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The Surprising Truth about Faculty Perception and Use of Collection Development Opportunities: One Library’s Case Study

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William Madison Randall Library provides informational resources and services for the University of North Carolina at Wilmington community. UNC Wilmington is a comprehensive university that enrolls approximately 11,000 students, including more than 950 graduate students, and there are over 600 faculty. The university was ranked sixth in the 2004 U.S. News and World Report listing of the top public regional undergraduate universities in the south. Library collections include over 1,000,000 bound volumes, 1,000,000 microforms, 40,000 audiovisuals, 25,000 curricular materials and 85,000 other documents. The annual materials budget is $1,871,000. There are approximately 21,200 Interlibrary Loan transactions a year, 12,500 borrowing and 8,700 lending.

During the summer of 2002, the Associate University Librarian for Technical & Collection Services and the Assistant University Librarian, Access & Delivery Services, met to discuss how collaboration between Interlibrary Loan and Collection Development activities could enhance library services. The assumption was that ILL book requests represented specific needs and therefore should be in the collection. A review of recent ILL book requests revealed that most were very relevant to UNC Wilmington’s curriculum, and would be good candidates for a collection development project. Since recent changes in the book trade enables libraries to purchase materials very quickly using Internet vendors and credit cards, it was decided to initiate a project using ILL book requests as the “trigger” for acquiring materials for the library’s collection. It was assumed that these books would circulate to other users after the Interlibrary Loan requestor had used the material.

A review of the literature revealed two similar projects. At Bucknell University, Perdue and Van Fleet (1999) describe a project that was designed to enhance the collection and reduce the ILL workload. The main goal at UNC Wilmington was to obtain ILL materials quickly and to enhance the collection, rather than to reduce the ILL workload. Ward, Wray, and Debus Lopez (2003) report on collection development projects at University of Wisconsin - Madison and Purdue University. The goal of the University of Wisconsin - Madison was to obtain ILL materials rapidly that were not filled by the first five libraries asked to furnish the item. Purdue University’s project was similar to the UNC Wilmington project in that it focused on collection development and purchasing materials that would circulate.

A draft of procedures was written for this project and it was reviewed several times until all known issues were addressed. All ILL book requests that met the following parameters would be purchased:

- Not already in the collection or on order
- Books published in 2000 or later
- Available from a vendor promising 24-48 hour shipping (Our Interlibrary Loan turn around time for books is nine days and it was important to ensure delivery to our patrons within that same time frame or faster.)

The project was implemented at the beginning of Fall Semester 2002. Funding came from the library’s special project fund and $2,500 was allocated since most special projects were assigned between $1,000 and $3,000. It was hard to predict how many books would be ordered and at what cost, so the 2000 publication date was selected to restrict the number of books purchased. It was also assumed that newer books might be more readily available from Internet vendors. Each library staff member involved in this project was trained to accomplish his or her part of this process.

The following steps describe the process:

**Randall Library** used for acquiring items from vendors versus borrowing them through Interlibrary Loan. Potential requests were automatically routed to the special queue in the ILLiad Interlibrary Loan system for Randall Library staff to review and fill the request. Setting up this queue was fairly easy and was accomplished in the Custom Queues table of the System section of the ILLiad Customization Manager. This queue is named “Awaiting Acquisition Review” but any descriptive name works. The routing for this queue was also set up in the Customization Manager and the match string language created for each user’s request to see if it was a loan with a publication date of 2000 or greater and if those conditions were true, that request should be routed to the “Awaiting Acquisition Review” queue. Most eligible requests were routed in this manner but requests without public...
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Once that day’s set of eligible requests were identified, they were saved in spreadsheet format, sent to acquisitions staff and added to the project spreadsheet. The project spreadsheet contained fields for the bibliographic information, requestor’s status and department, date ordered, vendor used and date customer notified. Each daily list was searched in vendor databases and if they were available with quick delivery, an order was placed. Acquisitions staff inserted a “Rush” note in the order record and placed a hold on the book for the patron.

As soon as items were ordered, ILL staff were notified via email of the vendor selected and this information was added to the ILLiad system and to the database. When an item was not available from a vendor with a quick delivery promise, it was processed through ILL.

When items were delivered, the library acquisitions staff received them in the library system and sent them to cataloging staff for rush processing. These materials were cataloged within two working days and delivered to ILL with a flag identifying them as rush items for the ILL Acquisition Project. Then they were processed in ILLiad and checked out to the requesting customers. Each item was identified with a service slip that stated that their ILL request prompted the library to purchase the item they requested and, as a special service, had been rushed through processing. ILLiad’s notification system sent an email to the patron notifying them of the item’s status, either availability for pickup or in transit to the patron. The project’s spreadsheet was updated with the date the customer was notified:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Transaction</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Client Name</th>
<th>Item</th>
<th>ISBN</th>
<th>Epub</th>
<th>PDF</th>
<th>Digital</th>
<th>Print</th>
<th>Date Received</th>
<th>Date Filed</th>
<th>Date Processed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>20120101</td>
<td>01/01/2012</td>
<td>John Doe</td>
<td>Book</td>
<td>123456789</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>123456789</td>
<td>01/02/2012</td>
<td>01/03/2012</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Summary of Findings

A total of 194 eligible requests were submitted and evaluated for purchase. Near the end of Fall Semester the original $2,500 allocation had been exceeded and another $2,500 was added to the project. The project ended on January 21, 2003, when all funds assigned were expended. One hundred sixty-eight books were purchased at a total cost of $5,066.31. Out of the eligible requests, twenty-eight were not ordered through this program because they were out of print, not yet published, or not available for rapid delivery. Those titles unavailable for any of the above reasons were routed back to the ILL queue and ordered through normal ILL routines. Prior to being evaluated for purchase, requests were searched in our local catalog and approximately 55% of the requested items were already in our collection.

Most of the requests processed through this ILL/Acquisition project were from faculty members, who generated a total of 50 requests. The next largest number was from graduate students who submitted 72 requests, and the smallest number came from undergraduate students with 42 requests. These numbers are fairly close to the breakdown of our ILL requests by patron category where graduate students order the most requests, followed closely by faculty and then undergraduates.

The project results showed that the average time it took to get a requested title to a patron was thirteen days. This average was calculated by looking at the amount of time it took from the date the book was requested through ILL to the date the book was delivered to the patron requesting it. This time frame includes processing the request, selecting the vendor, ordering the item, receiving the item and cataloging it for the collection. Although this average was indeed faster than the normal acquisition/cataloging process of four to six weeks, it was slower than the average turn around time of nine days for acquiring books through ILL. One factor that skewed the project’s average delivery time was that twenty titles had to be re-ordered for reasons ranging from not available for rapid delivery from the chosen vendor to out of print and unavailable, to mention a few.

The majority of orders were placed with Amazon.com, Barnesandnoble.com, or Strabook.com, but a few orders were placed directly with the publisher. In a few instances an order was placed with a vendor who could not deliver and it continued on page 22

<http://www.against-the-grain.com>
had to be reordered from another vendor. If it had not been necessary to reorder some books, it might have been possible to achieve a turn around time closer to the ILL average of nine days.

We calculated an average cost of $30.16 per item acquired, based on the purchase price for the 168 items ordered, excluding labor costs. Although this figure is more than the mean borrowing cost of $16.67 for US research libraries cited in table 6 in Measuring the Performance of Interlibrary Loan Operations in North American Research & College Libraries (Jackson, 1998), we did get the benefit of additional circulations from the items ordered.

Conclusions
First and foremost we learned that faculty members tend to use ILL to order items that could easily have been purchased through their departmental collection development account. It surprised us that faculty members were relatively uninformed of their collection development opportunities, despite our best efforts to spread the word. This project helped us realize that additional marketing of our collection development process needs to occur, specifically highlighting our ability to use credit cards with Internet book vendors, which assures a faster acquisition process.

We also learned that ILL requests could serve as a valuable tool for collection development. Patrons place ILL requests for materials they need access to, and both collection development and ILL can help meet those needs. Our project results show us that many of the materials acquired for the collection fulfilled more than just one patron’s research interests since 168 items had circulated 261 times as of October 2003. Checking circulation statistics for those titles again three months later revealed that they had circulated a total of 348 times, an increase of 33%!

From these findings it can be concluded that ILL requests should be considered as one of several collection development methods. Funds should be made available to support continuing projects like this so that materials requested through ILL can be acquired for the library’s collection and we will try to incorporate similar projects into the library budget. However, staffing is equally important to materials funding. The project was not continued because the library had lost an acquisition staff position the previous year and the demands of a new project that required daily expedited ordering could not be sustained. Despite the lack of a formal project at this time, we plan to analyze ILL requests each year so we can purchase those titles that match our curriculum.

The ILL/Acquisition project was an excellent vehicle to use for some of our collection development activities. We learned a number of valuable lessons from this pilot project and also enhanced services to those who placed requests that were ordered as a part of this project. The library continually earns good will from its patrons and this effort only strengthens that perception.

References

Using Interlibrary Loan Data as a Selection Tool: ILL Trails Provide Collection Clues
by Camille Livingston (Evening Reference Librarian, University of Houston Downtown)
and Antje Mays (Head, Monograph & A-V Acquisitions, Ida Jane Dacus Library, Winthrop University, Rock Hill, SC 29733)

Interlibrary loan (ILL) data can provide a goldmine of information for acquisitions and collection development. Both interlibrary loan and acquisitions support the library’s mission of timely patron access to needed materials. While acquisitions is geared to supporting the core information needs of the library constituency, interlibrary loan complements this role by providing access to additional materials that are out of scope, beyond the library’s purchasing power, or any combination of these factors. Interlibrary loan data provide a glimpse into what is being borrowed. When viewed from an acquisitions standpoint, these data can point to gaps in the library collection and/or to specialized research in areas beyond the library’s scope. By providing additional insights into library needs, ILL data can enable library acquisitions to provide greater customization of curricular support.

Data Analysis — What is the ILL Trail Telling Us?
The key to analyzing ILL requests is through use of a good interlibrary-loan software package that allows storage and manipulation of historical data mature enough to contain at least several years of interlibrary-loan history. The library may choose to use a standalone package such as Clio, OCLC’s ILLiad, or the integrated library system’s ILL module. Regardless of which system is used, the data elements needed to meaningfully track the requests include the department, requester (faculty, staff, undergraduate student, master’s level, doctoral student), lender, the item ordered, borrowing costs, and requests and return dates. Meaningful data elements facilitate analysis of summary data for a big-picture assessment of the overall situation.

Summary of the data by academic department/area of study provides an overview of subject areas, allowing for at-a-glance identification of the highest concentrations of borrowing. Additionally, detailed interlibrary loan data (including articles and monograph titles) reflect library needs from several vantage points with the help of needs-specific sorting variables:
- By academic department/area of study. This breakdown of data assists acquisitions librarians in identifying needs specifically by subject area.
- By patron level. When combined with title information, this reflects the level and purpose of the kind of work being accomplished with the borrowed material. For example, the borrowed material could be used by specialized faculty research in an individual area of interest that is not necessarily tied to the university’s existing curriculum. Or items could be borrowed for students’ coursework and thesis/dis-