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ABSTRACT

This review summarizes findings derived from recent literature concerning the influences of online reference services on interlibrary loans: staffing, scheduling, and budgeting: library acquisition: library visibility and use: physical floor space: and the image of the reference department, the librarians, and the library as a whole. Eleven sources are cited. (FM)

# EFFECTS OF ONLINE SERVICES ON OTHER LIBRARY FUNCTIONS

by

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Effects of Online Services on Other Library Functions

The online services referred to in my discussion are those services offering access to those bibliographic data bases made available through commercial vendors and government departments and agencies such as BRS, SDC, LIS, NLM, and the New York Times Information Bank. I will not be referring to OCLC, computerized circulation systems, or other computerized library functions.

The most commonly discussed effect of online computer searching is the effect on inter-library loan service. Generally, there is an increase in inter-library loans after the start-up of an online search service in a library. Bell Laboratories found that "online searching has a significant effect on library services, particularly inter-library loans."[1] Bell's library "... has an in-depth collection on some subjects, and minimal or no holdings in others. It was found that ILL requests increased from 1,309 in 1974, to 2,109 in 1975---- an increase of 67%."[2] Most of these requests were traced to a few large online searches performed there.

Other special libraries' studies have shown increases of 167.7% in ILL requests, and 18% in ILL requests.[3] However, there may be only a small increase in ILL requests due to online searching when the users have access to a large university library, or several libraries in the area, as perhaps in San Antonio, that may provide the materials cited in the search results. One example of this is the Kresge Library of Oakland University (Michigan). In 1976, this mid-sized university began using the MEDLINE data base service, although they do not have a school of medicine. "One of the problems anticipated . . . in exposing the university community to an information retrieval system was an overload on the ILL department, since many of the journals indexed for MEDLINE are not held by the library."[4] They reported that "54% of the citations deemed relevant by the users were not available in the university library, but only 4.1% of these citations were requested through ILL." One reason given for this is that Wayne State University, in Detroit, is only 30 miles away and many students and faculty commuted and got their materials there.

SWTSU is in a similar position. We are about the same size university, and are about 30 miles from Austin and 50 miles from San Antonio. And, many of our students and faculty commute from these and other surrounding cities. We do MEDLARS searching along with many other data bases and yet our ILL statistics have only increased slightly. We started online searching about a year and a half ago, and there does seem to be a gradual increase in loan statistics due to online searching, so maybe I will not be able to report such a small increase in the future.

One social science research library did a comparison of ILL transactions and online literature searches from July, 1973, to December, 1977. "A highly significant correlation was found between the two variables."[5] This created a problem in budgeting for the increased demands on the ILL services. These effects . . ."were minimized by changes in library policy and procedures. A chargeback service for ILL was initiated to partially recover the costs."[6] So, there will definitely be some increase in ILL requests following start-up of an online search service in your library. But, the extent of that increase seems to be dependent on such variables as the size and type of library, the types of subjects searched, the location of the library, and the clientele served. Special libraries seem to have a larger increase in ILL requests than academic or public libraries. Probably many business libraries are making greater use now of document delivery services, such as the DIALORDER service on Lockheed-DIALOG whereby photocopies of articles can be ordered online.

Another area related to ILL increase is an increase in ordering of materials <u>for your</u> library as a result of computer printouts. This can work to the advantage of your library by identifying key journals and other materials in your areas of specialization.

Another factor related to ILL increase is the increase in library use by persons that did not use the library before, or did not use it in the same way, or to the same extent. James Kusack reported in the Fall, 1979, that "... librarians who conduct online searches report... that patrons they had never seen before...are more willing to come to them for help."[7] A study was conducted by Lockheed Information Systems

of four public libraries in northern California that began use of online computer searching. They reported some effects on the libraries:[8]

(1) New library customers--computerized search seemed to attract a new set of customers, who often posed questions of a technical nature, and who required rather fast turn-around service.

(2) Increased visibility of the library--local government leaders began to turn to the library when technical questions arose, and the library was able to answer more technical and business questions.

Ryan Hoover, in an article in the Journal of Library Automation, sums up by saying "Subjective conclusions are that online bibliographic services. . . result in greater library and interlibrary loan use by people who are not otherwise regular library users. . ."[9]

The next effect of online searching, therefore, is its effect on staffing and scheduling and budgeting. One author suggests that ". . . unless additional staffing can be acquired to provide the search service, some other library activity must be curtailed in order to reallocate staff time."[10] The time involved in an online search varies, but usually five steps are involved:

(1) Initial patron interview;

(2) Preparation of search strategy;

(3) online search;

(4) Review of results for relevancy;

(5) Explanation to patron.

Also, there is the record keeping, billing, reports to administration, etc. A general rule of thumb is to allow a full hour of time for each patron.

If the present staff are going to do the online searching, then there will have to be adjustments in their schedules for doing searches and for training sessions. Each library must work out its own schedule for doing online searching, depending on how busy they are and where their priorities lie.

Once the problems of staffing and scheduling are solved, there are still the initial budgetary effects of starting an online search service. Richard DeGennaro reports that "Fortunately, there are virtually no risks for a library that wishes to get a terminal and offer

(online) services. The investment is small and the systems work."[11] An estimate by this speaker of the minimum costs for starting an online service, with one librarian doing a moderate amount of searches would be the following:

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| Computer terminal -- | $2000.00 |
| Computer paper, yearly | 100.00 |
| Telephone, yearly rent | 100.00 |
| Training sessions,basic | 200.00 |
| Manuals and guides | 400.00 |
| | $2800.00 total |

There are always hidden and 'extra' costs that should be budgeted for--but $3000.00 should be adequate to provide good search service. This would not include all the extra benefits of having money for practice time, travel, advanced training sessions, maintenance of equipment, promotional materials, professional journals to read, building you an office, buying another desk, etc, etc. But, with a terminal, a telephone, a password, basic training, a few guides, and a handful of 800 numbers, one has access to worlds of information at his fingertips.

The need for physical space to do online searching can affect other functions of the Reference Room and the library. James Kusack reports in an article entitled "Integration of On-line Reference Service" that "In most libraries. . . online retrieval services are not fully integrated with the day-to-day reference function. Particularly in public and academic libraries, there is a tendency to remove the physical components of the online system. . . to a special office of desk some distance away."[11]

The Lockheed study of four public libraries beginning online searvices in 1976, reported some practical problems with reference space. ". . .Eventually the (online) terminal had to be fitted with a sound-proof enclosure because it was not quiet enough for service in the reference area of the libraries. A teletype terminal was used in one of the libraries in an area not accessible to the public..."[12]

So, there should be plans and perhaps money set aside for the physical space requirements for interviewing patrons for searches and for doing the online searches.

One positive effect of online searching on the reference department and on the library as a whole is the effect on the image of the department, the librarians, and the library. Online searching enhances the image of those associated with it. One librarian explains that "There is a certain mystique and novelty about the computer that fascinates and attracts most people."[13] Another author stated in 1975, "The most important trend in libraries is really not automation as such. . . but is that there is continuing to be a perceptual change within the library about the role of the library and the way in which the library operates."[14] Do librarians subscribe to a conservative or minimum philosophy of giving reference service, or do we provide liberal or maximum service with the help of online computer searching? The role of the reference librarian and the library is redefined by the ability to do online searching.

The philosophical issue over what level of reference service should be provided, also leads to the debate over whether or not to charge and how much to charge for online services in a library. Each library's philosophy and budget will help decide this matter. However, "On-line services are having a profound impact on the philosophy of library/information reference service."[15]

These are some of the probable effects of online services on other functions in your library.

FOOTNOTES

[1]Donald T. Hawkins, "Impact of On-line Systems on a Literature Searching Service," Special Libraries 67 (December 1976): 559.

[2]Ibid., p.560.

[3]Ruth I. Pralle, Alternatives and Implications for On-line Searching: A Working Paper. Educational Resources Information Center, ED 163 896 (Wisconsin University-Stout, Menomonie. Media Retrieval Services) March 22, 1978, p. 3.

[4]Eileen E. Hitchingham, "MEDLINE Use in a University Without a School of Medicine," Special Libraries 67 (April 1976): 190.

[5]Anna Marie Keck McKee and Janet Williams, Computer Searching and Interlibrary Loans: Where's the Connection? Educational Resources Information Center, ED 157 559 (SLA Annual Meeting-Kansas City, Missouri) June, 1978, p.2.

[6]Ibid., p.5.

[7]James M. Kusack, "Integration of On-line Reference Service," RQ (Fall 1979): 65.

[8]R.K. Summit and O. Firschein, "Online Reference Retrieval in a Public Library," Special Libraries (February 1976): 91.

[9]Ryan E. Hooever, "Patron Appraisal of Computer-Aided On-line Bibliographic Retrieval Services," Journal of Library Automation 914 (December 1976): 335.

[10]Richard DeGennaro, "Impact of On-Line Services on the Academic Library," in The Online Revolution, eds. Allen Kent and Thomas J. Galvin (New York: M. Dekker, 1978), P.180.

[11]Ibid., p.181.

[12]R.K. Summit, p.93.

[13]Gail Herndon Lawrence, "The Computer as an Instrumental Device: New Directions for Library User Education," Library Trends (Summer 1980): 140.

[14]Ralph M. Shoffner, "Outlook for the Future," in Library Automation: the State of the Art II, eds. Susan K. Martin and Brett Butler (Chicago: ALA, 1975) p. 143.

[15]Judith Wanger, Carlos A. Cuadra and Mary Fishburn. Impact of On-line Retrieval Services: A Survey of Users, 1974-75. (Santa Monica, California: Systems Development Corporation, 1976)p. 236.