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ABSTRACT

This report describes a study designed to improve the interlibrary loan service offered by the I. D. Weeks Library at the University of South Dakota (USD); the study which examined both the actual time elapsed in filling interlibrary loan requests and the causes for delays. An introduction to the problem is provided; the library staffing and interlibrary loan process are described; and related literature is reviewed. In addition, a brief discussion of the study methodology describes the tracking of a total of 253 interlibrary loan request forms submitted to the Interlibrary Loan office during April 1986. Study results indicate that 28% of the requests were completed in one week (7 days), 61% were completed in two weeks (14 days), and 76% were completed in four weeks (28 days). Factors beyond the control of the library staff caused a delay in the completion of 19 of the 39 requests not completed after 28 days. It is recommended that borrowing materials for local USD patrons be made a clear priority for interlibrary loan, that regular follow-up procedures be instituted, and that an additional half-time staff position be added. Study results are presented in ten tables and interlibrary loan request and time study forms are included. A 20-item bibliography is also provided. (KM)

# INTERLIBRARY LOAN TIME STUDY

AT

I. D. WEEKS LIBRARY

UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH DAKOTA

by

Marcia L. Sprules

# INTERLIBRARY LOAN

# TIME STUDY

## THE PROBLEM

During 1984-85 the University of South Dakota's regional accreditation was due for review and renewal by the North Central Asscciation. The site-visit to the campus tock place in April, 1985. The report rf the site visit team remarked that students had expressed to them dissatisfaction with the time it took for an interlibrary loan request to be filled.

I. D. Weeks Library has, for many years, had a budget too small for the size and diversity of the University of South Dakota. As a result the collection available in the library is significantly smaller than is desirable, calculated by the standards of the Association of College and Research Libraries. Faced with a small collection and a small budget, the library adopted a liberal policy of borrowing what was needed to meet local needs. Table I shows the expenditures on materials and the total volume holdings for the past eight years.

TABLE I

| Fiscal Year (ends June 30) | Materials Budget (nearest dollar) | Holdings (volumes) |
|---|---|---|
| 1987 | 584,200 | 394,869 |
| 1986 | 554,536 | 384,898 |
| 1985 | 489,978 | 373,683 |
| 1984 | 502,350 | 360,798 |
| 1983 | 294,924 | 345,366 |
| 1982 | 296,513 | 329,055 |
| 1981 | 282,358 | 322,127 |
| 1980 | 263,509 | 313,675 |

The current president, hired in June, 1982, has made support for the libraries a high priority. The dramatic increase in the budget in fiscal 1984 represents that added support. Part of the

increase was raised by a student fee of $1 per credit hour. In September, 1983, the collection size rated only a D according to the ACRL formula. By Fall, 1986, collection size had increased to an A rating, but the volume of interlibrary loan continued high.

Interlibrary loan will always be a slower method of document delivery than local ownership of the needed item. It is, however, inconceivable that the library will ever be able to meet all local demands from the local holdings. Some esoteric sources on exotic topics will always depend on off-campus sources. For this reason it behooves the library to offer the most expeditious interlibrary loan service possible, minimizing any delays.

In order to determine how services might be improved, the Interlibrary Loan Supervisor, a reference librarian, undertook to study the actual times elapsed to fill requests and to ascertain the causes of the delays. The study was carried out during April, 1986. April was chosen for three reasons: 1) a new Library Associate was hired in October, 1985, to run the service on a day-to-day basis; after six months she should be sufficiently familiar with the routines that inexperience would not be a factor contributing to any delays; 2) April is a busy month, past the mid-point of the semester, with deadlines approaching so that student term-papers are in full progress; 3)there were no scheduled school holidays in April to take students off campus and reduce demand for interlibrary loans.

THE LIBRARY

I. D. Weeks Library is the central library for the University of South Dakota, and covers all of the subject disciplines offered (arts and sciences, business, education, and fine arts) except law

and medicine. The School of Law and the School of Medicine have their own professional libraries and do interlibrary loan for their primary clientele. This study is concerned only with requests submitted in I. D. Weeks Library.

Interlibrary Loan is a very popular service at the University of South Dakota. Table II shows the volume of activity for the past six years.

TABLE II

| Fiscal Year (ends June 30) | Requests to Borrow | Filled | Requests to Lend | Filled |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1987 | 3163 | 2524 | 5007 | 3867 |
| 1986 | 2935 | 2420 | 4605 | 3530 |
| 1985 | 3426 | 3035 | 4303 | 3557 |
| 1984 | 3289 | 2962 | 4302 | 3606 |
| 1983 | | | | |
| 1982 | 3033 | 2708 | 3477 | 2644 |

I. D. Weeks Library has been a net lender each year. In 1987, approximately 56% of these requests to lend are from libraries within South Dakota, often small public libraries or school libraries. But I. D. Weeks Library is a net borrower on out-of-state transactions. In 79% of the requests to borrow, no copy of the needed item is owned in South Dakota; requests must them be sent to a library beyond the state boundary. And the gap between borrowing activity and lending activity is increasing. While borrowing activity has fluctuated between 3000 and 3500 requests per year, lending activity has increased 50% since 1982. While this study is concerned only with requests to borrow materials, it must be borne in mind that staff were filling requests to lend out materials at the same time as they were borrowing in other materials.

STAFFING

The Interlibrary Loan office is staffed by one full-time civil service position at the level of Library Associate. This position classification requires two years of college plus two years work experience or an equivalent combination. In addition there are 35-40 hours per week of student help. The Library Associate is supervised by one of the Reference Librarians, who devotes approximately 10% time to interlibrary loan matters. Approximately 2 FTE handle all the interlibrary loan requests.

THE PROCESS

There are four stages to filling an interlibrary loan request: 1) after the request is submitted to the local ILL office, the staff verify the accuracy of the bibliographic information supplied by the requestor, check holdings lists to ascertain which library owns the item needed, and type a request form for the potential lender; 2) the request is transmitted to the other library via US mail or electronic mail; 3) the lending library checks its holdings to ascertain if it does indeed own the item and can circulate it, retrieves the item from the shelves, photocopies the needed pages if appropriate, wraps and mails the item back to the borrowing library; 4)the package is in transit from the lender to the borrowing library. Parcels are usually shipped Library Rate ( a special fourth class mail) or UPS; electronic transmission of printed pages is not widely available in libraries at this time.

Each request to borrow must be handled by the staff of the borrowing library at least four times: holdings lists are checked until a potential lender is located, the request is typed and

transmitted, when the package is received it must be recorded and requestor notified, and finally the borrowed material is wrapped and mailed back to owner when the requestor is finished with the item. A negative reply from a potential lender would cause additional handling in order to locate additional lenders, type and transmit a second request, and an additional wait for a package to arrive.

During the April study period, the Interlibrary Loan Office staff processed 263 requests to borrow and 577 requests to lend materials. In 22 working days, they processed 840 requests, or 38 per day. All of these had to be performed by 2 FTE employees in 352 working hours (22 days x 8 hours x 2 people). Under such conditions, it would be tempting to set aside the difficult or problem requests to work on later when it gets slower, but it never gets slower. Yesterday's problems get buried under today's problems, causing long delays for the users.

Delays can occur at any point in the chain. In addition, it is often necessary to send requests to more than one holding library, as the copy may be checked out, missing, noncirculating, or otherwise unavailable. Holdings lists only tell the staff where an item is supposed to be; they do not indicate day-to-day availability of the item. Some of the available holdings lists are several years old and so do not reflect materials lost, discarded, or added since the preparation of the list. When sending to several libraries, all steps need to be repeated for each potential lender; a negative reply received in the mail effectively returns the process to step 1.

In addition, it is not clear what constitutes an acceptable

response time. Those who begin their projects well in advance of deadlines may be able to wait longer for a few sources to arrive than those who leave everything to the last week of the semester. Yet it is not the function of the Interlibrary Loan office to compensate for procrastination on the part of the requestor.

LITERATURE REVIEW

In 1983 the Council on Library Resources commissioned Information System Consultants to do a study of "Document Delivery in the United States."(1) Their review of the literature on document delivery produced some useful statistics. Of the approximately 25 million interlibrary loan transactions per year, academic libraries place 21.2% or 5,300,000. Interlibrary loan borrowing typically accounts for about 1% of a library's total circulation. Satisfaction time (from initial submission of the request to picking up the item) ranged from 10 to 16 days, averaging 8.5 days for a loan filled in-state and 18 days for a loan filled out-of-state. The material spent 6.3 days in transit to the requesting library. Telephone interviews with large libraries revealed that the librarians were satisfied with the time requirements and were not getting complaints from users. Only a handful of respondents felt that the current state of affairs needs to be improved. Users have learned to wait.

> It is their impression --one which cannot be documented -- that what has generally been characterized as satisfaction is actually acceptance of a pattern which has existed for decades. The first time user quickly learns that it takes weeks --not days --to get something which his or her library does not own. The expressions of concern about improved document delivery appear to be coming from leaders in the profession who are looking ahead to greater resource sharing as a means of coping with

ongoing fiscal constraints.

The emphasis in this report is the last stage of the interlibrary loan process, delivery of the actual document from the lending library to the borrowing library, including electronic means of delivery. These authors were convinced that the delivery delays were much too long. The number of studies of interlibrary loan networks and satisfaction time would suggest that an increasing number of librarians are becoming concerned with delays in the existing interlibrary loan systems.

Academic libraries frequently study the performance of one or more departments. Brown (2) reported that among Research Libraries Group members using RLIN to transmit interlibrary loan requests, the average time between transmitting a request and receiving an item ranged from 7 to 19 days for the various users. Tallon (3) studied universities in Quebec and Ontario, using a courier delivery service, and found the time between sending the request and receiving the item to be 3.9 days in Ontario and 6.3 in Quebec. Stuart-Stubbs (4) reported on delivery among colleges and universities in British Columbia. Using three working days as a target processing time for both borrower and lender, he calculated the percentage of requests filled within target. For borrowing library processing, scores ranged from only 6.1% to 100%. Lenders responded to requests within the target time limits for 62.8% to 97.9% of the requests. At the last stage (in transit to the borrowing library) 56.9% of the requests sent by mail arrived in six days; when using a courier service 53.0% of requests were delivered in four days. Noda et al (5) studied interlibrary loan among the 19 campuses of the California State

University system and found a total turn-around time of 5.1 days, with 1.0 days for borrowing library verification, 1.8 days for lending library routines, and 2.3 days for delivery. Martell (6) studied the Lending operations at the University of California at Berkeley and found that processing time for requests was more than 20 days from receipt of the request from a library to shipping the item. Reasons included storage of some materials ten miles from the campus and a photoduplication unit which took 2-10 days to make needed copies. Taler (7) studied the ILL patterns at Paul Klapper Library of Queens College to determine how the method of sending the request to a potential lender affected turn-around time. In 1979, when the OCLC ILL subsystem became available, they received notification of shipment in 2.18 to 14.29 days and received the item in 10.09 to 27.39 days. In 1981, times were reduced to 5.11 to 9.83 days for notification of shipment and 13.70 to 22.13 days for receipt of the item. Budd (8) analyzed the filled ILL requests at Southeastern Louisiana University in 1985, and found that the mean elapsed time from request to receipts was 19.13 days, the median elapsed time was 17 days, but the range was 2-95 days. He further reported that 40 requests (8.1 %) were filled in 0-7 days, 144 (29.2%) in 8-14 days, 162 requests (32.9%) in 15-21 days, 69 requests (14.0%) in 22-28 days, or 84% in 28 days or less. The remainder could have taken considerably longer.

There are many library networks and consortia which provide rapid delivery of interlibrary loan materials among their members. Turn-around time is a point of great interest to these networks. Thomas (9) studied turn-around time in three sections of the

Colorado Western Slope in 1980, finding an average turn-around time of 9 days, with 7 days for requests filled in-state and 11 days if filled out-of-state. At each step, 1-2 days elapsed in processing. Gorin and Kanen (10) studied the Florida Library Information Network, testing the OCLC ILL subsystem againgst TWX and telex. All requests sent via OCLC were shipped within 13 days; one-third were shipped within one day and 54.1% were shipped in two days. In 1983 the South Dakota State Library (11) studied requests sent within the state, and found an average turn-around time of 6 days. Seidenberg (12) studied the Texas State Library Network and found average turn-around times of 10.3 days for requests filled at the nearest Major Resource Center (MRC) library, and 28.3 days if the MRC referred the request on, in 1982. Response time of the lenders was measured in hours. Telephone requests were acted on within 34.3 hours, while OCLC requests were acted on in only 7.3 hours, for a total network processing average of 20.8 hours per request. Herman (13) studied public library requests in Idaho in 1978. Of the total requests submitted, 41.98% were filled within ten days and 58.46% were filled in fifteen days. Considering only the filled requests, 55.93% were filled in ten days and 77.89% were filled in fifteen days. Mean turn-around time was 11.39 days, with a range of one day to thirty-nine days. Trudell and Wolper (14) surveyed the use of interlibrary loan among NELINET members in 1975. Total turnaround time averaged 10.5 days overall, and 8.5 days for a loan within the same state, but 26 days for a loan request sent out-of-state. In 1985 Ringgold Management Systems, Inc. (15) conducted an exhaustive study of the New York State Interlibrary

Loan network NYSILL and recommended a new design to speed service. During the study period, delivery times (stages two, three, and four) averaged 7.14-19.57 days, depending on type of library and method of delivery used. Public library requests took twice as long as others (7.14 days for medical libraries and 9.87 days for academic). The discrepancy may be due to more referrals made on public library requests, and more direct transmission to a known location by the other two types. For the SUNY/OCLC academic libraries, the processing times were 11.6-13.3 days total, with the request date to ship date interval (Stage III) averaging 4.0-4.4 days and the ship date to receive date interval (Stage IV) averaging 7.5-8.9 days.

The Illinois State Library Network (ILLINET) appears to be the most thorough in studying its own performance. Rouse and Rouse have produced a series of nine reports on various topics. They emphasize the processing times within the lending library. This processing may result in filling the request by sending an item or in referring the request to another library. Because the network is extremely hierarchic, a request may be referred several times between first transmission from the originating small public library and eventual fulfillment by a large research library. It is not clear from these reports how long the requestor waits for his/her book or materials. The extensive research which goes into these reports makes them useful as models of the methodology for analyzing a complex network. Rouse and Rouse (16) studied the Illinois State Library Network, and found processing time at the four referral centers ranged from 3.81 days to 6.87 days. Each center went through six steps to process a request received, with

the longest times spent on in-processing the request, verifying the information, and forwarding to another library (if necessary). Goldhor (17) summarized ILLINET activity in the spring of 1975. The average turnaround time as 13.9 days, the median was 11 days, and the mode 8 days.

There has been a proliferation of commercial document delivery services in recent years. While these firms serve primarily for-profit clients, some nonprofit organizations certainly make use of them as well. Two recent studies have compared the delivery times for these services to the times for traditional interlibrary loan channels. Currie studied fulfillment times for requests submitted to the Albert R. Mann Library at Cornell University. (18) The requests were for periodical titles published after 1975, and were sent either to libraries, to one of three abstracting services, or to one commercial information broker. Days elapsed between sending the request to a potential supplier and receipt of the item ranged from a low of 3 days to a maximum (on only one transaction) of 118 days. Overall the library suppliers filled requests in an average of 13.56 days; commercial sources took from 6.04 to 20.53 days to supply an item. Hurd and Molyneux (19) compared delivery times and costs for library and nonlibrary document delivery suppliers at the University of Virginia Science and Engineering Library. They found that conventional sources averaged 14.9-15.0 calendar days from transmission of the request to arrival in the library, while non-library sources averaged 11.1-11.3 calendar days.

It is also clear from these studies that the introduction of the OCLC Interlibrary Loan sybsystem in 1979 has had a definite

effect shortening interlibrary loan time. The potential lending library receives the request the same day as the borrowing library transmits it. One delay in the process is eliminated. In addition, the four-day deadline to respond to the query prods the lending staff to fill these requests in a timely manner.

Table III summarizes these reported times.

Table III

| INSTITUTION | | STAGE I | STAGE II | STAGE III | STAGE IV | TOTAL |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Boss and McQueen | | | | | 6.3 | 10-16 |
| Brown | RLG | | * | * | * | 7-19 |
| Budd | LA | 6.46 | 4.58<br>3 OCLC | 0-73 | 8.21 | 19.13 |
| Currie | Cornell | | * | * | * | 13.56 |
| Goldhor | IL | | * | * | * | 13.9 |
| Gorin and Kanen | FL | | OCLC | 2 | | |
| Herman | ID | | | | | 11.39 |
| Hurd & Molyneux | VA | | | * | * | 11.1-11.3<br>14.9-15.0 |
| Martell | CA | | | >20 | | |
| Noda et al | CA | 1.0 | | 1.8 | 2.3 | 5.1 |
| Ringgold Mgmt | NY | | * | * | * | 7.14-19.57 |
| SUNY/OCLC | | | * | 4.0-4.4 | 7.5-8.9 | 11.6-13.3 |
| Rouse and Rouse | IL | | | 3.81-6.87 | | |
| Seidenberg | TX | | | | | 10.3-28.3 |
| South Dakota | | 1 | 1 | 2 | 2 | 6 |
| Stuart-Stubbs | BC | | | | 4-6 | |
| Taler | CUNY (1979) | | * | 2.18-14.29 | * | 10.09-27.39 |
| | (1981) | | * | 5.11-9.83 | * | 13.7-22.13 |
| Tallon | Canada | | * | * | * | 3.9-6.3 |
| Thomas | CO | 1-2 | 1-2 | 1-2 | 1-2 | 9 |
| Trudell & Wolper | NELINET | 2.5 | * | * | * | 10.5 |

* indicates stages included in totals to right, but not reported separately.

Waldhart's recent review of the literature on interlibrary loan (20) summarizes and contrasts methodologies used to study this service in 50 other reports and articles. Some of these reports deal with aspects of interlibrary loan other than turnaround time; examples include telecommuncations and means of transporting the documents. The section on turnaround time enumerates some of the questions which need to be asked in designing a study such as this: how to measure elapsed time (calendar days or work days?) and how to handle requests not completed (include or exclude?). Two of his reporting suggestions have been incorporated into the tables here. Turnaround time is reported in component parts, each stage separately, and percentages of requests filled in a stated time

interval are supplied, as well as te average time at each stage.

The definition of "turn-around time" used in these studies varies widely. The lending library frequently defines it as the interval between receipt of the request (by mail or electronically) and shipment of a package to the borrowing library (stage III only). The borrowing library frequently defines it as the interval between transmission the request to a potential lender and receipt of the package containing the needed material ( stages II, III, IV). Under this difference of definitions, the borrowing library's turn-around time will necessarily be longer than the lender's, even on the same transaction. Only four of the studies reviewed considered the processing at stage I, in the borrowing library before transmission to the lender. The person making the request probably starts measuring the turn-around time as soon as he/she submits a request and stops counting only when he/she picks up the item. If this is true, then the borrowing patron's concept of turn-around time will be the longest of the three. Additional research appears needed on this stage I processing time.

METHODOLOGY

All requests to borrow submitted to the Interlibrary Loan office during April, 1986, were tracked. To each request form (Figure I) a record sheet (Figure II) was stapled. As work was done on the request, a notation was made on the record sheet. These were turned in to the supervisor upon completion of the request until August 12, 1986, when remaining forms were retrieved from the "Pending" files. Extensive efforts were made

to go back and fill in incomplete data so that no forms needed to be discarded as useless. Requests from other libraries to borrow materials from I. D. Weeks Library were not tracked at all at this time.

RESULTS

Patron log requests numbers 2645-2898 were turned in during April, for a total of 253 requests. All of the forms were returned eventually. Of these, 66 (26%) requests were not filled. Reasons for nonfulfillment are shown in Table IV.

TABLE IV

| REASON | NUMBER |
|---|---|
| Exceeds copyright restrictions | 11 |
| USD owned the item | 10 |
| No reply from lender by August 12 | 10 |
| Requestor unwilling to pay charges | 10 |
| No location would lend | 7 |
| Citation problems | 7 |
| No locations found | 3 |
| Deadline passed | 3 |
| Duplicate requests | 2 |
| Sent to Health Sciences Library to refer | 2 |
| Microform copy unacceptable to requestor | 1 |
| TOTAL | 66 |

The length of time elapsed to notify a requestor of a problem are shown in Table V.

TABLE V

| ELAPSED TIME (days) | NUMBER REQUESTS | CUMULATIVE NUMBER |
|---|---|---|
| Same day | 17 | |
| 1 | 8 | |
| 2 | 2 | |
| 6 | 2 | |
| 7 | 3 | 32 |
| 8 | 1 | |
| 11 | 1 | |
| 13 | 2 | |
| 15 | 2 | 38 |
| 16 | 1 | |
| 17 | 1 | |
| 19 | 1 | |
| 21 | 2 | 43 |
| 41 | 2 | |
| 76 | 1 | |
| No reply | 10 | |
| Can't tell | 8 | |
| TOTAL | | 66 |
| AVERAGE | | 8.8 |

In all cases, time intervals are calculated in calendar days, not working days. Responses of "Can't tell" are caused by missing notations on the form which could not be reconstructed.

One half of the requestors were notified within one week that the material was, most likely, unavailable. With such a prompt reply they should be able to find alternate sources for their paper. Fully one-quarter were notified on the same day that there was an evident problem on the request submitted. In 28 cases (nearly half) the request was sent to a potential lender who reported that the article did not appear where the requestor's source said it did or that there would be a charge for the material. Problems such as USD owning the material or the request exceeding copyright restrictions surface early in the verification

process and tend to cause prompt replies. Lending charges and citation problems often surface only after the request is actually transmitted.

Intervals between submission to the ILL office and first transmission were calculated from the action sheet. Results are shown in Table VI.

TABLE VI

| INTERVAL | NUMBER | CUM | PCT |
|---|---|---|---|
| Same day | 44 | | |
| 1 | 47 | | |
| 2 | 54 | 145 | 57% |
| 3 | 30 | | |
| 4 | 14 | 189 | 74% |
| 5 | 16 | | |
| 6 | 14 | | |
| 7 | 17 | 236 | 93% |
| 8 | 6 | | |
| 9 | 4 | | |
| 10 | 3 | | |
| 11 | 1 | | |
| 13 | 1 | | |
| 14 | 1 | | |
| 15 | 1 | | |
| Can't tell | 2 | | |
| TOTAL | 255 | | |
| AVERAGE | 3.1 | | |

More than half of the requests were processed and transmitted to a potential lender within two calendar days; nearly three-quarters were transmitted within four calendar days; more than 90% had been processed in one week. It is not clear from the data collected why more than one week elapsed before transmitting the remaining requests to any lender.

Stage Two should be the briefest of the four stages of a request. I. D. Weeks Library uses electronic mail extensively, sending requests via Easylink to libraries in South Dakota, North

Dakota, and to the MINITEX office in Minneapolis, and via the OCLC ILL subsystem to libraries outside the MINITEX region. In addition, the OCLC ILL subsystem allows for automatic forwarding of requests to as many as five libraries in sequence. This feature eliminates processing of negative replies and retyping the request, at least until five libraries have tried to fill it. These electronic mail systems depend on the recipient to check the mailbox periodically to receive messages. Easylink even tries to call a box owner's terminal to deliver a message, but if it receives no answer, delivers the message to the mailbox to be held until called for.

During the study period only 16 requests (6% of the total) were send through the US mail on standard ALA interlibrary request forms. Delays at this stage are probably insignificant since most libraries do seem to check their electronic mailboxes frequently.

Stage Three (lending library processing time) was calculated from date of transmission to postmark date on the package. Results are shown in Table VII.

TABLE VII

| INTERVAL | NUMBER | CUM | PCT |
|---|---|---|---|
| Same day | 1 | | |
| 1 | 21 | | |
| 2 | 31 | | |
| 3 | 20 | | |
| 4 | 17 | | |
| 5 | 11 | | |
| 6 | 23 | | |
| 7 | 12 | 135 | 58% |
| 8 | 13 | | |
| 9 | 4 | | |
| 10 | 5 | | |
| 11 | 2 | | |
| 12 | 3 | | |
| 13 | 7 | | |
| 14 | 3 | 172 | 74% |
| 15 | 6 | | |
| 16 | 2 | | |
| 17 | 2 | | |
| 18 | 2 | | |
| 19 | 1 | | |
| 20 | 1 | 186 | 83% |
| 22 | 1 | | |
| 25 | 2 | | |
| 26 | 1 | | |
| 31 | 2 | | |
| 33 | 1 | | |
| 34 | 1 | | |
| 44 | 1 | 195 | 87% |
| No reply | 10 | | |
| Can't tell | 17 | | |
| TOTAL | 223 | | |
| AVERAGE | 6.3 | | |

Of 223 requests, more than half (136 or 61%) were processed within one week, 173 requests (78%) were processed in two weeks. In those cases where a request was sent to more than one library, the separate processing times were counted as separate requests, if the interval could be determined. In the case of the fifty requests which had not been processed after two weeks it is tempting to fault the lending library staff. The cause of these delays cannot be determined from the information available.

During the Stage Four of the process, the material is in transit from the lending library to I. D. Weeks Library. Electronic mail is not suitable at this stage. Transit time intervals are shown in Table VIII.

TABLE VIII

| INTERVAL | NUMBER | CUM | PCT |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 day | 20 | | |
| 2 | 41 | | |
| 3 | 46 | | |
| 4 | 42 | | |
| 5 | 22 | 170 | 91% |
| 6 | 6 | | |
| 7 | 2 | | |
| 8 | 1 | | |
| 10 | 1 | | |
| 16 | 1 | | |
| 20 | 1 | | |
| Can't tell | 6 | | |
| AVERAGE | 3.3 | | |

Telefacsimile is not commonly used in libraries to transmit requested materials. Several experiments with telefacsimile in the 1960's disappointed many people. Expensive equipment proved unreliable with frequent breakdowns and poor quality copies. Recent technological improvements now give better results, but they are not widely adopted yet in libraries. Materials are commonly sent in the US mail or via UPS.

More than 90% of the requests were delivered in five days or less. Differences when using UPS or US mail, whether first class or fourth, were not evident. Nor does the distance seem to be significant, for one package from New York City arrived in two days while one from Nebraska took eight. It appears that the actual time in physical transit is not often the cause of the delays.

The only number that matters to the requestor, however, is the total elapsed time from submission of the request to picking

up the material. As shown in Table IX, 28% of the requests were completed in one week (7 days), 61% were completed in two weeks (14 days), 76% were completed in four weeks (28 days). What is a reasonable delay to expect? Each requestor will have his/her own notion of how long he/she can bear to wait for an item. Four weeks would seem like a long wait for a source if the paper is due at the end of a 16-week semester.

TABLE IX

| INTERVAL | NUMBER | CUM | PCT |
|---|---|---|---|
| Same day | 17 | | |
| 1 | 8 | | |
| 2 | 2 | | |
| 4 | 4 | | |
| 5 | 7 | | |
| 6 | 16 | | |
| 7 | 16 | 70 | 28% |
| 8 | 18 | | |
| 9 | 16 | | |
| 10 | 10 | | |
| 11 | 7 | | |
| 12 | 9 | | |
| 13 | 13 | | |
| 14 | 12 | 155 | 61% |
| 15 | 11 | | |
| 16 | 5 | | |
| 17 | 2 | | |
| 18 | 2 | | |
| 19 | 4 | | |
| 20 | 6 | | |
| 21 | 7 | 192 | 76% |
| 22 | 4 | | |
| 23 | 2 | | |
| 24 | 1 | | |
| 26 | 2 | | |
| 27 | 2 | | |
| 28 | 4 | 207 | 82% |
| 31 | 3 | | |
| 32 | 2 | | |
| 35 | 2 | | |
| 38 | 2 | | |
| 39 | 1 | | |
| 41 | 2 | | |
| 42 | 1 | 220 | 87% |
| 46 | 3 | | |
| 47 | 1 | | |
| 49 | 1 | | |
| 50 | 1 | | |
| 51 | 1 | | |
| 54 | 1 | | |
| 55 | 1 | | |
| 60 | 1 | 229 | 91% |
| 61 | 1 | | |
| 63 | 1 | | |
| 70 | 3 | | |
| 76 | 1 | | |
| No reply | 10 | | |

| | |
|---|---|
| Can't tell | 7 |
| TOTAL | 253 |
| AVERAGE | 15.1 |

Each of the 39 requests not completed after 28 days was scrutinized individually to ascertain the reason. In some cases more than one reason contributed to the delay. Table X shows these causes in descending order of frequency.

TABLE X

| | |
|---|---|
| Delay in reply from lending library | 17 |
| Inadequate followup at I. D. Weeks (those not filled by August 12) | 10 |
| Delay in sending status check to lender | 8 |
| Delay in transmitting first request | 4 |
| Package took a long time in the mail | 2 |
| Delay in sending request to second lib | 1 |
| Delay in notifying requestor of negative reply | 1 |
| Delay in notifying requestor of problem | 1 |
| Had to send to three libraries | 1 |

In 19 cases (only half) the delay is clearly due to factors outside the control of I. D. Weeks Library staff. In the remaining 20 instances, delay appears to be exacerbated by inaction on the part of local staff. In eight cases a long delay occured before a status check was sent to a potential lender. In 10 cases the request was in the active files from April until August 12 (approximately four months) with no evident followup. No wonder requestors sometimes believe that their request has been sent to Aldeberan!

DISCUSSION

The average request, then, would require the following processing times: 1)I. D. Weeks Library staff search for a location and transmit the request (or return to the requestor if there seems to be a problem) in 3-4 days; 2) the lending library staff check their holdings and send the item or send notification of a problem in 6-7 days; 3)the item is in transit to Vermillion for 3-4 days. The total elapsed time, between submission of the request and picking up the material, will average 15 days. This is within the range found by Boss and McQueen, and compares favorably with times reported by other academic librarians, such as Brown, Budd, Currie, Hurd & Molyneux, and Taler.

There does seem to be an excessive workload on the staff in the Interlibrary Loan office. Processing 38 requests per day means that everyone is trying to get as many requests as possible done in a very short period of time. It is very tempting to put the problem requests aside and get on with the easier ones. Although the intent probably is to return to the problem requests when time permits, time never seems to permit. A more consistent and reliable method of follow-up appears to be necessary.

Having the same staff process both borrowing and lending requests may create confusion about what the office priorities should be. Requests to lend are often easy to fill, requiring only retrieving the item from the stacks, checking the book out, photocopying some pages, and wrapping and mailing a package. Because these requests are so easy and so numerous, it is tempting to fill them first. But doing so leaves insufficient time to process borrowing requests.

Since one of the two FTE in the office are part-time student workers, scheduling becomes a problem. There are some hours during the week when no one is available. In addition, during school vacations, students are not usually available to work. But the requests keep coming in during vacation periods. Greater continuity might be provided by adding a half-time CSA position to fill some extra hours.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1- The primary function of the office must be to borrow materials for local USD patrons, whether student or faculty. Current staff must be reminded of this priority and must adjust their work patterns in order to fulfill it. New staff need to be told of this priority early in their training. Work must be scheduled to give priority to the local borrower. While requests for other libraries are important, they must be given second priority.

2- Regular follow-up procedures are needed to ensure that requests do not sit in a file for four months with no action taken. Files should be checked weekly for delayed responses. Even during busy times of the semester, it is essential that this follow-up be performed consistently as a high priority.

3- A half-time CSA position should be created in the office to deal primarily with requests to lend materials to other libraries. Appropriate classification would probably be Library Clerk. This additional staff would free the Library Associate to work on the more difficult borrowing requests so that they are located and transmitted in a timely manner.

With these minor changes, the Interlibrary Loan service would become far more responsive to the needs of the university community and would improve dramatically the services offered.

# I. D. WEEKS LIBRARY/INTERLIBRARY LOAN REQUEST

(ONLY ONE ITEM PER SHEET, PLEASE!)

NAME OF BORROWER _____ DATE _____

MAILING ADDRESS _____ STATUS: FACULTY ____ GRADUATE STUDENT ____

_____ UNDERGRADUATE ____ OTHER ____

PHONE NUMBER (___) _____ DEPARTMENT _____ DATE NEEDED BY _____

*(Please allow at least 2 wks.)*

_____

*BOOK:

AUTHOR _____

(LAST NAME, FIRST NAME, MIDDLE INITIAL IF POSSIBLE)

TITLE _____

_____

PLACE _____ PUBLISHER _____ DATE _____

SUB. ED. ACCEPTABLE? ____ YES ____ NO

*PERIODICAL:

NAME OF PERIODICAL _____

(PLEASE DO NOT ABBREVIATE)

_____

_____

VOL. _____ NUMBER _____ DATE _____

AUTHOR, TITLE AND PAGES OF ARTICLE: _____

_____

_____

_____ PAGES _____

*SOURCE OF ABOVE CITATION

_____

(TITLE OF INDEX OR JOURNAL/BOOK)

_____

VOL. NO. _____ DATE _____ PAGE _____

METHOD OF PAYMENT IF THERE IS A CHARGE:

( ) CASH OR CHECK

( ) CHARGE _____ DEPT.

( ) DEPT. NO. _____

( ) GRANT/LOAN NO. _____

SIGNATURE: _____

**********

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**********

THE SPACE BELOW IS FOR STAFF USE ONLY.

VERIFIED _____ MULS _____

_____ NST' _____

_____ NUC _____

OTHER _____

OCLC # _____

LOCATIONS _____

IL: _____

INTERLIBRARY LOAN

TIME STUDY

DO NOT WRITE IN THIS COLUM

PATRON LOG NUMBER _____

DATE REC'D IN ILL OFFICE _____

DATE TRANSMITTED _____

TRANSMITTED TO _____

TRANSMITTED VIA _____

POSTMARK DATE _____

DATE RECEIVED IN I. D. WEEKS _____

SHIPPED VIA _____

LENDING LIBRARY _____

ZIP CODE OF LENDING LIBRARY _____

LOAN OR PHOTOCOPY _____

**********

DATE RETURNED TO REQUESTOR _____

REASON _____

DATE SEARCH RESUMED _____

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