Patron-Focused Services:

Collaborative Interlibrary Loan,

Collection Development and Acquisitions

by

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Abstract

To improve service and increase user satisfaction, some libraries are exploring new models of collaboration among the Interlibrary Loan, Collection Development and Acquisitions departments. One public library and two university libraries present models in which funds were set aside to purchase materials requested by library users through interlibrary loan. The models differ in some details but in all cases Interlibrary Loan staff select the titles to be purchased and Acquisitions staff rush order the requested titles. Titles are then either rush processed in Technical Services and circulated to the user, or are received un-processed in Interlibrary Loan for immediate patron use and are cataloged later. All three models have been in operation for two years or more and have moved from the pilot project stage to permanent implementation.

Data are presented on the effectiveness of these models, including turnaround time, average cost per title, user satisfaction, and subsequent circulation of titles. These models accomplish several major goals including: obtaining users' requested items quickly; building collections by adding titles with user interest and which have a high potential for subsequent use; and demonstrating that the rush acquisitions processes are both efficient and cost-effective.

Concept Overview

Traditional interlibrary loan (ILL) service involves borrowing material requested by a library user and then returning it to the lending library after a few weeks' use. However, sometimes it is difficult or impossible to meet a user's needs by exclusively following the traditional model, such as when a title is newly published or when a library can identify no owning library or has exhausted all potential lenders. In these situations, a user's request may simply go unfilled.

The collaborative purchasing model allows library staff to work together to identify when a title requested via ILL is appropriate for purchase, buy it quickly, circulate it to the user, and then add it to the library's collection when the transaction is complete.

The Thomas Crane Public Library Experience

The Thomas Crane Public Library (TCPL) is a medium-sized public library in Quincy, Massachusetts (pop. 85,000). TCPL also serves as a regional interlibrary loan processing center for the SouthEastern Massachusetts Regional Library System (SEMLS), a multi-type region serving 362 member libraries in 86 communities. In fiscal year 2001/02, TCPL processed 8,300 borrowing requests from 82 member libraries.

TCPL developed its expedited purchasing model in fall 1998 to increase its interlibrary loan fill rate and to satisfy member libraries and their users. The SEMLS ILL budget

included funds earmarked for TCPL collection development, both to anticipate user demand and to fill specific interlibrary loan requests.

The TCPL ILL librarian considers purchasing titles on a case by case basis whenever borrowing is problematic, usually when a title is new or when no owning library can be identified. Selection is based on a number of factors, including availability (in-stock status), price, subject matter, and suitability for the collection. Once a purchase decision is made, Acquisitions staff order the item unprocessed from the quickest, least expensive source. Titles are received in Acquisitions but immediately given to ILL with no processing or data entry. ILL staff minimally process the material and circulate it to the library user. When an item is returned, it is sent to the Acquisitions librarian, who decides whether to add it to the collection.

In 2001/02, 107 items were purchased at an average cost, including shipping, of $17.00 per item. Seventy-seven percent of the items were purchased from library vendors such as Ingram and Baker & Taylor; such vendors offer electronic ordering, immediate shipping (often overnight) of in-stock items, and significant library discounts. Eighteen percent of the items were purchased from online booksellers such as Amazon.com, Booksamillion, and Amazon.co.uk. These booksellers often carry titles not available from library vendors, and usually provide quick delivery and small discounts. The remaining items were purchased directly from various small publishers.

Nearly all of the titles were published within the last two years, although scattered titles were published as far back as 1986. Twelve percent were fiction; the remainder were distributed throughout the non-fiction subject areas, with concentrations in areas such as self-help, business & investing, true crime, health, diet and cookery, parenting, business & careers, history, travel and biography. These areas reflect similar concentrations in the library's collection.

Seventy-nine percent of purchased items were received in 14 days or less, compared with 73% of items borrowed via interlibrary loan, although a small percentage of "long order" items that took months to arrive pushed up the average turnaround time for purchased items to 14 days, as compared to nine days for interlibrary loan items.

As of November 2002, 84% of the items purchased in 2001/02 had subsequently circulated to library users, with an average of three uses per item. Of items purchased in the two previous fiscal years, 95% have circulated, with an average of eight uses per item, and 30% have circulated more than ten times. High use titles include both fiction and non-fiction.

The Purdue University Libraries Experience

The Purdue University Libraries support the learning and research needs of 40,000 students and faculty. The publicly-supported institution is located in West Lafayette, Indiana, about 120 miles southeast of Chicago. In fiscal year 2001/02, Purdue received

51,000 interlibrary loan borrowing requests from Purdue patrons and filled 21,000 of them from external sources (the majority of the remaining 30,000 requests were for material available on campus).

In 2000, the Libraries allocated a separate fund for a Books on Demand project in which ILL staff purchase selected titles rather than borrow them. The books are loaned to patrons and then cataloged for the collection after use.

The selection criteria are:

- non-fiction works in English

- scholarly titles

- published within the past five years

- maximum cost of $100 (later raised to $150)

- shipment within one week from an online bookseller (Amazon.com)

Between January 2000 and October 2002, over 2,300 books were purchased as a result of patron requests and then cataloged after the interlibrary loan requestor returned them. Responding to a brief questionnaire included with each book, patrons express almost universal satisfaction with the speed of delivery (average turnaround of eight days, which is virtually identical to the turnaround time for traditional loans from other institutions). Seventy-six percent of patrons also judged the books to be very useful additions to the library collections. The average cost per book is $37 including shipping costs. Patrons received an average of two books each. The patron distribution for the Books on

Demand titles was about 70% students and 30% faculty and staff, the same distribution as for normal ILL activity. Analysis of subsequent circulation of the Books on Demand titles suggests that, at least in the short term, they are used more heavily than similar books purchased at the same time through routine collection development activities.

In 2002, bibliographers in the six subject areas that received the largest numbers of Books on Demand titles undertook a detailed analysis of the books acquired in their disciplines. Their analysis covered about 55% of the books purchased during the program's first two years. The bibliographers' major findings were:

- 80-99% (depending on the subject) of the titles were appropriate to the discipline or to the collection as a whole
- many titles were in interdisciplinary areas that are sometimes overlooked during normal collection development
- many patrons affiliated with traditional subject areas have interdisciplinary research interests
- the project provided student participation in collection development

This model (using a single online bookseller) appears to work best for titles in the humanities and social sciences. The majority (84%) of all titles fell into these disciplines, although the university as a whole is better known for its scientific and technical programs. The two major reasons why more science/technology/medical books are not

included are probably (1) scholars in these fields rely less on books; and (2) the books are generally so specialized that Amazon.com is not able to supply them within a week. More details about planning and implementing the Purdue University Libraries Books on Demand project have been published elsewhere [1], [2] and an article about the bibliographers' analysis is in press [3].

The University of Wisconsin-Madison Experience

The University of Wisconsin-Madison Libraries support the educational and research needs of over 60,000 students, faculty and staff. Memorial Library is the principal research library for the humanities and social sciences. Of the six ILL borrowing offices on campus, Memorial Library is the largest. In fiscal year 2001/02, Memorial Library handled 38,000 ILL borrowing requests and filled 31,434 from off-campus sources.

In early 2000, the Library Director and Collection Development Officer created a separate acquisitions fund for an ILL/Rush Acquisitions project through which the Memorial Library ILL librarian initiates the purchase of selected titles after attempting to borrow them from five libraries. Interlibrary loan was attempted first due to the modest allocation of $5,000 during the first two years. Central Technical Services rush orders and rush catalogs the titles prior to patron use.

The selection criteria were:

- items fit UW-Madison General Library System scope criteria

- published within current year plus two previous years (later expanded to current plus four years)

- monographs or proceedings (not textbooks or computer manuals)

- maximum cost of $250

- item was identified as *available* from online (Amazon.com or BN.com) or local bookstores (In some cases other sources were used.)

- foreign language/imprints and additional copies of high use items permitted

Between May 2000 and April 2002, 135 titles were purchased for $4,976 in response to patron requests. The average cost per title was $36.86, including shipping. The breakdown of patron status generally reflected the normal ILL pattern: 48% graduate students, 9% undergraduates, and 43% faculty and staff. Titles were primarily domestic imprints (80%), although a significant portion was foreign imprints. The major sources used to acquire materials were Amazon.com (42%, includes UK and France sites), Borders bookstore (34%), Barnes and Noble and BN.com (10%), foreign vendors (8%), publishers (4%), and domestic vendors (2%).

Turnaround time (from day of order, through receipt, full cataloging and delivery to the circulation desk) for domestic purchases averaged eight calendar days, while foreign imprints averaged one month. Many foreign imprint titles had been deemed 'unborrowable' through interlibrary loan, and this project delivered otherwise unobtainable titles to patrons. As was found at Purdue, the books acquired through this program are used more heavily than similar books purchased at the same time through

regular selection activities. This finding suggests that these books serve an immediate need for patron use even if that need diminishes in the future. At the end of the first 24 months, titles purchased on the project had circulated an average of 3.5 times, and 73% of the materials had circulated at least twice.

Handling these requests through rush acquisitions and cataloging processes prior to making them available to the patron proved to be so effective that the project became part of routine library processes in February 2002. In September 2002 this project was significantly expanded as the 'Book Express' project. ILL requests are now screened up front and in scope titles are immediately purchased rather than first attempting interlibrary loan. Based on data collected, the budget was increased with one-time gift funds that support services to students. Following the Purdue University Libraries approach, patrons are being surveyed about the service effectiveness and their impressions of the books selected. A bibliographers' analysis of titles ordered by the ILL librarian is planned. More details about planning and implementing the UW-Madison Book Express project are published elsewhere [2]

Conclusions

All three of these collaborative models demonstrate that library users are well served by moving selected ILL requests into a rush acquisitions process. Users are very pleased to quickly receive the materials they request and relevant titles are added to library collections. Both the cost and the turnaround time are reasonable and library staff from

Interlibrary Loan, Collection Development and Acquisitions are satisfied with the service provided and the materials acquired.

This collaborative model is easily transferable to most types and sizes of libraries. A library can adjust the variables to suit its budget and its needs. For example, one library might decide to limit its program to a single online bookseller, whereas another might check appropriate titles against several potential sellers' lists or even contact publishers. Another model focused on rush-ordering through established book jobbers. [4] Or a library might select titles published within the past two years, or five years, or any suitable in-print title. Although the authors are only familiar with U.S. libraries that have adopted this model, they anticipate no reasons why it would not work in other countries with quick-response Internet booksellers and reliable mail or other delivery services.

Footnotes:

1. Ward, Suzanne M. (2002), "Books on Demand: Just-in-Time Acquisitions", *The Acquisitions Librarian*, No. 27, pp. 95-107.

2. Ward, Suzanne M., Wray, Tanner and Debus- López, Karl E.,. "Collection Development Based on Patron Requests: Collaboration between Interlibrary Loan and Acquisitions", *Library Collections, Acquisitions, and Technical Services*,Vol. 27, No. 2, forthcoming.

3. Anderson, Kristine J., Freeman, Robert S., Hérube, Jean-Pierre V.M., Mykytiuk, Lawrence J., Nixon, Judith M. and Ward, Suzanne M., "Buy, Don't Borrow: Bibliographers' Analysis of Academic Library Collection Development through Interlibrary Loan Requests", *Collection Management*, Vol. 27, No. 3, forthcoming.

4. Perdue, Jennifer and Van Fleet, James A. (1999), "Borrow or Buy: Cost-Effective Delivery of Monographs", *Journal of Interlibrary Loan, Document Delivery & Information Supply*, Vol, 9, No. 4, pp. 19-28.

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