

Librarians Working with Publishers on E-book Provision

by PIERRE LE LOARER & JEAN-MICHEL SALAÜN

SOME STATEMENTS ABOUT TRADITIONAL AND VIRTUAL LIBRARIES

Let us compare a traditional library of scholarly journals with a virtual one¹.

The traditional library builds a world of limited knowledge for a limited number of people: the economy of the traditional library is based on the service for an identified community of people. This community is limited and, in most cases, the external patrons are very few. The justifications of a library are mutualisation of the costs (an item for several patrons), opportunities of reading (discovery of documents by the effect-collection, „just in time“) and insurance (preserving the access „just in case“). Thus, the representatives of the communities they are serving mainly fund libraries.

Information retrieval systems opened a gate in the walls of libraries by offering the access to outside resources. Indeed, the community of patrons remains limited and the sophistication of the tools clearly showed the need of information specialists.

In the virtual library, the walls are down and its business model is shaken. We can illustrate these new issues by the changes for collections and for patrons.

The collections of a virtual library are made up mainly of:

1. *Local collections*

The documents that could be recorded on the server of the library. The virtual library does not loan anything to anybody, it gives access, often to everybody connected on the Net. Usually these documents are those of the public domain (heritage) or the non-published works (grey literature) of the members of the community (theses, reports, etc.).

This new role for the library produces new costs unknown in traditional librarianship. A librarian not only catalogs and equips the document but for-

mats it in a readable and accessible file, and even trains local authors in electronic publishing. Some works look like publishers' or printers' ones in the old paper world.

And, in most cases, these changes are managing in a collaborative way with others library. Networks are built to share skills, experiences and digital collections. These networks could reduce cost to morrow.

2. Licensed collections

Publishers offer libraries a license to access their full-text journals. The terms of the licenses are negotiated. Gradually new rules are emerging. The librarian does not really hold collections any more, and, at least partly, he does not even build the collection in his own way. In a way, librarians and publishers have reversed their role, and librarians with licensed collections are now some kind of agents.

Consequences are serious. The librarians build consortia to reinforce their capacity in negotiation and to build technical platforms. Publishers become bigger and bigger sometimes increasing their portfolio in quasi-monopolistic ways. The already inelastic market can become still more rigid.

3. Free collections

Many scientific articles are now available for free on the Internet. How to control a collection which, by definition, is wild? How to separate valid documents from those that are dubious? How to be sure of the stability of the Url or even of the documents themselves? These issues, and many others, are still discussed and different solutions are proposed. We can find three categories of free collections:

- *Archives of scientific articles* organized by researchers themselves or learned societies. The fast evolution in some very organized scientific communities could prefigure changes in traditional functions of scientific publication. This new way of publishing, controlled by the concerned scientific community, is bypassing mediators, i.e. librarians and publishers, since authors and readers, belonging to the same group, access the text directly.
- *Self-publishing*. Researchers can offer their own productions online and develop specialized web sites. After the current boom of exchanges in the „invisible colleges”, most authors do not highly appreciate to do a publisher's work, different from their own research, for which they are not trained and do not receive any remuneration, in money, career or reputation.

- *Free access publishing.* Profit or non-profit publishers could offer journals online free for various reasons. Generous at first sight, such a policy can also support the actors who have these means, i.e. powerful ones and thus reinforce their dominant position.

Thus, the concept of collection could be upset in the digital world, and we have only suggested some aspects, forgetting for example the mission of conservation, up to now reserved for the libraries.

Let's take the problems now from the patrons' point of view. In a virtual library, it does not cost, a priori, more to offer the services to the community of original members or to the entire Internet; and conversely it is possible to offer its original patrons a much broader panel of resources without excessive cost. So, two funding issues have arisen. They are:

- 1) if the access to a document is free for everyone, how can one invest funds in publishing?
- 2) if everyone has equivalent access, how can fees charged to a particular community be justified?

The first observations of the evolution of the practices of electronic reading in science could appear paradoxical. We think there is a breaking point. Readers prefer paper when electronic resources are neither accessible enough, nor abundant enough. But they dramatically change their practices and opinions as soon as there is enough on screen to monopolize all information retrieval and reading time. If this assumption is founded, as predicted by statistics, the economy of publishing will have to be rebuilt on other bases tomorrow.

In the scientific world, some consider that the literature would become a „public good” accessible to all, without mediation, allowing an optimal development of science and knowledge. In order not to stay a utopia, these considerations suppose a very structured and consensual (particularly about its mode of regulation) community. In this case, the cost of certification (reviewing) of document is included in the common uses of the community, implicit for the researcher who could publish online only „legitimate” article; if he doesn't, he does face exclusion. In addition, researchers sometimes forget they are publishing not only for their peers: industrialists, researchers of other disciplines, students, and various politically enlightened citizens are readers. Even if only occasional readers, they are essential for inserting science into society, for its renewal, and for exchange between different parts of science. For these reasons also, mediators are important.

Thus we are facing dramatic changes. Nevertheless, we can locate some structuring movements and incite the stakeholders to take care of it:

- *The access to the reading must be free* (in the academic world). All the barriers (technical, financial, etc.) to the text should be banished. In particular, the commercial transactions must be removed, either before (subscription, license), or after (invoice), but not at the time of reading.
- *For the mediators, publishing and librarianship have been models in the paper world, but do not work in the same way in the digital world*, even if they remain a reference for commercial transactions. So it is very important to conduct experimentation and avoid getting locked in one mechanism. The financial negotiations will be rebuilt tomorrow on new bases.
- *Lastly, the movement in progress is also the occasion to redefine the places of public interest and market in scientific publication*. These polemical debates and contradictory initiatives are not exceptional in the history of media. Private or public sectors are alternatively accused of oppressing or freeing publication. In the field of science, the connection between publishers and libraries was the old compromise; scientists and mediators have to find a new balance for the new situation.

A PRESENTATION OF THE PROJECT CALLED MANUM

The MANUM project is a research project sustained by the Ministry of National Education within a national program called „Campus numériques” (digital campus). MANUM is an abbreviation for „*des manuels numériques pour le premier cycle*” (handbooks for undergraduate students). Its aim is to give undergraduate students in social sciences an easy access to digital sources recommended by their teachers and to define the conditions to do so: how to offer electronic sources versus printed ones and what kinds of contents to offer in order to meet the students’ needs and in order to help the teachers prepare their classes. The partners of this project are publishers (de Boeck Université, Armand Colin, Dalloz, Dunod, La Documentation française, Kleio Larousse, La Découverte, les Presses de Sciences Po), academic institutions (Institutes of Political Studies of Lyon and Grenoble, University of Marne-la-Vallée), research units (GRESI - Groupe de Recherche sur les Services d’Information - Research Group about information services, Ecole nationale supérieure des sciences de l’information et des bibliothèques; LENTIC - Laboratoire d’Etudes sur les Nouvelles Technologies de l’Information et de la Communication - IT Research Unit, University of Liège).

The domains of knowledge linked with MANUM are those of social sciences and more specifically of political studies, such as law, economy, history, international relations, sociology, etc. and the publishers partners of this project are specialised in these domains.

What is the background of this project?

Anglo-Saxon university partners can rely on their old tradition of documents being part of academic activities to tackle the new digital deal. Universities can both provide and purchase documents. North-American libraries have sufficient acquisition budgets to support scientific publishing. Academic readers have a considerable amount of information resources at their disposal. What matters about intellectual property has already been settled beforehand, either by the legal practice of „fair use” or by negotiated licenses. Finally, teaching openly includes the reading of published documents. Each student is used to reading the documents before attending the teachers’ classes and to making his own personal files.

France and, to some extent, the other French-speaking countries such as Belgium, traditionally have quite a different policy in higher education: they consider published documents to come second. What comes first is opening universities to a greater number of students. Universities are mass-universities, almost free for students. What is privileged is teacher-to-student transmission. Universities do not purchase as many documents, either in copies or in titles. As they are rarely recommended by the teachers who maintain that the core of the necessary knowledge lies within their lectures, they are left aside by the students who prefer reading extracurricular books. These uses have thus enabled an underground economy of academic publications (photocopies, duplicated notes) to develop. In such a context, digital documents, now at least, are slow to develop in French-speaking higher education. However, it is obvious that electronic publishing and distant learning will fundamentally change the students’ access to handbooks and academic information resources. The general aim of the project is to measure if digital documents can be a vector to reconcile on the one hand reading and teaching and on the other hand publishing and university.

Following what Robert Darnton² has maintained in particular, we can make the hypothesis of a progressive development of a „layer” pattern. On a basic layer made of the „online” version of a text, equivalent to the present handbooks (or equivalent to a synthesized version of those), other „layers” of documents could be added such as additional documentary resources (articles,

factual data, graphs, and so on), hyperlinks to other sites, either general or specialized, exercises with their corrections, documents for teachers, etc.

This project aims at testing the validity of this pattern with undergraduate students and at defining the modalities of the undertaking on different levels:

Editorial

First and obviously, the concerned students' needs about documents must be precisely identified (handbooks, academic resources), no matter if the documents are imposed or recommended by the teachers or are required on a more personal research basis. In this respect, a special care is to be given not only to the nature of the different „layers” of proposed documents, but also to the different types of relationship between these „layers”.

Educational

What comes then to consider is to what extent the chosen approaches can be similar for every subject (in social sciences) taught to political science students or if, on the contrary, the specificity of the different subjects (disciplines) should lead the publishers to choose different editorial options according to each subject (discipline). The consequences of such an editorial „online” offer on teaching methods and practices must also be studied.

Technical

The question is also to spot which systems and devices are the better adjusted to the pattern considered, from the online access (from what source? On what system?) to the print on demand, not to forget e-books, without giving on exclusive access to one or the other.

Economic

One of the specificities of the project is to aim at identifying how to establish a durable business model for financing activities for developing editorial contents proposed to students, once the experimental stage is over. Financing could be proposed as the purchase of licenses, as the purchase of subscriptions or as „pay per output” payments. What is focused here is the question of economic relationships between the university, the students and the publishers.

Legal

Lastly, it is clear enough that an offer „online” – and precisely a personalized offer – of documents is fundamentally questioning the moral and patrimonial rights of the authors. In such a context, the last aim of the project consists in removing the legal uncertainties likely to thwart the development of electronic documentation and information services to students.

Furthermore, it has been noticed that the definition of the target of this study, the of the project it could enable to start, questioned the notion of „granularity of information”. To put it otherwise, it questioned the nature of the documents likely to be put at the students’ disposal (pattern of relationship of the contents: either by layer, or hierarchical, etc.). This study will deal with this aspect to try and measure how the students can integrate the presented contents. Will they consider a text as a whole, integrating all along the text the intellectual progress of its author(s) or will they only integrate the conclusions without measuring the progress leading to them? These results might have consequences on the teachers’ teaching methods and on the publishers’ way of structuring the contents.

The MANUM project is divided into two phases. The first phase is dealing with studies and the second one with experiments. At this stage of the project, we are consolidating the results of studies. What are these studies? They are divided into two groups: one is dealing with the evolution of the publisher world in the academic field and the other one concerns the existing practices of students and teachers for their classes.

For the first group of studies, different analysis of publishers’ offers on the Net have been examined and a specific attention was granted to new comers called „aggregators”.

For the second group of studies, two surveys were realized: one, quantitative, for students from the academic institutions implied in this project with a questionnaire on their existing practices (use of handbooks, dictionaries, press cuts, Web sources, etc.) linked to their classes, and the other one, qualitative, with semi-directive interviews of teachers. The results of these surveys are just coming now and give a smart view of what is going on in terms of use of printed and electronic sources by students, expectations and fears of teachers about these new possibilities of electronic publishing sources. These results must be linked with the existing situation in these French academic institutions (number of Internet accesses, training to use search engines, etc.).

The second phase of this project and the realization of different experiments are now being discussed and it is too early to develop here this phase of our project. These experiments may help to define a model or different ones

through five main aspects: publishing (what contents?), pedagogy (what kind of added value?), digital rights management (how to manage intellectual property and copyright?), economics (what business model?), technical solution (what server, security system, data format, etc.?).

At this phase of the work on the project and according to the focus of this LIBER conference titled „European Libraries as Portals to Information”, it is particularly interesting to focus on the first group of studies dealing with the evolution of publishers’ offers and new services proposed by aggregators. These studies enabled to spot on publishers’ offers such as Primis online (McGraw Hill), Pearson Education, Thomson Learning, etc. and especially aggregators (netLibrary, ebrary, Questia and XanEdu). These services were analysed according to four criteria: contents proposed, digitisation, and security solutions, access and added value functions, rights management). The first analysis results show that these services have required big investments for limited results (low use and little income revenues), applied business models not consolidated with a tendency going from B2C to B2B models. These services seems to have rather weak links with e-learning offers, except XanEdu. Finally, the diversity of the situations and needs depending on the disciplines and the nature of documents used by teachers and students forces you to be careful concerning the uses and their evolution.

QUESTIONS FOR THE FUTURE OF UNIVERSITY LIBRARIES AND THE EVOLUTION OF THE LIBRARIAN’S JOB.

With this new electronic information offer, the librarian’s job is gradually changing. Librarians are at a step where they acquire both printed and electronic content materials. But with the electronic offers, the paradigm is changing: more and more publishers or aggregators propose a general access to a whole set of titles (for instance, through consortia, you can obtain a subscription for thousands of serial titles). Sometimes, even for e-books, you have access to a whole range of titles depending on the agreement between publishers and an aggregator (for example, ebrary). In these cases, the function of selecting resources is replaced by that of negotiating the best contract to give access to this whole range of titles.

At this first change in the job functions, you may also consider the storage and diffusion functions. Through their own servers, more and more information suppliers give a direct electronic information access to library readers. Libraries are no more mediators if only to negotiate financially the accesses with these suppliers. For instance, netLibrary proposes to libraries to „acquire”

each electronic title (in this way, the librarian keeps his function of acquisition choice), but this acquisition seems limited in the sense that the library cannot put this electronic title „acquired” on the library server: This electronic title must remain on the netLibrary server and the library must annually pay an access fee to enable its readers to access this title. netLibrary, acquired by OCLC, a „non-profit organization” at the service of libraries and for the benefit of their users, is changing the way of managing the library world. Nevertheless, librarians develop a more and more technical know-how to manage electronic information.

We could consider this example as an illustration of some of the theses from Jeremy Rifkin³ in „The Age of Access”. Acquisition of contents is gradually replaced by the right to have access to contents and you can lose this right if you are no longer a subscriber to the service.

In this way, a developing function of the university libraries is to become more and more mediators for training end users for the best use of these electronic services, mediators for organizing the contents and giving a structured and easy access to them.

The question for tomorrow might be this one: in the Middle Ages, the books were often chained and in the XXIst century, are the libraries and their readers becoming „chained”, through the net, to access contents by newcomers controlling access and use?

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