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Lisa O'Hara

*University of Manitoba*, [lisa\\_ohara@umanitoba.ca](mailto:lisa_ohara@umanitoba.ca)

Pat Milne

*University of Manitoba*, [pat\\_milne@umanitoba.ca](mailto:pat_milne@umanitoba.ca)

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Lisa O'Hara and Pat Milne, "Analysis of Claiming Print Journals at the University of Manitoba Libraries" (2010). *Proceedings of the Charleston Library Conference*.

<http://dx.doi.org/10.5703/1288284314857>

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## **ANALYSIS OF CLAIMING PRINT JOURNALS AT THE UNIVERSITY OF MANITOBA LIBRARIES**

**Lisa O'Hara** ([lisa\\_ohara@umanitoba.ca](mailto:lisa_ohara@umanitoba.ca)) *Head, Technical Services, University of Manitoba Libraries*

**Pat Milne** ([pat\\_milne@umanitoba.ca](mailto:pat_milne@umanitoba.ca)) *Supervisor, Acquisitions & Serials, University of Manitoba Libraries*

### **ABSTRACT**

Many libraries have ceased claiming print journals in recent years for a number of reasons and the idea has been raised at the University of Manitoba Libraries. Before making this decision we performed an analysis of the claiming process to determine whether claiming journals was a worthwhile cost in terms of staff time. We looked at both formal (monitoring collections on a weekly or monthly basis) and informal (missing issues reported by public or shelving staff) claiming, the cost in staff time per claim, and the success of the claiming process. The results of this analysis will be discussed at this presentation.

### **BACKGROUND**

The University of Manitoba Libraries (UML) is a medium-sized academic library serving a community of approximately 26,000 FTE. A member of both ARL and CARL, the UML has 19 libraries, including 8 hospital libraries. The staff at the hospital and main medical library have traditionally monitored their serials collections on a weekly or monthly basis and claimed any serials that were missing (which we will call formal claiming for our purposes). The other UML libraries have not monitored their collections but have reported issues as missing when discovered by the public or shelving staff (informal claiming).

Since Rick Anderson's 2002 article "A Sacred Cow Bites the Dust", there has been much discussion about the cost of checking-in print serials to the detriment of online journal collections. The UML established an electronic resources unit in 2000 but also continued checking-in and claiming print journals. In 2009, Technical Services centralized the work of claiming journals for the hospital libraries and the main medical library. Staff in Technical Services began to monitor the claiming process more closely at this time with the aim of determining whether formal claiming was an option for the other libraries and what the success rate of formal versus informal claiming might be. We also wanted to determine how much time was spent on claiming and the cost of formal and informal claiming in terms of staff time. Finally, we wondered whether the claims for journals that we receive only in print are more or less successful than ones where we have electronic access.

### **METHODOLOGY**

There is one staff member in Technical Services who has primary responsibility for claiming in addition to other duties. She created spreadsheets for the hospital libraries, for the main medical library (tracking formal claims) and for the largest non-medical library (tracking informal claims). She tracked formal claims for 10 months but only began tracking informal claims 4

months ago so there is more data available regarding formal claims than informal claims. On the spreadsheet, she recorded information including title, issue, vendor, 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> claim dates, date received, vendor response if issue not received and any notes. Claims were tracked from the two serials vendors used at UML only; no claims to individual publishers were tracked.

## SUCCESS RATES

Vendors generally quote an 85% success rate with first claims, but our results showed that success rates for first claims fall far short. Excluding active claims, in the formal claiming process the success rate for first claims was 34.5% and only 18% for the library doing informal claiming. These numbers fell even lower for the second claims, to 32% for the libraries doing formal claiming and 8% for the library doing informal claiming. For third claims, the success rate rose for the formal claiming process to 39.5%. For the library claiming informally, the success rate at 3<sup>rd</sup> claim was 0%, although all third claims were still active. These figures do not include claims which were issued within the last month of the study since the vendors did not yet have time to respond to those claims. This means that the probability is that the active 3<sup>rd</sup> claims seen in the informal process were old claims and were unlikely to be successful at this point. The overall success rate for formal claiming was 34.5% and only 13% for informal claiming. That the success rate for informal claiming is lower than for formal claiming is not surprising, since claims identified through the informal process are older than claims identified through the formal process.

Figure 1: Percentage of Successful Claims (Formal)

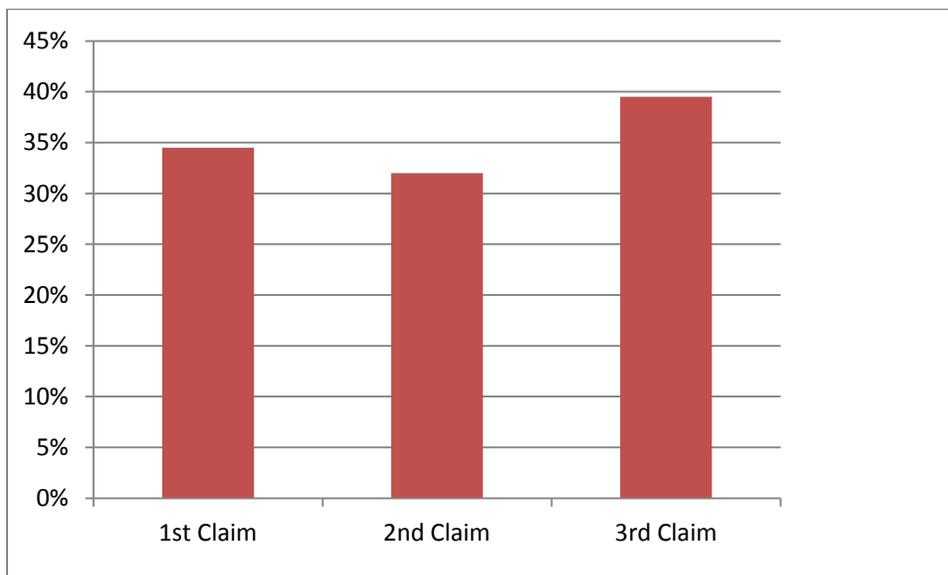
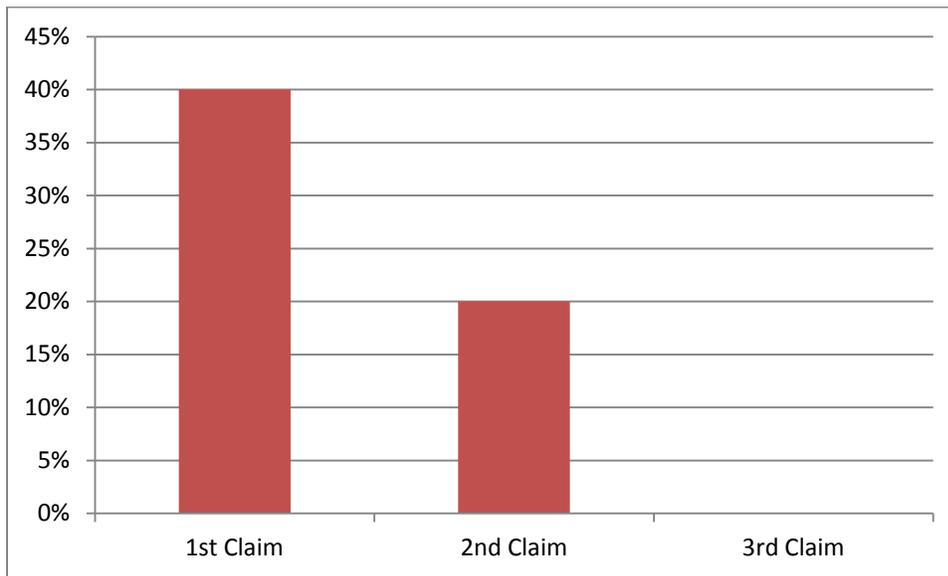


Figure 2: Percentage of Successful Claims (Informal)



All issues were (obviously) claimed at least once and the number of claims dropped on each successive claim either because the issue was received on first claim or because of a negative response from the vendor. A total of 498 items were initially claimed, with only 181 being claimed a second time and 61 being claimed a third time. Vendors gave the following reasons for claims being denied:

- the print subscription had been cancelled and the vendor would not fill the claim
- too late to claim
- the issue is out of stock
- the issue is available online
- the issue was never published
- the issue has been discontinued
- the issue was delayed.

Interestingly, the success rate for formal claims dropped between the first and second claim, but was highest for the third claim. We suspect that many of the first claims were actually made before the issue was available, thereby boosting the success rate of second and particularly third claims. We intend to investigate this further. Also, since formal claiming allows claims to be made much earlier in the acceptable claiming period, successful third claims are more likely. Forty percent of the UML's subscriptions with one of our major vendors have claim restrictions of 6 months or less. As expected, the percentage of successful second and third claims dropped significantly in the informal claiming process and many were "too late to claim".

## **COSTS OF CLAIMING**

In determining the cost of claims, the staff member responsible for claiming tracked her time for two months in terms of hours spent claiming. This was then multiplied by her hourly salary to determine the total cost in terms of staff time. We then found the number of issues claimed in each of three months for each of the libraries and divided that number into the total cost of claiming for that month to determine the cost per issue. We then took the average for both months, which was \$7.77 per claim.

When looking at the total amount spent on successful and unsuccessful claims and dividing that by the number of successful claims, first claims cost the UML \$21.50 per successful claim. The amount for successful second claims is \$22.16 per claim and for successful 3<sup>rd</sup> claims is \$15.51.

We looked at the average cost of journal issues for each type of library to get an idea of how much claiming cost in comparison to how much we paid for the journal issue. For the hospital libraries, the average cost of an issue is \$38.60 ( $\text{total cost of journals}/\text{number of journals} / 12$ ). If an issue is claimed 3 times, the total cost of the claim is \$23.31, almost 60% of the cost of the journal. For the main medical library, the average cost of an issue is \$66.41, making the cost of each claim add 12% to the cost of the issue. For these libraries doing formal claiming, the cost in staff time is actually even higher because of the time spent at each of these libraries to do the formal claiming. For the non-medical library, the average cost of an issue is \$23.06, making the cost of each informal claim 34% of the value of the issue.

## **CLAIMING PRINT ONLY**

We also looked at the online availability of the journal issues claimed.

Claiming issues of journals that are only available in print is approximately 22% of the total cost of claiming issues of all journals. Success rates for claiming print journals are also higher than when claiming journals for which an online version is available. The success rate for claiming print only journals is higher on the first claim for formal claiming at 56.5%, but lower for informal claiming at 29%. Rates dropped significantly on the second claim to 25% for formal claims and 0% for informal claims. The success rate for third claims was 37.5% for formal claims and 0% for informal claims. Again, active claims within the current month were excluded from these figures. We see the same pattern for claiming print journals as we did in claiming all journals, with third claims being more successful for formal claiming than informal claiming, again because the claims are not as old in the formal claiming process. The higher success rates on first claims for print journals are notable.

## **VENDORS**

We also compared the success rates between the two vendors we use at the UML. Our main vendor, Vendor A, had a 60% success rate. Vendor B, our secondary vendor, had a success rate of 38%. When active claims were added to the successful claims to give us the number of successful or open claims, the rate became 42% for Vendor A and 48% for Vendor B. However, not all the claims that are active will be successful and the number of open claims with Vendor B suggests that they are slower to respond to claims than Vendor A.

We asked vendors to comment on the claiming process and were not surprised to hear that vendors also consider claiming an expensive process. Vendor B responded by saying that if an institution decides to discontinue all serial claiming, it may be possible to renegotiate lower service charges. Other comments included that EDI claiming is the most effective way to claim and that missing copy banks or reprint services are alternate sources for missing issues but of course those have additional costs associated with them.

## **CONCLUSIONS**

The cost of formal claiming is very expensive when the costs of staff in the unit libraries (not factored into this study) and staff in Technical Services are taken into account. Although the UML has already paid the publisher for each issue, claiming adds another 12% to 20% of the cost of the issue for each claim. The success rate for claiming formally is at best 58%, and if the journal is also available online, whether this is an acceptable cost is debatable.

Informal claiming, where the success rate is at best 15% on first claims is not successful. Our library system can take on some of the burden of formal claiming by producing monthly reports notifying us when an issue hasn't arrived on its' expected date, but this would also increase the amount of staff time spent claiming journals because we will be claiming journals that we would not have claimed previously. Also, we will have to do some work in the system to make sure that the predicted arrival dates are entered correctly into the system.

This study demonstrates that libraries who want to continue to do claiming should rationalize which journals should be claimed in order to use staff time most efficiently and effectively. If a journal is not going to be bound, perhaps claiming is not worth the added costs claiming would add to the price of the issue.

Another possibility is outsourcing the check-in and the claiming of journals. It would be interesting to see statistics on the success rate of claims made by the vendors and if they improve on what we found doing the claiming ourselves.

Rick Anderson suggested that all claiming and check-in activities for print journals should be discontinued. The UML is not yet ready to go as far as that, but having some background information on the actual costs of carrying out these activities is a first good step in rationalizing what activities are cost-effective and important enough for us to continue.

## **REFERENCES**

Anderson, Rick. 2002. "A Sacred Cow Bites the Dust." *Library Journal* 127, no. 8: 56. *Business Source Premier*, EBSCOhost (accessed October 26, 2010).