



Universal Availability of Publications Core Activity 7th Interlending and Document Supply International Conference

The role of collaboration between the British Library and public libraries in the UK in meeting government agendas on life-long learning and social inclusion

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Abstract

Two key strands of current UK government policy are an aspiration to raising the level of social inclusion and to create an infrastructure capable of supporting life-long learners. Access to information in general and learning resources in particular are fundamental to achieving these aims. Public libraries are now being recognised as a focal point for such access. Accordingly investment has been made in an IT infrastructure for the public library sector. This investment has coincided with a shift in focus within the regional public library consortia from the operational to the strategic.

These changes have generated much debate on how best to meet the goals on social inclusion and life-long learning. One conclusion is that collaboration between the various library sectors will play an important part in developing the services to meet these goals. Through maintaining close links with the regional library consortia the British Library has been able to develop a strategy aimed at providing access to its catalogues and collections to the widest possible audience. Part of the strategy recognises the importance of public libraries as the point of access to services not previously accessible to the general public.

As part of this process two pilot studies have been initiated. Each will be a collaborative venture between the British Library and a regional library consortium. Each is aimed at promoting use of the national library through local library services.

The British Library (BL) and Co-East, the regional library consortium for the east of England are looking at the impact of providing free access to BL's electronic table of contents service which is accessed through a Web-based service called *inside*. *Inside* consists of the contents pages of the 20,000 most requested journal titles and all conference proceedings held at the Document Supply Centre. The database has over 16 million articles and conference papers and is updated daily.

The pilot will:

- Look at the technical issues of providing access over a number of different platforms
- Look at the resource implications for the public libraries
- Collect statistics on the use of the service
- Promote the availability of service to the local communities
- Measure the impact on inter-library-lending requests
- Consider the targeting of specific clients groups e.g. distance learners and small businesses
- Look at what support will be needed from the national library in delivering the service

This pilot commenced in March 2001 with Peterborough Libraries making *inside* available over its Intranet.

The BL and SWRLS, the south west of England regional library consortium are developing a pilot study to define the factors influencing the decline in inter-library-lending within the UK public library sector. The pilot will have particular reference to charges for ILL levied by the lender to the public library and the public library to its users. The project will seek to define measures resulting in the reversal of this trend and in doing so nurture the use of the UK's library resources across all local communities.

The conference paper will report on the progress with each of these initiatives and on any conclusions available at the time.

The full paper is not available for publication.