

## **Electronic Document Delivery in a Biomedical Library: Costs and Benefits**

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In the last few years, scientific literature, and bio-medical literature in particular, has seen the number of publications increase exponentially while, at the same time, the financial resources available for their acquisition, as well as for expanding old and new collections, are shrinking. In addition, the globalisation of biomedical research has resulted, on one hand, in strong growth in document-delivery services and, on the other hand, in the necessity for users to have original documents available to them, within ever- shorter timeframes. This need arises not only from the continuously increasing pressure under which researchers operate but also from expectations raised by the availability, in electronic format, of articles and of scientific literature in general.

Unfortunately, many of the most important sources are not yet available in electronic format. Electronic document-delivery is being set up in order to respond to the necessity for the timely updating of libraries.

In the spring of 2000, the University of Padua began to experiment with electronic document-delivery, using various document-transmission systems and turning to commercial suppliers or to Italian and non-Italian associations.

The purpose of this paper is to examine not only the advantages but also the problems associated with the change in service supply as experienced by the Vallisneri Library. This library has been managing traditional document-delivery since 1990, using procedures that have by now become well-established but which are uneconomical in terms of time, costs and use of human resources.