The Surprising Truth ...
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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:

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 30 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 turnaround 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 Strandbooks.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 the order was continued on page 22