

Licensing E-Journals: UK Style

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Presenter

SUMMARY. This presentation will describe the way in which academic libraries in the United Kingdom (UK) are licensing and accessing electronic journals (e-journals). This process is being facilitated by the higher and further education (HE and FE) funding councils through the Joint Information Services Committee (JISC). The presentation will begin by setting the context for national e-journal licensing and explain the wider vision of the Distributed National Electronic Resource (DNER). It will then go on to describe the achievements of the National Electronic Site License (NESLI) initiative and examine some of the future developments currently under consideration. [Article copies available for a fee from The Haworth Document Delivery Service: 1-800-HAWORTH. E-mail address: <getinfo@haworthpressinc.com> Website: <<http://www.HaworthPress.com>>]

THE JOINT INFORMATION SERVICES COMMITTEE

The HE and FE funding councils are responsible for funding and determining strategy for all post-sixteen educational institutions in the UK. Responsibility for information and information technology is devolved to the JISC which is funded by the HE and FE funding councils in England, Northern Ireland, Scotland, and Wales through top-sliced money. The JISC is not a single committee, but a nested committee structure responsible for stimulating the innovative use of information

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technology (IT) in learning, teaching, and research. The JISC has four main areas of focus. First, it provides the SuperJANET network to all colleges and universities in the UK. Second, it funds research and development in areas such as the eLib Programme, ATHENS authentication, Managed Learning Environments, and many others. Third, it raises awareness and provides support and training; and fourth, and most importantly in terms of national licensing, it provides an environment for delivering electronic materials essential for learning, teaching and research via the DNER.¹

THE DISTRIBUTED NATIONAL ELECTRONIC RESOURCE

- Is the vision driving JISC's information activity;
- Is a managed electronic collection delivered through a coherent information environment supported by advisory, preservation, and other services;
- Is the strategy for joined-up activity locally, regionally, nationally, and cross-sectorally;
- Has developed a three-year collection strategy supported by policies for charging, collection development, licensing terms, and preservation.

The DNER Collection team has a budget of some \$20,000,000 for projects and services. The team has set up eight Collections Working Groups which oversee some 206 collections including 5000-plus journal titles and two e-print servers, fifty-plus discovery tools such as abstracting and indexing databases and union catalogs (e.g., COPAC), and 250,000-plus images.² Membership of the Working Groups is predominantly drawn from a wide of range of academic libraries; however, members from publishing companies and intermediaries are also included where appropriate. The Working Groups cover the following collecting areas:

- Books
- Journals (incorporating NESLI)
- Discovery Tools
- Images
- Geospatial Resources
- Learning Materials
- Primary Data
- Moving Images and Sound

THE NATIONAL ELECTRONIC SITE LICENSE INITIATIVE (NESLI)

NESLI³ works under the auspices of the DNER Journals Working Group, of which the author is a member. NESLI was set up in 1999 as a service designed to promote the widespread delivery and use of e-journals in the UK academic communities through central negotiation with publishers. NESLI is a "loose" consortia of academic libraries. National e-journal deals are negotiated with publishers by a central negotiating body and individual libraries decide whether they will "opt-in" to each separate deal. When NESLI began in 1999 the consortia represented some 180 higher education libraries. More recently, further education libraries have joined the consortia, which now number over 300 libraries.

It is important to recognize that the strategic aims of NESLI are by librarians and for librarians, through the Journals Working Group. However, the day-to-day operations of NESLI are undertaken by the Managing Agent (Figure 1)—a consortium, appointed by open European procurement, of the University of Manchester and Swets Blackwell (initially Swets and Zeitlinger). The Managing Agent's role is extensive and includes the following activities:

- To negotiate value for money deals with journal publishers
- To handle subscriptions to e-journals
- To provide a single interface for access to e-journals
- To address the technical issues surrounding authentication
- To encourage to the widespread acceptance of a standard Model License (based on the JISC/Publishers Association Model License).⁴

The NESLI process goes through a number of stages (see Figure 2). The Journals Working Group requests the Managing Agent to enter into negotiation with a particular publisher. In the early stages of NESLI the majority of the publishers were the major scholarly publishers such as Elsevier, Academic, Wiley etc., the intention being to make available a "critical mass" of e-journals to academic libraries as quickly as possible. Quite rapidly, other major and minor journal publishers began to approach either the Working Group or the Managing Agent independently to set up the negotiation process. The Managing Agent enters into negotiation (which has often proved to be more labor intensive than might have been expected) and brings a deal to the Working Group. This is then evaluated according to a pre-determined set of criteria in-

FIGURE 1

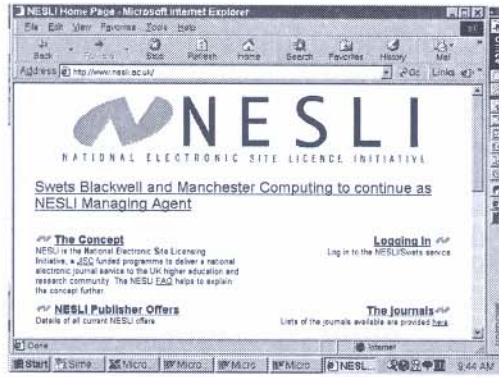
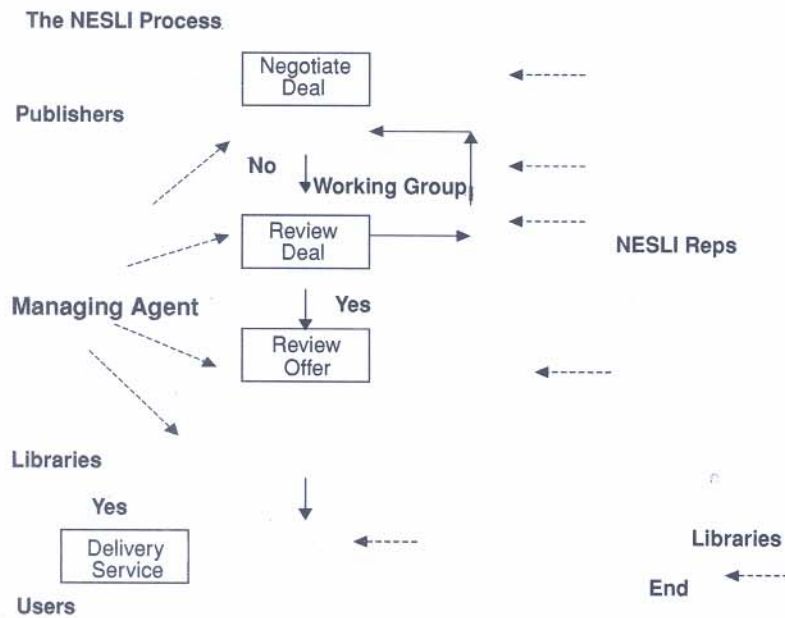


FIGURE 2



cluding content, content bundles, value for money, value to all sectors of the community, and adherence to the Model License. If acceptable, the deal is then e-mailed out to the community via a system of NESLI representatives in each member institution for evaluation at a local level. If not acceptable, the Managing Agent is instructed to return to the negotiating table.

Once an individual library has decided to "opt-in" to a particular deal, the Managing Agent handles all aspects of the licensing process. NESLI licenses are actually signed between the library and publisher and virtually all participating publishers have agreed to use the NESLI Model License. This provides benefits to all parties. For the publisher it represents considerable savings of time and money in negotiating individual licenses with libraries. Libraries also benefit from savings in time and money but additionally have the benefit of a consistent license across a wide range of publishers. From the librarians' perspective there are a number of potentially "thorny" licensing issues that have been centrally negotiated on their behalf. These include a site definition that covers multiple campuses, provision for walk-in users, electronic inter-library loan, continuing access to materials publishers and paid for within the subscription period, and mandatory usage statistics.

Access to e-journals is through SwetsNet Navigator, although some NESLI titles are available from other aggregators such as ingenta. Authorization is managed by the Managing Agent using the ATHENS authentication systems—another national JISC-based service.

As well as establishing a successful negotiating framework, instigating and overseeing consistent licensing agreements, and developing a delivery and access portal, NESLI has made many other significant achievements. The Working Group and the Managing Agents have established a variety of channels of communication with all stakeholders, including a NESLI Advisory Board, the NESLI Website, an active NESLI representatives discussion list, a NESLI Newsletter, and NESLI Helpdesk.

E-journal deals have been negotiated with eighteen journal publishers, including the majority of the major STM publishers such as the American Chemical Society, Association of Computing Machinery Inc., Blackwells Publishers, Elsevier Science, Kluwer Academic Publishers, MCB University Press, Oxford University Press, MCB University Press, Sage Publications, and Wiley. Fifty institutions have signed up for one or more of the NESLI deals and over seventy have expressed an interest and taken part in trials of one or more of the deals. The Managing Agent also makes available MARC records of NESLI journal ti-

ties to libraries wishing to catalog their e-journals; work is ongoing in establishing subject clusters of e-journals across a range of different publishers, although it must be noted that progress is slow in this area. Journal usage statistics are delivered on a monthly basis and the Journals Working group has established contact with a number of bodies currently working in the area of e-journal statistics. These include the Association of Research Libraries (ARL) and the International Coalition of Library Consortia (ICOLC). JISC itself, through its Publisher and Library Solutions (PALS) Committee, has set up a PALS Vendor-Based Usage Statistics Working Group to develop a code of practice for e-journals. This is currently examining data element definitions, data capture standards, data processing/reporting integrity, and output formats and delivery methods.

NESLI EVALUATION AND FUTURE DEVELOPMENTS

During 2000, the Journals Working Group commissioned an interim evaluation of NESLI. This was undertaken by the Research School in Ergonomics and Human Factors at Loughborough University. The evaluators consulted widely with all NESLI stakeholders and produced a final report in June 2000. The findings showed that there was almost universal agreement that a single negotiating body for e-journals was a good idea in principle and that the Model License was very helpful. However, it was also very clear that libraries have quite different expectations about value for money. As expected, a number of areas were identified as being unsatisfactory and these included:

- the negotiation phase was often too long and complex;
- some libraries found some of the deals complex to assess and evaluate;
- deals often needed a response too quickly;
- some deals suited some organizations but not others;
- some respondents expressed a preference for multiple access points.

The findings of the interim report are currently under consideration by the Journals Working Group. Many actions have already been taken, including the renewal of the Managing Agent's contract for a further year (until the end of 2002).

In summary, Phase 1 of NESLI has had many successes. It has provided value for money for libraries by creating an environment that provides less duplication of effort by individual libraries and greater purchasing power for the community as a whole. It has raised the strategic profile of DNER activities, built trust with the publishing companies, and done a considerable amount of lobbying for libraries. In the UK, national licensing and negotiation fit well with political trends such as lifelong learning and social inclusion and the desire to build cross-sectoral partnerships that include archives, educational institutions, libraries, and museums. Most importantly, national licensing allows tight integration with the strategic direction of the funding bodies, which is very important where central funding is provided.

Phase 2 of NESLI—now under the wider auspices of the JISC/DNER Journals Working Group—will build on the successes of the Phase 1 but take into account the stakeholder and community feedback collected by the evaluation team. The role of the Managing Agent will be considered in the light of reflection and evaluation, which suggests that developing strategic partnerships is not an activity that can be easily delegated. In the future it is likely that the JISC/DNER will do more collections building “in house” whilst continuing to outsource administrative functions. There will also be much closer working relationships with other consortia in the UK, especially regional and subject-based consortia. A lot of work remains to be done.

NOTES

1. For an overview of the DNER see: <http://www.jisc.ac.uk/dner/>
2. For an overview of the DNER collections see: <http://www.jisc.ac.uk/collections/>
3. The NESLI home page is at: <http://www.nesli.ac.uk/>
4. For an overview of the JISC's license principles see <http://www.jisc.ac.uk/pub00/licensing.html>. The NESLI model license is at: <http://www.nesli.ac.uk/nesli/licence.html>

CONTRIBUTOR'S NOTE

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