



Consorci de  
Biblioteques Universitàries  
de Catalunya

## Licensing, organizing and accessing e-journals in the Catalan university libraries

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*The Consortium of University Libraries of Catalonia (CBUC) manages several cooperative programmes such as the union catalogue, the inter-library loan service, a TOC database, a digital library, a training programme and a doctoral thesis server. All these programmes are interrelated in their operation so it is easy to go from one service to another.*

*One of the cooperative actions that is being carried out by the CBUC is the licensing and organization of electronic journals. The Technical Office of the CBUC coordinates or directly carries out the selection, negotiation and licensing of the resources of the digital library. It currently offers access to 5,440 electronic journals. Though it receives subsidies, most of the subscription costs are paid by the libraries themselves.*

*This article describes the practices and processes used at the CBUC to select, license, describe and organize electronic journals, an electronic information source whose characteristics (remote access, simultaneous users, links to other documents, etc.) allow all the libraries of the consortium to work together to face the challenges and opportunities that it offers.*

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## **Managing e-journals in a context of cooperation**

The Consortium of University Libraries of Catalonia (CBUC) was created in 1996 after a five-year gestation period<sup>1</sup>. Its original objectives were more in line with the needs of the eighties than those that characterized the creation of library consortia in the late nineties. In a context in which the number of universities in Catalonia rose from three to nine in the space of only three years, there was an urgent need to pool resources in order to automate their library services, and it was decided that they should adopt the same system, VTLS.

The use of the same systems and the tradition of cooperation that had already existed among the libraries of Catalonia made it easier to establish the common objective of setting up a union catalogue, the Union Catalogue of the Universities of Catalonia (CCUC), which was achieved in 1996. The CBUC was set up with the aim of creating and maintaining the union catalogue, but due to the very inertia of cooperation the member libraries of the Consortium came to consider new cooperation programmes such as inter-library loan (1997), a TOC database (1998), the Catalan Digital Library (1999), a training programme (2000) and a full-text doctoral thesis server (2001).

The above services are independent and complementary, but the CBUC has designed them to be interrelated with each other in order to make it easy to change from one service to another. For example, the interface for consulting the union catalogue allows users to request an inter-library loan and the consultation of an electronic summary allows them to locate the journal immediately in the union catalogue. In the licensing and organization of e-journals it has been attempted not to separate them from the other materials in the libraries or from the other services.

Most of the e-journals subscribed to by the libraries of the CBUC come from joint subscriptions made within the programme of the Catalan Digital Library (BDC). A large part of the work carried out by the Office of the CBUC is aimed at facilitating their licensing, cataloguing and accessibility.

The CBUC bases its functioning on specialized work groups (for cataloguing, electronic resources, training...), a Technical Office that coordinates the works and a Technical Committee composed of the directors of the member libraries. Decisions are made by consensus and agreements are reached as a result of a thorough technical process of study, information gathering and coordination.

## **Licensing e-journals: the Catalan Digital Library**

Work devoted to the collective licensing of electronic resources began in 1998, when these activities were given the name of the Catalan Digital Library. The aim of this is “to

provide a common nuclear set of electronic information for all the users of the libraries of the CBUC”.

The criteria used to select the products to be licensed consortially are:

- **Interest:** the licensed databases or journal packages must be sufficiently multidisciplinary to attract the attention (and the money) of the institutions that previously subscribed to them, but also that of those that subscribed to few or none of them.
- **Accessibility:** the joint licenses must represent an improvement in access, not only in terms of technology (in general the access is direct to the web site of the publisher, controlled through recognition of authorized IP addresses), but also in terms of content (cross access, access to the whole package of journals, access to backfiles, etc.).
- **Cost:** the economic conditions of the licenses must represent one or several improvements over individual licensing; these improvements may consist of savings on the previous situation, stable prices in the medium term, benefits arising from economies of scale, elements of added value arising from collective licensing, etc.

By applying these criteria and through constant consultation with the libraries, the Technical Office selects the vendors with which it will negotiate the joint licenses. The offers are approved by the Technical Committee, which is composed of all the directors of the libraries of the CBUC. So far all the consortial subscription proposals presented have been approved, though in fact most offers are made in response to a previous request by the Committee, which delegates the task of negotiating with the publishers to the Technical Office. In some cases—particularly for specialized databases—the Technical Office of the CBUC has requested the advice of working groups set up for this purpose.

The negotiations with the publishers to establish the final economic offer and to agree the terms and conditions of the license are long and hard. However, as with the pricing models of the different publishers, the licenses have been simplified over the years and (partly thanks to the efforts of several associations of libraries and professionals related to the sector)<sup>2</sup> there is a tacit general agreement on the most important aspects that they should include. For the moment the CBUC does not have its own licensing model, but agrees with the publishers to add/remove clauses that may favour its members in line with widely accepted practices, placing special emphasis on the subject of authorized users (including walk-in users and remote users), authorized uses (inter-library loan, electronic reserve), perpetual archiving and special economic conditions. The director of the CBUC signs a sole license in the name of all the members of the consortium and the license is published on the Intranet of the CBUC so that all the members of the consortium can see the conditions of the contract.

Though the digital library has received government subsidies, the subscription costs are paid by the libraries. Each one pays part of the total amount negotiated for electronic access, which is calculated according to a formula for internal distribution that takes into account, among other parameters, the previous expenditure of each member with the publisher in question, the size of the university within the consortium (according to its budget and the number of students it has) and an equal part for each member. The

Technical Office of the CBUC calculates the part of the total that must be allotted to each member and asks the publisher to issue an invoice for each one.

This distribution formula means that for large universities with a large number of previous subscriptions the amount to be paid usually represents a saving over what they would have paid individually for the same subscriptions; on the other hand, for smaller universities or those with fewer previous subscriptions, the amount to be paid is greater but offers access to an amount of information that they would be unable to obtain with an individual subscription. In both cases, more information is obtained at a reasonable extra cost that is relatively easy to justify. This serves to explain the enormous success of joint licensing by the CBUC, which started in 1998 with just over 180,000 euros and in 2003 will have a total expenditure of about 3 million euros (2 million in electronic journals; the rest in databases and electronic books). See the evolution of the budget of the Catalan Digital Library in Figure 1.

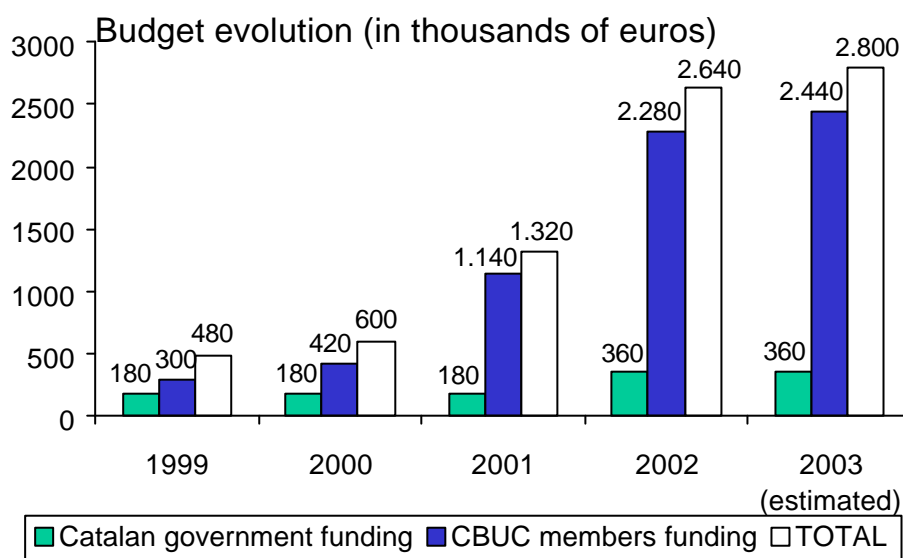


Figure 1

In e-journals, the pricing models that the publishers offer to consortia vary, but in recent years there has been a tendency to standardize the offers and to take as a base price the total expenditure that the members of the consortium have made in the previous year, plus negotiable increments (for new titles, new members, etc.). The CBUC prefers the *electronic plus print* option: the cost of electronic access is paid consortially, and a price is established with a discount for the paper subscriptions that the libraries wish to continue receiving (optionally and at their own expense). This option, which was first adopted in 2000, has proved a success. Since then the libraries have progressively cancelled their paper subscriptions, each at their own pace, and the number of them is now merely symbolic. There are other pricing models (especially for databases), but not all are equally advantageous for consortia, particularly for those outside the Anglo-Saxon sphere<sup>3</sup>.

## **Cataloguing e-journals cooperatively**

Once the e-journals have been licensed, it must be decided how access to them is to be provided. One must decide whether to create lists of the licensed journals on web pages, to include them in specific databases for these resources or to catalogue them in the catalogue. If lists are made on web pages one must decide whether they should be in alphabetical order, by subjects or in another order; if they are catalogued in the catalogue one must decide whether to catalogue all the e-journals or only a selection, and one must also define how they are to be catalogued (cataloguing level, description, indexing...)<sup>4</sup>.

The advantage of providing access to e-journals from outside the catalogue is the speed of location of the information, though it involves the great drawback of segregating these resources from the rest of the library collections. This problem is overcome by including the e-journals in the library catalogue, with the additional advantages for users that they have more points of access and greater possibilities of finding the related bibliographic records (for example, collections of the journal on paper or other formats). The main problem of including e-journals in the catalogue is the work of cataloguing and maintaining the URLs.

From the first licenses that were made, the CBUC agreed to integrate in the union catalogue both the electronic journals that were licensed consortially and those that were licensed locally. The Union Catalogue of the Universities of Catalonia (CCUC)<sup>5</sup> includes over 2.2 million titles that represent 4.5 million physical copies located in the 140 different physical libraries of which it is composed. The CCUC is conceived as a portal for all the information that the libraries select to provide service to their community of users, whether the documents are the property of the institution, licensed documents on remote servers, or free resources located on any network server. The CCUC has links that lead directly from a record located in the union catalogue to the local catalogue of the library that has the document.

On 31 January 2003 there were 5,440 electronic journals catalogued at the CCUC, nearly 1,500 of them licensed in packages from publishers, over 1,500 included in full-text databases and the rest licensed locally or free. Figure 2 shows a screen capture of the index of titles of the Business Source Elite journals catalogued in the CCUC.

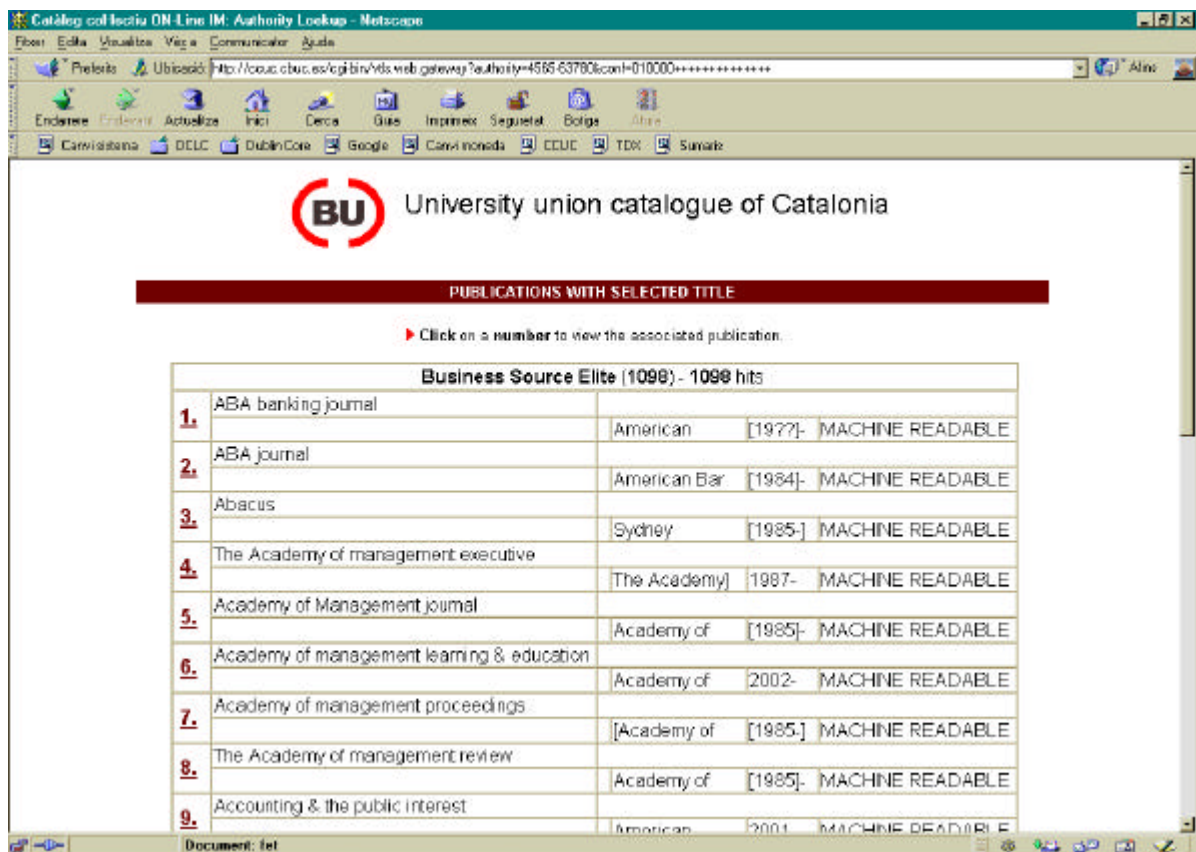


Figure 2

To facilitate searching, the CCUC has drawn up filters of the main types of electronic resources with access to full text and therefore also the electronic journals, which allows them to be searched for directly. This filter is the result of a "hidden" Boolean search with the content of field 655 of the MARC format, and it allows one to search for key words in general, and by author, subject or title.

To catalogue an e-journal in the CCUC it must have a 'publication overview' with the data necessary for cataloguing it. This also makes it possible to have a single and permanent URL for each title, which is requested from the distributor before the cataloguing. The same procedure is followed for free e-journals, but in addition the institution that wishes to catalogue them must accept responsibility for maintaining their URLs.

In 1999 the cataloguing working group of the CBUC decided that it was necessary to draw up guidelines for cataloguing these new materials, to create uniform records of electronic resources to facilitate exchange between catalogues, and to pool efforts aimed at studying and understanding the wealth of international documents and regulations on the topic. So far, this work has led to the drawing up of eleven guidelines on different aspects related to the ISBD(ER) standards. these guidelines have been summarized to facilitate their application, in a *Guia per a la catalogació de recursos electrònics remots en el CCUC* (Guide to cataloguing remote electronic resources in the CCUC).<sup>6</sup>

The most debated topic of 1999 was whether to catalogue the electronic version of a journal in a separate record or to include the information of the electronic version in the record of the printed version. The agreement was to catalogue the printed and electronic versions of the same journal in separate records. This decision was taken because it was the most common practice in American and European university libraries, it allows the journal to be catalogued even if there is no printed version, and it also allows information to be included that would not fit in a single record based on the printed version, such as the electronic ISSN. It is also the practice recommended by *CONSER, An International Cooperative Serials Cataloging Program*. Furthermore, the practice of a single record would not have allowed specific filters to be made for access to the e-journals.

The cataloguing of the electronic journals licensed through the CBUC is distributed among the nine member institutions. The cataloguing is done at the CCUC and the records are then copied to the local catalogues. To catalogue these e-journals, in addition to the option of searching and copying them from OCLC's WorldCat database to which we are subscribers, the office of the CBUC distributes a cataloguing template for each licensed package so that the cataloguers can easily replace the crosses with the right information to make uniform and coherent records. Figure 3 shows an example of these templates, which we made using the Kluwer Online package.

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Niv. local: 1      Analitz: 0 Operador: 0000      Edit
                Est Reg: n Entr: 011010      Usat: 011010
Tipus: I NivBib: s PubliGov: 0 Llen: eng EncRep: 1 Ilust: Codif: 3
DGMat: K MatBio: PubliCon: 0 País: ne TipDat: m PubliPeriòd: p
Índex: 0 TipPub: Hometge: 0 Form: NivInt: Dates: 19??-9999

001 CXXXXXXXX60
022 00 XXXX-XXXX (versió paper)
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257 00 Revista electrònica
260 00 Dordrecht $b Kluwer Academic Publisher $c [19??]-
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Figure 3

## Complementary systems of access to e-journals

As other library institutions have done, the CBUC also provides access from its web pages to the full-text electronic journals contained in the Catalan Digital Library, which are organized by vendors and also through an alphabetical index of titles (Figure 4).

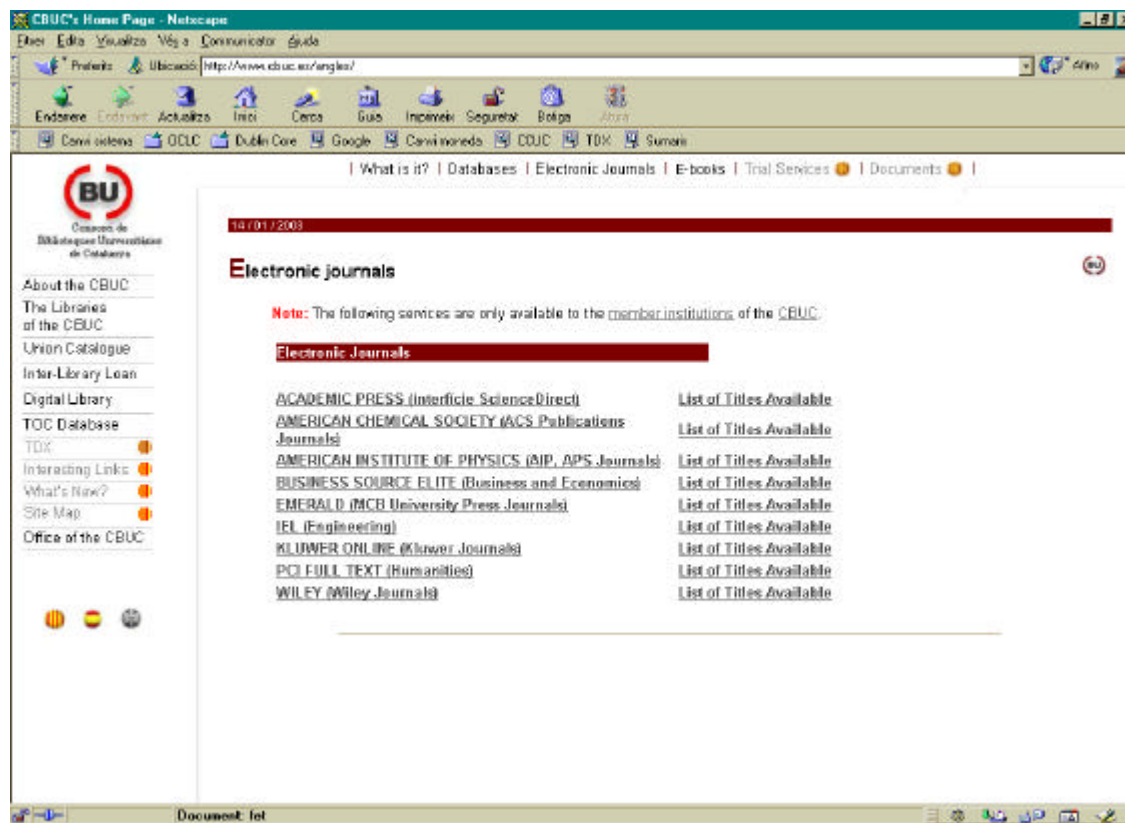


Figure 4

To organize the journals on their web pages, some consortial institutions have static pages that provide access to them by title, subject and vendor, whereas others organize the web pages of journals through database managers.

It has been the aim of the CBUC to facilitate access to the collections of its libraries as far as possible. It has therefore created complementary instruments of access and links between different resources. In 1998 some of the institutions of the CBUC already had an alert service of electronic tables of contents (e-TOCs) that replaced the traditional photocopy system. Their users thus received a copy of the e-TOCs of the journals they were interested in as soon as they reached the library. To save efforts and achieve synergies between these institutions, a central database of e-TOCs was created at the CBUC.

This database now has the description of over three million articles corresponding to nine thousand journals. The information that feeds this service comes from the EBSCO company (80%) and the Universidad Complutense of Madrid (10%), or is introduced

directly by the consortial institutions (10%) using various methods (scanning or manual). Both last groups correspond mainly to local journals that do not tend to be managed by international companies.

Though the initial idea of this database was to provide the alert service to the users of the CBUC (access is restricted), the adding of a free-access article search engine and the fact that the number of articles reached a critical mass meant that it also became a database archive for consulting articles. In fact, in the last few months this second function has been overtaking the first in the number of queries, and it has also been used by some institutions as a stable platform for introducing back numbers retrospectively in order to create a tool for overall consultation of the journals.

The database of e-TOCs is one of the four main programmes on which the CBUC is working, together with the union catalogue, inter-library loan and the digital library. This is why it has links with all the others, so that users always have a way to finally reach the document they desire, whether through ILL or by directly consulting it on the BDC.

The link to the collective catalogue operates in two directions: when you have located a journal in the catalogue you can access its abstracts through the MARC field 856. The record of the journal can also be accessed from the abstracts database with an ISSN-based link. As both products are maintained within the CBUC, there is no problem of compatibility in the links.

The link to the ILL service is activated when a user asks to receive a document that does not have full-text within the BDC. The system brings the details of the article and the journal directly to the request form of their institution for them to process it and to help the person in charge of the service to locate it.

The link to the BDC is the most complex but also the most useful, because it takes the users directly from the search to the document they desire. As digital information vendors are diverse and use different technologies, there is no standard way of linking to them, and at present we have only managed to do so at the level of journals rather than specific issues. In the near future, when these vendors and our systems support open linking protocols such as Z39.50 (or even better OpenURL because of its ease of implementation) we will greatly improve the efficacy and success of these connections.

Figure 5 shows a diagram of how the different services of the CBUC are linked to each other to guide the users throughout their search for information.

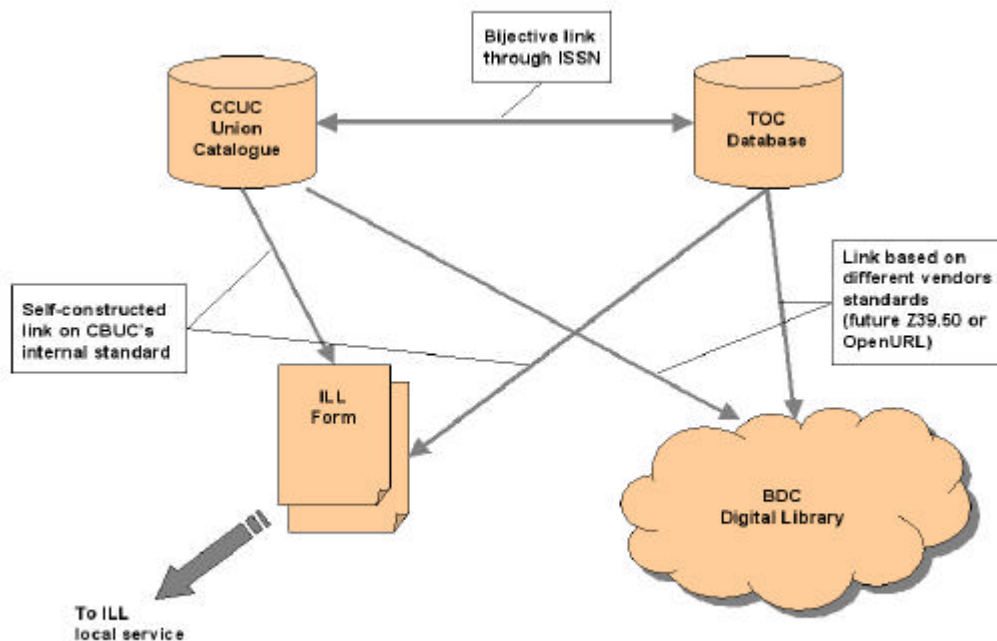


Figure 5

## What has been learnt

In these almost five years of consortial work in the licensing of e-journals, we have acquired knowledge in four areas: negotiation, the new digital environment for libraries, the behaviour of users, and e-journal organization and access.

After the initial period, the selection and licensing strategies are now fairly well defined. Internally the CBUC has discussed at length the best strategy to follow, but practice has always led us to select journal packages from publishers with a considerable number of titles in order to increase the information available to the users of the libraries of the CBUC. It has always been attempted to consider the ones that offered the best value for money. Currently the concerns of the libraries focus on the licensing of journals offered by small publishers, which include those published in Spain and Catalonia. The negotiation and licensing techniques are fairly standardized, and it is only to be regretted that the lack of stability of the publishing market has required greater efforts than we expected even for three-year licenses. Finally, there is great satisfaction about the mechanisms used for the internal distribution of costs, though it is thought that these must be revised in the near future when the figures of use are more stable and reliable.

Over these years the library directors have discussed at length the threats and opportunities of the new paradigm of e-journals licensed consorcially. Initially, the resistance to licensing non-previously subscribed journals was great among some librarians, who thought that it would involve paying more for journals of no interest. Time and the behaviour of the users, in addition to the studies of other consortia<sup>7</sup>, have shown

us that the use of non-previously subscribed journals is high, because the subscription to a package of journals offers the users the possibility of choosing from a large volume of information (including previously subscribed and non-subscribed journals). The policy of choosing licenses based on electronic access (with optional purchase of the printed version) and allowing the libraries to define their own rate of cancellation of printed journals has also proven to be a success. There has been— and still is—resistance to the cancellation of paper subscriptions, but the policy followed has been progressive rather than radical. In general the users have approved of the increase in the number of titles, the ease of electronic consultation and the guarantees provided by the licenses for perpetual access.

The behaviour of the users is always difficult to foresee and to determine, and we are not satisfied with the statistical data that are currently available to us. The information provided by the publishers is still unreliable and difficult to compare, and requires a great effort to analyze. This situation should be improved in the near future thanks to the recent agreement between the CBUC and the Faculty of Librarianship and Documentation of the University of Barcelona, which will analyze the statistical data on library use as a research topic. For the moment, however, our experience allows us to make at least two statements. The first is that in the use of e-journals it is essential to reach a critical mass that allows users to find titles (familiar and new) of interest to them. The second is that despite the shortcomings with regard to statistics, we are able to observe relatively constant patterns of behaviour in which there are big increases in the first few years and a stabilization after that.

The best way to provide access to the licensed e-journals has also been the subject of lengthy discussions within the CBUC. It must be taken into account that the licensing of e-journals began at the same time in most libraries worldwide and that the best policies for it were not then defined, nor have they been yet. The decision to facilitate access to the titles through the collective catalogue and the local catalogues has proved a success, and after initial hesitation the libraries are now the most active advocates of immediate cataloguing of newly licensed journals. This does not exclude the use of other forms of access, but it forms the basis. However, the directors of the libraries of the CBUC considered that it was necessary to further disseminate the e-journals and other electronic information resources and to promote their use, and decided to issue an explanatory leaflet on the BDC this year.

Last but not least, our satisfaction with the collective work is very high. The university libraries of Catalonia have undergone major improvements in the last 15 years. These have focused on automation, organization of services and construction of new buildings. The major weak point in the late nineties was that Spanish collections did not grow at the same rate as those of other European libraries during the Franco regime. This limitation has been palliated to a large extent by consortial purchasing, which has greatly increased the number of titles available (even in the universities that had the best collections). Currently, at least with regard to e-journals, the consortial work has allowed the academic libraries of Catalonia to reach a level that was not foreseeable five years ago.

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See also CBUC home page at: <http://www.cbuc.es>

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