

STRATEGIES FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF NOSP IN NORDIC AND BALTIC LIBRARIES

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A formidable increase in free searches and an encouraging increase in paid orders seem to suggest, that NOSP still has a future. Since the agreement with NORDINFO stipulates, that NOSP should be financed by income on its use, and the present use does not generate enough income to cover the cost of running NOSP, it is urgent to find new strategies for the financing and expediency of its services. Such strategies may include sharing costs on a Nordic basis with a view to free ordering, or changing the price policy; faster copy delivery, free dispatch of copies and loans between the Nordic countries.

For the moment 1309 Nordic and Baltic libraries are more or less regularly contributing reports of their holdings to the NOSP database through the National NOSP centres. After a few years of decrease in the use of NOSP, the year 2004 showed a formidable increase in searches in the NOSP database, a staggering 124,9 %, and paid orders increased by 22,2 %, from 2003. At the same time the number of paying subscribers to the ordering service NOSP-on-Web decreased from 386 to 341, 7,2 %. (For further statistics, see *Appendix 1*)

These numbers strengthens our belief, that NOSP still may have a future. At least it shows, that those still subscribing to the *NOSP-on-Web* ordering facility use it more. Could it be, that the gap between the increase in free searches and the increase in paid orders suggest, that libraries are performing the free searches in NOSP, and then order the article copies in Subito? What strategies could be taken to cope with that?

LOOKING BACK

When Norway took over the NOSP Centre in 1992, the agreement with the now closed-down NORDINFO (Nordic Council for Scientific Information) stated that the costs of running the NOSP centre should be covered by the income from the sales of the product. The agreement further acknowledged the participating partners a right to receive machine-readable NOSP-data free of charge for "national purposes". Since searches now are free, and NOSP was to be financed through paid use of it, the financial situation is considerably weakened, as there are now some fewer subscribers to the ordering facility than previously.

Prior to 1992 the partners had to pay for this data and the payment represented a third of the total costs of running the NOSP database. At present Denmark (Danbib) and Sweden (Libris) include the NOSP holdings information in their services thus making it less

interesting for Danish and Swedish libraries to subscribe to NOSP on Web.

During the discussions held at the Lysebu seminar in Oslo 1998, Denmark, and to some extent Sweden, expressed willingness to pay for the edited data. Hence, the new NOSP contract that was signed by all participating countries in 2000/2001 states: "The Participants have the right to receive edited data from the National Library of Norway in machine readable form. The price may be subject to negotiation between the two parties."

As *appendix 2* to this paper is an evaluation of the use of NOSP, conducted as a survey among NOSP libraries in 2002 that concluded with a problem of delivery time and finance.

Based on the result of this survey the meeting of NORON (a forum of Nordic Directors General of State Library Authorities and National Librarians) in January 2003 decided to grant an annual contribution of EUR 17.500 toward the cost of running NOSP for the years 2003 and 2004. This was to be shared between the Nordic countries according to a key set up by the Nordic Council of Ministers, based on the Gross National Product: Denmark 23,8 %, Finland 17,7%, Iceland 1,1%, Norway 23,4% and Sweden 34,2%.

We are happy, that from 2000/2001 Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, and the Faeroe Islands joined the cooperation and the name was changed to Nordic/Baltic Union Catalogue of Serials. We have appreciated very much their faithful and regular contributions to NOSP. Because of the economic situation, the Baltic countries have so far not been included in the proposed payment to NOSP, although their shares would have been quite small.

Since the number of libraries subscribing to the NOSP-on-Web ordering facility is decreasing, the management of NOSP has created a deficit for the National Library of Norway. This means, that we actually sponsor NOSP from 2005, beyond our share.

BIBLIOGRAPHIC QUALITY

NOSP was the first union catalogue, which used bibliographical data from the Paris ISSN International Centre as the primary source for the bibliographical records. When verified bibliographic data is not found in the ISSN database, they are taken from *New Serials Titles* (-1970) and *Ulrich list of serials* (1970-74). About 180.000 serials have ISSN. For the about 230.000 serials without ISSN, the national union catalogues or the national bibliographies of the Nordic and Baltic countries are used to verify bibliographical records.

The selection, preparation and extension of records in NOSP are the responsibility of the national union catalogues or national bibliographies in each country. All of this guarantees a high bibliographical quality of the NOSP products. NOSP covers references to approx 410.000 serials in 1.309 libraries in the Nordic and the Baltic countries.

With a few exceptions due to technical problems, new and revised holdings data are received four times a year from the nine cooperating countries and merged into the database. When false, missing or cancelled ISSN are discovered, these data are sent to

ISSN Paris, which, in their turn may alert the responsible ISSN centres in the Nordic and Baltic countries. Thus, NOSP is also a valuable source for the work at the ISSN Paris.

NOSP is the only database listing and maintaining the combined holdings of serials in the libraries of the Nordic and Baltic countries, and might as well be used as a budget support to each library, if the number of subscriptions in a library has to be reduced.

FUTURE STRATEGIES

Since the last edition of the NOSP Directory to Nordic and Baltic libraries balanced on the verge of a financial deficit, we conducted a survey of more than 400 Nordic libraries in March this year, asking whether the NOSP Directory should be continued. 85% of the respondents answered "No". So this publication will be discontinued.

The 2002 survey revealed that "NOSP is a much appreciated service, but the present level of subscriptions to NOSP-on-Web does not generate enough income. New sources of income must be found, and soon." We are planning to evaluate all the Norwegian union catalogues during 2005, including whether to continue or close down NOSP.

During 2004, a Government-initiated total reorganisation of the National Library of Norway, led to all vacant positions' being frozen. Unfortunately, the NOSP manager retired in December 2003. This, together with the insecure future of NOSP, has left the position of the NOSP manager vacant for more than a year. Only the technical side of NOSP, the merging of the incoming data, has been taken care of. If this is to be changed, we depend largely on finding a viable strategy for managing NOSP in the future.

Ideally, searches and ordering should be free for unlimited use for all. Some possible first measure strategies for the survival of NOSP could be:

By permanently sharing the cost between the participating countries' National libraries by percentage, based on each country's gross national product, we could either:

- Close down the present article copy ordering facility and export the NOSP-data for free national use to all participating countries, or
- Make the use of the present article copy ordering facility free for all libraries.

If external financing is not, or only partially granted, we could also change the price policy of the subscription, hoping that a lowered initial subscription cost would incite more libraries to subscribe.

If NOSP is going to cope with Subito's reliability and short delivery time, it would be equally important to reduce the delivery time. If a larger number of the big libraries would oblige themselves to NORKVIK¹, we might be a long way towards *that* goal. This agreement obligates the participating libraries to respond to article copy orders within 24 hours. At present only 14 Nordic libraries participate in NORKVIK.

Compared to NOSP's 1309 participating libraries, there are only 267 NORFRI² libraries in the Nordic countries. This agreement allows the participating libraries to send copies

and loans free of charge and postage between the Nordic countries, based on the idea that the cost of exchanging loans will be equalized in the long run. Many more libraries could thus contribute to an overall reduction of the expenses of billing and money transfer.

The National Library of Norway welcomes all interested colleagues to a seminar in a separate room for an informal brainstorming on strategies for the future of NOSP.

***APPENDIX 1: to Arne Gauslå's paper on
Strategies for development of NOSP in Nordic and Baltic Libraries:***

**STATISTICS ON FREE SEARCHES AND PAID ORDERS IN NOSP,
CONCLUDING THE YEARS 2000-2004**

NOSP	2000	2001	%	2002	%	2003	%	2004	%
Free searches	583.888	288.018	-51,7	259.918	-9,8	214.176	-17,6	481.750	+124,9
Paid orders	70.363	41.166	-41,5	26.734	-35,1	17.465	-34,8	21.349	+22,2
NoW subscr.³	360	397	+9,4	392	-1,3	386	-1,6	341	- 7,2
Contributors⁴	ca. 900	ca. 1.000	ca.+10	1.258 ⁵	ca.+25	1.294	+2,9	1.309	+1,1

FOOTNOTES

¹ <http://www.nrl.fi/nvbf/poul/>

² <http://inet.dpb.dpu.dk/nvbf/norfri.htm>

³ *Number of subscribers to NOSP-on-Web*

⁴ *Libraries contributing a report about their periodical holdings to NOSP via their national NOSP centres.*

⁵ *In 2002 about 250 Danish public libraries were added to the contributors to NOSP.*

*APPENDIX 2 to Arne Gauslå's paper on
Strategies for development of NOSP in Nordic/Baltic libraries:*

**Nordic and Baltic Union Catalogue of Serials (NOSP) -
future services and organisation**

Draft report of Survey October 2002

Written by Siv Hunstad, Brodd

1. The assignment

The National Library of Norway has asked Brodd to do a survey on the use of NOSP. Planning of future services and organisation will be based on the collected data.

The study was initiated by NORON and financed by NORINFO. NORON is the forum for The Directors General of Research Documentation, Academic and Special Libraries and The National Librarians of the Nordic countries.

Please note that within this report, when nothing else is stated, the term *Nordic countries* includes the following: Denmark, Estonia, Faroe Islands, Finland, Iceland, Latvia, Lithuania, Norway and Sweden.

It was agreed to base the study on the following two surveys:

- a) Interviews with key players, selected from the NOSP partnership and from libraries involved in ILL services within the Nordic countries.
- b) A web based survey, inviting a broad range of Nordic libraries to come forward with their views on NOSP.

This report is based on the findings of the two surveys. Information from the ISSN International Centre (Paris), the SVUC project (Nordic) and the SUNCAT project (UK) is also taken into account.

A summary of statistics from the web survey is available in *Appendix 1*. Please note that comments the respondents have come forth with, will not be published, but have been a valuable source of information for this report. The reporting is focused on analysing the market for the NOSP service, including areas for improvements.

2. NOSP

The Nordic/Baltic Union Catalogue of Serials (NOSP) contains references to serials available in Nordic countries. NOSP is based on a cooperation between national union catalogues and national libraries by merging data from The ISSN International Centre with location and holding information from the participating countries.

Article copies may be requested from the holding libraries via the online ordering service. NOSP covers all subject areas.

3. Why a union catalogue

The idea of a union catalogue for serials was first on the agenda in 1956. However, it took a number of years before NOSP was established as a tool for interlibrary lending.

As a union catalogue, NOSP has focus on the following tasks:

- * Give easy access for libraries and library patrons to information on serial holdings in Nordic countries.
- * Make available and increase the use of library holdings within the Nordic countries.
- * Make available and increase the use of documents published within the Nordic countries.

The only way of efficiently addressing these tasks has been through the gathering of records for titles and holdings from relevant sources into a common, physical database.

Until very recently there has been no alternative solution. But now, the use of Z39.50 to establish joint access to relevant Nordic resources, must be addressed. This is discussed in chapter 5 "Technological issues".

4. The Findings

Decrease in use

Statistics on the use of the NOSP database shows a significant decrease in use. The survey shows the following major factors behind the observed decrease:

1. A great number of libraries prefer other sources than NOSP. This has nothing to do with the quality of NOSP or NOSP service. The problem is delivery time and fees charged by the libraries. Most Nordic libraries deliver too late and charge too high fees. Some libraries use NOSP for verification of serials titles, but order article copies through other channels.
2. NOSP records are included in the DANBIB database and most Danish libraries use NOSP records through Danbib. Many Danish libraries know they are using NOSP records.
3. NOSP records are included in the Libris database and an increasing number of Swedish libraries use NOSP records through Libris. However, in Sweden the focus has been on Libris interlibrary lending. Few are aware of the availability of NOSP records in Libris.
4. More college libraries have joined the BIBSYS cooperative in Norway. Within the BIBSYS cooperative, there is a preference for BIBSYS interlibrary lending.

5. Electronic serials and fulltext databases are as a general rule not registered in NOSP. Increased use of such resources will result in decreased use of NOSP. Such resources are often available through consortium agreements, limiting the availability of these resources to a given group of students and staff.
6. Increased use of the Internet as a primary source of information. Students, staff and all other library users, perform their own searches, at home, at work, in the library or anywhere else.

All this taken into account, printed serials are still much in demand in libraries. The main reasons for not using NOSP are the delivery time and the charging policies for Nordic libraries. This issue must be addressed.

Printed serials face heavy competition from their electronic counterparts, and also from other Internet based resources. This competition will increase as more serials are converted to continuing resources.

NOSP quality

The general impression is that the NOSP database is regarded as a high quality resource, appreciated by the Nordic libraries. Quality issues are not the cause of decreasing use. However, some areas for improvement have been identified.

1. More frequent updates of the NOSP database will improve quality.
2. Improved procedures for cooperation with the ISSN International Centre in Paris will improve quality both of the NOSP and the ISSN databases. This should include regular reporting of "ISSN request" to the ISSN Centre in Paris, when no ISSN match is found for serials normally expected to have an ISSN.
3. Inclusion of more bibliographic information on serials will improve quality. This should include linking of related titles.

NOSP - pricing and economy

Most libraries find NOSP prices reasonable. The problem are fees from the delivering libraries, not payment for NOSP services. There is one exception - public and school libraries seem to be more price sensitive.

Income from subscriptions to NOSP products are supposed to cover the costs of running the NOSP Centre. The present level of subscriptions do not generate enough income. The National Library of Norway can not run the service for a long period of time without cost recovery.

5. Technological issues

In the history of NOSP, technology and organisation have been the issues. In the present situation this is not the case.

The choice of establishing the NOSP Centre as part of the National Library in Norway has been a happy one, and made it possible for the NOSP Centre to serve its users well, and also to improve products gradually. The present web solution with ordering facilities is easy to use for anybody interested.

Concerning the use of Z39.50, there are three factors to be taken into account:

a) Use of Z39.50 to give joint access to a large number of databases does not work well. The limit is 10-12 databases with the present day technology. Complexity of the searches might alter this limit up and down a bit, but on average the figure is 10-12, which means that Z39.50, from a technological point of view, might be used to join the national union catalogues to give joint access, like in the SVUC project. Clumping all single, Nordic libraries holding serials through Z39.50 is not feasible; again, with present technology.

b) Bibliographic information has a complex structure. Given great acceptance for international standards, there still is plenty of room for differences in registration practices. This is particularly the case with serials.

This is a problem to be faced with when gathering records into a union catalogue, which easily ends up with a duplication problem. Good algorithms for duplication control has to be found, bearing in mind that when facing the cardinal sin of deleting information that should not have been deleted, duplication is to be preferred.

The problem is even greater when using Z39.50. It becomes a matter of recall and precision, basically a case for bibliographical control rather than a technological issue. Matthew J. Dovey has described this very accurately in: <http://www.ariadne.ac.uk/issue23/dovey/>

c) Due to the lack of standards for holdings, the function "item order" is not available in most Z39.50 applications. You can find a serials title, but you can not put an order for an article.

Conclusion:

This is not the time to discharge of a well running web based NOSP service for a new and unproven Z39.50 solution. This being said - the possibilities the Z39.50 gives us, are promising. The Nordic library community, including NOSP, should put Z39.50 to use in projects, and gain experience. And we might make some good use of it for particular purposes.

Both Sweden and The UK are now implementing the *Marc21* format, a giant step forward. Widespread use of the Marc21 format, copy cataloguing, export and import of bibliographical and holding records, improved services from the ISSN Centres, improved standards for holdings and other activities will gradually give us better odds concerning bibliographical control.

Z39.50 might be, or will be, the solution at a later stage.

6. The NOSP challenges

6.1 The Decrease in use

6.1.1 How to cover costs

The interviews and survey show that NOSP is a much appreciated service, available through more than one channel. But the present level of subscriptions does not generate enough income. New sources of income must be found, and soon. Use of NOSP records through Danbib and Libris do not result in income for the NOSP Centre.

The NOSP contract includes the following statement: - "§ 3.4 The Participant has the right to receive edited data from the NLN [= National Library of Norway] in machine readable form. The price will be subject to negotiation between the two parties. The data can not be sold or given to a third party without the written consent of the NLN."

Contributions in the form of bulk payments for each country might be an alternative to the present subscription system. A combination of bulk payment and subscription might be considered.

6.1.2 The delivery time and fee problem.

This is really a problem outside NOSP's scope. It is up to the library authorities and politicians, and the Nordic libraries themselves, to solve it.

Subito is at present the most used source for ordering articles, and it is fast, reliable and cheap. Subito is a frontend organisation for a number of German libraries. The price of an article copy and the time span for delivery are set by the German politicians. It must have been quite a challenge for German libraries to meet these demands. German libraries were not known to be fast, or cheap, previously. It is not known if the German libraries manage to cover their costs, but this is an interesting question, indeed.

In the Nordic countries, Norfri and Nordkvik are positive initiatives to overcome this speed/time problem.

6.1.3 The availability of electronic serials and fulltext databases.

This is a copyright issue. Requires an initiative from the library authorities.

More and more serials are converting to these forms. The ISSN organisation has great attention on what they call continuing resources. Iceland has managed to negotiate a common agreement for all libraries in the countries. But they are not allowed to deliver to libraries outside Iceland. Hopefully more countries can get such general agreements. "Permission granted for ILL transactions", at least within the Nordic countries, must be part of these consortium agreements.

These resources must be catalogued in a suitable way as part the library holdings and be available in NOSP.

6.1.4 Copies as file attachments or by fax

This is a copyright issue. Requires an initiative from the library authorities.

Subito normally forwards all copies as file attachments to an email. This is the case also when the original document is in paper form. Nordic libraries prefer this form of delivery. It is fast, reliable and easy to print out by the library for the library patron.

There is some concern that Subito might not be within the boundaries of present European copyright law. Nordic libraries in general, adhering to common understanding of copyright law, do not deliver the same service. Though they would very much like to.

From the library point of view the best thing would be if the file attachment from the delivering library could be passed on electronically to the library patron requesting the article. This procedure saves a lot of work and paper handling. And would be appreciated by the library patrons. But it is not acceptable from a copyright point of view.

6.2 Recommendations for quality improvements

These are ideas for long term improvements.

- * The NOSP partners should investigate the possibility of more frequent updates, including the feasibility of some sort of replication between the national union catalogues and NOSP. The possibility of two-way replication might be considered to ensure consistency.
- * The NOSP partners should investigate the possibility of improving quality by closer cooperation with the international ISSN Centre and with the national Centres. The ISSN International Centre has a tender out for new software for the ISSN database, requesting among other things Z39.50 functionality. This new software might give new opportunities for smooth processing. Efficient workload distribution between The ISSN International Centre, national ISSN Centres and national libraries must be in focus.
- * More information available on serials. The Draft Invitation to Tender for the

Provision of a National Serials Union Catalogue for the UK Education and Research Community includes in appendix 1: SUNCAT Statements of Requirements. The Tender documents is available at: http://www.jisc.ac.uk/pub02/suncat_tender.doc

This document points out areas for improved bibliographical information. In the NOSP context this might be done by allowing Zsearches on demand against the national union catalogues where this is relevant, or CONSER in other cases.

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For detailed response statistics, see <http://www.nb.no/nosp/Sluttrapport.pdf> (English)