ELECTRONIC PUBLISHING IN THE FINNISH ENVIRONMENT INSTITUTE (FEI)

By

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Abstract

The National Electronic Library in Finland is a programme launched by the Ministry of Education. Its aim is to support research and teaching in Finland. The National Electronic Library collects electronic materials, such as electronic journals, reference databases and reference books. It also improves information retrieval from the information network and provides common access to information in electronic form.

The library and information service of the Finnish Environment Institute has been a participant in the consortia of The National Electronic Library. Thus, FEI has access to the electronic full text journals of Academic Press, Springer Verlag and EBSCO, a total of 1,800 electronic journals.

On our Intranet, there are links to these journals, as well as links to the tables of contents of environmental journals such as Kluwer, Wiley and Elsevier. On our Intranet, there are also links to the electronic form of journals for which we have a print subscription.

One task of the FEI is to promote environmental awareness. Electronic publishing is one way to do this more effectively. In 1999 FEI began electronic publishing. The venture was new and there has been much to learn. The library and information service has participated in this project with the publication service team. Last year we drew up electronic publishing instructions to authors. PDF is currently used and XML may be used in the future. It is planned to reduce the number of print editions produced and focus on electronic publishing

Electronic Journals

The National Electronic Library in Finland is a programme launched by the Ministry of Education. Its aim is to support research and teaching in Finland. The National Electronic Library was set in motion in March 1997. It collects electronic materials, eg electronic journals, reference databases and reference books. It also improves information retrieval from the information network and provides common access to information in electronic form. (http://hul.helsinki.fi/finelib/english/ index.html).

The library and information service of the Finnish Environment Institute (FEI) has been a participant in the consortia of the National Electronic Library. Thus FEI has an access to the electronic full text journals of Academic Press, Springer Verlag and EBSCO, altogether about 1,800 electronic journals.

In our Intranet there are links of the journals above and also the links of environmental journals with the tables of contents of eg, Kluwer, Wiley and Elsevier. In our Intranet we have also the links of those journals which we can use in electronic form because of the subscription of the print versions.

Many of the publishers have Contents Direct – a service without charge (so far) to the email addresses of the users and it's a very useful and handy service which many of our customers use.

The situation with the electronic journals is at the moment fascinating but also very confused and incomplete. In spite of this, we have arranged courses for the personnel of FEI about the use of electronic journals. Also, the mentor activity among the library personnel has become very important. The biggest problem at the moment is the fact, that we don't have the references of the electronic journals in our collection database, but hold them separately in the library's Intranet home page as a directory format. It's for the sake of the lack of human resources, because it's a question of many hundred titles of journals. It's possible that the National Electronic Library will solve this problem, because the situation is the same in many libraries. Another problem is that these electronic products are very expensive and the libraries of research centres don't receive any subvention of the price like the university libraries do. Besides it seems that from now on we have to pay also part of the salary of our contact person in the National Electronic Library.

We ought to live in a paperless society but it's easy to notice, that the electronic journals have increased the output of articles. It's because the displays are not at the moment effective enough for reading.

We have cancelled some print journal subscriptions but in general our customers use electronic and print forms side by side. Perhaps very soon the time is ripe for changing the culture and using only electronic journals but before this happens there are some problems to solve concerning using of old volumes, (archives) connection services, prices and licence politics.

In the future I wish that the Electronic Library will make a licence agreement at a reasonable price with Elsevier, because they publish many essential environmental journals. I wish too, that in the future it will be possible to profile and choose some parts of the consortium products instead of the whole package offered by the publisher.

Electronic Publishing

The task of the Finnish Environmental Institute is among other things to promote environmental awareness. Electronic publishing is one way to do it more extensively. In 1999 FEI began to transfer its publications to the electronic format. The situation was new and there has been much to learn. It has been important for us, that the electronic publications are easy to find and use for the customers. The printed publications of FEI have an uniform graphic layout and the same principles applied to the electronic versions.

In our institute the publishing activity has been divided into the two sectors, which are the publishing service team and the authors in the divisions. The library and information service has been a participant in this project together with the publication service team. Last year we made the instructions of electronic publishing to the authors. There were, for example, the following questions in the instructions: definitions (eg what electronic publication actually means), process of electronic publishing, copyright, file format (pdf, html), starting page, metadata and Dublin Core, codes and identifiers (like ISBN = International Standard Book Number and URN = Uniform Resource Name), addresses of the electronic publications in the directory tree, transfer of the electronic publications to the outside server and the practice of reference to the electronic publications. So *summa summarum* there were plenty of questions to solve and all of the issues were important. One of the most important is metadata, a description of an information resource in order to identify a resource to meet a particular information need. Also important is the format of the electronic publication. In our instructions we have recommended the PDF (Portable Document Format) format, because it's very useful and the only possibility because of scarce resources. Each PDF document contains a starting page with HTML and Dublin Core to ensure that the document will be found in information searches. Perhaps in the future we can make beside the structural documents using XML (Extensible Markup Language) which is an effective format in the Internet.

At the moment we have to get more experience and knowledge about electronic publishing. Also we have to renew our tools, the microcomputers. We have made cooperation with other institutes which are in the same stage.

Electronic publishing has had a strong effect on the library and information service. Boundaries between library and information service, publication service, www service and press and information service are less visible. Our expertise is needed. Also we have to renew our ADP library system, because we need a more effective archive for saving and searching the electronic publications.

In the future we can reduce the print editions and focus more and more on electronic publishing. However we can't completely give up the print versions because there are citizens who can't use the Internet at the moment, and as FEI is a public research institute, this is a question of democracy.

With each new manuscript we have to decide separately, which format is best for the users: only the printed version, the printed and electronic versions both or only the electronic version.

The electronic publications of FEI are free of charge. We think that they are also a tool of marketing, because after seeing the network version many customers want to buy a printed version, too. In Finland we have several national projects concerning electronic publishing, eg EVA (http://hul.helsinki.fi/eva/english.html) and ELEKTRA (http://renki.helsinki.fi/electra/english.html).

The aim of EVA is to create methods and tools for libraries to collect, register and archive electronic publications distributed on the Internet and to investigate conditions for long-term preservation of them.

The aim of ELEKTRA is to publish, collect, distribute and store national electronic articles and publications.