

THE FINNISH MODEL FOR CONSORTIA AND NATIONAL LICENSES

Kristiina Hormia-Poutanen

The Finnish Electronic Library, FinELib, is a programme launched by the Ministry of Education aimed at supporting higher education and research in Finland. FinELib acquires Finnish and foreign electronic material for Finland, such as scientific journals and reference databases in specialist fields. The goal is to provide the material for serving as many scientific disciplines as possible. It is also intended to offer a more effective way of finding material from the Net and to provide common access to information by using the data network.

Areas of responsibility

The Ministry of Education has laid down the areas of responsibility for the programme which is being led by a steering committee appointed by the Ministry and is being implemented in practice by Helsinki University Library. The Centre for Scientific Computing Ltd is responsible for technical matters concerning the FUNET data network.

The programme is financed from the programme of additional funding for research, with the 1999 budget of FIM 18 million. The Ministry of Education's centralized funding is intended primarily for universities. Other organizations may also join — and have already joined — user consortia with their own funding. A national agreement aims to ensure that all participants will benefit as much as possible from the project.

User needs

FinELib services are being developed to support researchers, teachers and students in their work. To get a better understanding of what users really want, a web-based user survey was carried out in June 1998. The survey was performed at two of the largest universities in Finland, University of Helsinki and University of Oulu, at one art university and among the library staff of polytechnics. The users were asked to rank different types of electronic materials.

There were altogether 294 responses to the survey. The end result was very clear: foreign full text journals were considered to be the most important type of material in an electronic library. Next in the order of priority came special reference databases, such as INSPEC, BIOSIS etc., and Finnish full text journals, while Science Citation Index databases placed fourth with respect to importance. The focus in licensing electronic materials during 1998 was thus on foreign electronic journals and special reference databases. In 1999, more emphasis will be given to the licensing of Finnish electronic materials.

Selection of electronic materials

Two types of working groups, a policy group and six specialist groups, were formed to help with selection of electronic materials. The policy group consists of members of the FinELib steering committee and has discussed topics such as licensing policy and pricing policy.

Six specialist groups were formed in the fields of engineering, science and agriculture, medicine, business and administration, humanities and culture. The members of these groups are specialist librarians and researchers. All these six groups have laid down priorities concerning the electronic materials to be acquired for FinELib.

The activity of the working groups has been very successful.

User consortia

The Ministry of Education's centralized funding is intended primarily for universities. Other organizations may also join user consortia with their own funding. The polytechnics in particular were very active in 1998 participating in the activity. More efforts will be taken during 1999 to broaden all user consortia to include polytechnics and research institutes.

Researchers and teachers, other staff members, students and occasional users of libraries, belonging to user consortia, have access to FinELib services. Licenses guarantee authorized users full access to the material for browsing and searching, downloading and printing as well as for creating course packages for non-commercial, educational, instructional, and scientific purposes.

FinELib material

The National Electronic Library offers a wide variety of information retrieval and document delivery services. A customer may obtain an article in the electronic form via a catalogue of electronic journals, a reference database for a specialist field or a library catalogue. The availability of a wide range of reference databases in specialist fields provides an opportunity to carry out high quality data searches.

At the beginning of 1999 about 2600 full text journals and about 70 reference databases were available.