Trends in document delivery system in the Medical Library Information System of the Korean Medical Library Association

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Abstract
This case study aimed at disclosing the changing trends of amount of document delivery services (DDSs) in the Medical Library Information System (MEDLIS) of the Korean Medical Library Association (KMLA). The data from 2001 to 2014 in the MEDLIS were searched and analyzed according to year. To know outside environment of DDS, The trend in use of DDS of the Research Information Sharing Service and the journals listed in the Directory of Open Access Journal were presented. The DDS request in MEDLIS decreased year by year from 214,304 in 2001 to 50,352 in 2014 (23.4%). There was an increased number of requests a monthly average from 4,799 in 2009 to 8,157 in 2014 (170.0%) through Research Information Sharing Service. As of 2015, 10,702 journals were listed in the Directory of Open Access Journal. I can find that the continuous decreased request of DDS in MEDLIS which might be originated from the increased number of DDS service through RISS and the increased number of open access journals.

Keywords
Access to information; Information dissemination; Information services; Korea; Medical libraries

Introduction
Researchers look for academic journals at the libraries of the institutions they belong to. Libraries select journals that suit the research topics of the researchers of their institutions under their unique management policies. They try to expand the number of journals they subscribe to, but cannot subscribe to all relevant journals due to budget limitations. Unsubscribed journals are provided by request through a document delivery service (DDS). A DDS refers to a service offering a copy of the full text of print or electronic documents possessed by other institutions to users via mail, fax, or an electronic transmission system. A DDS is a type of resource sharing service and one of the core functions of today's libraries. In Korea, the service is
mostly provided by either the Research Information Sharing Service (RISS) of the Korea Education and Research Information Service, the National Digital Science Library of the Korea Institute of Science and Technology, or the Medical Library Information System (MEDLIS) of the Korean Medical Library Association (KMLA). This case study aimed at disclosing the current status of changing pattern of DDS in the KMLA. The background of the changing pattern was also discussed.

**Trends in Document Delivery Services in Medical Libraries**

Among major DDS providers in Korea, MEDLIS was the first to provide the service by establishing an information sharing agreement in November 1968, and issued the first edition of the National Catalog of Medical Journals. Today, MEDLIS is actively used among members of the KMLA, an association of medical libraries that belong to universities and hospitals, to share academic journals. However, it is obvious that the total number of requests for copies of materials has recently been declining. As seen in Fig. 1, the number was 214,304 in 2001, but sharply decreased to 50,352 in 2014. The figure of 2014 is only 23.4% of that of 2001. It is worth considering potential reasons for this trend: whether the number of journals each library subscribes to is increasing; whether users are increasingly turning to other systems rather than MEDLIS; whether there is an increased number of open access journals, which would be available without subscribing to electronic resources or using a DDS.

**The Trend in Library Subscriptions to Electronic Resources**

The overall number of subscriptions to periodical publications and electronic resources seems to be on the rise in Korea. The statistics from the National Library Statistics Agency during the period of 2008 to 2013 shows that 316,117 domestic journals and 1,465,825 journals published outside Korea were registered in 2008, but the numbers had risen to 707,384 and 3,137,621 respectively by 2013 (Fig. 2). On the other hand, annual budgets for libraries for purchasing new materials are not catching up with the overall inflation or markups by publishers. Libraries still find it difficult to select and set up plans for electronic journal subscriptions every year. Therefore, the decreased number of requests for DDS or MEDLIS services might not be a result of an increased number of subscriptions to electronic journals by each library.

**The Trend in Use of the Document Delivery Service of the Research Information Sharing Service**

According to research by Williams and Woolwine [1], expanded subscriptions to databases or electronic resources by academic libraries actually lead to an increased use of DDSs. The 2014 white paper on ICT in Education Korea released by Korea Education and Research Information Service reported that almost all Korean university libraries, but not public libraries, are joining the RISS service, and the number of requests increased to a monthly average of 8,157 in 2014 from 4,799 in 2009 [2]. The RISS service attracted more non-academic users after expanding its lending service and providing free copies of foreign materials through its Foreign Research Information Center. One of the factors behind the success was delivering requested materials to users faster by adding a digital transmission service in addition to the traditional mailing services. However, this does not completely explain why only the RISS saw an increase and not MEDLIS, as MEDLIS also provides a similar digital delivery service.
Increase in the Number of Open Access Journals

Meanwhile, open access journals are becoming increasingly available. Open access journals serve as an alternative to conventional journals currently fraught with many issues including: major journals dominating official academic communications; soaring subscription costs; complex review procedures; the monopoly of commercial publishers on academic journals; abuse of copyright, etc. Open access journals aim at providing research results to anyone for free online. The Directory of Open Access Journals report shows a sharp climb in the number of open access journals during 2002 to 2015, as seen in Fig. 3. In 2002, 32 of them first appeared in the directory, and as of 2015, 10,702 are in operation. The biomedical field has the highest number of open access journals worldwide [3]. According to Universities UK, 20% of articles published by UK researchers over a recent 2-year period are accessible for free. The ratio rises to 24% and 32%, 6 months and 12 months, respectively, after publication [4]. Many journals still stick to the traditional channels of academic information sharing, but movements to fundamentally address the existing problems with the channels, represented by promoting open access resources, are becoming more popular in Korea and worldwide.

Conclusion

The request of DDS through MEDLIS has decreased year by year from 2004 to 2015 up to less than one fourths. It may be a originated from the increase of online journals accessible through researchers’ institute and increase of open access journal. It is reported that many major full text providers outside Korea, including the British Library Document Supply Centre of the British Library, are facing a decline in users [5]. There is a need to develop a more prompt and efficient electronic full text copy service to meet the increased preference for electronic resources while not violating copyright law. At the same time, efforts to promote open access journal publication should involve more researchers by teaching them its social benefits.

Conflict of Interest

No potential conflict of interest relevant to this article was reported.

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