

## **Developing sustainable economies for accessible collections: extending demand driven ebook acquisition to interlending services.**

### **It's all about access**

No research library can satisfy the information needs of users solely via the local collection. Where the local collection stops the above-campus collection starts, to which libraries have traditionally facilitated access by agreeing and maintaining cooperative and reciprocal access schemes, or by bringing the collection to the user via interlending and document delivery.

This dual approach has served the community well - up to a point, but is now facing an increasingly uphill struggle against a perfect storm of budgetary pressures, growing user expectations and changing needs, increasingly discoverable collections and a more volatile supply chain, all coalescing to rapidly change the landscape in which we operate. More than ever before, the power of the collection is being determined by access rather than ownership.

### **Utopia on the horizon?**

While there are some signs that (open access) utopia may be on the horizon, it would be folly to wholly base our strategy and operations on anticipating future conditions that may never arrive, let alone conditions not of our making. We need to respond to the imperative as it exists today, that is to demonstrate our value and impact at the institutional level upwards, and influence the shape of things to come. To do that, we need to encourage and facilitate even greater use of our collections locally and above-campus, while ensuring the evolving needs of our users are more than adequately met.

### **Solutions**

Initiatives like the UKRR have gone a long way to address some of these issues, and have also provided exemplars for how we can successfully collaborate to create national-level shared services. The ongoing development of the Copac Collection Management Tools (CCM) is another area with great potential to help us co-ordinate collection activity, and use cases around access will undoubtedly prove a fruitful area for service development.

Two practical steps all research libraries can take now towards delivering accessible above-campus collections are optimising adoption of commercial just in time content services, and reinvigorating collaborative sharing mechanisms and infrastructure. Of course, developing and extending services bears a cost, and consequently economic sustainability must be key throughout.

At King's College London we have been expanding our just in time offering by adding demand driven titles to our ebook portfolio, and by improving our interlending and document delivery access to the above-campus collection. Additionally, co-ordinating the two has allowed us to develop a sustainable economy as well as enhance access to content.

### **EBL at King's**

In December 2010, we launched a new demand driven ebook service using the Ebook Library (EBL) platform. From the outset, our strategy was to provide instant and unmediated access at the point of need 24/7 to as wide a scholarly collection as possible. After loading 120,000 records into our catalogue, we discovered the appetite of our users exceeded our budget and we needed a new approach to reach a sustainable economy. Our solution was to control use at the discovery stage by tactically drip-feeding and periodising selected EBL metadata in response to known user requirements based on group-specific satisfaction and feedback, and any possible service impacts such as library space redevelopment. By October 2012, we had made over 700 autopurchases, over 11,000 Short Term Loans (STL), 60% occurring outside office hours, and successfully reached key target groups, e.g. taught graduates. Significantly, over 12,000 unique users have made over 51,000 free browses (usage of less than five minutes), which is perhaps evidence of satisfying a new level of sampling behaviour and resource evaluation demand.

### **Interlending and Document Delivery (IDD)**

In 2011-12, the IDD service at Kings processed over 10,000 local requests for books and articles, and supplied over 1,000 books and articles to other UK institutions. The service has been developed to provide as much as possible electronically, including autopopulation of web forms via the linkresolver, e signatures, and delivery direct to staff and student email accounts.

Similarly, over 60% of the articles supplied to other libraries are from King's e journals where licences permit printing then scanning. For an area of library services that has experienced consecutive predictions of demise, the service at King's is thriving and based on user feedback, proving vital to making above-campus collections accessible to support research.

### **EBL via IDD**

Since November 2011, local interlending requests for books not held at King's have been satisfied where possible using EBL demand driven titles not loaded in the library catalogue, and which would only otherwise be visible to those users who visit the EBL platform directly. Up to October 2012, nearly 500 requests, approximately 20% of all interlending book requests, have been fulfilled using EBL this way.

Using demand driven ebooks to satisfy interlending requests provides two significant benefits to the development of sustainable economies for an accessible collection. Firstly, it means users are getting the content they need faster and electronically, which for most users represents a better service and a more accessible collection. Secondly, it not only makes the demand driven service work harder to repay library investment, but does so more cost-effectively than alternate means of print supply, before even factoring in savings in staff time.

### **Sharing better**

A significant consideration in providing access via just in time methods is overall cost. Using EBL to satisfy book requests at King's represents a good local economy comparatively, but like all just in time approaches, costs will ultimately depend on levels of demand. In this regard, just in time services can become victims of their own success, challenging the goal of sustainability despite meeting the need to make the above-campus collection more accessible. To tackle this dilemma across the board we must share better.

Most research libraries in the UK are reliant on the British Library for document supply, a relationship which comes at a price that effectively makes the above-campus collection less accessible to end users than the local, and despite the local e journal licences that permit sharing between institutions free from the constraints of unnecessarily heavy DRM.

However, to date there have been few viable alternatives that meet modern requirements. One example in practice is ArticleReach as used by the University of Liverpool and the University of Glasgow. ArticleReach, from library software vendor Innovative Interfaces(III), allows a global consortia of libraries to cut-out local work at the requesting stage by automating workflows via a consortial database, thereby lowering costs and reducing the time between demand and supply. However, this option is only available to customers of IIE. As part of the RLUK 'Collaborating to reduce Costs' working group, Phil Sykes is leading work to explore potential opportunities for research libraries to improve sharing in this area. One as yet unexplored opportunity has recently been presented by the launch of Knowledge Base+ (KB+).

### **KB+**

The new KB+ shared service from JISC Collections aims to 'Do Once and Share' to address several outstanding needs around Electronic Resource Management (ERM), specifically issues of data quality. Crucially, part of the underlying KB+ strategy is to build services around data, and significantly in the context of sharing, KB+ also represents the first above-campus and non-vendor specific database that could contain all the key information required to enable a new wave of automation for inter-institutional cost-effective document delivery.

If, as the research library community, we are concerned with developing sustainable economies for accessible collections, we need to take action both locally and collectively. Reinvigorating interlending and document delivery with new collaborative initiatives is as vital as local innovation. If we want to reach utopia, surely it should be of our own making?

**Nick Woolley**

**Associate Director – Information Resources, Library Services, King's College London  
October 2012**