Strength in numbers

CAUL licencing & consortia arrangements

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The Council of Australian University Librarians (CAUL) has been facilitating consortial purchasing of electronic databases since 1993 — some with seed funding from the Commonwealth, but most from the budgets of the thirty-nine individual members. Initial activities were under the auspices of the Australian Vice-Chancellors' Committee's Database Access Working Group (AVCC DAWG), and from 1999 under CEIRC (the CAUL Electronic Information Resources Committee). Since 1995, the day-to-day activities have been run from CAUL's Canberra office.

CEIRC, CAUL's consortial purchasing program, has current agreements for more than thirty products ranging from major bibliographic databases to large journal aggregations, both single- and multi-publisher, to specialised subject databases. It has facilitated trials for a great many more. Current offers can be monitored on the web-site [http://www.caul.edu.au/datasets/offers.html]. Program participants currently include twenty-two educational and research organisations in Australia, New Zealand and Fiji who are not members of CAUL, but who have perceived a number of advantages from joining the program.

Obvious benefits include advantageous costs (even though this often means that prices are rising at a lower rate, rather than falling), access to a wider range of full-text journals for little or no more than the current print expenditure, and low-price entry for new subscribers. Less evident benefits are the centralised activities such as co-ordination of trials, negotiation of licences and pricing, and the gathering and distribution of product information.

The information flow has been identified as a valuable resource on its own. It is epitomised by the highly interactive discussion on the CAUL 'datasets' list, and the CAUL web archive of vendor and product information. Since 1998, CEIRC has freely shared this information with other potentially interested organisations *viz* the National Library of Australia, CAVAL, the Council of Australian State Libraries and UNILINC, to ensure that each is aware of CAUL's consortial activities and the products being examined. Each organisation has an 'observer' on the datasets list.

CEIRC has guidelines for licensing but no model licence. It has a checklist for negotiations but no rules. It has guidelines for the admission of external organisations into the program, but the interests of CAUL members will always take priority. It has no preferred pricing model but works with a range of models for different types of products and subscribers. It has no memorandum of understanding or contracts between members, allowing each to accept or reject an offer on its merits and their circumstances. CEIRC is entirely flexible.

Licencing

In the early days of electronic journal publishing, licences were very restrictive, limiting access to narrowly defined users and locations. Over time, publishers and libraries have together achieved a level of experience and trust which has resulted in the easing of most of the more irksome restrictions.

For example, authorised users are now more commonly defined according to a university's own designation, and are likely to include walk-in users (members of the public using the university library on-site). Interlibrary loans from an electronic journal once were almost universally banned, but now are generally permitted, albeit in hard copy. Academic licences now frequently permit reproduction of licenced content in hard copy course-packs and in electronic reserve collections. Licences now rarely refer to fixed workstations or buildings. Such licences are unlikely to be accepted by universities.

Bundling the electronic version with the print subscription is fast losing its attraction. Many universities have adopted a policy of electronic-only subscriptions. Others are retaining print, choosing to pay the premium costs associated with keeping both formats.

National site licences

The concept of a 'national site licence' has been bandied around since the United Kingdom's Joint Information Systems Committee (JISC) was established following the 1993 Follett Report [http://www.ukdn.ac.uk/services/papers/follett/report/] JISC is funded by the Higher Education Funding Councils of England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.

Initially, JISC heavily subsidised the provision of United Kingdom-wide access to databases and journals — all products were made available to all universities. In latter times, the subsidy has been less, and universities select the products individually. In May, 1998 JISC appointed and funded a consortium of Swets & Zeitlinger and Manchester Computing at the University of Manchester as Managing Agent for the United Kingdom National Electronic Site Licence Initiative (NESLI). The 'managing agent undertakes negotiations with publishers, manages delivery of the electronic material, and oversees the day-to-day operation of the pro-

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gram to ensure that it provides value for money through cost effective operation.'

State-wide and sector-specific programs are becoming common in the USA, stimulating the formation of the cutely named Consortium of Consortia, now rather more formally designated at the International Coalition of Library Consortia (ICOLC). ICOLC meets biannually in North America, and has spawned a European offshoot which meets in the middle of the northern winter. National programs exist elsewhere in Europe and Asia, and are discussed in some detail in Colin Steele's paper at http://www.caul.edu.au/cisc/proj4final.doc. A fine example is the Canadian National Site Licensing Project which, following a protracted and careful process of specification, tender and evaluation, is delivering a suite of scientific research databases and journals from seven major scholarly publishers to all sixty-four of Canada's research universities.

A defining feature of national site licensing to date has been the addition of external funds to the recurrent budgets of universities and their libraries. In the case of Canada, this amounts to an additional C$20m over three years from the Canada Foundation for Innovation, matched by university funds of C$30m, and a five-year commitment by the universities to the project.

The AVCC is currently holding discussions with a small number of publishers with a view to providing Australian universities and the CSIRO full access to expensive, but highly sought after, databases. A final decision on the Australian national site licence is not expected before September.

Further information
See the CAUL website at http:// www.caul.edu.au.

'More, better, cheaper: The impossible dream?' Diane Costello. *Information Technology and Libraries* Special issue: Library Consortia Around the World Volume 18, Number 3, September 1999 (pp.154-160)

'Library and information infrastructure: international strategic initiatives: a discussion paper', by Colin Steele, university librarian, Australian National University. Paper prepared for *Australia's Information Future: Securing the Infrastructure for Research and Innovation*, sponsored by the Australian Research Council, the National Academies Forum and the Coalition for Scholarly Communication (CISC), Canberra, 16 August 2000 [http://www.caul.edu.au/cisc/proj4final.doc]

'Just like Topsy — how CAUL became CEIRC: the rise of the library consortium', presentation by Diane Costello, JULAC seminar: *Electronic resources — consortial initiatives*, Hong Kong, 11 May 2001 [http://www.cityu.edu.hk/lib/julac_P1.ppt] ∎

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