual hardcopy for archive’. Another is ‘Authors’ Page Charges’ where the author pays to be published, so allowing subscriptions to be reduced or removed. Surprisingly, transaction-based ‘Pay per View’ has not been widely promoted. This probably reveals reluctance on the part of the suppliers to move from the subscription model where they receive payment in advance.” (p. 137)

Again it is helpful and heartening to find similarities in direction on each side of the Atlantic:

“... the desirability for a single network login which would authenticate a user to all the resources s/he is authorised to access. This has been clearly articulated by Clifford Lynch of the Coalition of Networked Information. The UK’s Athens Project is a significant move in this direction. It enables users in the HE sector to have a single username for all the products available through the national data services, NISS, BIDS, EDINA and MIDAS. Other data providers, including Silver Platter and OCLC First Search, intend extending their server technologies to enable Athens authentication.” (p. 138)

There are of course pointers to further detail on web pages. We could have done with more on the development of DOIs (Digital Object Identifier) and the companion DUIs (Digital User Identifier).

It is clear that supplier decisions and initiatives are even more important than librarians' activity – and suppliers are underrepresented both in the book and in Internet references. But putting that right may be for another day!

Between the 'Bodleian' introduction and summary lie ten accounts of projects in progress or nearing completion. These may have a regional dimension reflecting vigorous initiatives in developing regional activity, particularly in broad access to devolved bibliographic records – M25, RIDING, MALIBU, SEREN (Wales), etc. Others are more general – IMPEL, HyLife, Agora – while some are subject based – music, geography, health information. Z39.50 is everywhere in the development of virtual union catalogues. And the larger public libraries need to be alive to the opportunity of sharing in these developments.

Some of these papers are premature in that they abound in questions posed rather than avenues being developed. The paper on 'consultation with university managers' yields results that are rather obvious and too general. Increasingly what is required now of research in this area is practical systems work (action research) and specific examples with actual cost estimates and quantified usage. It is earnestly to be hoped that the final stages of these projects will move in this direction.

Economies of scale through consortia activity are important and receive more attention in the USA and Australia than in the UK. Their identification and exploration needs more attention than has been given here. Are we spoilt by JISC and BIDS – which can all too easily be taken for granted until the picture overseas is considered?

Among other things we need data to explore the differences between subject fields and between main core journals and the small niche products. We all know that electronic prospects for the *American Economic Review* are not the same as for *Library Management* or for *Chemical Abstracts* – but just how significant such differences will prove to be is not clear. There is also the prospect, in some areas, that electronic availability might actually increase hard copy sales rather than eat into them. It happened, surprisingly, with CD ROMs.

In this respect it seems strange that their common original format meant that, for many purposes, Abstract & Indexing journals have typically been lumped in with Full Text journals – when, in purpose, content and economic features, they are quite different. Their separation needs to be fully accepted – as is being proposed in the current revision of ISO 2789 *Library Statistics*.

The overall impression gained from each of these books – there is some overlap – is heartening. UK research projects are launched in a healthy direction; practitioners are heavily involved; collaboration and consortia are the order of the day; there is much activity at the supplier interface; important experience in the USA and Australia is readily available on the Internet. Copyright remains the central problem – and others loom ahead – but these problems, and the associated opportunities, are increasingly well articulated.

Somehow the article *Measuring journal cost-effectiveness: ten years after Barschall* on the web page of the University of Wisconsin – Madison deserves a bolder frame to draw attention to its many virtues. Historically it reviews systematic and painstaking research conducted into the costs and economics of journal pages – initiated by Barschall in 1986 and completely updated in 1998. The conclusions – that commercial publishers charge more than twice as much as learned 'not for profit' societies – led to dramatic court cases starting in the USA and spreading to Germany, France and Switzerland.

This Wisconsin research, and similar research at Cornell University, greatly improved our knowledge of the costs involved in journal provision. Other studies have addressed the same topic. What is outstanding here, however, is the extension to produce Cost-Effectiveness data based in calculating Impact of different journals. Impact is estimated by counting the number of times journals have been taken for study. For this the basic data gathering method is described as:

- All journal issues and volumes bar coded.
- Counts made by scanning the barcodes as items are reshelfed after use – in some places by portable scanners, in others using stationary scanners.
- Lots of Signs request users not to reshelve the journals they use and explain why.

- Journals picked up frequently during the day to accommodate heavy use.

While some may regard this “nitty gritty” detail as beneath their consideration, in fact its viability makes all the difference in adopting a rational approach to decisions on journal subscriptions and access. It has to be something of a mystery why it is not common practice worldwide. To quote the Wisconsin article:

“While cost-per-use figures have never been used by themselves as a basis for journal cancellations, these data [gathered for the last five years] have been extraordinarily useful, say library staff, in identifying potential cancellations for discussion with faculty. . . .the cost-per-use data have helped them avoid the huge crises that other libraries have had to weather.”

What higher testimonial could one want for one's research effort! This article, with its high research standard and up to date references included, makes good and enjoyable reading for general interest – and essential reading for the specialist. The situation update twelve years on is particularly enlightening – encouraging researchers to take the ‘long view’ - and maybe salutary for those who repeatedly forecast the impending revolution that still takes its time a ‘coming!

To finalise, the provision and acquisition of research knowledge is the area where the electronic networking revolution promises most by way of threats and promises, where there is endless excitement and enthusiasm. Are we faced with creeping developments on the fringe? – many pundits expect to see a largely familiar landscape in twenty years' time. Or shall we see a dam bursting rate of change as we did with CDs and the fax? It is good to take stock from time to time – and to indulge in speculative lateral thinking based on research findings. For that these reports are useful both for the expert, for research funders, and for the interested outsider.