

## **Hellenic Academic Libraries Link (HEAL-Link): when, why, how?**

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In this presentation I shall try to answer the following questions: Why did we start a consortium? When HEAL-Link came to existence? How do we do business in HEAL-Link? An account of the history of HEAL-Link from 1998 till today would give a reply to these questions.

You are all well aware of the price increases in journal subscriptions in the past decades. Only between the years 1990-1995, subscription journal rates in all fields increased by 82%. This fact had caused major problems to libraries all over the world. Problems that were even more acute in countries where libraries were not adequately funded and where the national currency was not strong.

Higher education is by constitution public in Greece. Universities are constantly underfunded and so are libraries. The combination of stagnant budgets with the high inflation of previous decades and the double digit increases of journal prices forced the academic libraries to almost eliminate their book budgets and keep canceling journal titles year after year. By 1997 most academic libraries had high debts and an ever shrinking journal collection. As an example the library of the Physics Dept. in Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, one of the two bigger universities in Greece, had to cut the majority of its journal subscriptions and move from a collection of 200 journals to 54.

Before HEAL-Link libraries did not have a history of cooperation in Greece. With the exception of a national program for document delivery that started back in the 1990s under the initiative of the National Documentation Center, libraries for a long time operated in isolation both at a national as well as an international level. With a limited national collection, they turned to the British Library Documentation Center for interlibrary loan services at a high cost which were unable to contain and passed it directly to the users.

In 1995 the Ministry of National Education and Religious Affairs requested proposals for funding from the Higher Education Institutes for improving their library services. All institutions received funding that it was in part funding from the European Union's Structural Funding Program. Most institutions hired personnel, supplemented their journals' budgets, purchased library automation systems, undertook retrospective cataloguing, etc. Trying to promote cooperation between the Greek Academic Libraries the Ministry also funded a project for:

- ⇒ Creating a Union Catalogue for the Greek Academic Libraries
- ⇒ Dealing with the problem of escalating serials costs

⇒Preparing a framework for an electronic database of Greek theses and dissertations.

A number of committees were appointed and one of them was aimed at studying the possibility of cooperation at a national level on collection development of the journals' subscriptions of the higher education institutes. The committee suggested to undertake a pilot project in three disciplines physics, chemistry and informatics across the science faculties of the universities. The conspectus method was followed and the conspectus software was purchased. The project lasted for a year. It entailed detailed study of the syllabus of the departments involved and evaluation of the journals' collections, against the perceived needs of the departments, depending on the level of study (undergraduate, graduate, research level) and the specific areas of research interest of the departments. Upon completion of the study it was realized that all libraries in the disciplines under study were down to the core collections, so these titles were impossible to cut in favor of another university. The savings in canceling some peripheral titles would be marginal, not to mention the reaction of the faculty members who were suspicious of cooperation initiatives.

The committee suggested that the focus should be shifted from coordinated collection development in print publications, to exploration of national licenses for online databases. To achieve this, the constitution of a consortium, as the international practice suggests, was required. In November 1998 we were introduced to the mailing list of ICOLC (International Coalition of Library Consortia) by Dr. David Kohl that was invited to talk about Ohiolink at our Annual Conference. In December 1998, we signed an agreement with Elsevier and soon after this with OCLC for access to FirstSearch. By the end of 1999 we also signed agreements with Springer, Kluwer, MCB and Academic Press. The effect on library services was enormous for all academic institutions. Libraries especially in small institutions in remote places with a few hundred or even worse with tenths of journals, had access to almost 4000 electronic journals and 12 bibliographic databases through FirstSearch, while before HEAL-Link only one academic library had a print collection of almost 3000 journals. All the rest had far more limited journals' collections. As a result of HEAL-Link's success the 21 research institutes of the Ministry for Development and the Ministry of Agriculture requested to join the consortium in the beginning of 2000.

HEAL-link is governed by a 37 member steering with one representative from each academic institution big or small. The research institutions are associate members and have no vote in the governing body. Although HEAL-Link has no legal structure, the rectors of all academic institutions signed a statement of understanding. Back in 1998 the academic institutions were bound to keep their journals subscriptions to the publishers we had an agreement with, while HEAL-Link paid for the access fees. At the time we did not negotiate any more agreements because our project's budget was already stressed to its limits. The end of 2001 earmarked the completion of our first agreement with Elsevier. We

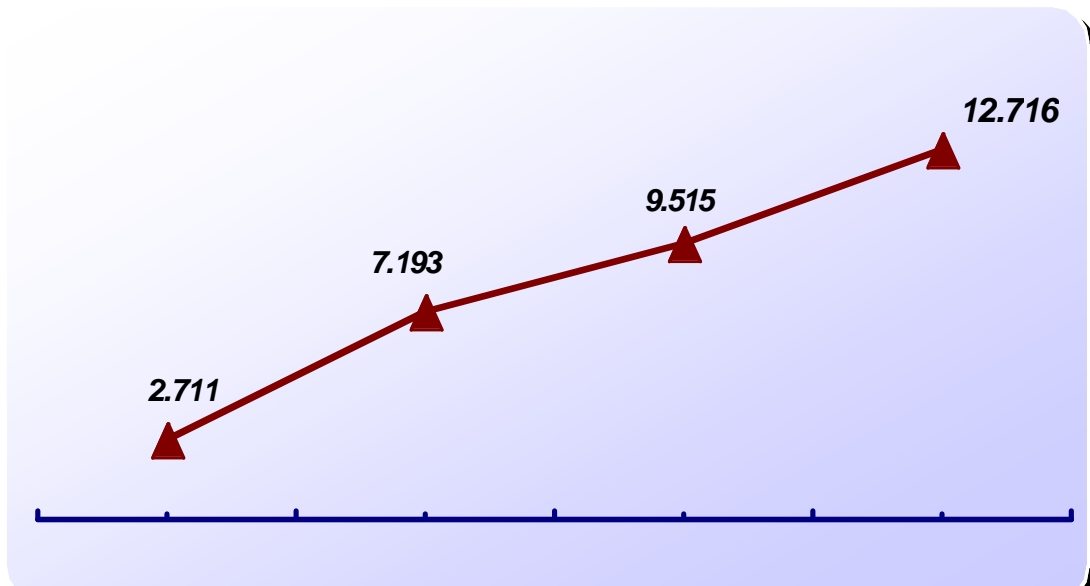
were confident that not only we would receive funding under the next (3<sup>rd</sup>) European Structural funding program but also we would get more money to negotiate further license agreements with more publishers.

Although HEAL-Link has 57 members, back in 2000 only 10 of them had the biggest print collections and thus had the responsibility to keep their print subscriptions to the publishers' we had an agreement with. By the time we were ready to negotiate the renewals' of our license agreements with the publishers, those 10 libraries could no longer keep their print subscriptions to those publishers. A couple of them had debts and could not even renew their subscriptions for 2002. It seemed like a recipe for disaster. The rational decision would be to give up and wait for better times. But from the time of Leonidas in ancient Greece, where three hundred Greeks from Sparta fought the army of Xerxes and all died in the process, Greeks tend to make risky decisions at difficult times. Since the governing body of HEAL-Link had no power to find a solution, the steering committee decided to submit a report to the Council of Rectors of Greek Academic Institutions. The Council of Rectors meets about 4 times a year to discuss policy issues and the meetings are always attended by the Minister for Education.

In a short report the steering committee focused on the debts for the journal's subscriptions of a number of major institutions and suggested that the only viable solution would be to move to electronic only. We did not have high hopes since the Council of Rectors had never before discussed library issues and we were pleasantly surprised when the council decided to go to e-only, not only for the Elsevier agreement, but for all of them. Moving to e-only meant a major change in cost allocation between the academic libraries. In e-only environment, there are no print subscriptions to base the cost on, and everybody shares electronically exactly the same information. To make a long story short, in the next meeting of rectors the steering committee of HEAL-Link submitted another report that dealt with the problem of cost allocation in the e-only environment. A committee of vice-rectors was appointed and in cooperation with the steering committee suggested an algorithm. Finally the third consecutive council that discussed the issue decided that the amount of money needed to cover the budget of HEAL-Link should be top sliced at the ministry before the budgets are distributed to the universities. In two meetings at the Ministry for Education among the general secretary for education, the general secretary of the ministry for development and a committee of rectors, it was decided that not only the funding should be central but the ministry decided, instead of slicing the already limited budgets of the universities, to provide extra funding to cover the cost of the HEAL-Link agreements.

So in 2002 the steering committee of HEAL-Link not only negotiated the renewal of the existing license agreements but signed many new ones. All our license agreements for the period 2003-2006 were e-only and HEAL-Link became one of the first consortia, probably in the world, to move to e-only. According to the

instructions of the Council of Rectors all academic libraries had to cancel the print subscriptions for the journals that HEAL-Link had signed an agreement for, and only one print copy is kept at the National Documentation Center as an archive. By 2003 HEAL-Link had agreements with 14 major publishers and more than 8000 journals. The following table shows the increase in numbers of electronic journals accessible to the members of HEAL-Link from 1999 till today.



Giving access to all the academic community in Greece, even to the smallest institutions that used to have only a handful of subscriptions, was short of a miracle and had an immediate impact on usage from the very beginning. As you can see in the table below back in 1998-2000 and with not very good network infrastructure in Greece at that time, the usage was higher than OhioLink and it still keeps increasing after almost 9 years.

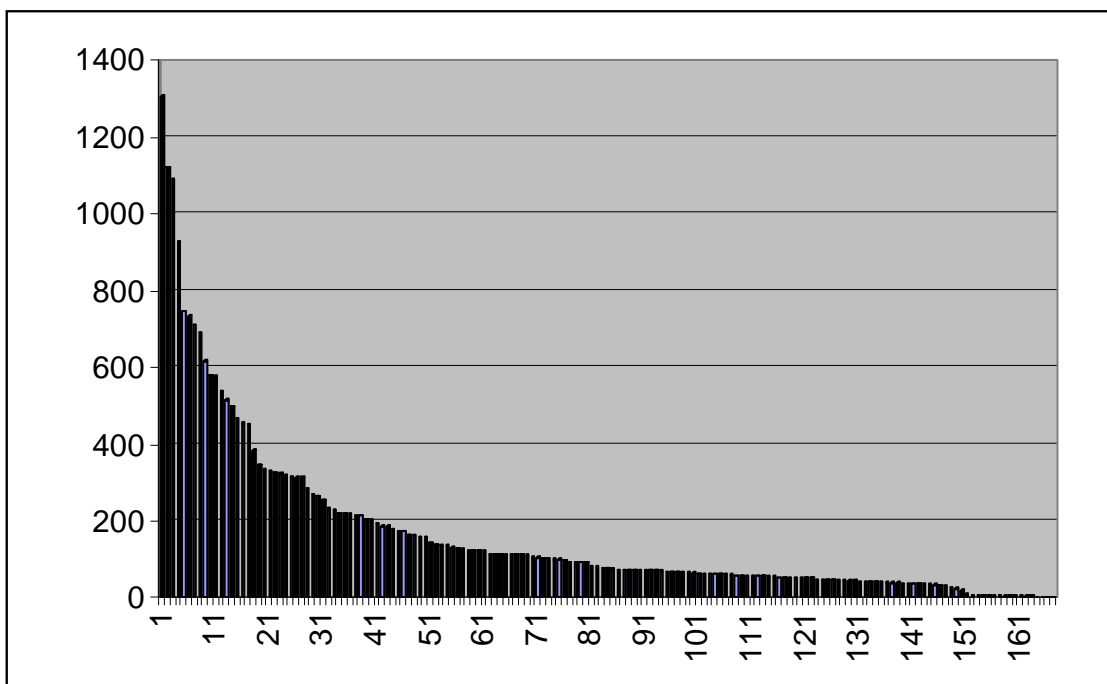
|  | Number of requests | Downloaded articles |
|--|--------------------|---------------------|
| OhioLink<br>(Elsevier, Academic Press)<br>April '98-March '99    | 10.000.000         | 280.000             |
| HEAL-Link<br>(Elsevier e-journals)<br>September '99-August 2000) | 1.923.183          | 329.000             |

**Table 1. ScienceDirect Usage Statistics: HEAL-Link and OhioLink**

So when in 2005 it was time to negotiate the 2006-2008 renewals and the Ministry did not respond to our requests for a budget to cover the cost of the renewals, it was the sheer pressure from our users that forced the Ministry to

commit to a budget for the next three years. To our surprise there was even a question in the Greek Parliament about the funding of HEAL-Link.

HEAL-Link always signs “bid deals” trying to expand the national e-journals’ collection. There is a controversy for years and a lot of discussion, that by signing for a big deal, you get a lot of journals that are not needed and are not of great value. In the early years, when we were still not sure if the big deal is the best solution we were monitoring closely the use of the “subscribed” and “non-subscribed journals”. The table below is again from the early days of HEAL-Link and describes the usage in ScienceDirect (March 1999-May 2000). 167 titles from nonsubscribed journals were used 1-1306 times while 74 of them were used over 1000 times.



**Table 2. Non-subscribed Journals Number of titles/times that have been used.**

As you can see also from the table below for 2002 the journals that were non subscribed in the print environment had the heavier use in the electronic environment. This enforced the outcome we got from our pilot conspectus study. First that our collections were down to the core and very limited and second that the development of our collections was not updated with the research needs of the universities but were based on the historical subscriptions.

|                | Titles Accessed (%) | Full-text Downloads |
|----------------|---------------------|---------------------|
| Academic Press | 58%                 | 62%                 |
| Elsevier       | 47%                 | 33%                 |
| Kluwer         | 57%                 | 54%                 |
| MCB            | 75%                 | 61%                 |
| Springer       | 61%                 | 56%                 |

**Table 3. Non subscribed journals.**

This trend continues even now as you can see from the following table:

| <i>Publisher</i>    | <i>Titles usage 2005<br/>(% of the available<br/>electronic titles)</i> | <i>Titles usage 2006<br/>(% of the available<br/>electronic titles)</i> |
|---------------------|---|---|
| <b>ACS</b>          | <b>100 %</b>  | <b>100 %</b>  |
| <b>Blackwell</b>    | <b>95,1 %</b>   | <b>100 %</b>  |
| <b>CUP</b>          | <b>91 %</b>   | <b>81,10 %</b>  |
| <b>Elsevier</b>     | <b>87,8 %</b>   | <b>97,7 %</b>   |
| <b>OUP</b>          | <b>93,7 %</b>   | <b>98,4 %</b>   |
| <b>LWW (Ovid )</b>  | <b>100 %</b>  | <b>100 %</b>  |
| <b>SpringerLink</b> | <b>76,5 %</b>   | <b>94,12 %</b>  |
| <b>Wiley</b>        | <b>87,8 %</b>   | <b>75,4 %</b>   |

Another concern was the following: did it make sense apart for political reasons to give access to all the institutions to the full collection of journals since several of them are subject based (Economics, Fine Arts etc)? Again we monitored the statistics and we noticed usage from a wide spectrum of publishers. The economists are accessing the journals of the American Institute of Physics, the School of fine Arts is accessing the American Chemical Society and the Dept. of Psychology is accessing IEEE. Using federated search programs or Google it becomes obvious that science has no subject boundaries, it is interdisciplinary.

Being involved in the European ICOLC (International Coalition of Library Consortia) conferences from the very beginning it has become obvious to us that although most consortia share the same principles, everyone operates a bit different from the other. It all depends on the local needs and balances. Many times while running a consortium you face not only library problems but political problems, bureaucratic problems, financial problems, the list is endless but the reward you get from your end users keeps you going.

What works for one consortium does not necessarily works for the next one. For HEAL-Link it has been very important in our negotiations with the publishers that we are a national consortium. Basically, in Greece academic Libraries have by far the biggest share of the market. The publishers know that if they do not sign with HEAL-Link, considering that the local budgets are very limited, their subscriptions in Greece will decrease sharply. sWe never walk into negotiations

without having done our homework. Very early, back in 2000 we created a database with all the subscriptions of the Greek Institutions. It was not an easy task. Even though officially asked, in most cases we had to contact every institution separately. The list of journals were send to us in different formats, some of them in print with no publishers or prices included. It was a lot of work to assign each title to the corresponding publisher and then check the publishers homepages for the prices of the journals. But it was a necessary task. It helped us understand how we spend our journal budgets, which publishers are a priority for our consortium (this becomes evident looking at how we spend our budgets), on what disciplines we should focus on, at least initially. Also knowing how much income a publisher has from your consortium, you have a base to start your negotiations. Apart from knowing how much we spend on each publisher, it is also important for us to know what is the cost of the publishers' database (the cost of all their journals if you have one subscription to each one of them). We have found out that the publishers are very vague about this information. All this preparatory work takes time and effort, but it is well worth it. It gives you a sense of where you stand and what should be your limits.

Although libraries keep their end of the bargain and keep negotiations confidential, there is a lot of mobility between the employees of the publishers, so information can leek from one publisher to the other. We always try to be fair and try to treat everyone the same. What we do not accept from one publisher, we shall not accept from another just because they have a very popular and highly cited journal. This is the reason we do not have a license agreement with Nature or Science or even JSTOR. When you walk into a negotiation you must always be ready to walk out, if you consider the terms unacceptable and then you must be ready to accept the criticism from your users. And you must at all time be ready to justify your actions.

It is also important that although HEAL-Link does not have a legal structure (one university is appointed to do the payments on behalf of the rest of the members) and even though the ministry always gives us the budget late in the year, we have solved this problem by using Swets Information Services as intermediary. The publishers send one invoice to Swets for HEAL-Link, Swets does the payments on time and then distributes the cost according to our instructions among the research and the academic institutions. They also take part in the negotiations either as observers or more actively involved if we wish them to.

So far the above basic principles have worked for HEAL-Link. It has been such the impact of HEAL-Link in the Greek Academic Community that the Ministry gave us a one time extra funding in 2006. This enabled us to buy the back files from Elsevier, Springer, Wiley, ACS, Taylor and Francis and Lippincott Wilkins and Williams. We also bought reference material (encyclopedias), and are experimenting with e-books from Elsevier, Springer and Taylor and Francis. Because HEAL-Link serves a varied community of institutions, some of them very small, we make sure that through our portal the users can find the

information they need. They can search either the alphabetical list of titles that connects to the journals homepage or search by subject. We have assigned Library of Congress Subject heading to all our journals. The users if they prefer can link directly to the publishers' homepage.

The screenshot shows the HEAL-Link website interface. At the top, there is a navigation bar with links for Home, Information, For Librarians, SELL, and Useful Links. The main content area is titled "Alphabetic Index" and lists journals in alphabetical order from A to Z. Each entry includes the journal title, publisher, and the year of publication. The journals listed include:

- JAB (Journal of Artists' Books) (ceased publication) - Wilson (1997 - 2003)
- JAIDS Journal of Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndromes (formerly Journal of Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndromes & Human Retrovirology) - Lippincott Williams & Wilkins (1999 - )
- JAOA: Journal of the American Osteopathic Association - HighWire Press (Free Access) (2000 - )
- JARO - Journal of the Association for Research in Otolaryngology - SpringerLink (2000 - )
- JAVA: Java Grande Conference - ACM (Association for Computing Machinery) (1999 - )
- Jahrbuch der Kunsthistorischen Sammlungen in Wien (now Jahrbuch des Kunsthistorischen Museums Wien) - Wilson (1996 only)
- Jahrbuch der Osterreichischen Byzantinistik - ALPSP (2005 - )
- Jahrbuch des Kunsthistorischen Museums Wien (formerly Jahrbuch der Kunsthistorischen Sammlungen in Wien) - Wilson (2001 - )
- Jahrbuch fur Computerphilologie - DDAJ (Directory of Open Access Journals) (1999 - )
- Jahreshefte des Osterreichischen Archologischen Instituts in Wien - ALPSP (2005 - )
- James Cook University Law Review - Wilson (1997 - )
- James Joyce Quarterly - Project MUSE
- Janus Head - DDAJ (Directory of Open Access Journals) (1998 - )
- Japan Agricultural Research Quarterly - DDAJ (Directory of Open Access Journals) (1998 - )
- Japan and the World Economy - Elsevier (ScienceDirect) (1988 - )

The screenshot shows the HEAL-Link website interface, specifically the "Electronic Sources" section. The page provides information about the consortium's access to electronic journals and books, including a disclaimer about copyright and a list of news items.

**Electronic Sources**

Through HEAL-Link Portal the members of the consortium have full-text access to electronic journals and books and to bibliographic databases. IP address recognition is used from the publishers to allow access and My HEAL-Link, which is a personalization service, does not conflict with this process.

The legislation for Copyright issues is applied for the electronic publications the same way that it is applied for printed. By using the service of electronic journals you should know that:

- You accept the provisions of the legislation being in effect for Copyright and Related (Law 2121/93, Law 3049/2002 article 14 and Law 3057/2002 article 81) and that it is prohibited the systematic storage or printing of entire content of copies of electronic journals and books.
- You declare responsibly that the information will be used exclusively for personal study or research.

**News**

- Information for new agreements 09-01-2007
  - HEAL-Link Academic Libraries Link completed the negotiations and signed new agreements ensuring access for all its members starting on 01-01-2007 to the following sources:
    - Elsevier e-Books (Book Series, Handbooks, Reference Works, Referex Engineering)** Full text access to approximately 170 titles of book series, to approximately 20 titles of handbooks, 58 titles of encyclopedias and to approximately 400 titles of electronic books of Referex Engineering
    - Springer Full e-Book Package (Copyright Years 2005, 2006, 2007)** Full text access to approximately 8500 titles of electronic books containing monographs, book series and reference works (encyclopedias, atlases, handbooks etc.)
    - Taylor & Francis Group e-Books** Full text access to approximately 500 titles of electronic books related to Archaeology, Classical studies and Law.
    - Lippincott Williams & Wilkins (LWW) Journal Legacy Archive** Permanent access to the full text of publisher's journals from the first volume, where this is available.
    - Taylor & Francis Group Online Archives** Permanent access to the full text of publisher's journals from the first volume, where this is available.
    - Wiley Journal Backfiles Collection** Permanent access to the full text of publisher's journals (that were not included in the previous contract) from the first volume, where this is available.
    - ALPSP Learned Journals Collection** Full text access to more than 500 journal titles from 48 publishers like Brill Academic Publishers, EDP Sciences, IOS Press etc.
    - Project Muse Standard Collection** Full text access to approximately 300 journal titles from 65 publishers related to Literature, History, Political Science, Economy, Philosophy etc.
    - Pericles** Service which offers a permanent archive of electronic scholarly journals, thereby providing protection against the potential loss of access (e.g. when a publisher stops operations or when a publisher ceases to publish a title etc.) to e-content of HEAL-Link Collection.
- Access restored to the electronic journals that are provided through Hellenic Academic Libraries Link (HEAL-Link) 26-07-2006
- Danger of cutting access to the electronic journals that are provided through Hellenic Academic Libraries Link (HEAL-Link) 15-02-2006

Hellenic Academic Libraries Link

http://www.heal-link.gr/journals/en/publishers.jsp

HEAL LINK LIBRARIES LINK  
ΣΥΝΑΕΣΜΟΣ ΕΛΛΗΝΙΚΩΝ ΑΚΑΔΗΜΑΪΚΩΝ ΒΙΒΛΙΟΘΗΚΩΝ

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**Search**

- Quick Search
- Advanced Search

**Services**

- Alphabetic Index
- Subject Categories
- Bibliographic / Full Text Databases
- Electronic Books/Dictionarys
- Publishers

**My HEAL-Link**

E-mail:   
Κωδικός:

Enter

- New user
- Forgot password
- Usage guide

### Publishers

Publishers having convention with HEAL-Link:

- **ALPSP ( Association of Learned and Professional Society Publishers)**
- **ACM (Association of Computing Machinery)**
- **ACS (American Chemical Society)**
- **AIP (American Institute of Physics)**
- **American Psychological Association (PsycARTICLES)**
- **Blackwell Publishing**
- **Cambridge University Press**
- **Elsevier (ScienceDirect)**
- **Emerald**
- **IEEE**
- **Institute of Physics (IOP)**
- **Kluwer Law International (KLI)**
- **Lippincott Williams & Wilkins (LWW)**
- **Oxford University Press**
- **Project MUSE**
- **Sage**
- **SpringerLink**
- **Taylor & Francis**
- **Wiley**

Organizations - Publishers that provide open access to all or a number of their journals.

- **Directory of Open Access Journals (DOAJ)**
- **HighWire Press**
- **NUMDAM**
- **Project Euclid**

http://www.heal-link.gr/journals/en/ebooks.jsp

Hellenic Academic Libraries Link

http://www.heal-link.gr/journals/en/ebooks.jsp

HEAL LINK LIBRARIES LINK  
ΣΥΝΑΕΣΜΟΣ ΕΛΛΗΝΙΚΩΝ ΑΚΑΔΗΜΑΪΚΩΝ ΒΙΒΛΙΟΘΗΚΩΝ

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**Search**

- Quick Search
- Advanced Search

**Services**

- Alphabetic Index
- Subject Categories
- Bibliographic / Full Text Databases
- Electronic Books/Dictionarys
- Publishers

**My HEAL-Link**

E-mail:   
Κωδικός:

Enter

- New user
- Forgot password
- Usage guide

### Electronic Books

- **Elsevier e-books**
  - **Elsevier Book Series**  
full text to approximately **170 titles** of Book series.
  - **Elsevier Handbooks**  
full text to approximately **20 titles** of handbooks.
  - **Elsevier Reference Works**  
full text to **38 titles** of encyclopaedias.
  - **Referex Engineering**  
full text to approximately **400 titles** of electronic books of Chemical Petrochemical and Process Collection, Electronics and Electrical Collection, Mechanical and Materials Collection.
- **IEEE Proceedings**  
full text to more than **450 titles** of conference proceedings
- **Springer e-Books**  
full text to more than **2500 titles** of electronic books
- **Springer Full eBook Package (Copyright Years 2005, 2006, 2007)**  
full text to approximately **8500 titles** of electronic books containing monographs, book series and reference works (encyclopedias, atlases, handbooks etc.) (Titles of 2007 are not yet available).
- **SpringerLink Book Series**  
full text to **14 series titles** of SpringerLink.
- **Taylor & Francis Group eBooks**  
full text to approximately **400 titles** of electronic books related to Archaeology, Classical studies and Law.

### Dictionarys

- **Grove Art**  
full text of dictionarys «The Dictionary of Art» and «The Oxford Companion to Western Art», with more than **1500 art designs**
- **Grove Music**  
full text of dictionarys «The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians», «The New Grove Dictionary of Opera» and «The New Grove Dictionary of Jazz», with more than **500 sound samples** of Grove
- **Oxford Reference Online**  
full text of more than **100 dictionarys**, encyclopaedias and other reference reports of Oxford University Press

**Construction and Maintenance:**  
Flora Papi  
Papiropas Leonidas  
Katerisaurus Mavric

Done

From the very beginning HEAL-Link had always a lot of moral support and encouragement from our European colleagues. Still, we had the feeling that our problems and our educational system are unique. But once we started cooperating through SELL (Southern European Libraries Link) on a regional level we realized that we were not alone in facing these problems. Since 2001 in our annual meetings, that take place in a different country every year, we have been discussing issues of common concern and have build ties of trust and respect. So, we are very pleased that recently SELL signed its first inter-country license agreement with an inter-publisher journals' collections ALPSP. Lluís Anglada and Núria Comellas from the CBUC have been instrumental in coordinating the deal. "The work of coordinating people from so many different libraries and countries has been made possible only thanks to the confidence we have built in the SELL meetings and relations" was Luis comment in the press release for the signing of the agreement. I think that no statement could express better what we have been doing at SELL over the past few years.

## References

Xenidou-Dervou, Cl. Moving from print to electronic: a survival guide for Greek Academic Libraries, based on a paper given at the 26th UKSG Conference, Edinburgh, April 2003. Published in *Serials*, vol. 16(2), 2003.

Xenidou-Dervou, Cl. Cheaper by the dozen: consortial journal licensing, 8th IFLA International Conference, Jerusalem, Israel, 12-18 August 2000. Published in *Interlending and Document Supply*, vol. 29, 2001.