Medical Information Services in the Netherlands

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This article gives a brief description of the library organization in the Netherlands with emphasis on medical libraries. Library automation and cooperation is dominated by the PICA system (Project Integrated Catalogue Automation), a system which is used for shared cataloguing and interlibrary loan requests. The largest collection of periodicals in the sciences, life sciences and medicine in the Netherlands is found in the library of the Royal Netherlands Academy of Sciences. Second best are the libraries of the eight medical faculties in the Netherlands. Several health care institutes and organizations have important and specialized library collections. Library education in the Netherlands is either an in-service training with part-time theoretical courses or a four-year program in higher education. The biomedical information group of the Dutch Association of Librarians is well organized and very active. Task forces and study groups are working on several subjects, e.g. library automation, job descriptions, quality management, minimal requirements for medical libraries, internet sources and continuing education. The main issues in the next few years will be further development and integration of computer facilities together with library services. For most libraries finances will make it impossible to keep the collection of books and journals up-to-date and to maintain size and quality of the printed collection. Therefore pricing of document delivery, interlibrary loans, copyright, bibliographic and full-text databases will set constraints to information services where automation and networking promise potentially unlimited possibilities.

Libraries in the Netherlands1)

The Royal Library was founded in 1798. This library serves as a sort of national library regarding its responsibility for the union catalogues and its central position in interlibrary lending. There is no legal deposit of publications in the Netherlands, but most publishers cooperate on a voluntary basis in order to compose a national bibliography and to

1) オランダの図書館について、特に医学図書館を中心に簡単に紹介する。図書館の機械化や協力はPICA（Project Integrated Catalogue Automation）システムが主力となっている。PICAシステムは目録の共同製作や相互利用の申込に利用されている。オランダにおける科学、生命科学、医学雑誌の最大コレクションはRoyal Netherlands Academy of Sciencesの図書館によるもので、次いで8医科大学図書館所蔵のものが第2である。その他のいくつかの医療機関でも専門的な重要な図書館コレクションを所蔵している。オランダでの図書館教育は、定時制学習コースを受けながらの館内教育でも、4年間の高等教育プログラムでもどちらでも良い。オランダ図書館員協会の生物医学情報グループはうまく組織され、たいへん活動的である。研究グループは、いくつかの種類について活動している。例えば、機械化、業務の分析、品質管理、医学図書館にとって最低必要条件、インターネット源、継続教育。今後数年間の主要課題は、図書館サービスとともに、コンピュータ設備のさらにもうすんだ開発と統合だろう。たいていの図書館予算では、最新の本や雑誌を所蔵し、印刷物の質や量を持続させることが不可能となるだろう。それゆえに、ドキュメントデリバリーや相互利用、著作権、書誌およびフルテキストのデータベースなどの費用は、機械化やネットワークが約束した限りない情報サービスの可能性への制約となるだろう。

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cooperate with the Royal Library and Academy Library; this cooperation has a great influence on library matters. A most visible result is the PICA system that is in use by at least 11 of the university libraries and by most of the major public libraries. The integration of the National Central Catalogue and the Interlibrary Loan System with the local catalogues and library systems as well as the connection of these systems to the academic computer network (SURFnet) is a great advantage for librarians and library users in the Netherlands. Most interlibrary loan requests are answered by photocopy delivery within one week. With this system coordination of collection management is very well possible.

Hospital libraries are independent from the universities. Some 15 years ago a small group of hospital librarians started to use the same library automation system (STRIX). This initiative was followed by many more and nowadays this group consists of some 60 hospital libraries. For these libraries the local catalogue system is connected to and integrated into the PICA system. Shared cataloguing facilities are available as well as the interlibrary loan system.

The Dutch Association of Librarians (NVB)

Most librarians in the Netherlands are member of the association, either personally (2200) or by their institutions (600). There are 8 sections in the association of which the Biomedical Information Group (BMI) is one of the smaller ones (with 270 members). This section was founded in 1952 as a working group of the scientific libraries section. The aims and activities of the BMI are:

- to promote the biomedical information centres and the supply of literature;
- to organize meetings, symposia and training courses in order to advance cooperation and medical librarianship;
- to stimulate communication among librarians.
in medicine and health care for which purpose the semiannually newsletter BIOMETADIES is published.¹

The Study Group Library Automation for Hospital Libraries is part of the BMI and consists of the medical librarians cooperating in the STRIX and PICA library systems.

The Task Force on Medical Library Education started to work in 1991 in order to advise the board of the BMI on educational requirements for medical librarians. Long term objective of the task force is to improve image and self-esteem of medical librarians and to create opportunities to get certificates and qualifications. The short term objective is to initiate a continuing education program for medical librarians. This program is based on the requirements that were formulated in a report Educational Qualifications (1992). To realize this continuing education program there is a strong cooperation with two colleges for higher education in librarianship. A modular program is set up, three modules are already created, the fourth is now being prepared, the fifth will be developed early 1996. These modules are three day courses on the following subjects: CD-ROM management, Dutch biomedical information sources, the Dutch health care system, Management of medical information sources and International bibliographic databases.

The Dutch Online Users Group (VOGIN) was founded in 1979. A biomedical subgroup was formed in order to promote the usage of specific bibliographic databases and to make comparisons. The first generation of biomedical online users in the Netherlands was trained by the Medlars Information Centre of the Karolinska Institute (Sweden) in searching Medline and using McSH (Medical Subject Headings of Medline). By the end of this year the VOGIN will become a section of the NVB. The biomedical working group of VOGIN has a strong connection to BMI with the collaboration and participation in a task force for the evaluation of biomedical sources available via Internet.

**Issues and Challenges in Medical Librarianship**

**Collection development**

The PICA system offers the opportunity to coordinate collection development amongst participants, be it universities, medical faculty libraries or hospital libraries. As a tool in collection development the participating university libraries introduced the Netherlands Basic Classification (NBC) scheme. Within this classification there is only a limited number of codes per discipline available, for medicine not more than a hundred codes (from 44.00 to 44.99) are available. Collection profiles are to be made according to this classification and a comparison of the collections will be possible with regard to the number of titles purchased, costs per code and goals set for collection development. Although a strong plea was made to use this scheme for shelving, most libraries prefer other, more detailed shelving schemes. Medical libraries facing collection movement to a new library building most probably will make use of the Classification System of the National Library of Medicine (NLM, Bethesda, USA); about half of the academic medical libraries already use this classification either for shelving or for subject indexing.

**Descriptors and subject cataloging**

For subject indexing the medical libraries of the universities and academic hospitals make use of the fore-mentioned NLM classification, the NBC and a national (Dutch) thesaurus for subject indexing.

The hospital libraries cooperating in the STRIX/PICA automation system make use of a simplified and translated version of MeSH for subject indexing.

**Journal subscriptions**

Most medical libraries in the Netherlands make use of the services of a subscription agent. The university libraries take care of and are responsible for purchasing books and journals also for the medical and other faculty libraries. For years now
the annual journal price increase amounts approximately 10% but library budgets lag far behind. Academic medical libraries face the problem of cancellations even more than hospital libraries since the costs of subscriptions in the research fields do rise more than in the clinical area. Slightly different methodologies are in use to curtail the journal collection to user needs, including usage statistics, impact factors, questionnaires, user surveys. All medical librarians face shrinking journal collections, growing numbers of interlibrary loan requests and an increase in charging the end-user.

Document delivery

The PICA system is used for approximately 95% of the interlibrary loan requests of academic medical libraries. The remaining 5% concerns books or journal titles not found in the PICA database, but nevertheless available in one of the specialized libraries. International requests are sent to the British Library Document Supply Centre (United Kingdom of Great Britain) or to the Zentralbibliothek der Medizin (Cologne, Germany). Many libraries making use of the PICA system have agreed to cooperate voluntarily with the project of rapid document delivery (RAPDOC). Libraries taking part in this project guarantee the mailing of requested photocopies within 24 hours, which means receipt within 48 hours after posing the request in the system. Logistics in many libraries had to be changed to give such a high priority to the photocopy service. Taking part in the RAPDOC project has the advantage that most of our ILL requests are answered within a few days as well. In the future the PICA system will make it possible to charge library accounts for document delivery, avoiding many hours of work in preparing and sending invoices.

Another feature of the PICA system is the end-user account. End-users can open an account with their library and use the PICA system themselves to send in requests for photocopies and making use of the Online Contents for that matter. Anyone who has access to the academic network and has settled an account with his/her library is no longer obliged to go to the library for making ILL requests. As we have no experience as yet with end-user accounts in my library I cannot foresee what the consequence will be for the library workload.

Bibliographic databases

The most popular, i.e. the most heavily used bibliographic database in medicine in the Netherlands is Medline (composed by the National Library of Medicine, Bethesda, Md., USA). The pricing of this database is the major advantage over competitors such as EMBASE, BIOSIS, SCIsearch, PsycInfo and many others. Since the late seventies online searching is possible in the Netherlands and therefore use is made of host organizations such as DIMDI (Cologne, Germany) and Datastar (Bern, Switzerland). The latter being taken over by Knight-Ridder, which also holds the Dialog host computer and databases.

Since the late eighties CD-ROM technology was introduced in the Dutch medical libraries. The academic medical libraries were the first who could afford to purchase the equipment and to take a CD-ROM licence to Medline; nowadays at least 25% of the hospital libraries have Medline on CD-ROM available and there are many more to come. For the academic libraries the many CD-ROM discs and the heavy use of it urge for other solutions, such as multi-user access and networking. User friendly interfaces support the local or wide area network solutions. Licence agreements is the new subject in which librarians have to educate themselves.

Networking

Not only the PICA system with Online Contents and the Medline system will become available in local networks, other bibliographic tools are to come. Many researchers want to make use of the
Current Contents Life Sciences and the Current Contents Clinical Medicine current awareness services of ISI (Philadelphia, USA) either on diskette, CD-ROM or, preferentially, loaded on the local network. Not only bibliographic databases but also the many facilities of Internet will be offered to academic research and clinical staff. The KNAW library is about the first in the Netherlands to offer a World Wide Web (WWW) home page (http://www.library.knaw.nl) and services to many internet sources in biomedicine. A working group of the Dutch Online Users Group and of the Biomedical Information Group acts as an editorial board to evaluate biomedical internet sources in order to select the ones worth connecting to via the Web-pages.

Clinical librarianship

Despite the many electronic features for end-users via local area computer networks, clinical staff is still facing time constraints with regard to literature searching. Since five years a clinical librarian project is going on in the Academic Medical Centre of the University of Amsterdam. A member of the medical library staff, with good skills in online searching and well trained in medical terminology and clinical problems, visits once a week clinical bedside rounds of participating departments. The same afternoon, online literature searching is done in attendance of the postgraduate trainee responsible for that particular patient. The full-text of the four or five most relevant journal articles found by searching Medline are photocopied and delivered the same afternoon to the postgraduate and clinical supervisor. This service is very much appreciated and judged to be an essential contribution to postgraduate training and patient care.

The near future

Tailor made services and guidance to relevant and high-quality biomedical information sources as well as instruction how to use the many different bibliographic tools will be a most prominent part of the role of medical librarians in the near future.

References