

## REPLACING THE REAL WITH THE VIRTUAL: BUYING AND BORROWING JOURNALS AT THE UNIVERSITY OF MELBOURNE.

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During the past decade, the costs to academic libraries of acquiring resources, especially journals have soared. This has been an international phenomenon which has been exacerbated in Australia by volatility of the A\$. The University of Melbourne has been as hard hit as any other institution and once comprehensive research collections of journals have been reduced considerably, in some cases to core collections for teaching and research. The Library has examined a number of possible ways of ameliorating the situation, none of them unique or original, and all tried elsewhere with some success. However, the end result of the Melbourne experiment has been to embed the use of ILL and document delivery as a part of the management of the Materials Vote on an ongoing basis, and to have this approved by the University hierarchy. This paper outlines the stages taken to reach this decision.

### **THE UNIVERSITY OF MELBOURNE LIBRARY**

The community at Melbourne University is heavily research oriented. The student population was 38,541 in 2002, of which 2,785 were postgraduate students. There were over 4300 teaching and research staff. The University is very successful in national and international competition for research grants, an example being the recent success in winning in excess of \$6 million in ARC Linkage grants – almost double the next highest total. An examination of the research areas shows a range from mining to irrigation to milk products, IT security and climate change. Various projects in the planning stages suggest that this diversity will only increase in future years. The BIO21 project, for example, seeks to bring together biochemistry research in the academic and commercial spheres in one research institute, currently under construction on the Parkville campus. In addition the university has a plethora of affiliation agreements with research institutes in Victoria, and the university and affiliated researchers are often closely linked in research endeavours. Library support for the extremely wide range of research activities undertaken by the University constantly tests the ability of the collection librarians to provide appropriate resources to support the work that is undertaken.

The acquisition of resources for the Library is the responsibility of the Information Resources Access Department. The Information Access Section handles Collection Management and ILL/DD, while the more traditional technical services processes are handled by the Information, Acquisition and Organisation Section - which has also taken on a number of other activities such as metadata. The fact that collection management and ILL/DD fall within one Section has proved to be the ideal situation in which to manage the various aspects of information provision for the university.

### **MANAGING THE JOURNAL COSTS**

The initial attempts to cope with the disastrous increase in journal costs were varied, but generally revolved around ways of controlling purchasing and selection. Strenuous efforts have been made to negotiate better conditions with the suppliers and publishers. The supply side has been analysed and monitored and the suppliers have been assessed on performance on an annual basis. One result of this was a decision to consolidate most journal subscriptions with just two major suppliers. The reduction in the number of invoices handled was one of the benefits from this decision as was the willingness of the suppliers to handle negotiations over a myriad of events that occur in the life of any journal. It is with dismay that the Library now sees publishers of online databases in particular trying to avoid dealing with the traditional suppliers, thus forcing the Library to handle all the issues in-house.

It would be safe to say that the volatility of the A\$ has caused as much grief as the rising journal costs. Various attempts have been made to deal with this and the Financial Operations Department have offered advice on ways to hedge currency. In some years this has been more successful than others but, on balance, certainty as to the value of the dollars to be used to pay bills at the end of the year has unquestionably been useful.

A somewhat obvious mechanism chosen to deal with the problem was to cancel journal titles. There have been about four major cancellation exercises over the past decade at roughly two yearly intervals. Initially there were margins for cancellation. The University had a very rich and diverse collection of journals that included a wide range of titles of value to the broad range of teaching and research that was undertaken. A quality exercise in the late 1980s, for example, showed that the Library held every significant title in Genetics. The first round of cancellations, although painful, did not have too dramatic an effect on the work of the institution. However, as it was the more general titles that were being culled, they were often the less expensive items and large numbers were needed to make up the required reduction. Early casualties in the cancellation exercises included an excellent foreign language component in the Sciences and Medicine, and a variety of journals such as those from small learned societies in the humanities that added to the richness and diversity of the resources but could no longer be justified in a climate of financial constraint. The two most recent cancellation projects have been heartbreaking, especially in the Science and Medical areas, since the resultant collections do not really represent the core collections required for research in a research orientated university.

The University of Melbourne places a great deal of emphasis on the contribution by academic staff to the selection of journals for purchase and, of course, the cancellation of titles. Cancellation projects take extraordinary amounts of time and effort on the part of the Collection Management Librarians who consult widely and coax responses from unwilling academics who are loath to see more journals go. One of the benefits of this close liaison has been that the Faculty hierarchies have obtained a better understanding of the problem. The annual meeting of Deans and Department Heads has approved requests for additional funds and they have been supportive when difficult decisions, unpopular with their academic staff, have had to be made. Through all of these cost crises it must be emphasised that the University has remained as generous as it possibly can be with funding for the Materials Vote. However, the increases in costs have been beyond the resources of any Australian Library to maintain journal holdings at their former level.

### **ALTERNATIVE FORMATS**

The University has tried a number of mechanisms to maintain good access to journals while controlling costs. An early venture into the world of other formats was the CD-ROM based ADONIS system, which was urged on us by the then head of ITS who believed that paper based publishing was in its death throes. It was generally an unqualified failure and despite the increase in titles it made available, it was unwieldy to use, cumbersome to maintain, and very clearly designed for a market of small but intense usage and not for students. While it was an interesting experiment for the Library staff, it had the unfortunate effect of making academics and students rather suspicious of later ventures.

### **CONSORTIA**

The arrival on the scene of the electronic journal, the consortium and the *big deal* appeared to offer more options for enhancing access and were embraced quite enthusiastically to begin with. Melbourne has been involved in consortia in a number of ways, undoubtedly the most successful of which is the CAUL program of consortium subs. The CAUL program which has allowed university libraries to pick and choose the titles in which they wish to participate, not only facilitates participation in blockbuster titles such as Proquest 5000, but has made it

possible to get a joint purchase on some fairly esoteric items - there are four libraries who currently get the English Short Title Catalogue as a part of the RLG deal. The CAUL program deserves the highest praise and every support in that it delivers a unique service to university libraries that has greatly improved our capacity to obtain resources and to speak with one voice.

Melbourne also participated in a very successful Science Direct consortium deal organised for a group of seven libraries and negotiated by Adelaide who achieved an extremely good bargain for their partners. The consortium obtained access to the titles held jointly by the seven libraries, and in the case of Melbourne, doubled the number of available journals. At the start of the three year period this seemed to be a huge benefit but as the years progressed it became clear that, in the main, the usage of the journals to which the Library did not originally hold subscriptions would not justify the participation in a consortium in which costs might be increased by the need to buy everything produced by the publisher. Of the 700 or so titles available about a quarter were heavily used, almost all of which were titles to which Melbourne had an existing subscription. There were a 11 unsubscribed titles, most of which had been held and cancelled in the past decade, that were very high - in one case number two in the list of used titles. About a quarter of the list showed extremely low use and included a number of Library subs that were barely used and were obvious candidates for removal from any list. The 50% in the middle of the list showed varying usage but there were few titles from other libraries lists that showed usage sufficient to justify a sub at the end of the consortium. It should also be said that there was a healthy distrust of the statistics as they were presented, and usage was interpreted in fairly broad bands rather than on a title by title usage basis.

The reasons for this have been analysed as far as we can and were discussed with the Australian Elsevier agent. It was not typical of the experience of other libraries in the consortium and anecdotal evidence suggests that the more titles one makes available the wider will be the spread of usage. However, Davis (2002) suggests that this experience has been encountered elsewhere. One of the reasons advanced locally for this different experience has been that by using the in-house BUDDY interface to the electronic materials collection the Library has been able to load all titles held, including those in aggregations, onto the INNOPAC catalogue. Melbourne users seem to have acquired a habit of searching for materials in a wide range of places - databases, their reading of other research, current awareness tools etc - and then turning to the catalogue to find the items. The Science Direct statistics suggested that Melbourne users did not make as much use of the search facilities on the service but tended to go straight to particular titles. The other strong possibility is that, despite incessant requests for more/new titles, the list of Elsevier titles held before the consortium commenced really did represent the majority of that publisher's titles that the Melbourne researchers wanted to use on a regular basis. There are some academics who would dispute this. Recent interaction with a small, highly specialised research group produced the argument that twenty uses per year from a group of three or four people constituted heavy use for them and we should take out a subscription to the title in question. They are now rather warily examining the other option we have suggested, of a *just in time* solution using CISTI.

While the Library still sees consortia deals, especially of the CAUL variety, as very useful and will continue to participate, where appropriate, in more specialised consortia, the view now held is that they have not provided this Library with many answers to the journals crisis. They have turned out to be fairly expensive in terms of staff costs for managing the arrangements. While the Library appears to be providing swathes of journals, and can point to increases in the numbers of titles available, if they are not the titles that Melbourne users are actually looking for then the problem has not been solved. There are some other factors that control Melbourne's participation in package deals. The packages of journals from large publishers continue to rise in price, albeit more slowly if a good deal is struck. Once the deal

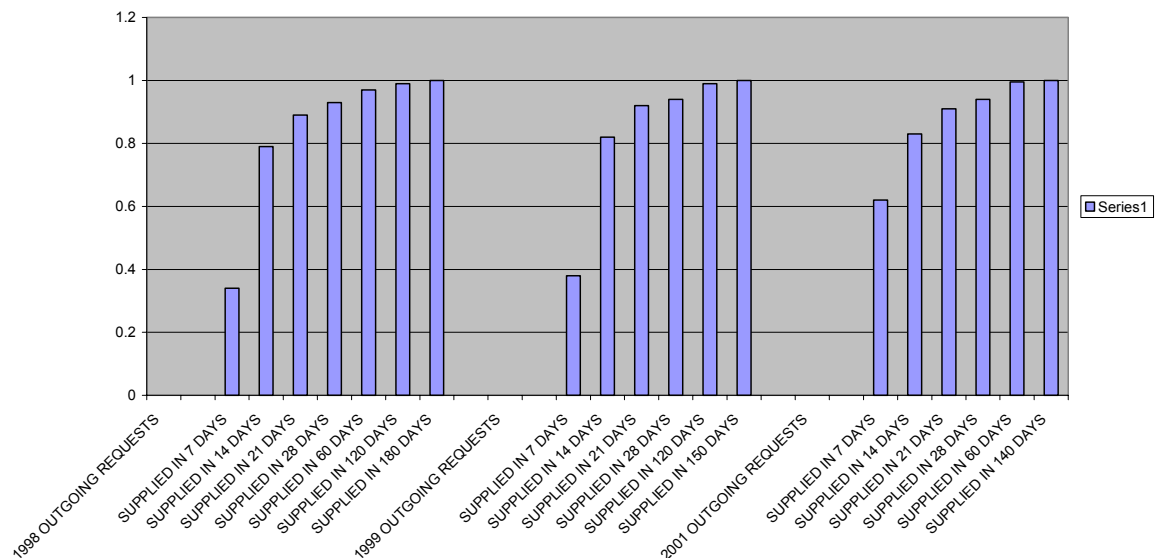
is locked in, if cancellations do have to be made, it is often the journals from smaller and more specialised publishers which are discarded, even if they are important, so that the package can be maintained. Libraries report moving funds from monograph lines to support these packages. Melbourne has moved from a ratio of 65:35 for journals to monograph expenditure in 2001, to one of 70:30 in 2003, and is hoping to drop back to the 65:35 ratio over time. Monographs continue to be important for many areas of teaching and research and other methods have to be found to contain rising journal costs.

## IMPROVING DOCUMENT DELIVERY SERVICES

The ILL and Document Delivery service (ILL/DD) at Melbourne has had an honourable history. For many years it was decentralised, with every Branch Library handling incoming and outgoing requests in the way it felt was best. This resulted in a very haphazard delivery situation and about five years ago a Document Delivery Committee, with members from all the major Branches, was formed to co-ordinate and streamline the processes. Two years ago the outgoing request process was largely centralised into the work of the main ILL team in the Baillieu Library. This has allowed for considerable development and improvement in the way requests are handled and has also allowed for some important changes in philosophy. Incoming requests continue to be handled in a decentralised way since the University still has 22 Branches and materials may be held at any Branch state-wide.

A series of performance assessments were also commenced five years ago with a turnaround time survey and customer satisfaction survey alternating annually. The turnaround time surveys do not match the basis of the very successful national survey done in 2000 but in order to maintain comparability we have continued with the original method, while planning to undertake additional surveys using the CAUL survey instrument that will allow some benchmarking with colleagues in future.

ILL SURVEYS 1998 - 2001 COMPARISON OF OUTGOING REQUESTS



The important difference in the in-house turnaround time survey is that we do not work on an average but look at percentages of success within predetermined time frames. In any measurement that uses an average, Melbourne does very badly. The philosophy in the ILL/DD Unit is that no request is too difficult and the timeframe is dictated entirely by the requester. This means that some of the requests may take anything up to 10 or 12 attempts to locate and deliver but as long as the requester asks for the service the search will go on. In the

last turnaround survey done, the item with the longest delivery time was 144 days. While this philosophy has been a winner with many customers, as the satisfaction survey demonstrates, it has not provided really good results at the other end of the timeframe. The original customer surveys suggested that a seven day delivery time was perfectly acceptable and during the first turnaround time survey this was achieved for a reasonable percentage of requests.

It was at about the same time that the University Librarian decided that the philosophy of Access versus Ownership would underpin all future collection development and also that no journal would be held in both paper and electronic formats if this could be avoided. This was endorsed by Academic Board. No delivery time lines were attached to this access and it seemed that for the academics this might mean a move from paper to electronic formats. Certainly an edict from the University hierarchy said that the Collection Librarians would have to demonstrate a 10% move from paper to electronic formats on an annual basis. This goal has been achieved and exceeded although the Collection Librarians have a number of caveats in place when making the changes. However, format notwithstanding, we still own the titles.

Something had to be done to improve the services to a point where it would be reasonable to ask an academic to cancel a title and rely on document delivery. The literature was scanned and, in particular, the book by Kingma (1996) gave some very useful insights from the 1994 project at SUNY, which made the possible change to using document delivery less expensive than had been believed. Over a long time period the Brownless Biomedical Library had developed a faster turnaround time for requests from the Medical Faculty by using the British Library as a supplier, and this experience informed our decision when looking at possible improvements. Additionally the Engineering Library had experimented with using the CISTI service and while their volume was very low, it did look very promising.

Several other decisions made a change essential. While the decision had been made to apply the access principle, the Library had in 1998 introduced a \$6 handling charge for all outgoing ILL/DD requests. Prior to this time the Library had met all costs for requests except for those of the overseas loan of books where full cost recovery was in place. The steady increase in requests seemed to come from an increase in the use of databases and it was not unusual for novice requesters to arrive clutching a long printout and ask ILL to get everything on the list. An insistence that they fill out a form for each item had a sobering effect on some but not all! The Library was at that time a nett lender and the income was used to fund outgoing requests. The nett lender status was dropping steadily as the use of electronic journals increased and it looked as though in 1998 the Library would have to provide considerable additional funds to cover the projected costs. The introduction of the handling charge was unpopular but it had the effect of reducing the number of requests in that year by 40% over the previous year. The Faculties agreed to subsidise postgraduate students but, for strong financial reasons, maintained more control over what they requested. Most academics funded the costs from research grants. In subsequent years the volume of requests climbed slowly back to where it had been in 1998, then levelled off and in 2003 dropped back about 3%.

The issue that remained was that when this charge was combined with a reduction in journals and a policy that said that the Library would provide access if not ownership, a much better service was required. An analysis of the existing processes showed that there were several impediments:-

- the basic Australian service costs \$13.20 and requires delivery or notification within 5 days; a faster delivery time earns a fast track payment of \$26.40 which would be a big impost as a routine service.
- the Kinetica process slowed things down and compared unfavourably in terms of staff time to the batching of requests from the Medical Faculty to the British Library.

- the staff of a Supervisor plus 4.5 staff in the Baillieu was only just handling the existing load plus other activities, but, with the literature suggesting that demand for ILL/DD was dropping world-wide, the University Librarian was interested in staff reductions not increases.

The decision was made to stop requesting journal articles from Australian libraries via Kinetica and to switch to placing most of the requests via CISTI and British Library. The service from Subito was also used with much success until its recent withdrawal, and was particularly valued for the access it gave to big European libraries. Books are still requested via Kinetica, as are some journal articles such as those from Australian titles. The improvement in turnaround times in some areas has been extraordinary. A high percentage of requests for current materials in the Sciences and Medicine are being delivered in one to three days and many more have arrived within seven days

For example

April 2003 requests for journal articles placed within that month, mainly in Sciences and Medicine. These were placed mainly via CISTI and BLL

- 51% within 3 days
- 81% within 7 days
- 94% within 14 days
- 98% within 28 days
- the rest took up to 56 days to arrive.

June 2003 requests for journal requests placed within that month, mainly in Arts. These were placed mainly with BLL and Subito and included a much higher older item component than the stats above.

- 20% within 3 days
- 43% within 7 days
- 69% within 14 days
- 83% within 28 days
- the rest took up to 104 days to arrive

Requests in the Arts areas seem to take about as long as they ever did but it has been possible to improve the numbers delivered within the 3 day timeline. It will only be possible to make a direct comparison at the end of October 2003 when the next turnaround time survey will be complete. However, the improved delivery times to the Sciences, Medicine, Engineering and Veterinary Science have changed the attitudes of requesters and have convinced them that an *access* policy where journals are concerned is feasible

## **UNMEDIATED DOCUMENT DELIVERY**

So successful has been the use of overseas suppliers that unmediated document delivery via CISTI was introduced in 2002. Once again this was not an original step to take – there is a wealth of literature that suggested that this might be a successful route to take. The experience of McGill University Library played quite a part in the planning of this service (Houle, 2000), while the experience of our colleagues at Central Queensland University Library tended to reflect all ones fears about embarking on such a venture (Orr and Dennis (1996)

The assistance of the staff at CISTI in undertaking this venture is warmly recognised! This is a real unmediated service - the customers are given a password for CISTI *Source* and some training and are let loose. The bills come to the Library. The main users have been postgraduate students with real confidence in their IT skills. A number of regular users who were approached to trial the service declined and noted that they were quite happy with the service as it stood and did not see that their doing the work would improve matters. A number

of researchers who were approached registered for the service but have either requested nothing or have started using a mediated service again and say that it is easier.

The registered users have been quite abstemious in their usage. Occasional bursts of requests are followed by silence for several months, presumably while they digest the results. The waiving of the \$6 handling fee on all unmediated requests has been warmly received and played a big role in the deliberations of the Chemistry Department on whether to cancel four titles and subscribe to Crossfire or not. They left the deliberations too long and the decision will now have to be made in 2004, but the concept of parting with four rather specialised journals and using unmediated document delivery in order to pay for a database that a number of the Department much desired was well received, once we had worked through all the details. The plan is now to revisit the regular ILL users and persuade them to trial the service.

### Unmediated usage May – June 2003.

Letters of the alphabet have been substituted for personal names

| April |    | May |    | June |    |
|-------|----|-----|----|------|----|
| A     | 3  | A   | 1  |      |    |
| B     | 17 | B   | 14 | B    | 13 |
| C     | 1  | C   | 16 | C    | 3  |
| D     | 25 | D   | 7  | D    | 6  |
| E     | 2  |     |    | E    | 19 |
|       |    | F   | 2  | F    | 2  |
|       |    | G   | 1  | H    | 2  |
|       |    |     |    | J    | 12 |
|       |    |     |    | K    | 2  |
|       | 48 |     | 41 |      | 59 |
|       |    |     |    | 148  |    |

### 2002 JOURNALS REVIEW

Early in 2002 the decision was made to have a major review of the whole journal collection. This was quite deliberately not described as a cancellation exercise but as a major review. The need to do this resulted from the fact that whenever the journals subs were reviewed it was to make cancellations and was done in a fairly tense atmosphere. The Collection Librarians were fairly sure that there were low use titles that could be cancelled and replaced by new titles. It was hoped that the collection would be refreshed by this exercise and that some new areas would be able to improve their core title holdings. It was also a good opportunity to test the possibilities for convincing users of the potential advantages of replacing subscriptions with document delivery. The academic staff were asked to review their titles in three categories:-

core titles

titles essential for teaching and research across a range of subject areas in their field,

titles which served the needs of a very small group of people and might be supplied in other ways such as document delivery.

The promise was that funds freed up could be used for new titles.

The review was a laborious one for Collection staff, occupying the major part of the first six months of the year. Lists of journal titles were put up on the Library's home page and supplied in print to Departments and circulated around. The complete list of titles gave details of costs and indicated those which were being received in electronic format and as a part of packages. The Collection Librarians had meetings with Library liaison people, with Library User Committees and occasionally with small groups of individuals. In the end very few major changes were made. What was clear, however, was that most academic staff had examined the titles list with no pressure to cancel anything and had assessed the existing titles

as still being the ones they wanted. They sometimes supplied a wish list of titles that they would like to have but that were not important enough to replace existing titles. It was important to have this sort of conversation outside the cancellation arena and it is hoped that discussion about journals will from now on be done as a planning exercise rather than for crisis resolution. Some suggestions were made for cancellation, notably in Engineering where journals which had gone unused in electronic format were cancelled and replaced by some new titles. It was also clear that the concept had been accepted as providing possibilities since it reappeared in Chemistry a year later, as discussed above.

### **DOCUMENT DELIVERY AS A FACTOR IN THE MATERIALS VOTE.**

The attempt to use ILL/DD as a part of the management of the collections has been taken a step further in 2003. The University Librarian decided that the annual request for additional funds made to the Deans and Heads of Department meeting in June needed to take a more proactive line. Various scenarios were prepared which would make judicious use of document delivery as one of the strategies to manage the Materials Vote and any potential increases. The request taken to the meeting asked for more funds but also offered a planned and staged approach to the management of the Materials Vote. The Library has undertaken to experiment with holding the growth in the journals area to 8% and in non-journals to 3% and using ILL/DD to make up the shortfall. The University hierarchy decided to allow the Materials Vote to enjoy the annual 2% indexation applied to other major funds in the Administrative area from 2004. The whole package was adopted by the University Planning and Budgets Committee. The effect of this will undoubtedly mean that there will be regular reviews of journal holdings and some cancellations will take place. It is, however, hoped that as the adoption of various ILL/DD services increases, the reorganisation of journal holdings will not appear to be crisis management but a planned move to a *just in time* service for some of the needs. The policy will be reviewed annually. A further change introduced in 2001 is the provision of funds in the Materials Vote to cover the costs of the major invoices such as those from CISTI and British Library.

There are some possibilities for future change. Many publisher sites offer document delivery at prices somewhat in excess of what it currently costs to provide the current service, but using this as a means of document delivery in certain subject areas is worth exploring. For some expensive and specialised titles it might make economic sense even at the advertised prices. Buying books instead of borrowing them from overseas is also on the list of things to explore, although it must be said that many of the titles we do borrow are long out of print and are often very obscure. Foreign language titles from the first half of the 20th century seem to figure rather highly on the list.

ILL and Document delivery will continue to have a place in the acquisition of materials for customers of the University of Melbourne for long into the foreseeable future. The services will undoubtedly change as rapidly as the publishing industry is doing, as will the mechanisms for funding this way of acquiring information. It remains a fascinating and challenging field.

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