Against the Grain

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Biz of Acq -- The Getting It System Toolkit (GIST) and Changing Workflow in Acquisitions and Collection Development

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Biz of Acq — The Getting It System Toolkit (GIST) and Changing Workflow in Acquisitions and Collection Development

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What is GIST?

The Getting it System Toolkit, or "GIST," is a system designed to change library workflow. It started with an enhanced interlibrary loan and acquisitions request system, integrating two formerly disparate workflows and allowing for user-driven selection. Utilizing API technology, JavaScript programming, and customizing the OpenURL Web pages of the interlibrary loan software ILLiad, the GIST interface enables effective, data-driven decisions at the point of request. Because the user now has price, holdings and delivery estimates, book reviews and ratings, and full-text availability options at the request interface, they can easily make decisions about the item they want, and give feedback about what items they need, why they are using the material, as well as how the library can deliver requested items. Beyond the user interface, GIST is a new request workflow system for Acquisitions and ILL. GIST streamlines the once manual process of mediating and processing purchase requests and allows the ILLiad software to automate those processes by routing requests customized for the library. With GIST ILLiad addons, automatic searches of your favorite book suppliers and other acquisition services can be custom tailored and embedded into your workflow.

Why GIST?

In many libraries, the acquisitions request system is simply inefficient. Requests are handwritten on slips of paper, buried on hard-to-find Web forms, pieces of torn publisher catalog pages or post-it notes on someone's desk. All these systems have the potential to lose requests, and become a "black box" to users. Using automated software to manage the request process is one step in creating more efficient workflows in acquisitions.

Secondly, with decreasing budgets and a recognized need for more user input into collection building and use, it makes financial and practical sense to make the user's request part of the decision-making process. Student-centered and other user experience services are a popular trend in libraries, so collaboration with collection development is a logical next step. Patron-driven acquisitions should truly *be* patron-driven, augmented by data that helps the patron and library evaluate requests rapidly.

Third, more collaboration with ILL makes sense. Instead of looking at ILL data after the materials have already been requested and received, why not use a request-driven system to route requests to acquisitions at point-of-need? Good workflow design can improve a relationship that is needed in many libraries to streamline services. Also, this collaboration has the added benefit of automating formerly time-consuming processes in many acquisitions departments. No need for manual emails to be written each time you order or receive material and notify the patron. Because of the robust ILLiad request system, all requests are handled internally to the system, where staff from either department can view requests which have been routed back and forth between ILL and acquisitions staff (see Figure 1).
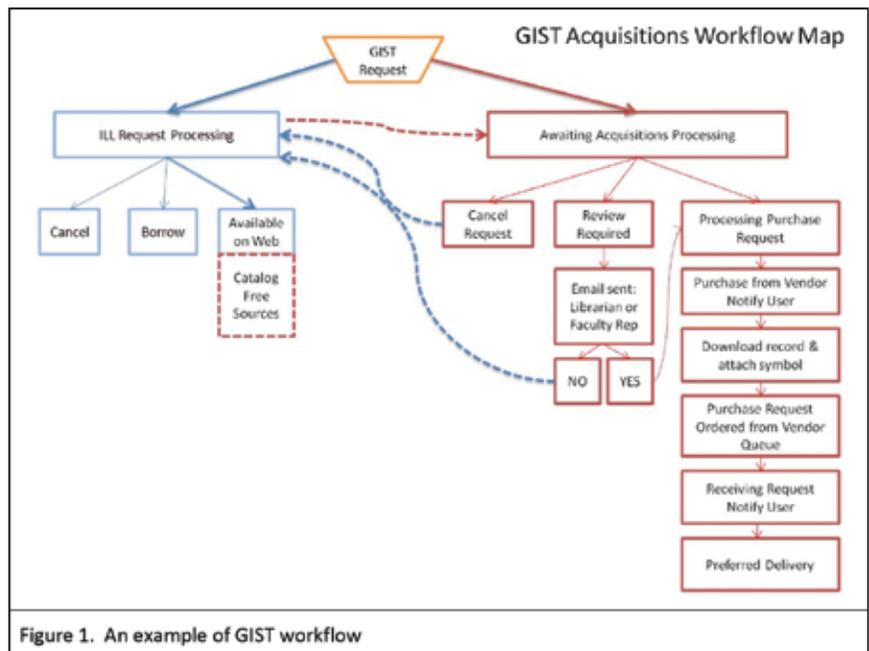

Figure 1. An example of GIST workflow

Fourth, we need to make data-driven and effective decisions at the point-of-request. If the 80/20 rule still applies in libraries,[1] then we are making ineffective purchasing decisions with money that we can't waste. On the other hand, ILL requests cost money and doing more interlibrary loan borrowing also increases costs at the expense of collection building.[2]

This article, by **Nathaniel Schwalb**, goes to the heart of the matter in the Higher Ed realm. The entire worldview held so comfortably by the publishers and the book sellers is under assault — and I mean **determined assault**. Some publishers and book sellers are trying to ride the wave — Leadership in the style of "Find a parade and try to get in front of it…"

Let's be frank. The multiplicity of devices that can download and render e-content has grown faster and developed further and in more diversity than any of the commercial e-content offerings.

We've got DRM'd eBooks, music, movies, in which the publishers or sellers struggle to bind the content to a particular, known user or set of devices — but a far greater body of content — content these devices can already access — is already out there, and out of the publisher's or content seller's hands. Some of the recent attempts to reign things back in, such as **Apple's** shameful grab to take a 30 percent cut on in-app purchases, represent either greed, desperation, or both.

Whistling while walking past the graveyard…. 🐘

GIST provides libraries a way to balance buy and borrow with strategies that leverage automation and data services. GIST allows for several streams of disparate information at the point of request — users and library staff can see how many other libraries own it in your area or consortia, how much it would cost to purchase it versus borrow it (this can be automatically determined by your ILL staff, thanks to custom holdings, which differentiates holdings based on consortia, region, free, fee, etc.), as well as if the book is available full-text online or in some other format. Thus, GIST easily enables library staff to make effective "buy or borrow" decisions *at the point of request*. The actual staff client interface is customizable for ILL and Acquisitions staff, bringing critical data to the relevant processes. (See Figure 2).

Figure 2. Purchase request as seen in the ILLiad client on the staff side

How it Works

GIST is really about leveraging systems we already have in place, adding the data we need to make decisions rapidly, and providing a flexible and robust request management system as the workflow platform. The request interface is simply an OpenURL request page or the standalone Web request page for your existing IL-Liad request management system. Using API (Application Programming Interface) technology, the GIST purchase request system returns pricing and vendor information, holdings data from the **WorldCat** API (including local and consortia holdings), full-text availability information using **Google Books**, **HathiTrust**, and **Index Data** APIs (**Project Gutenberg** e-texts, **Internet Archive**, **Open Content Alliance**, and audio, etc.) (see Figure 3).
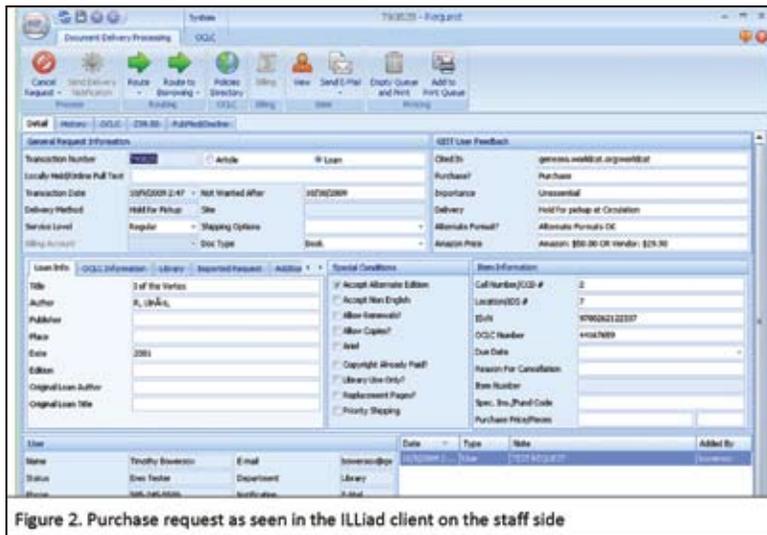

Figure 3. The GIST interface and API components

Besides enhancing the user interface with data from API, the GIST interface offers a feedback section for invaluable user feedback from your patrons. Questions can be status-specific and tailored to a library's different user populations. For example, on **SUNY** Geneseo's request form, we ask faculty to indicate if the book is being used for classroom teaching, research, or is unessential. They are also asked to give a pickup location preference (hold at circulation, shelve in the collection, or place on course reserves). This last question is left off the student purchase request form, where students are asked a slightly different question about their request (required textbook, etc.). In many cases, our users may not answer, but we are surprised by the respondents who give us honest and valued feedback to our questions. Because this is a customizable feature, libraries can ask any type of question they want (see Figure 4). Purchasing options are also included, giving users the opportunity to purchase a book directly through **Amazon** or another vendor.

Workflow and the Business of Routing Requests

The Getting It System Toolkit is designed to leverage systems and streamline workflow. Using the ILLiad software is one way of achieving better workflow design and synergy between ILL and acquisitions. Streamlining acquisitions workflow is simply utilizing ILLiad functions, including customizing request queues, email templates, and a routing system. ILLiad can automate sorting requests using a system of routing rules, which are queries that will automatically change the status of requests based upon certain conditions. If you create custom acquisition queues, you can have your requests routed and changed to a different status automatically based on your department workflow and attributes about the request (e.g., too widely held by consortia, free full-text available, or department review required). For example, once a request has been opened and processed, acquisitions staff can change the status of a request automatically with one click and send a specific Acquisitions ILLiad email to the patron notifying them that their item has been processed. Both ILL and acquisitions can now have their own custom queues and emails, and the ability to route a request back and forth between queues or even between ILL and Acquisition processes.

After customizing your ILLiad web pages, routing rules and email routing for GIST acquisitions processing, you will see that when a user submits a purchase request it is first routed into a custom queue for
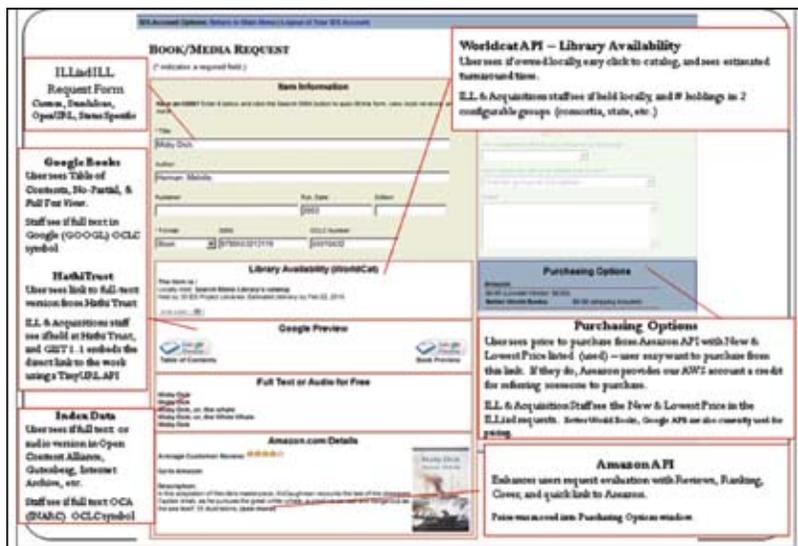
Importance	Faculty	Graduate	Staff	Undergrad	Total	%
No response	759	107	224	7,769	8,859	69.5%
Essential for class research		42	18	2,318	2,378	18.7%
Essential for classroom use	246				246	1.9%
Essential for research	213				213	1.7%
Good for collection	149				149	1.2%
needed for class			1		1	0.0%
Nice to have	50				50	0.4%
Required textbook		15	5	480	500	3.9%
Unessential	30	3	65	152	250	2.0%
Unsure	17		2	79	98	0.8%
Total	**1,464**	**167**	**315**	**10,798**	**12,744**	

Figure 4. Table of feedback responses to purchase request form questions, 10/1/2009 - 3/1/2010

acquisitions staff in ILLiad's Document Delivery module. With some client modifications and staff manager settings, Acquisitions will only see purchase requests associated with Acquisitions (see Figure 5). However, requests may be routed back and forth between Acquisitions and ILL as needed. Custom queues can be created for particular functions associated with Acquisitions, such as "Purchase Pending Budget Availability" for those requests which arrive in Acquisitions between budget cycles or "Purchase Awaiting Pre-Pub" for items which have not been published yet.

Staff double-click on a queue name to open it, and requests within may be sorted by any of the field labels (see Figure 6) to enable easy processing. Once a request is opened, staff will see a wealth of data which may inform decisionmaking. Each purchase request includes the GIST User Feedback section with pricing information, delivery preference, and importance of request. Below this section is the item information section, which includes several fields customizable according to a library's preference. **SUNY** Geneseo repurposes the Call No. and Location fields for our consortia and state-level holdings data. This enables our Acquisitions staff to make quick decisions regarding diversity of the collection with respect to collection holdings within those two configurable groups (see Figure 7).

After a request has been processed, the acquisitions staff chooses an email routing to complete the transaction. Figure 8 shows a selection of email routing rules which **SUNY** Geneseo has in place. Emails can be customized and templates created to maximize efficiency. However, all emails can be edited on the fly when necessary. Once the email routing is used and this changes the status of the request automatically, no staff intervention is needed to manually place a request in another queue.

In ILLiad 8.0, Addons were introduced, enabling Web services to open up within the ILLiad staff client. This new feature has the added benefit of allowing acquisitions staff to have multiple browser windows open within the client and automates searching of familiar book jobbers and services. This eliminates the need to tab to various browser windows and use copy and paste to do manual searches. Addons are being programmed by Atlas Systems (ILLiad's software developer) as well as the GIST Team, libraries, and consortia groups. The IDS Project and GIST Team have created addons that automatically search **OCLC** Connexion, **RCL** Web, **GOBI**, **Powell's Books**, **Amazon.com**, and many more. Addons are designed to be added to your workflow the way you need them to get the job done more effectively.

How Are We Doing?

Until October of 2009, students had little voice in how library resources were purchased. Once GIST was implemented for faculty and acquisitions began to get comfortable with the new system, GIST was introduced to the students. **SUNY** Geneseo's interlibrary loan office (Information Delivery Services or "IDS") is heavily used by students and faculty and is an efficient and effective means of routing requests for materials we do not own. Students use this service to supplement **Milne Library's** collection, so it seemed logical to let students make purchase requests as well. Beginning in October 2009, 119 items were purchased, with 54% of the items circulating between 1-2 times in the library. As of November 2010, 83 items have been purchased, with 71% of the titles circulating at least 1-2 times.
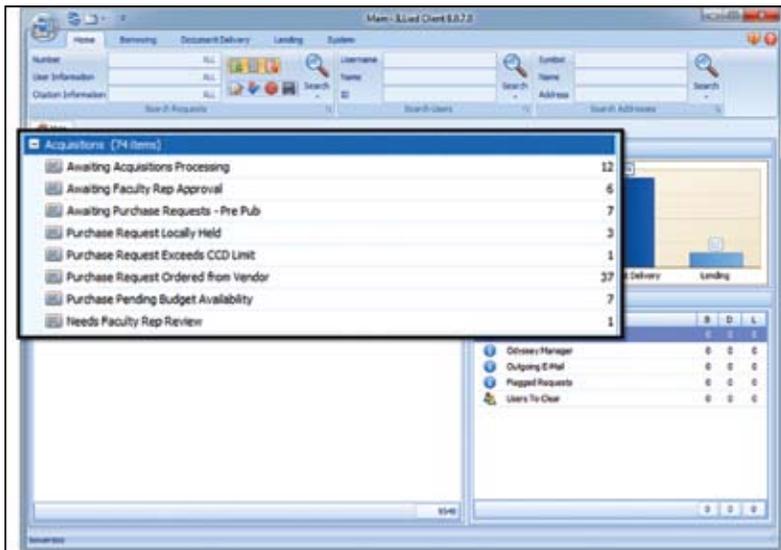
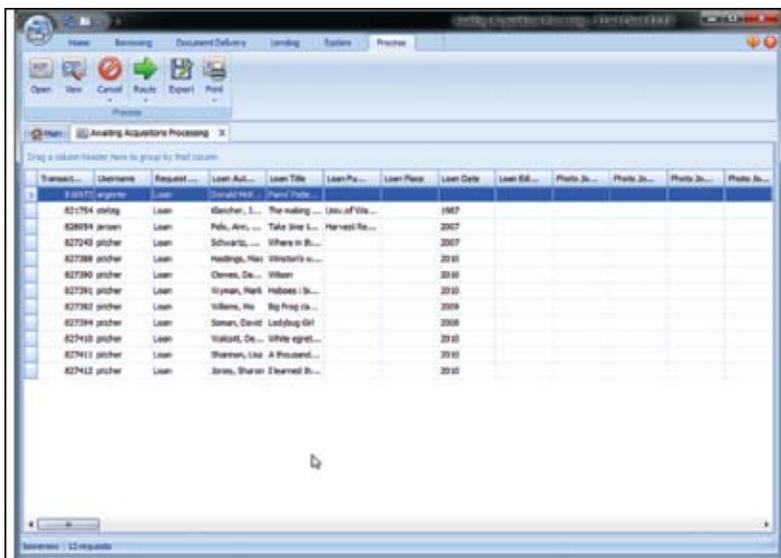Figure 5. Acquisitions custom queues in the Document Delivery module of ILLiad

Figure 6. Purchase requests in the "Awaiting Acquisitions Processing" queue.
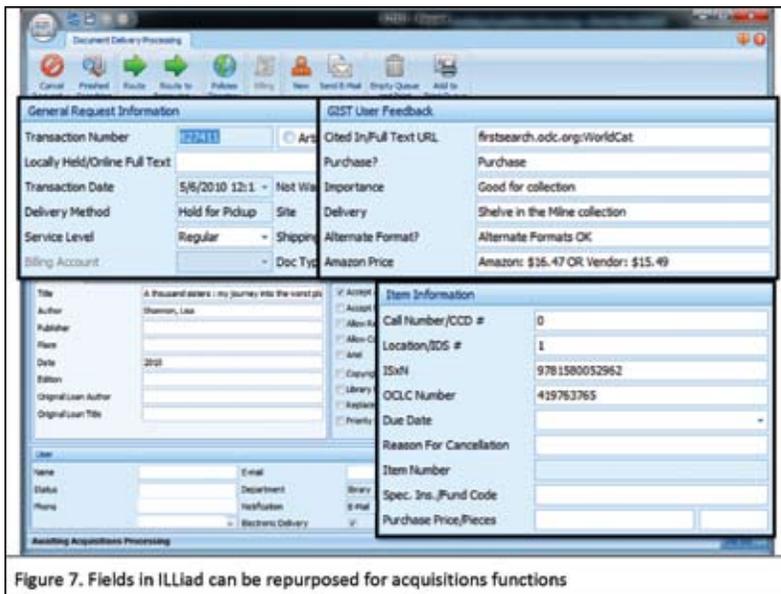

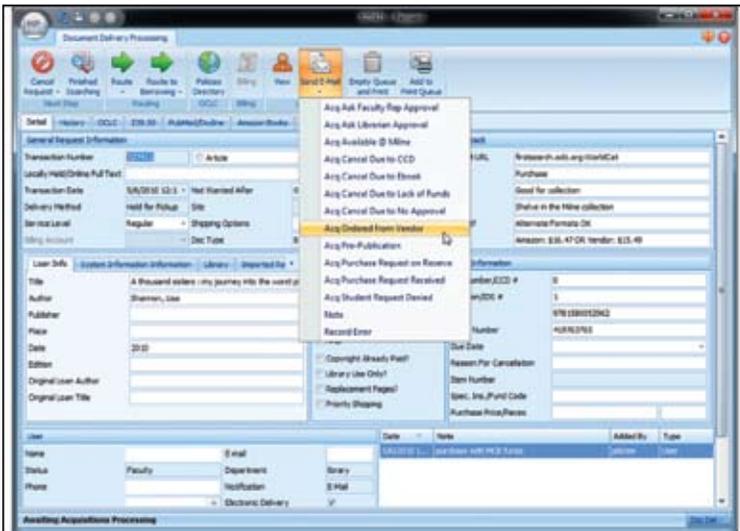Figure 7. Fields in ILLiad can be repurposed for acquisitions functions

Figure 8. Email routing allows acquisitions staff to have customized emails for different requests

Figure 9. A screenshot of the ILLiad addon for Amazon.com

Here is the breakdown of student requested items which were cataloged in 2009 and 2010:

2009 (October – December) Student requests purchased (119 total items cataloged)		
22	19%	Never circulated
65	55%	Circulated 1-2 times
32	27%	Circulated 3 or more times

Table 1. GIST Student purchase requests, 2009

2010 (January - November) Student requests purchased (83 total items cataloged)		
14	17%	Never circulated
59	71%	Circulated 1-2 times
10	12%	Circulated 3 or more times

Table 2. GIST Student purchase requests, 2010

Since October of 2009, we have been tracking GIST interlibrary loan and purchase requests. On the whole, 80% of requests initially processed by Acquisitions were eventually purchased (data collected from October 2009 to December 2010). 9% of requests were routed to IDS for borrowing from other institutions, and 11% of purchase requests were cancelled. The most frequent reasons for cancelling a request included textbook requests or items already owned by **SUNY** Geneseo. Items routed to ILL generally included holdings readily available within our consortia, thus easily obtained with a 2-3 day delivery window. The turnaround time for purchase requests averages out to 14 days.

Conclusion

GIST is a flexible system designed to leverage existing systems and improve workflows in acquisitions, as well as enable more cost-effective decisionmaking in ILL. Making use of the request management software ILLiad, GIST is designed to transform current purchasing workflow and help staff make better use of data and time. This year has seen the release of GIST's Gift and Deselection Manager, which streamlines gift processing and weeding analysis. Next year, we are releas-

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now happily retired **Jim** says that about the only thing he misses about working, besides a paycheck, is seeing "old friends, "long time" friends" (we aren't getting older, as the commercial says, we're getting better!). Anyway, **Jim** has two grandchildren and another set of twins is coming along. He is going to be busy! Speaking of which, my granddaughter's first birthday is March 7! How time flies!

Did you read the article in the last *ATG* by the bam-zowie **Sara Killingworth** ("The Future of the Textbook," p.45-48, v.22#6)? This is definitely a fluid and evolving market. There was an article in the *Wall Street Journal* as well, "Publishers expand e-Textbook offerings for Classroom," (*WSJ*, Feb. 25, 2011) which talks about a deal between **McGraw-Hill** and the textbook start-up **Inkling**.

praised ways technology has allowed more accessible collaboration. But the goal, **Waltner** offered, was getting at the root cause of issues in order to truly take collaborative action.
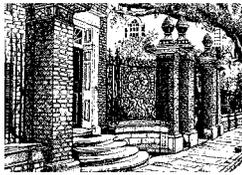
Arthur and **Waltner** can both be praised in their efforts paring down this session, originally billed as an all-day preconference, to a mere hour and fifteen minutes. Anticipating audience reluctance to provide ideas in this short timeframe, the presenters outlined their perspective of key ideas. General agreement settled upon the idea presented by **Waltner**, that **the Scholarly Publishing Model is Broken (and has been for years)**. A loosely facilitated discussion followed, touching on myriad perspectives, obstacles, and some causes.

The concepts behind this type of session format — releasing the wisdom of the crowd, expanding the Unconference approach — were described, but not fully-employed. Unfortunately, due to time limitation, the session ended with a rush to exchange contact information and without clear objectives for exactly what to do next.

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*That's all the reports we have room for in this issue. Watch for the more reports from the **2010 Charleston Conference** in upcoming issues of **Against the Grain**. Presentation material (PowerPoint slides, handouts) and taped session links from many of the 2010 sessions are available online. Visit the **Conference Website** at **www.katina. info/conference**. — KS*

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ing the GIST Acquisitions Manager to do even more with Acquisitions and ILL, including budget and fund management.

To read the GIST documentation or to download the GIST software, visit the Website at *http://gist.idsproject. org* or contact the author for more information. 🌳

Endnotes

1. **Trueswell, Richard**. 1969. Some behavioral patterns of library users: the 80/20 rule. *Wilson Library Bulletin*, 43, 5: 458-461.

2. **Jackson, Mary E.** 2003. Assessing ILL/DD Services Study: Initial Observations. *ARL Bimonthly Report 230/231 October/December 2003*: *http://www.arl. org/bm~doc/illdd.pdf*.

Year	Month	Purchase Requests	Purchased	Routed to ILL	Routed from ILL	Cancelled	Purchase Turnaround (avg. days)
2009	October	153	109	16	2	28	17.34
2009	November	233	182	15	5	36	12.33
2009	December	150	123	11	0	16	14.18
2010	January	249	162	45	4	42	10.57
2010	February	103	38	41	0	24	9.46
2010	March	192	122	51	2	19	15.05
2010	April	228	152	56	5	20	15.47
2010	May	493	434	12	1	47	15.24
2010	June	1026	920	7	5	99	31.03
2010	July	122	112	4	5	6	25.20
2010	August	74	40	20	11	14	19.23
2010	September	65	50	15	7	0	10.21
2010	October	116	101	14	7	1	6.46
2010	November	122	101	15	24	6	6.69
2010	December	141	133	4	15	4	9.00
		3467	2779	326	93	362	14.50

Table 3. Total GIST purchase requests, October 2009 – December 2010