Where do we go from here? - Perspectives for world-wide co-operation of veterinary libraries

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The '90s have seen the expansion of the Internet with the use of e-mail growing into a household means of communication, heavily increased traffic on the World Wide Web, and the possibility to download all kinds of documents or images from the latter no matter how important or trivial they may be. In this environment, which is a to a large extent a mixture of business and amusement, libraries are a minor party. As commercial information specialists in publishing companies or elsewhere are rapidly expanding their actions into the librarians’ domain, they will have to utilise modern technology in a way, by which they can optimise their services and thus show their efficiency. It may be objected that a number of impressive electronic catalogues already exist and that there are also some networks / union lists, which will supply documents ordered online. However, there are still more ways to enhance library services. Efforts should focus on the improvement of the line:

bibliographical verification - holdings - document delivery.

First it must be considered how to improve information. In the field of veterinary libraries just like in others this means online availability of

- holding information
- information about veterinary libraries
- information about veterinary schools/faculties
- yellow pages for veterinary and related libraries
- full text databases
- tables of contents of held journals

Holding information is covered to a large extent by the MLA/VMLS union list, to which also libraries from outside North America are contributing their catalogue data. The union list is well established and about to go online. Therefore the concept needs no introduction, but participation by as many libraries as possible is encouraged.

How many times have we seen questions on VETLIB-L about people’s addresses, about a special topic and the right contact person? All the list members have been helpful about these queries, but even in the past some of the questions could have been solved by the people who asked them through mere consultation of existing homepages. What is desired in this field is a page with all the links and searchable categories of the next three topics in the overview given above. Included should be subjects, schools / faculties and the respective libraries that are of interest to the
profession. On such a page we would appreciate links to special collections, persons, organisations, schools, conference schedules, and factual databases. Various homepages of libraries have a wealth of information to offer at present already, but it would be more convenient to have special research subjects or library collections already on the main page, for example the Veterinary Libraries Homepage.

Links should also be placed for full text databases of electronic journals and the files that are maintained by individual libraries. For example the library of the veterinary school of Hannover has started a full text database of its dissertations on a so-called archive server. The students of our school as well as the other schools of our state were encouraged and will be obliged by law to submit their theses in machine readable format, so it can be put on a server.

There should also be links to what is sometimes referred to as "online contents". This term describes tables of contents online. In the library network which the library of the Veterinary School of Hannover is part of tables of contents of 14000 journals are available and the libraries, which will supply articles from them are named for each journal. In order to minimise work, only one supplier for each journal is given. The library of the Veterinary School of Hannover covers all its specific titles. In a worldwide version of this system for veterinary and related journals this would have to be modified according to regional availability and balance between different libraries. The realisation could grow out of the union list of serials. The terms under which libraries would supply should be clearly given on the relevant page. It might be distinguished between various modes of conveyance and various distances.

One mode of conveyance needs an explanation. The library of the Veterinary School of Hannover is fortunate to have an Ariel workstation for file transfer. It is basically a networked computer with an IP address and a scanning device and a printer. Thus documents can be sent and received among partners with equal or compatible systems.

Over VETLIB-L there have been extremely good results in terms of reliability and speed of deliverance of articles. This is a great achievement in itself. Thanks are due to the moderator and participants. However, completeness of sources is something that is beyond the influence of VETLIB-L. So the proposed measures might complement the good work done so far.