

E-JOURNALS AT ISS LIBRARY: A FOUR-YEAR EXPERIENCE

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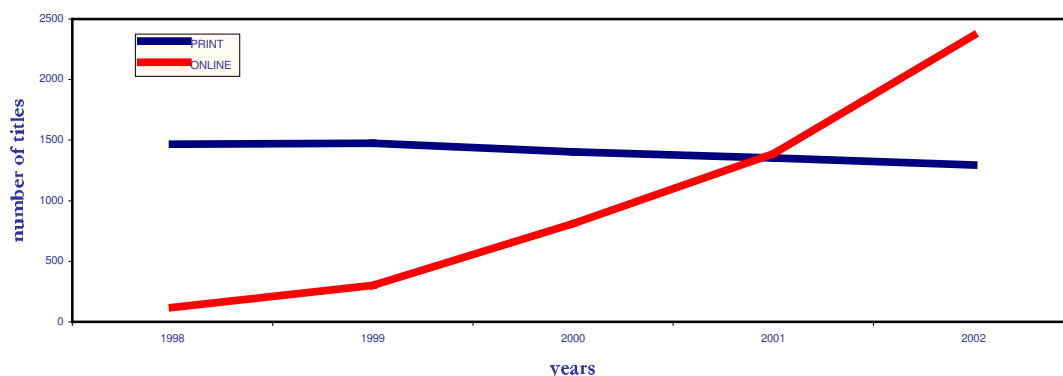
INTRODUCTION

The ISS (Istituto Superiore di Sanità – National Health Institute) Library is one of the major Italian libraries in the biomedical field, owing 2.181 current STM serials titles. Nearly 90 per cent of our budget is devoted to serials, databases and electronic resources acquisition.

The changing serials landscape, resulting by the advent and continuous increase of electronic journals in recent years, has modified the library management from the acquisition policy to the users' need satisfaction making necessary the evaluation of costs, benefits and disadvantages of this new trend.

This is an overview on our Library's efforts during the last four years to acquire and manage electronic journals. This paper particularly outlines the steady growing of electronic journals, the different ways of access and technical and practical problems deriving from their management.

Print vs. Online journals



METHODS

First, we decided to activate only electronic journals offered by publishers with a print subscription, in order to evaluate our print collection policy vs. online access. We started a systematic study on electronic journals trying to:

- find useful information to initiate access
- identify and activate free with print titles

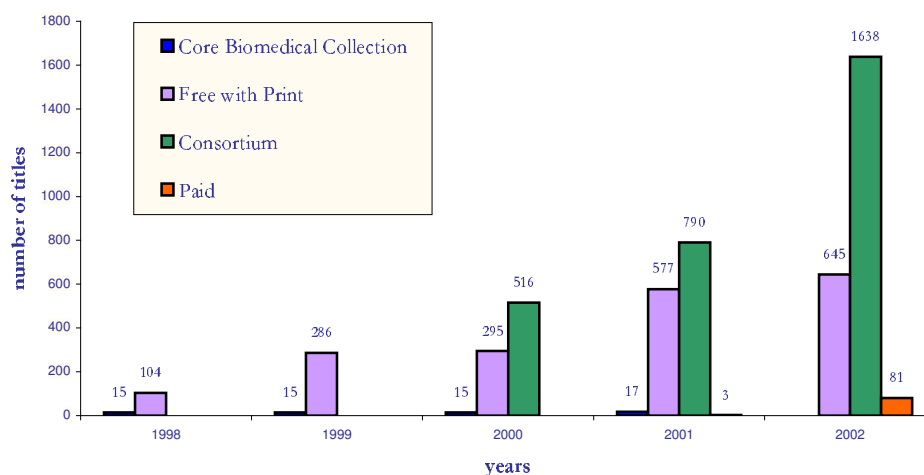
All the information we found was still strictly bound to print sources (publisher's catalogue, proforma invoices...).

This systematic study let us activate in 1998 104 free with print titles up to 645 titles in 2002.

This first phase was very useful not only because it allowed us to create a new service and a new acknowledgement of the e-journals landscape but also to test our users' interest on the matter.

Our first step toward a whole e-journals collection (free and paid) was the acquisition of 15 titles of the Core Biomedical Collection by OVID in 1998. Later on, in 2000 the Library decided to agree for a trial to the CASPUR consortium (Consorzio Interuniversitario per le Applicazioni di Supercalcolo per Università e Ricerca) of the University of Roma "La Sapienza" gaining access to 516 titles of the Elsevier ScienceDirect package. The results were so encouraging for the number of access recorded and users' satisfaction that we decided to join the consortium as participating members obtaining not only on site access to the entire ScienceDirect package but also to Kluwer titles online (a total amount of 1638 titles). Moreover, our Library's policy is to increase the number of paid online subscriptions. This year we acquired the online version of Wiley and AMA (American Medical Association) journals of which we subscribe to the print version plus some core titles such as Nature, Science and The Lancet (a total amount of 81 titles).

online journals



User notification and training have been our aims too. Initially we provided information through print lists and e-mail updates. Since 2001, our Library has a new intranet homepage where hyperlinked e-journal lists are continuously updated. Moreover, in 1998, a training seminar has been organized by the Library and personal user training is also provided on demand.

The main problems we faced with were about identification and activation issues and also a new kind of relationship between the Library, publishers and agents. Below we present an analytical table concerning those problems and some feasible solutions.

ACTIVATING AND MANAGING	
PROBLEMS	SOLUTIONS
<p>PRELIMINARY PROCESSES Finding information to initiate access Identifying free with print titles No notification when access is allowed E-journals available from more than one source</p>	<p>Better communication among publishers/agents and librarians Cross departmental team approach to build up the new service</p>
<p>GAINING ACCESS Obtaining subscription numbers from agents Conflict with agents/publishers Incomplete or incorrect information from publisher Choosing access through IP or Username/Password Linking to the title level rather than hard-to-explain top level</p>	<p>Try to deal directly with publishers Ask agents to activate all free with print journals access Subscription agents have to define and establish their role</p>
<p>MAINTAINING ACCESS URL maintenance Maintaining access over calendar year Volatility Having to reregister Agent changes can affect access</p>	<p>Closer oversight Try to deal directly with publishers</p>
<p>LICENCING ISSUES Wide range of novel pricing models Publishers often tie their electronic pricing to print purchase making difficult a cost/benefit analysis Different terms of agreement between free with print and charged e-journals High pricing policies and licensing restrictions</p>	<p>Take advantage of consortial deals for electronic products Trials were arranged in order to evaluate the products more closely</p>
<p>INFORMATION TO END USERS End users do not realize that not all journals are available electronically Users get confused surfing the Net looking for access points to journals' full text</p>	<p>A training seminar highlighting our electronic resources Users training Hyperlinked e-journals list on library's intranet site which is continually updated</p>
<p>EVALUATION OF STATISTICAL DATA Problems in analyzing the publisher information so as to use it for service evaluation and decision-making</p>	<p>More standardization is required</p>

Joining Caspur consortium, in 2001 our institution gained access to all of the Elsevier titles subscribed to by all of the participating members. This year, we are able to offer the complete journals package of the publishers Elsevier and Kluwer. Our participation to the consortium not only allowed us to resolve the difficult to manage licenses of hundreds of journals but also made electronic access more widespread and cheaper providing a single point of access to a great deal of journals.

Purchasing products at a better price than individually was another important benefit we had.

However, we are aware that it is an excellent choice for a small library because for a large library the cost could be much greater and the benefit less. Actually, to prevent libraries from canceling print periodicals to pay for the consortium, the program penalizes libraries for print cancellations: the subscriber has the right to change titles or replace value of subscriptions with other products to maintain the print value...acquisition policy is strongly influenced by publishers!

CONCLUSIONS

Constant evaluation and improvement of our Library's policy is our first objective in order to offer users a well organized service.

At the moment, our aim is to increase our e-journals collection through the consortium or dealing directly with publishers such as Blackwell, Academic Press, American Chemical Society, Lippincott.

The Library is also evaluating to integrate the collection subscribing to journals in their online only format and updating the print collection with new titles.

In order to meet researchers information needs we are also improving the Library's home page and we are planning to integrate e-journals titles into Library collection using a web based catalogue.

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