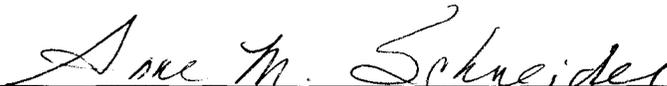# Evaluation of Interlibrary Loan Services

at the

South Carolina State Library

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March 15, 2001

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Goal Statement: To develop a process to evaluate use of State Library resources by the public library community to meet the information needs of South Carolina citizens. To meet this goal, the Information Services Department will conduct by a biennial survey of interlibrary loan staff at South Carolina public libraries. The survey's objectives will be to evaluation the services offered and the current needs of public libraries and citizens and explore new avenues of support for the target population. Statistical analysis of data currently collected by the State Library will be used as well. Results of the survey will be used to decide how resources are to be spent and library services are to be offered to local library staffs to improve information access to SC citizens.

Problem Statement: The State Library's mission is to improve library services throughout the state and to ensure all citizens access to libraries and information resources. The Library's first goal is to provide information resources and services to meet the needs of the people of South Carolina. The South Carolina State Library has served South Carolina citizens through their local library for over thirty years. 55% of our budget goes to providing resources and staff for the information needs of our citizens through the local public library systems (includes State Aid to County Public Libraries and federal monies). Since many libraries in the state are in rural areas, the State Library works with the local library system so all to SC citizens will have access to quality information resources regardless of their location in the state. Service statistics over the last three years show the first decline in traditional[1] information services usage since we began gathering statistics

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1)**The State Newspaper**, November 6, 2000.

2)Traditional library services includes: informational requests, requests for specific book titles, and photocopy requests for magazine articles.

in 1969. Additionally, during the last three years, the State Library has developed DISCUS – South Carolina's Virtual Library. With state and federal funds, the Library has been able to purchase full text online databases for all public, school and academic libraries in the state. Statistics for DISCUS are rising at a rapid rate. Although the statistics in themselves demonstrate a change in information services usage around the state, it would be beneficial to obtain the information needs of the local libraries to better use available resources (including staffing and materials) for South Carolina's citizens. The data collected would give the library a more accurate view of what the current needs of libraries and citizen are and how the State Library can meet those needs effectively. With the added information, the State Library can use its resources to give South Carolinians the information that they need when they need it. With so many small public library systems in the state, the State Library has been looking for ways to equalize access to service so that all citizens have the same access to information as the larger public library systems.[2]

Cause Analysis: Statistics over the last three years show a decline in traditional reference services, while statistics for electronic resources are rising. The missing ingredient to this analysis is that we do not know that if citizens and libraries are obtaining the information they need. By conducting a biennial survey, we will be able to get the pulse of local library staffs as to where our service delivery needs to be and will better assess which statistics to collect to evaluate our services offered.

Survey and Data Collection: An eighteen question survey was sent to all public library interlibrary loan staff to see what libraries think are the reasons for the decline in interlibrary. Statistics were also gathered from the SC State Library annual report. Summaries of both are included below.

Summary of public library data collected by SC State Library annually.
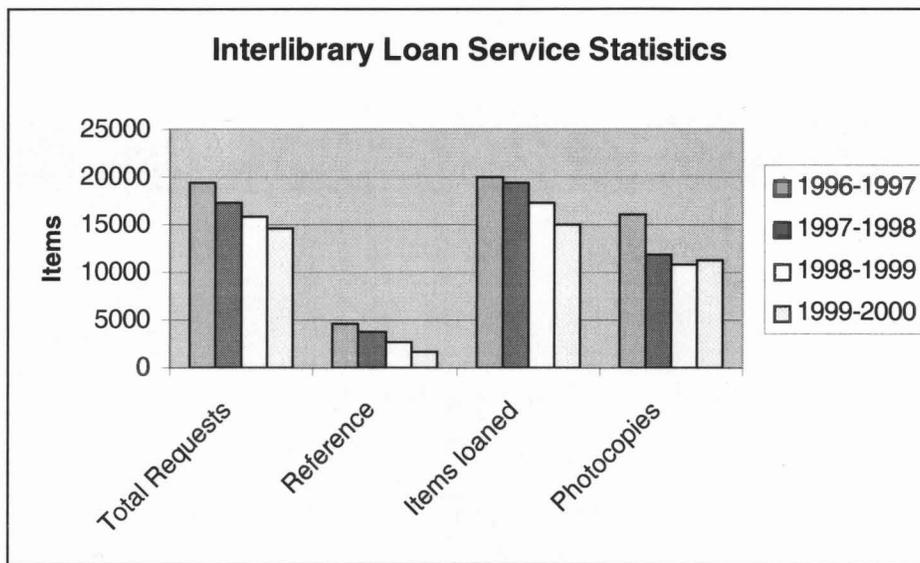
ILL Services	1996-1997	1997-1998	1998-1999	1999-2000
Total Requests	19373	17304	15844	14643
Reference	4552	3687	2806	1568
Items loaned	20081	19319	17299	14945
Photocopies	15986	11973	10834	11349

Interlibrary loan service statistics have steadily decreased in all areas. There was a small increase in use of photocopy of periodical holdings. Since most of the

databases in the DISCUS project are periodical indexes, requests probably did go up from the local level for items not available online.

Summary of Survey

Response rate: 36 library systems (78%) out of 46 responded to the survey including 2 regional library systems. Nine branch libraries contributed information to the survey results.

- 33% of the libraries feel that they need Interlibrary Loan services less than they did three years ago. Branch libraries show the same ratio for using services less at 33%.

- Although only 2 libraries did not know about the toll free hotline, 32% used the services seldom or never. All branches reported that they knew about the toll free service, but only one branch used the service often. (County library procedures may have affected this response.)

- 25% of the libraries do not check webLION every time there is a title request they do not own.

- When libraries check webLION, they find the items they need most of the time.

- Most libraries use another method of requesting items other then the ILL system set up for them. Only 12% used this system exclusively.

- 64% of the libraries use the periodical holdings list some of the time, and 20% never use the periodical holdings list. (15% use the list every time.)

- DISCUS, South Carolina's Virtual Library has had an impact on Interlibrary usage. 69 % of the libraries report that using the DISCUS databases has displaced ILL use.

- Finally, 51% libraries reported that the Internet has noticeably replaced traditional Interlibrary Loan service.

Implementation Plan: *Information Services Department resources will need to be shifted to accommodate changes in the needs of South Carolina Public Libraries and their citizens.*

Training: Staff will need to increase training and informational efforts at the local level in using the resources of the South Carolina State Library and the Library's Hotline. Training will serve two purposes: (1) to improve relations with the local libraries to inform staff that the State Library Services are public library services that should be used whenever a citizen is not able to locate the information needed at the local library; and (2) methodologies on when to use the Hotline can be outlined. By conducting training and awareness sessions, staff can go over other tools for effective use of Interlibrary loan, such as use of the State Library's online catalogued Periodical Holdings List (20% don't use the list at all, only 15% use the list every time). Time can be spent on reviewing effective searching in the online catalog and DISCUS resources to improve services to local citizens. Personal contact with the Interlibrary Loan staff at each library as well as a suitable curriculum will be the tools used. An added benefit will be that SCSL staff can see operations at the local level and assist local staffs as needed with their Interlibrary

Loan process. With increased awareness to the library services available, services will be used more effectively on the local level. Measuring the effectiveness of the strategy will be made by checking the monthly statistics to see if there is an increase in usage by the newly trained library staffs. Library cost is staff time, travel costs to local libraries. The time frame will be continuous throughout the year except for summer months (summer reading program) and holiday season. Obstacles in success for this intervention will be staff turnover and the overworked under-skilled staff at the local level as well as the availability of South Carolina State Library staff to conduct training.

Collection Development: Based on statistical analysis, the State Library staff is doing a good job selecting appropriate book items for the local public library community. The Library's online catalog provides staff with statistics on how many times each book circulates and how many books go to each library. Due to expected budget cuts during the current fiscal year, collection development will be a challenge at best. The book budget will be one of the budget items hardest hit by the budget shortfall. Staff will be looking closely at the serials to continue only those serial or periodicals that are needed often by the target groups. Decisions may need to be made about whether to continue paper or microfilm, or select only one format for many serials. Resources will be discontinued that are not used regularly. Measurement of steps taken include close monitoring of requests made and requests unfilled. If ratios of unfilled requests go up, State Library staff will need to alter strategies as needed. The best way to overcome obstacles in the

collection development arena is to select and deselect wisely based on past usage, and to continue SCSL staff training to locate new ways of locating materials for local libraries. Continued statistical analysis will assist in keeping staff apprised of usage and needs.

OCLC and ILL at Local Libraries: It was noted in the survey that more public libraries are using the OCLC interlibrary loan service exclusively to borrow or obtain materials at other libraries in the state and the nation. The survey also noted that many libraries are not using the SCSL's interlibrary loan online request system. There have been some technical problems with using the system that confused new computer users, but these have largely been resolved. The OCLC system is a nationally supported system used by libraries across the nation. With the new web interface, the OCLC system has become easier to use for the novice computer user. Funds may be available from federal monies targeted for services in local libraries. If each library had access to OCLC or similar ILL network, staff time would be saved. When items are not available locally, Interlibrary Loan departments would request items first from the State Library (if SCSL owned) and then a sequence of four other holding libraries. Currently, many public libraries request items only from the State Library. If the item is unavailable from the State Library or the University of South Carolina, SCSL staff can make a list of library holdings for the library and send it back via U.S mail or fax (if requested) to the local library. The local library then fills out a form (sometimes manually) to a library that might be willing to lend the item. Using OCLC or a similar network will save time for local

overworked staff and may free SCSL staff for more training on the local level. Time frame for consideration will be the 2002 fiscal year; implementation could take place first quarter of 2002 fiscal year. Obstacles will be funding, lack of computer skills at the local level and local staff reluctance. SCSL staff will need to closely consult and monitor usage of the system. Equipment may be an obstacle at some libraries. Many libraries received a large grant for equipment from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation and have Internet access, but most workstations are for public use only. Statistics will be compiled monthly.

Evaluation of Project: As stated in the problem statement, the survey will be conducted on a biennial basis. The survey will show increases or decreases in use, will point out any problem areas that need to be addressed, and will gather information about how the interlibrary loan staff uses SCSL services. Annually, the staff of the State Library coordinates a meeting of all interlibrary loan staff from the public library community. The meeting serves as an opportunity to discuss issue and current needs. The State Library also uses it as a way to evaluate how well we are serving the local community. If the SCSL staff is not meeting the needs of the local library community, further communication with local public library staff will direct the SCSL to the directions we need to go. If SCSL staff are meeting the information needs of local libraries and their citizens, the State Library staff will continue to explore our role in serving the information needs of our citizens. The South Carolina State Library's aim is to make sure that every South Carolinians has access to quality materials regardless of the size of their community or economic

status. The DISCUS Project goes a long way towards equalizing service across the state. Interlibrary loan services and training of local staffs still appear to be needed to assist local libraries on acquiring information not available at the local level. Success will be demonstrated by the usage statistics going up and by the upgrading of tools available to the local library to effectively search and obtain needed information.

Appendix 1: Library Definitions

For additional library definitions go to ODLIS: Online Dictionary of Library and Information Science at http://www.wcsu.edu/library/odlis.html

Interlibrary loan (ILL) – When a customer requests information or an item that is not available in the local library, library staff may request the item from another library. The process of requesting the item from another library is called interlibrary loan.

Online Computer Library Center (OCLC)- OCLC offers a full range of services to meet the needs of libraries of all sizes including cataloging tools, reference databases and online searching services, and access to over 46 million records at libraries all over the world. Over 6,600 libraries use the electronic interlibrary loan services provided by OCLC.

Toll-Free Hotline Service – In 1994, at the request of public libraries, the South Carolina State Library initiated a toll free telephone line for reference librarians. The purpose of the toll-free service is to give librarians immediate access to State Library Services. Typically the services are used for requests that need quick response or if the library staff needs to discuss a specific request and the possibly methods of answering.

Serials - A publication issued in regular or irregular intervals and intended to be continued indefinitely. Examples include Time Magazine (issued weekly); annuals report of state agencies (issued annually); and school directories (issued annually).

Microform - also called MICROCOPY, OR MICRORECORD, any process, photographic or electronic, for reproducing printed matter or other graphic material in a much-reduced size, which can then be re-enlarged by an optical apparatus for reading or reproduction. Microform systems provide durable, extremely compact, and easily accessible file records. (From *Encyclopedia Britannica*, http://www.britannica.com)

DISCUS - South Carolina's Virtual Library – The project provides all South Carolinians with an electronic library of essential information resources through schools, colleges and public libraries. For more information, go to the DISCUS Project web site at: http://www.state.sc.us/scsl/discus

Appendix 2: Survey

South Carolina State Library
Interlibrary Loan Survey for Public Libraries 2000

This survey examines the State Library's role in equalizing access to information across the state. We want to know how we are doing and what your library's needs are for the future.

The State Library has provided interlibrary loan service to local public libraries for over 30 years. The services include reference and research for informational requests, title requests, periodical requests and library location requests.

The survey has 17 items and should take about 20 minutes to complete.

General Survey Items

1. County or Regional Library Name:

   _____

   Name/Title of person completing this
   survey:_____

2. How long has Interlibrary Loan Service been a function **of your position** at the library?

   _____# of years
   _____# of months

3. If you have been providing ILL service for **3 or more years**, are you finding that you need our services less than before?

   _____Yes
   _____No

4. Please describe a **typical interlibrary loan transaction** at your library? Include necessary staff procedures.

   Step 1
   Step 2
   Step 3
   Step 4
   Step 5

Use additional space on back if needed.

5. **What methods** of Interlibrary Loan service do you use on a regular basis? Please rank in order of your preference with 1 being the most used and 4 being the least used.

    _____OCLC
    _____State Library
    _____Branch to Headquarters
    _____Other libraries in regional area

6. The South Carolina State Library Information Services Department offers **toll free reference hotline** services to all South Carolina public Libraries. Are you aware of the service?

    _____Yes
    _____No

7. **How often** do you use the toll free service mentioned in question 6? (Check one)

    _____Often
    _____Sometimes
    _____Seldom
    _____Never

8. Do you check the State Library's catalog (**WebLION**) every time a user submits an interlibrary loan request?

    _____Yes
    _____No

9. **How often** do you locate the requested interlibrary loan item(s) in the **State Library's catalog**? (Check one)

    _____0-20% of the time
    _____21-40% of the time
    _____41-60% of the time
    _____61-80% of the time
    _____81-100% of the time

10. How often do you use the South Carolina Library Network (SCLN) to place electronic requests for books, periodical photocopies, information, renewals, etc.?

_____Always
_____Sometimes
_____Never

11. How often do you check the State Library's **Periodical Holdings List** for journals/magazines not available in your collection? (Check one)

_____Always
_____Sometimes
_____Never

12. The State Library provides library **locations for books and journals** that are not available at the State Library or Thomas Cooper Library at the University of South Carolina. Are you aware of this service?

_____Yes
_____No

Electronic Services

13. The State Library provides every public library outlet with full text electronic databases through **DISCUS** – South Carolina's Virtual Library. **To what extent** have DISCUS databases replaced your traditional Interlibrary Loan requests? (Check one)

_____All of the time
_____Most of the time
_____Some of the time
_____Never

14. In general, **how confident** is your staff in using the **DISCUS** resources?

_____Very confident
_____Somewhat confident
_____A little confident
_____Not confident

15. **GaleNet and Infotrac databases** are available for home or office use from every public library. Briefly describe how your library is promoting home/office use of these databases?

16. **How confident** do you feel in providing your customers with their Internet research needs?

    _____Very confident
    _____Somewhat confident
    _____A little confident
    _____No confidence

17. Do you think that access to the Internet has decreased your patrons' need for interlibrary loan services in general?

    _____ yes
    _____ no

18. Do you think that the use of electronic books (E-Books) will impact on traditional interlibrary loan process?

    _____ yes
    _____ no

    If so how?

19. Additional Comments:

Please return to:
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DEADLINE FOR SURVEY: January 5, 2001