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Two Major Strategies for Facilitating Increased Interlibrary Loan Patron Satisfaction

Michelle Smith
Kennesaw State University

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GOO WHITE PAPER

Two major strategies for facilitating increased interlibrary loan patron satisfaction

by Michelle Smith

This paper will examine two major strategies currently in use that appear to have improved patron satisfaction in the Interlibrary Loan Unit at Kennesaw State University in the Atlanta metro area in northwest Georgia.

Strategies implemented by other libraries that have improved customer satisfaction and established effective interlibrary lending systems will also be examined. These strategies will include the research strategies of Tom Ruthven and Susan Magnay from the article "Top Performing Interlending Operations: Results of the Australian Benchmarking Study." The strategies described by Lynne Porat in "Automation of Interlibrary Loan Services: Effects on the Patron and the Library" will also be explained.

First, I think it is important to provide the reader with a brief definition of how I am defining patron satisfaction in this paper. The final section of this paper will include a brief discussion of what the implications are for further study and implementation of strategies examined.

I will examine some of the strategies and findings in the research of Ruthven and Magnay. "The three key objectives of the study were to: 1)

identify the characteristics of high-performing ILL/document delivery operations, 2) be an instrument for raising awareness and changing ILL/DD practices, and 3) provide a standard set of data to assist libraries to benchmark their operations."¹

The findings in this study of the use of certain strategies helped to facilitate interlibrary loan patron satisfaction as well as improve the overall effectiveness of operation of the interlibrary loan services in Australian universities.²

In the research of Lynne Porat, the findings on the use of selected strategies also were found to facilitate patron satisfaction.³ The study was conducted at the University of Haifa, Israel, which is a major teaching and research university. "The main objective of this study was to examine the process and development of automation and the extent to which it improved customer services in the Interlibrary Loan Unit at the University of Haifa Library."⁴ The following factors were examined to "determine whether the process of automation had been beneficial to the patrons and improved the quality of service as follows: timeliness of service, fill rate, quality and completeness of the

material received, interaction with interlibrary loan staff, ease of ordering and remote ordering, price of the services, convenience."⁵

Before describing the two major strategies used in interlibrary loan, I will define customer satisfaction. Dube and Menon refer to the research of Olivier and Richins to state the prevailing paradigm in customer satisfaction literature as "affective responses to one's perception of the series of attributes that compose a product or service performance."⁶ Other related studies on customer satisfaction include the research of Ellen Bosman and Carol Rusnick in "Creating the User-Friendly Library by Evaluating Patron Perception of Signage."⁷ In this research, it was shown that signage can contribute to a "user-friendly environment."⁸

The remainder of the paper will include a discussion of the two major strategies implemented in the Interlibrary Loan Unit at Kennesaw State University that appear to have facilitated patron satisfaction. The two major strategies consist of the following: (1) educating interlibrary loan patrons to increase timeliness of materials received and realistic expectations of services, e.g.,

standardized patron inclusion and (2) the use of automation and technology to increase interlibrary loan staff's requesting effectiveness and timeliness to achieve patron satisfaction. Educating interlibrary loan patrons includes the bibliographic instruction provided by librarians at the Horace W. Sturgis Library, the reference interview, the interlibrary loan interview and interlibrary loan interview cross-training at the point of pick-up of interlibrary loan materials. Informal educational methods used by interlibrary loan include an interlibrary loan wiki, an internal campus social networking tool developed by Ms. Amy Thompson, coordinator, interlibrary loan.

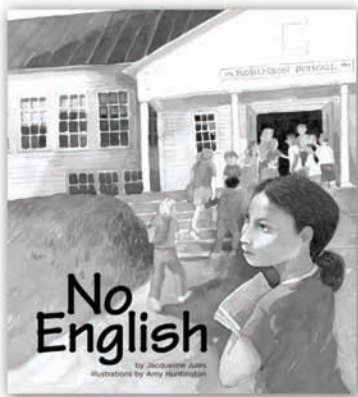
Be clear that the point of educating patrons about interlibrary loan services is to create awareness and

empower patrons. Educating patrons helps them become more effective in submitting accurate citations and become more realistic in their expectations.

The education of patrons in any context may then include such strategies as: "troubleshooting handouts" for receiving the best results when using interlibrary loan, during bibliographic instruction or during the reference interview; PDF documents on the interlibrary loan Web site interface that give a brief description of the concept and purpose of interlibrary loan; and a collaboration of borrowing items between libraries in different cities, states and countries through postal services. Patron inclusion into interlibrary loan procedures such as the aforementioned educates patrons about the process of interlibrary loan

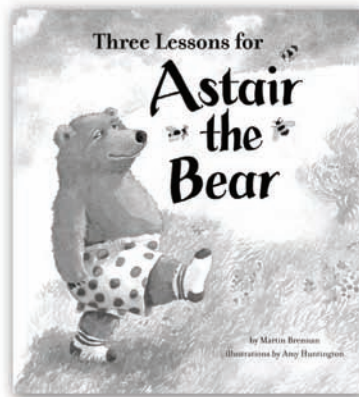
and can significantly limit the handling of requests by staff and increase the turn-around rate. Cross-training staff at the "point of material pick-up" to conduct interlibrary loan interviews and/or to track the status of a patron's request can help patrons leave with the assurance of the receipt of materials instead of frustration that his/her materials have not yet arrived.

Patron satisfaction may also be facilitated through a second major strategy. Increased fill rates may be achieved through citation verification, checking OCLC, borrowing request notes and so forth.⁹ However, according to Porat, the improvement of timeliness of service is the primary method of improving the quality of service to interlibrary loan patrons.¹⁰ An automated office with staff trained to prioritize requests beyond



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the date and time of submission meets the second and third methods of improving the services to interlibrary loan patrons. These include requests with citations first, requests and citations in OCLC second. Items that do not meet these criteria should be prioritized to the specifications of the department. For example, the Horace W. Sturgis Library Interlibrary Loan Department created custom queues in ILLiad entitled "the extensive searching queue" and "awaiting holdings verification queue." When requests are checked in these queues, they are sent to "haves," "cancelled" or back to "awaiting requesting processing." Please note that these processes are completed the day of request submission. This process is most effective when all queues are checked hourly. The ultimate objective of customized priority requests is to send a request the day it arrives and fill it from the first library on the lending string. This process has helped increase the office fill rate as well as timeliness.

According to the interlibrary loan best practices scholarship of Ruthven and Magnay, ILL patron satisfaction can be increased through many other value-added methods; automated interlibrary loan software can track requests and support electronic delivery and copyright clearance.¹¹

In summary, further extensions of this research might include a replication of the studies conducted by Ruthven, Magnay and Porat, using a survey instrument to collect patron satisfaction of users of all sectors of interlibrary loan to determine customer satisfaction and effectiveness of the operations of interlibrary loan. The benchmarking studies for "Top Performing Interlending Operations" by Ruthven and Magnay have proven that service and accurate citations are proven methods of increasing patron

satisfaction. Two major strategies that Kennesaw State University uses effectively to increase timeliness and the accuracy of its requests are patron inclusion in the interlibrary loan process through patron education and prioritizing borrowing requests beyond date and time. ►►

Michelle Smith is assistant coordinator for interlibrary loan at the Horace W. Sturgis Library at Kennesaw State University.

Notes:

1. Ruthven and Magnay, "Top Performing Interlending Operations: Results of the Australian Benchmarking Study," 73.
2. Ibid., 79.
3. Porat, "Automation of Interlibrary Loan Services: Effects on the Patron and the Library," 108.
4. Ibid.
5. Ibid., 110.
6. Dube and Menon, "Multiple Roles of Consumption Emotions in Post-Purchase Satisfaction with Extended Service Transactions," 287.
7. Bosman and Rusnick, "Creating the User-Friendly Library by Evaluating Patron Perception of Signage," 71-78.
8. Ibid., 81.
9. Porat, 110.
10. Ibid.
11. Ruthven and Magnay, 77.

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