EAHIL '97 Workshop on Managing Information in the New Electronic Age

SwetsNet
- The Single Source for Electronic Serials -

It is a pleasure to have the opportunity to speak during this workshop. In the following I would like to give you a general overview of our newest service - SwetsNet, addressing issues such as the underlying concept of this electronic service, its functionality and pricing structure.

Ever since the advent of the World Wide Web in 1992, the number of Internet users has increased annually at a phenomenal pace. The primary reason for this growth can be attributed to the ease-of-use of the WWW's navigational tool, the graphical Web browser. The Web browser allows 'point-and-click' navigation of the Internet using hypertext and graphical links enabling the user to retrieve information quickly and easily.

As to the usage of information platforms we also can detect a rapid migration towards electronic media in recent times. The last year has seen quite a number of publishers offering electronic versions of their journals on a subscription basis (IOP, Chapman & Hall, Academic Press, Johns Hopkins, Carfax etc). In the coming months it is anticipated that even more electronic titles will be announced. However, the large majority of these journals are electronic versions of existing print titles, for which you may already have print subscriptions.

In a discussion a Senior Associate from the American Astronomical Society even claimed: ..."paper journals will fade away. In astronomy, this will happen within four years. By January 1998, 95% of the world's peer reviewed astronomical literature will be available online." Could this be true for all disciplines? The number of new electronic-only journals distributed over the Internet has been growing impressively quickly. The ARL directionary 1996 mentions about 500 peer-reviewed Internet journals and by the end of this year this number will have increased up to 750. A study for the EU, made before the advent of the WWW, estimated that by the year 2000 25-30% of academic journals publication would be electronic. The Web with its user-friendly interface can only have increased this figure.

Librarians wishing to offer a full service to their users for these electronic serials are faced with new administrative and access procedures. For example in terms of password distribution, registration and license administration, arranging end-user access and printing as well as policy issues such as archiving and recording use of these titles. This creates a heavy work load for libraries and often requires a lot of direct contacts to a large number of publishers. Besides, electronic journals require equipment, training and support.

Having set the scene, I would like to focus on the recent product of Swets & Zeitlinger, which is available since May of this year.

SwetsNet is our new electronic service, offering libraries and their users a single point for accessing and managing all their electronic serials. This service has been developed to assist librarians in the already mentioned tasks like password and license administration. The service is the result of many months of discussions with librarians and publishers as well.

SwetsNet aims at simplifying the electronic journal management and user access. It offers libraries and their users one single point of access to a wide range of journal titles from different publishers via one single interface and search engine. Browsing and searching facilities are possible across all titles or only those subscribed to.

A library can order any serial title currently available on the market, either offered as print title or in electronic format via Swets & Zeitlinger. The order is handled by the agent, while electronic access is arranged either direct with a publisher's server or via SwetsNet.

SwetsNet gives access to bibliographic and table of contents information, to abstracts and fulltext either by browsing lists or by commonly used search facilities like Boolean operators. Browsing for table of contents is allowed for all titles even if a library does not subscribe to all of them. Besides these user functions there are a number of library management functions like regular usage statistics or integrated functions for the user and password administration.

SwetsNet offers acess to:

- Table of contents for 13,000 journal titles
- Fulltext for currently 635 journal titles
- 1,000 fulltext titles by the end of 1997
- 5,000 fulltext titles within the next 2 years

The following publishers are currently supplying electronic titles :

- Baltzer
- Blackwell Science
- Carfax
- Chapman and Hall (Thomson)
- Institution of Chemical Engineers
- Kluwer Academic Publishers
- MCB University Press
- Oxford University Press
- Rapid Science (Thomson)
- Routledge
- Swets and Zeitlinger Publishers
- Taylor and Francis

The gateway solution to Springer LINK (including Birkhäuser) is still under construction. Besides, there are still negotiations with Academic Press, Elsevier and a lot of other publishers to include their electronic titles into SwetsNet.

SwetsNet is offered via the Web using popular browsers such as Netscape and Microsoft Internet Explorer. Besides viewers like Adobe Acrobat or Realpage, both are free on the Internet and can be downloaded from our SwetsNet homepage, are needed for accessing the full text.

Search screens, table of contents and bibliographical information are presented in HTML with full text viewable in PDF or in Realpage format. Full texts are held either on the Swets' server or are accessed via special gateways from the publisher's servers. Access is granted to authorized users only, either those with subscriptions to SwetsNet titles or who are part of a site license. Viewing tables of contents is possible for all titles within the system regardless of an existing subscription. Control is via passwords and check of IP numbers.

Besides publisher's conditions there will be an annual SwetsNet access fee of DM 2,25 per journal title with a maximum annual fee of DM 1.250,-. There will be no SwetsNet access fee until the end of 1997. The average surcharges for accessing electronic titles currently vary from 10 % to 30 % depending on publisher's pricing strategy. Most publishers give access to electronic journals only in combination with a valid print subscription. Currently SwetsNet is subscription based as most publishers are very reluctant in allowing individual article supply.

As to the newest developments, we are currently developing means for the end user to specify individual search routines to be started regularly and resulting in relevant hits only.

At large libraries there is a strong requirement to give access to SwetsNet without the need for entering a password by each user. Therfore we are currently working out possibilities for access control by checking the IP adress only.

The latest news is that SwetsNet is now capable of handling direct links from third party software vendors. With this new technology libraries can now offer their end users direc t access to electronic journal articles from their OPAC or other kinds of local bibliographic software. This new technology gives libraries the possibility to offer SwetsNet over local Intranets and integrate it with the electronic journal access to the abstract and full text. Nevertheless, we will implement the Z 39.50 standard by the end of 1997 as well.

To sum up, one can say that the idea of One-Stop-Shopping and the Electronic Warehouse Concept aims at the integration of full-text print and non-print publications linked with references, electronic tables of contents as well as abstracts of the various publishers and subject areas.

The information can be stored either on the agency's, the publisher's or hosts' server. Hyperlinks create the connection to external documents. Apart from the provision and storage of data other essentials such as licensing, user-accessing as well as invoicing make up the all-inclusive service which we as mediary between publisher and library would like to offer to our customers.
Stefanie Gehrke, September 1997