Examining one model of ebooks
for an academic library setting

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Abstract:
In late 2000, CAVAL Collaborative Solutions organised a consortial purchase of netLibrary for interested member institutions. Throughout 2001, netLibrary was examined by a number of working groups at the University of Melbourne. This paper presents findings that cover a range of issues: acquisition, collection content, functionality, disability access issues, ereserve and administrative issues.

Introduction

Late in 2000, CAVAL Collaborative Solutions organised a consortial trial of netLibrary for a twelve month period. As a member of the consortium, the University of Melbourne undertook an extensive assessment of the product in order to ascertain its suitability as an effective resource. Working groups from across the Information Division[1] were formed to investigate a range of issues: acquisition, collection content, functionality, disability access issues, ereserve, and administrative issues. This paper will outline findings in each of these areas of examination.

Definitions of ebooks

There have been numerous attempts to define ebooks. The term "ebook" can be used to refer to hardware, software and documents. It has also been applied to some types of CD-ROM systems, palm-top CD players, on-demand text, and electronic documents systems of various kinds.
Planet ebook newsletter has stated that the term ebook has now been included in the *Concise Oxford Dictionary*, with the following definition:

e-book n. an electronic version of a printed book which can be read on a personal computer or handheld device designed specifically for this purpose (Planet ebook newsletter 2001).

Limiting the definition to content rather than hardware, a definition of ebooks may include manuals, textbooks and encyclopaedias as well as novels, dictionaries, anthologies, proceedings of meetings, and directories.

A narrower definition comes from a Baker and Taylor news release, which describes ebooks as, "full text electronic versions of published books that patrons can search, borrow, read and return via the Internet." (Baker and Taylor 2001). This is the definition that has been assumed for this paper.

Background of ebooks for the scholarly community

Electronic texts have been in existence for over 30 years, dating back to the start of Project Gutenberg in 1971. Initiatives such as Project Gutenberg and the Electronic Text Centre have been digitising out-of-copyright texts and making them available online.[2]

While electronic books and texts have been available for some time for selected public domain titles, only relatively recently have electronic texts been packaged and offered commercially as electronic books. Some publishers are becoming involved in projects to supply ebooks for the tertiary sector. Taylor and Francis, for example, plan to digitise 17,000 book titles, many of them academic, for sale on the Internet (Wilson 2001).

Background of netLibrary

netLibrary represents one of a number of models for supplying ebooks to different markets. netLibrary consists predominantly of printed books that have been converted into digital format for electronic distribution over the web. The remainder are supplied to netLibrary in

electronic format. Public, academic, corporate and other special libraries form the target market for netLibrary.

Founded in August 1998, netLibrary launched its website in March 1999 with approximately 2,000 titles. One hundred ebooks are being added each day. As of September 2001, it had 35,000 titles available from more than 300 publishers. netLibrary has deliberately worked through traditional libraries (Fischer 2001). It has formed relationships with a growing number of publishers, technology providers (including suppliers of library automation systems, eg Innovative Interfaces), and book distributors, as well as with many large libraries and library consortia (Hawkins 2000).

Areas of examination

Acquisition

There are two pricing models for netLibrary: titles may be acquired by purchase or by lease.

To purchase a title, the cost to the library is the publisher's list price for the hardback book plus 50% of that price. This provides perpetual access to that title even if the library's contract with netLibrary ends. If or when the contract ends, the book is supplied in CD-ROM format to the purchasing library for storage onsite. This pricing structure is useful for libraries wishing to own the title outright.

To lease a title, the initial cost is the publisher's hardback list price plus 9%. To retain access the annual fee is 9%, payable on the 12 month anniversary of the original access to the title. In the first year of lease, a library can choose to convert the lease of a title to a purchase by paying an extra 41%. The lease model is suitable for titles that are likely to be updated within a couple of years, for example, textbooks and technical manuals. Once the payment of the 9% ceases so does access to that book.

netLibrary has adopted the print model for purchasing or leasing, where one copy can be accessed by only one user at a time, so titles in heavy demand require purchase or lease of multiple copies. Discounts apply to large purchases through both models of acquisition.
The one user, one copy model ignores the flexibility inherent in electronic delivery. There is a school of thought that contends that the demand for simultaneous access to individual ebook titles should not require libraries to purchase or lease multiple copies of ebooks, and that pricing models that permit some level of simultaneous access should be developed (Snowhill 2001). California State University is one institution currently working with netLibrary to trial a simultaneous user model (Blumenstyk 2001).

As Clifford Lynch so cogently expresses it:

Do libraries want to regress to emulating the printed book? Or do they want to use digital books within a site license framework as an extension of current trends, treating e-book readers as just another display technology that their patrons may exploit? Or do libraries want some new hybrid solution that permits, for example, the acquisition of "peak load" copies of popular works for circulation for a limited time when they are popular and in high demand? (Lynch 2001)

Options for ordering

There are two methods of acquiring titles.
1. Titles may be acquired through netLibrary's *TitleSelect.* The *TitleSelect* website enables library staff to select titles, create title lists, and order ebooks from netLibrary. The tool enables searching by author, title, publisher, subject, keyword, ISBN and publication date. The service also allows tracking of orders.

2. netLibrary bibliographic records can also be loaded from library vendors. Blackwell's has all netLibrary titles on *Collection Manager* (its online ordering tool) as brief order records. Export and order capabilities are available. Other vendors offering netLibrary titles include Baker and Taylor and Yankee Book Peddler.

A final issue in the acquisition of titles is the extent of the delay between ordering and access to the title. While the quoted figure from netLibrary is as little as 3 days, feedback from the University of Wollongong indicates that it can be as long as 3 weeks, and that further delays were experienced in receiving MARC records (NSW Kinetica User Group 2001).

2. Collection content

Publishers associated with netLibrary include scholarly societies such as the American Mathematical Society, university presses such as Cambridge University Press and commercial publishers such as Edward Elgar. The complete list is available at: http://www.netLibrary.com/about_us/publishers/publisher_list.asp

The variety of publishers is indicative of the diverse content available for purchase or lease; however, not all the titles are available for lease or purchase outside the United States. Some publishers are loath to offer the latest editions of titles to netLibrary for fear of losing revenues from the print editions. Some titles are not available to consortia, but only to individual libraries.

netLibrary's academic collection policy states that it will collect materials "which are most current and authoritative within every subject. Acquisition of materials will be decided on the basis of 1) currency 2) authority 3) research value and 4) enduring value."[3] The current subject strengths of the netLibrary collection are in business, commerce and computing.

There are two parts to netLibrary. One is the collection of titles in the public domain known as Project Gutenberg, and the other consists of copyrighted works available for purchase or lease. The Project Gutenberg collection, while free, is only available on the netLibrary platform to paying customers of netLibrary. A benefit of having both groups of titles supplied in netLibrary is that there are value added features such as the searching facility, and the online dictionary, features not available on the Project Gutenberg site.

3. Functionality

Books on netLibrary are accessed through the netLibrary website. They can be viewed using an online reader, or offline via a reader which can be downloaded to a computer.

The following table outlines the differences between the two readers:

Online reader	Offline reader
Internet charges	No Internet charges
Has access to dictionary	No access to dictionary
	MLA style for citations can be created
Can browse ebook for 15 minutes Can also check out title for set loan time	Can check out title for set loan time
Table of contents contains hyperlinks to each chapter	Table of contents used for navigation to chapter headings
	Bookmarking, note making and annotation functions are available.
Available for PC, Macintosh or Unix platforms	Available for PC, but not available for the Macintosh or Unix platforms
Can search for a particular word within an ebook	Can search for a particular word within an ebook

Table 1.

Limited copy and paste functionality is allowed with both readers. The limitations are tighter than copyright restrictions.

4. Disability access issues

There are two groups of students with disabilities for whom netLibrary is best suited. These are the sight impaired and those with mobility problems. netLibrary is beginning to work with some publishers to produce audio versions of books.

netLibrary's decision to use Adobe Acrobat for its graphics has implications for accessibility for sight disabled. By using the offline reader the sight impaired can enlarge text.

5. Ereserve

Ebooks are potentially effective for short term use of items in high demand.
Advantages of the netLibrary ebook format both for reserve and general use include:

- items cannot be stolen or hidden or vandalised
- eliminates reshelving time and loans
- items available 24/7
- loan returns are automatic

The following table compares the features of netLibrary with manual and ereserve systems.

TABLE 2

Feature	Manual Reserve	Comments	E-Reserve	Comments	net Library	Comments
Access to high-use documents	Yes	Limited by number of physical copies	Yes	Not limited by number of copies (subject to copyright/ licensing restrictions)	Yes	Limited by number of electronic copies purchased or leased
Provide access at chapter level	Yes	Staff-time intensive - photocopying, binding, etc	Yes	Electronic files able to be split - subject to copyright / licensing	No	Would need to purchase the book, but having done that, can make chapter available
Provide 24x7 access	No	Restricted to library hours	Yes	Unrestricted - via web	Yes	Unrestricted via web
Cost	High	Staff time: loans, returns, fines, overdues, shelving, copying, repairing; purchase of multiple copies	Low	Subject to copyright/licensing costs	Mod.	Multiple copies need to be purchased or leased; staff time saved
Provide subject listing	Yes		Yes		Yes	MARC records available
Provide concurrent access	Yes	Limited by no. of physical copies available	Yes	Unlimited user numbers (subject to copyright/licensing restrictions)	Yes	Limited by no. of electronic copies available

Staff time	High	Loans, returns, fines, overdues, shelving, copying, repairing;	Low		Low	
Security - theft, damage and loss control	High	Damaged, stolen and unreturned items	Low	No physical items to lose	Low	No physical items lost to theft, loss, wear & tear

TABLE 2 (CONTINUED)

6. Administrative issues

Privacy

Privacy issues are a consideration in the dissemination of information over the Internet. While patrons may be willing to make compromises about privacy on the basis of expedience and need (and have every right to make these compromises), libraries have historically been more thoughtful and principled. (Lynch 2001)

The University of Melbourne was pleased to note that netLibrary makes a written commitment to protecting user privacy online and claims to adhere to the American Library Association's Code of Ethics. Details are available at
http://www.netlibrary.com/about_us/academic/faq.asp#ques_twenty

Access management

Authentication is by IP address range or by referring URL.

Initial registration (called account creation) needs to be undertaken at a PC within the authorised IP range of the subscribing institution. In the registration process, each user needs to enter name, address, phone number and email address, as well as a unique username and password. These details may be accessed by the institutional netLibrary administrator at the administration website for the subscribing institution. The administrator can search email addresses to bring up the list of current account holders. This person has the authority to edit or delete records, set the number of books each user is allowed to check out at any one time and set loan periods. One potential problem is that there is no way of limiting the number of accounts a user can create.

Copyright

Publishers are anxious about losing rights in the digital environment, so wish to ensure that there is no reproduction without their approval. netLibrary takes copyright issues seriously, as can be seen from the copyright notice on the netLibrary site:

Copyright laws protect all netLibrary eBooks, except those in the Public Collection. In addition, the following precautions ensure the protection of intellectual property:
All user IDs and passwords must be unique. This means that different users cannot simultaneously use the same ID or password.
When viewing a book online, you can display only one page at a time; netLibrary delivers a copyright warning if a suspicious usage pattern indicative of excessive printing or copying is detected.
netLibrary logs the delivery of copyright warnings to users.
netLibrary may disable an account if illegal use is detected. (http://www.netlibrary.com)

Statistical Reports

Reports able to be generated include:
- Ebook use listed in ascending order by number of accesses. Little used titles are listed first, and at the end of the list are the most heavily accessed titles. Such a report would be a useful collection management tool.
- Activity by subject. This displays ebook use by subject category.
- Turn-away statistics. These include ebooks where all copies were in use or the title was not owned by the library.
- Dictionary access. This report displays the number of times that users looked up terms in the *American Heritage Dictionary* from an ebook.
- Statistics are available on titles purchased or leased by the institution, as well as on the use of the free collection. Statistics may be exported in either comma delimited or Excel format.

Vendor support

NetLibrary has recently upgraded its site, including its assistance for promotional and training activities. Assistance available from the ebook toolkit includes

- netLibrary Training Manual
- Training Resources

Details of these resources are available from
http://www.netlibrary.com/resourcecenter/index.asp

Its collection development policy is linked from this site. Collection development reports may also be generated. These include:
- Owned ebooks, which displays current library holdings listed in ascending order by title.
- Not owned ebooks, which displays all ebooks available from netLibrary, excluding current library holdings.
- New ebooks, which displays new ebooks added to the netLibrary collection over the last 24 hours, last 7 days, last 30 days, or last 90 days.
- Browse by subject, which displays all ebooks in the netLibrary collection grouped by subject.

Conclusion

netLibrary would be a useful medium to enrich an academic library's collections. It provides another means for purchase of web based scholarly monographic resources.

To the extent that digital books are important works of scholarship, libraries - particularly research libraries - have little alternative but to purchase access for their patrons, though in cases where there is a print equivalent to the e-book they may choose to acquire the printed work instead (or in addition) (Lynch 2001).

A major benefit of netLibrary as a resource is the fact that it is a web based platform for potentially thousands of titles. Staff and students are already accustomed to the web interface for resources such as ejournals and abstracting and indexing tools.

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Notes

1. The Information Division was formed in late 2000 by the merger of Information Technology Services, the Multimedia Education Unit and the Library.
2. For details about Project Gutenberg and electronic Text Centre, see http://promo.net/pg/ and http://etext.lib.virginia.edu/
3. See netLibrary collection policy, page 10. Available: http://netlibrary.com/resourcecentre/index.asp 27 September 2001.