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National licenses as the philosopher's stone of enduser access? Analysing different approaches to resource sharing in the digital age

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Introduction

Back in 1949, the *Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft* (German Research Society, DFG in the following) established a system of shared collection building whereby a number of larger academic libraries were each assigned a few disciplines from the whole range of academic subjects, in order to build up collections of highly specialised literature not affordable for the average university library, and to share this material with the rest of the country. *Bayerische Staatsbibliothek*, for instance, in this context focusses on General History, History of German-speaking countries, Italy and France, Eastern Europe History and Culture, Classical Antiquity and Musicology. This system – extended to the new *Länder* in the former German Democratic Republic after 1990 – has worked quite well for conventional literature, both books and journals, for many decades. Libraries actively participating in this scheme share the material thus acquired with other libraries via interlibrary loan and special document delivery services. The DFG continues to support this concept of distributed collection building financially so that the libraries involved are in a position to purchase the kind of literature they would not necessarily buy for their own institution.¹

¹ Cf. the DFG website: <http://www.dfg.de/forschungsfoerderung/wissenschaftliche_infrastruktur/lis>. The website <<http://webis.sub.uni-hamburg.de/ssg/text/ssgliste2.html>> provides an overview of the currently approx. 60 libraries and 120 subject fields involved. 23 of the libraries are university and state libraries, 3 libraries are so

With the introduction of electronic media in the 1990s, this established system of nationwide shared collection building began to face new challenges. Licensed electronic resources can usually only be accessed within the limits of a certain geographic site. License restrictions therefore prevent us from sharing our electronic media with other libraries for the benefit of their users. Resources on physical data carriers can perhaps be sent out via interlibrary loan and are therefore within the scope of the DFG collection scheme, but for net-publications this is impossible. In consequence it became clear that collection sharing in the way described above was to be redefined in the digital age.²

This paper will focus on possible scenarios of electronic resource sharing by analysing three different organisational models which are currently being applied within the context of the established German system of distributed collection building. Even though those models are examined within the framework of the scheme described, some of the conclusions drawn may be applied to the general question of resource sharing amongst libraries in the digital age.

1. Model 1: Consortia building on a subject basis

Irrespective of any previously established system of nationwide collection building, library consortia in the sense of the collaborative acquisition of access rights to electronic journals and databases come closest to what can be called a certain type of resource sharing in the digital age. This is true in the sense that libraries participating in consortia can frequently offer their patrons access to many more journals and databases than would have been possible if they had had to purchase them on their own.

The most common form is the regional consortium, i.e. the collaboration of libraries and institutions within a certain geographic area.³ Due to the federal structure of the country and the considerable size of some of the *Länder* (German states), consortia in Germany predominantly work at this *Länder* level, i.e. not so much nationwide. Examples of active regional consortia would be Bavaria, Baden-Wuerttemberg, Hesse, Northrhine-Westfalia, Lower Saxony or the Berlin-Brandenburg region. They are all involved in cross-regional cooperation, which sometimes leads to joint consortial deals with one of the regional consortia in charge of the negotiations. A supraregional working group, which meets regularly and which also includes librarians from Austria and Switzerland, acts as their main communication forum.⁴

How could the consortium model be applied to the extension of the DFG subject collection scheme to net publications? One possible approach would be to form consortia not only at a geographic level, but on the basis of subject fields, i.e. a consortium for a rather specialised electronic resource which has a clearly defined group of users and is therefore only relevant for universities or institutions with appropriate faculties and a very specific subject focus. Within the subject collection scheme, ideally the library in charge of this particular subject would take the lead in the negotiations. In Germany, for instance, there is a cross-regional consortium for the database “America History & Life”, which is only of greater interest to

called central subject libraries for technical disciplines (Hannover), medicine (Cologne) and economics (Kiel). The remaining institutions are smaller special libraries.

² Cf. the most recent DFG memorandum on this issue: *Das System der überregionalen Literaturversorgung im Wandel*. Bonn: DFG, 2004.

³ Cf. the list of consortia provided by the International Coalition of Library Consortia (ICOLC): <http://www.library.yale.edu/consortia/icolcmembers.html>.

⁴ The group is known as GASCO, i.e. German, Austrian, Swiss Consortia Organisation: <http://www.hbz-nrw.de/kunden/gast/konsortien/konsortien.html>.

those institutions which have some focus on American History and Cultural Studies. A consortium at a purely regional level would not be feasible for such a database.

How much can such a model achieve from the point-of-view of nationwide resource sharing in the sense described above? If an adequate number of institutions come together, potentially the major part of the user community most concerned will have access to the resource in question, and their institutions will gain the benefit of paying a more affordable price. Every enduser of the schools or research centres involved has free and unrestricted access to the databases or journals licensed through such a subject-based consortium.

The other side of the coin is, though, that consortia building never reaches beyond the sites immediately participating. Other universities or institutions may have some interest amongst their users, but potential usage may not reach significant numbers for a license to pay off. Thus they cannot offer their users any access at all. The same is true for individuals not affiliated with any academic institution, an enduser group which the subject collection scheme of the DFG has always had in mind. If broader access coverage is intended, the subject consortium model must be combined with something else, e.g. a pay-per-use approach.

2. Model 2: Pay-per-use access

The main idea of a pay-per-use (for databases) or pay-per-view (for journals) model as applied to our context is that a library with supraregional responsibility for literature supply first of all purchases an ordinary local site license for a particular electronic resource to serve its own user community. In addition to that, the vendor grants this library the right to allow end-users resident in a certain geographic region, in our case Germany, to register with this library via the internet and to access the digital resource on a pay-per-use basis. Depending on the type of electronic resource, the cost for site-independent enduser access can be attributed to a time unit, the amount of data downloaded or a document unit, e.g. an article or a book chapter. The user will receive an invoice from the library (or make use of any other mode of payment the library may offer), while the library will forward a certain amount of money per access unit to the vendor as previously arranged. We have therefore a business relationship between user and library on the one hand, and between library and publisher on the other.

Based on previous experiences from a similar project related to electronic journals,⁵ *Bayerische Staatsbibliothek* is currently working on a project which tries to set up a pay-per-use scenario for databases in the fields of History, Eastern European History and Culture, Classical Antiquity and Musicology, its subject collection areas in the above-mentioned DFG scheme.

First of all, we had to establish a technical concept which would allow us to organise pay-per-use access on the basis of time units – the accounting model we regarded most appropriate for database access – and to invoice users accordingly. The solution chosen combines a registration database closely related to the local library system – and therefore enabling single-sign-on for various different services including federated search – with the kind of software we use for remote access to electronic resources for our own local users in the Munich area. The payment options are currently post-payment solutions, but electronic pre-payment is certainly something we will bear in mind for future development. Currently, users

⁵ Cf. Heinz-Peter Berg / Hildegard Schäffler / Irina Sens: „Elektronische Zeitschriften in der überregionalen Literaturversorgung : Ergebnisse des DFG-Projektes EZUL.“ In: Zeitschrift für Bibliothekswesen und Bibliographie 49:3 (2002), 118-132.

are being charged a flat rate of EUR 3 to 5 for which they can access the database in question for a time span of between 12 and 24 hours, which can be interrupted at any time. This seemed a more appropriate way of granting access to bibliographic databases than to charge for the exact number of minutes and seconds spent in the database.

At the same time, the project involved the negotiation of appropriate licenses with relevant publishers, with the main obstacle of having to convince them that such a model would not endanger their subscription basis as their main revenue stream. We have so far managed to secure more than 15 license agreements, mainly for specialised bibliographic databases in the subject fields mentioned. The program is currently being extended to other subjects in the humanities and social sciences where *Bayerische Staatsbibliothek* acts on behalf of libraries also engaged in the DFG plan, with the aim of setting up an interdisciplinary platform for pay-per-use access options.

A final step in the project will be to work out suggestions for a possible funding scheme to be submitted to the DFG which could be used as a basis for the potential extension of their literature supply program to electronic resources.⁶

The following illustrations show some of the steps the enduser has to take in order to access a database on offer.

Endusers access the resource via the so called database information system, a kind of union catalogue of databases, collaboratively updated by more than 50 German libraries. Each library involved has its own specific view of databases on offer for its own local user community or, as in this case, for a broader audience. The entry in the database information system describes the contents of the resource and informs the user of access options available, in this case that pay-per-use access is possible for 5 EUR with 24 hours access time.


⁶ Cf. Gregor Horstkemper: „Nosse volunt omnes, mercedem solvere nemo"? Pay-per-Use als Instrument der überregionalen Informationsversorgung. Workshop an der Bayerischen Staatsbibliothek.“ In: *Bibliotheksdienst* 38:11 (2004), 1457-1469.

Datenbanken Schnelle Suche: <input type="text"/> <input type="button" value="Suchen"/> Erweiterte Suche Aktuelles Fachübersicht Alphabetische Liste Hinweise zur Benutzung Ansprechpartner Bibliotheksauswahl / Einstellungen Über uns	Historical Abstracts
	Weitere Titel: Historical abstracts on the web Historical abstracts online
	Recherche starten: http://emedial.bsb-muenchen.de/Elektra/histab...
	Verfügbar: Kostenpflichtiges Pay-per-Use-Angebot
	Benutzerhinweise: (benutzbar für Personen mit Wohnsitz in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland; einmalige Registrierung notwendig) Preis: ab 5 Euro pro Zeitintervall von 24 Stunden weitere Hinweise
	Fachgebiet(e): Geschichte Osteuropa-Studien
	Inhalt: Titelerzeichnis (mit Abstracts); Zeitschriftenartikel, Aufsätze aus Sammelwerken, Monographien und Dissertationen zur Geschichte aller Länder (außer USA und Kanada) ab 1450 bis zur Gegenwart, international, Schwerpunkt bei Literatur in europäischen Sprachen
	Schlagwörter: Geschichtswissenschaft ; Bibliographie
	Erscheinungsform: WWW (Online-Datenbank)
	Datenbank-Typ: Aufsatzdatenbank Verlag: ABC-Clio, Santa Barbara Berichtszeitraum: 1955 -

Illustration 1: Database information system as main access point

After the endusers have registered with the library (cf. 3. below), they are guided to a screen where username and password are required. In entering the database they accept the license conditions.

Eingabe Ihrer Pay-per-Use-Kennung



Benutzername:
Passwort:

Um auf die gewünschte Pay-per-Use-Datenbank zugreifen zu können, müssen Sie in unserer Benutzerdatenbank registriert sein. Durch die Eingabe von Benutzernamen und Passwort können Sie sich in unsere Pay-per-Use-Plattform einloggen und die Datenbank-Benutzung starten.

Falls Sie noch keine Kennung haben, können Sie sich hier registrieren:
[Registrierung für die kostenpflichtige Datenbanknutzung](#)

Bitte beachten Sie, dass es sich um einen kostenpflichtigen Service handelt. Nähere Informationen können Sie der Webseite entnehmen, die nach dem Einloggen angezeigt wird. Die Rechnung wird Ihnen zu Beginn des nächsten Monats per Post zugestellt. Eine Anmeldung ist nur möglich, wenn Sie den Nutzungsbedingungen der Pay-per-Use-Dienste zustimmen.

Hiermit akzeptiere ich die [Nutzungsbedingungen](#) der Pay-per-Use-Plattform und sichere die Einhaltung aller urheberrechtlichen Vorschriften zu.

Illustration 2: Database entry screen for pay-per-use access

In a third step, users are not directly put through to the database, but are given an additional hint that if they follow the link provided they will be invoiced for using the database.

Pay per Use
Kostenpflichtiger Zugang

BSB Bayerische
Staatsbibliothek

Bitte beachten Sie, dass Ihnen beim Zugriff auf die Datenbank Kosten entstehen. Das Entgelt pro Nutzungszeitraum von maximal **24 Stunden** Dauer beträgt **5 Euro**. Innerhalb des genannten Nutzungszeitraums können Sie ggf. mehrere Startvorgänge durchführen. Die Abrechnung wird Ihnen per Post zugesandt.

Start der Datenbank:
[Historical Abstracts](#)

A B C  C L I O
Historical Abstracts

Informationen zur Datenbank
Fachgebiet: Geschichtswissenschaft
Inhalt: Titelerzeichnis (mit Abstracts); Zeitschriftenartikel, Aufsätze aus Sammelwerken, Monographien und Dissertationen zur Geschichte aller Länder (außer USA und Kanada) ab 1450 bis zur Gegenwart; international, Schwerpunkt bei Literatur in europäischen Sprachen.
Hinweise: [Vorwort des Herausgebers](#)

Zurück zum
[Datenbank-Infosystem](#)

Illustration 3: Final screen before entering the pay-per-use database

What are the pros and cons of this approach in terms of electronic literature supply on a nation-wide basis and from an enduser's point-of-view? On the one hand it can be stated that it is certainly an on-demand model, i.e. only those accesses are paid for which are really needed. It opens access to those user groups whose institutions cannot afford to purchase a license for their campus and anyone unaffiliated with such an institution. So enduser coverage is the broadest possible.

On the other hand experience with publishers shows that this model has so far only been applicable to highly specialised resources for which the subscription market has reached the saturation point, because only then vendors are prepared to strike such a deal at all. The most controversial point on the negative side is that endusers will be asked to bear the pay-per-use costs. Any other model would not be feasible financially for the organising library, because the number of pay-per-use accesses cannot be calculated in advance. Potential DFG funding would therefore rather aim at the cost of the site license for the library in charge than at the pay-per-use price for the patron. It must therefore be made sure that prices are reasonable and moderate enough in order to secure acceptance, especially amongst users in the humanities and social sciences. We have not collected enough usage data yet to make a qualified statement at this point about enduser acceptance, but this will certainly play a role in the evaluation of the project.

It is equally possible that those institutions which cannot afford a proper site license themselves will take over the pay-per-use charge for their users. For the enduser this means free access after all; from a publisher's point-of-view this generates extra income because they would never have sold a site license to that particular library; and the library can provide access to material otherwise inaccessible.

Why would a library organise such a model and not leave it to the publishers altogether? As far as the database project described is concerned, this is partly due to the fact that many vendors do not offer such a model themselves. What is more, it allows us to bring together quite a number of different databases on one platform. With our current intention of extending the project to other subject fields, especially in the humanities, we can thus create an interdisciplinary platform for cross-regional database access.

The above-mentioned subject-based consortium for the database “America: History and Life” is a good example of how different models can be combined. In addition to forming a consortium amongst institutions with relevant faculties, pay-per-use access is offered to those users whose libraries cannot afford to participate in the consortium due to insufficient usage figures or lack of financial means.

3. Model 3: National licenses

Going beyond both the consortium approach as well as the pay-per-use model is the idea of a national license in the broadest possible sense. As mentioned above, due to the federal structure of the country, there is no tradition of striking national deals for Germany. Within the context of the subject collection scheme introduced above, though, the DFG in autumn 2004 for the first time ever made available top-sliced funding for nationwide data purchases.

Four major academic libraries, amongst them *Bayerische Staatsbibliothek*, were asked to negotiate such deals for a number of resources each, after the whole group of libraries involved in the subject collection scheme had been asked which resources should be considered. The selection criteria were very specific due to the fact that money was only available for a one-off payment. The resources were therefore to be completed digital collections with a one-time purchase price and with perpetual access rights, ideally with a local hosting option. They should also be specialised to a degree that not many libraries would be able to afford them on their own. The main focus was on the humanities as a subject area which is sometimes being neglected in the digital age.

Out of 40 products originally discussed, 19 were finally agreed upon by a DFG committee set up for this purpose. Illustration 4 below shows the list of products available, the green “D”, a symbol created for the database information system, indicating free accessibility in Germany.

Acta Sanctorum	D
Aristoteles Latinus Database	D
China Academic Journals	D
COMINTERN Electronic Archives	D
Declassified Documents Reference System	D
Deutschsprachige Frauenliteratur des 18. & 19. Jahrhunderts, Teil 1	D
Digital National Security Archive	D
Early American Imprints, Series I: Evans, 1639-1800	D
Early English Books Online	D
Eighteenth Century Collections Online	D
English Language Women's Literature of the 18th & 19th Centuries	D
Europa Sacra	D
Library of Latin Texts	D
Making of Modern Law, The	D
Periodicals Contents Index	D
Times Digital Archive, The	D
Ut per Litteras Apostolicas ...	D
Wales related Fiction of the Romantic Period	D
World Biographical Information System	D

Illustration 4: List of databases available nationally

What makes this scheme so very specific and attractive is the specific kind of access options it provides. This means that access is not only given to all publicly funded academic institutions in Germany on an IP-basis, but that any individual resident in Germany can register with any of the four libraries involved in the negotiations and thus also use the databases in question

for free. The technical basis for this is the same as applied to the pay-per-use scheme (cf. 2. above), with the only difference that individual access is not charged for. Illustration 5 shows the registration screen for users who first register with the library in order to leave their personal data and to receive username and password. The same screen and underlying database are used for pay-per-use patrons. The numbers can be used for both services.

[Online-Auskunft](#) [Sitzung beenden](#)

BSB Bayerische Staatsbibliothek Benutzerregistrierung

Benutzerregistrierung für den kostenlosen Zugang zu Datenbanken mit deutschlandweitem Zugriff

Einzelpersonen mit ständigem Wohnsitz in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland können sich persönlich bei der Bayerischen Staatsbibliothek München für einen kostenlosen Zugriff registrieren lassen, falls ihnen kein Zugang über ein Universitätsnetz oder über eine wissenschaftliche Bibliothek zur Verfügung steht. Damit die Registrierung erfolgreich durchgeführt werden kann, füllen Sie bitte das folgende Formular aus. Alle farblich hinterlegten Felder sind Pflichtfelder. Mit dem Absenden der Registrierungsdaten wird ein zweistufiger Registrierungsprozess in Gang gesetzt:

1. Es wird umgehend eine **E-Mail** an die von Ihnen angegebene Adresse verschickt. Sobald Sie die in dieser E-Mail beschriebenen Schritte für den Abschluss der ersten Stufe des Registrierungsprozesses unternommen haben, wird Ihr **Zugang für einige Tage** freigeschaltet.
2. Nachdem Sie die erste Stufe des Registrierungsprozesses abgeschlossen haben, senden wir Ihnen **auf dem Postweg ein zweites, dauerhaft gültiges Passwort** zu. Am vierten Werktag nach dem Tag Ihrer Registrierung (wobei Samstage nicht als Werktage gezählt werden) verliert das von Ihnen selbst vergebene Passwort seine Gültigkeit und wird durch das zweite, von uns an Sie geschickte Passwort ersetzt.

Nutzerdaten (Pflichtfelder sind farbig hinterlegt):

Anrede:

Nachname: Vorname:

Firma/Institution:

Straße / Hausnr.:

PLZ: Ort:

Telefon:

E-Mail:

Wählen Sie Ihr Passwort: (mind. 8 Zeichen, max. 20 Zeichen, keine Sonderzeichen)

Passwort bestätigen:

Illustration 5: User registration screen for national licenses and pay-per-use access

Even though local hosting is possible in most cases, the majority of products are currently accessed via the vendors' sites. Server access fees, if applicable, were included in the purchase costs. For 2005 some funding will be available for a new round of negotiations, this time including STM subjects, especially backfile collections of electronic journals. The precise criteria and products are currently under discussion.

The clear advantage of such a model is that really everyone within a certain geographic region can have access to those resources without any restrictions as far as location or institutional affiliation or finances are concerned. In that sense, it is the ideal extension of the conventional subject collection model to the electronic age. Under the current funding conditions, which are not likely to be permanent, it is most appropriate for large, completed, high-priced collections, hardly affordably for more than just a few institutions and available for one-off purchasing.

Turned the other way round, it seems that such a model works best or perhaps exclusively if top-sliced funding is available, and will thus only be applicable to continuing resources if combined with a sustainable model for continuous access due to the insecure funding situation. This could be, for instance, the national purchase of backfiles together with reasonably priced pay-per-use access for those institutions and individuals unable to afford to continue the resource out of their own budget. A slightly different example in this context is the database "China Academic Journals", which contains a couple of thousand Chinese academic journals in full text and is run on a server of the Berlin State Library. The backfiles and a few current years were bought nationally in 2004. After that initial access period for current years will have expired, a number of institutions with a Sinology focus will form a subject-based consortium which will allow very small institutions and individuals in Germany to get free access to the database.

Conclusion

It has become clear that literature supply on a national level is a rather complex issue in the digital age. Three models have been described which are currently being tested within the framework of the national subject collection scheme of the DFG, but which might equally be adapted to different arrangements in other countries. Table 1 compares the three models in terms of enduser groups reached, cost allocation and typical types of resources.

	Consortia Building	Per-per-Use	National License
Enduser Groups	Institutional users	Everyone	Everyone
Cost	Institutions	Endusers and/or Institutions	Top-sliced
Types of resource	All resources	All resources (if publisher agrees)	Completed resources

Table 1: Comparison of the three models analysed

After analysing and comparing the three concepts currently tested, it is quite apparent that there is no such thing as the philosopher's stone, probably not only in this matter. Depending on the type of resource, on the specific requirements of the enduser groups concerned as well as the applicable funding situation, the models available – to be further tried, discussed and improved – will have to be combined with each other since they can be regarded as complementary approaches to the issue in question.

References

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