

We Sincerely Regret to Inform You That the Material You Have Requested Is Unavailable via Interlibrary Loan

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Jennifer Duncan, Carol A. Kochan, and Lars Leon, "We Sincerely Regret to Inform You That the Material You Have Requested Is Unavailable via Interlibrary Loan" (2014). *Proceedings of the Charleston Library Conference*.

<http://dx.doi.org/10.5703/1288284315615>

We Sincerely Regret to Inform You That the Material You Have Requested Is Unavailable via Interlibrary Loan

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Abstract

This paper outlines the preliminary results of the authors' research study on one consortium's interlibrary loan and collection development practices for returnable items. Local practices and policies that appear to have affected other member libraries are outlined. The audience will consider whether this analysis identifies concerns that they should investigate with their own consortium partners.

Do local collection development decisions have an impact on consortium resource sharing agreements? And does it matter? This study looks at collection development and resource sharing budgets, practices, and policies for returnable items. It considers the possible effects of widespread changes in collection development practices on interlibrary loan operations, particularly within a consortium but potentially across all lending partners.

The most basic collection development goal is to provide the materials that meet the research and teaching needs of the local institution. In terms of providing access to monographic materials, that means buying a (shrinking) core of print and electronic materials prospectively through firm orders and approval plans, leasing appropriate e-book packages that might disappear, and scoping a larger set of materials for potential demand-driven acquisition. Then, at the (ever-growing) periphery is the content that is not have immediately available.

Resource sharing is, for most libraries, an integral part of providing access to the corpus of information resources. However, most libraries make collection development decisions independently of others in their consortium. The ability for resource sharing officers to provide access to that global corpus is predicated on the idea that other collections officers have already identified and purchased materials that they are willing and able to share. Collection development officers claim to be radically scaling back, changing purchasing channels, and shifting

formats. Because some of these decisions (e.g. moving to e-book only purchasing, reducing prospective purchases, considering certain categories of materials out of scope, etc.) may reduce the content available to share with other libraries, the authors wanted to examine what effect these behaviors might have on interlibrary loan activity within a consortium. The assumption is that someone out there, hopefully in a preferred consortium, is surely buying that content and they can loan it. In the rush to move to new collection development models, will libraries have collections that can be shared sustainably? What, will that mean for the ability to provide a robust interlibrary loan service through a preferred consortium?

Utah State University and the University of Kansas are both a part of the Greater Western Library Alliance (GWLA), whose mission is to deliver "cost-effective and high-quality information services to its member institutions and their clientele." Comprised of 33 academic research libraries, primarily west of the Mississippi, GWLA serves over 650,000 undergraduates, 150,000 graduate students, and 41,000 instructional faculty. In 2012 the shared collection was comprised of more than 130 million volumes and member combined materials budgets exceeded \$310 million dollars per year.

The Greater Western Library Association has a long history of resource sharing and has developed and implemented policies that both speed material delivery and increase the convenience of the service. For example, GWLA

uses expedited shipping and provides a twelve-week loan period. The underlying philosophy is for lenders to “treat other member libraries’ patrons the same as their own.” (Kochan, 2013)

The GWLA Collection Development Committee also has a history of collaborative projects and group purchasing. More recently it has begun exploring what it might mean to do some kind of collaborative collection development. In determining if the project should be retrospective or prospective or both (or neither), it becomes clear that issues surrounding the unique needs of each institution, the size of the consortium, and the scope of the data for analysis are all very challenging for a group of volunteers to manage.

Methodology

The main investigators discussed possible reasons why some libraries borrowed more returnable items than others and came up with five theories to use to survey consortium members to test these hypotheses:

- Schools with the smallest budgets would be the heaviest borrowers.
- Schools that have eliminated their approval profiles would be the heaviest borrowers.
- Schools with the most restrictive ILL policies would not borrow as heavily.
- Schools that heavily market their ILL program would be heavy borrowers.

The authors developed questions based on these theories, focusing on local policies. Among others, collection development questions included: 1) preference between print and e-books, 2) current purchasing practices (e.g., PDA/DDA, approval plans), 3) types of materials purchased (e.g. textbooks, popular titles, scholarly materials only, etc.) 4) importance of GWLA collections, to your library's collection development strategy.

The authors questions for Resource Sharing focused on: 1) resource sharing policies (e.g. textbooks, popular titles, items held locally, etc.), 2) if it's easy for patrons to discover titles not held locally via a discovery layer, 3) marketing

strategies for resource sharing, 4) open-ended questions that allowed libraries to describe what borrowing activity was occurring.

In addition in order to gather consistently reported numbers on budgets, collection size, and patron demographics, the investigators drew from the longitudinal data gathered by the Association for College and Research Libraries (ACRL) as well as the data included in the Academic Library Survey (ALS), administered by the National Center for Educational Statistics. Consortium-compiled data on interlibrary loan borrowing activity for returnable items are also included. Thirty-two of thirty-three collection development librarians and twenty-nine of thirty-three resource sharing librarians completed their respective surveys.

The initial hypothesis was that by looking at local data and policies, clear ILL trends would emerge, including lending and borrowing rates. The situation is clearly complex, but the investigators assumed that there would be some common indicators that resulted in a school borrowing from other consortium members more heavily—and that these indicators would come from things that were happening in collections policies and practices. However, it became increasingly clear that while some practices may lead to increased or decreased usage to interlibrary loan, there were always exceptions to the rule. No patterns emerged.

Collection Development Issues

First, it is very clear that *there is more to buy and less to spend*. The latest data reported in the 2014 “North American Academic Books Price Index” (covering 2012) indicates an annual price increase 8% (note that this was 4.6% in the previous year) and e-books saw a staggering 23% increase in price (Tafari 2014). Moreover, examining trends in the numbers year over year, the data reveals an increase in the number of titles produced across most subjects. While prices increase for a growing quantity of content, budgets are failing to keep pace. Reviewing national nonserial materials expenditures for Research I universities in the ALS, with 275 libraries reporting, the expenditures went down 8% between 2008 and 2010. Four years later, in 2012, with 10 additional libraries

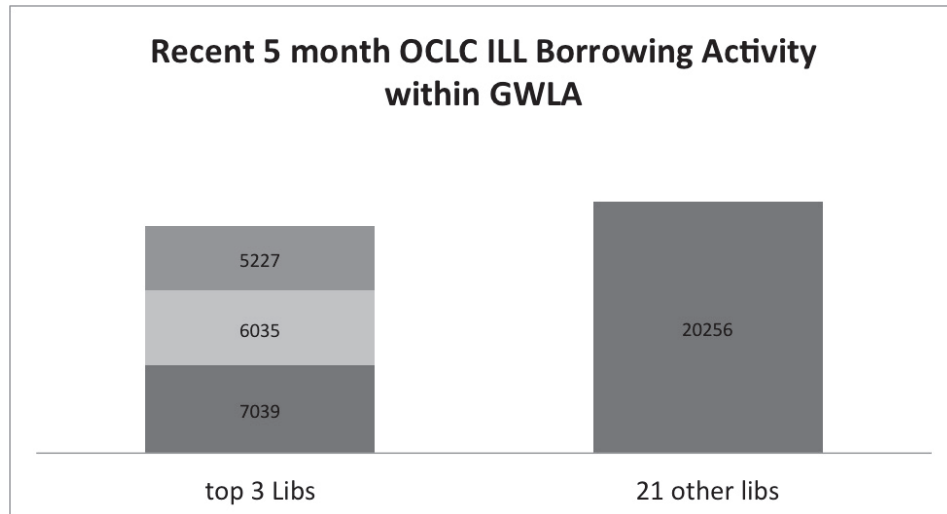


Figure 1. All GWLA one-time expenditures.

reporting, the increase in non-serial expenditures was only 4%. GWLA follows this pattern, with nonserial expenditures registering only a 1.5% increase overall between 2006 and 2012.

Next comes the very difficult question of what is the appropriate level of duplication for books in a consortium. Some of the best research on this question comes from OhioLink. In a 2003 study, Rob Kairis determined that OhioLink schools had, as a group, purchased 95% of all approval books and, on average, each title had been acquired 8.46 times (Kairis, 2003). Digging deeper, he discovered that 70% of those copies were available for circulation at any moment, clearly indicating unnecessary duplication. After very laborious attempts to run and analyze duplication reports for GWLA, the Collection Development Committee determined that this work might be too labor intensive for the reward. Conversations to determine what might be a “right” number for duplication have occurred, but there is not consensus what that might be. This number could be used both for local weeding as well as prospective planning.

For the most recent fiscal year, the survey asked the GWLA-CD officers to report how many books came into their collections via approval, firm order, and demand driven channels—both for print and electronic books. For the 17 schools that were able to report these numbers consistently, it was very clear that the vast majority of print titles

were still coming into collections via approval plans. Overall, all but two of the 32 respondents asserted that they still rely on approval plans of one type or another for the majority of acquisitions, even if they were unable to provide firm numbers.

On a related note, GWLA schools have been early adopters of the demand-driven acquisition model, with 22 members purchasing via this channel in 2012 and all but one of the 32 responders to the current GWLA survey doing so now. In an attempt to assess the true scale of DDA implementation at GWLA institutions, the survey asked CD officers to rate the level at which they believed they were acquiring materials through DDA (1-5). Only two schools claimed to acquire the “vast majority” (5) of materials through DDA and most schools seemed more to dabble, with 13 out of 32 ranking this channel as 2. Of course, most DDA plans rely on approval profiling and the corpus of books available via DDA is prescribed to a limited set of content. By increasing duplication through DDA and approval, dollars available to build the GWLA corpus through unique purchases are reduced.

Resource Sharing Assumptions

The premise behind interlibrary library loan is that a library can quickly provide access to patrons to books and other types of returnable items because partner libraries are continuing to build collections that can be shared. As a group, the

Resource Sharing Committee forged strong agreements to speed the delivery of materials amongst the partner libraries.

GWLA has historically used OCLC to transmit requests between libraries. However, last year the consortium began licensing the Relais software to facilitate the discovery of holdings and identification of potential lenders to which to send requests. GWLA calls its version of this system BorrowItNow. Currently almost all libraries are lending through BorrowItNow, and about half (sixteen) borrow via this system. BorrowItNow is not a true shared catalog (e.g. Orbis Cascade). Despite not having a shared catalog, library patrons are readily identifying materials that are needed for scholarship and research. Different libraries in GWLA have selected different integrated library systems and discovery layers. Forty-five percent of the libraries' discovery systems contain book titles that are not held at the local library and 48% do not. Many libraries that do not have information about titles not held locally mentioned that patrons commonly use Amazon, Google Books, and other Internet resources to identify titles. Patrons have increased access to identifying unique item types. While many libraries whose catalogs contained titles not held locally reported increased borrowing activity, this was not the case for all libraries that responded to the survey.

Looking at Policy Questions

In gathering data, the survey attempted to identify how various interlibrary loan policies might increase/decrease activity. It also juxtaposed ILL policies with collection development policies to further look at possible correlations and identify potential problems.

E-Books

First, there is the question of e-book acquisition. There is absolutely no question that GWLA institutions are moving faster and faster in this direction, as are most academic institutions. This is a planned move for most of GWLA schools with almost 70% having at least some form of e-preferred CD-policy according to the survey. Moreover, there is a rapid growth as a percentage

of the GWLA collections of e-book content. In 2006, the corpus was comprised 9% of e-books (data taken from ACRL Metrics). In 2013, the corpus was 17% e-books. For individual members in this group, one school reported to ACRL a high of 38% of his collection is comprised of e-books. What does this mean for a potentially shared collection?

From the resource sharing side, the survey asked if ILL policies allow patrons to order print copies if an electronic copy were already owned locally. The majority, 67%, said yes, they would just order the copy. Only 12% said no, they would not order a title already owned locally regardless of the patron's preference. As GWLA partner libraries continue to purchase e-preferred materials, ordering and receiving a print copy may no longer be an option. Members may need to order outside the consortium, which would usually take longer and might mean shorter loan period for items borrowed outside GWLA. In addition, some loans would incur charges from libraries outside the consortium.

Finally, the consortium needs to know that it can both legally and technologically share this content going forward. A possible solution is being developed in GWLA through the e-book lending technology in Occam's reader. In terms of the licenses, Anne McKee, who negotiates on GWLA's behalf with vendors and publishers, has incorporated the following language into consortium agreements:

Interlibrary Loan must be allowed. The consortium may supply a single copy of an individual document, chapter or book derived from the Licensed Materials to an Authorized User of another library utilizing the prevailing technology of the day.

Textbooks

As the prices of textbooks have increased dramatically, students are looking for cheaper alternatives. The numbers of patrons wanting to get these types of materials via Interlibrary Loan is also increasing. Many GWLA libraries (73%) have policies against borrowing textbooks, but it is labor intensive to identify and deny these types of

requests. A significant number of ILL offices do not restrict patrons and make no effort to screen requests.

Generally, collection development policies at most GWLA libraries do not permit the purchase of textbooks. Only 9% of libraries make it a policy to purchase some textbooks on demand by campus patrons. So even those libraries that do allow ILL for these types of materials will not generally be successful in meeting these needs within the consortium. In many ways obtaining textbooks on ILL is not practical. It is not possible to acquire 400 entry-level biology textbooks on ILL. The solutions for this conundrum are complex and not easily resolved. One positive recent development is the inception of OER textbooks.

Sustainability

Comparing borrowing activity from 2010 to 2014, 68% (seventeen out of twenty-five) of GWLA libraries filled fewer loans from all sources via interlibrary loan borrowing in FY14 compared to FY10. This drop ranged from 2% and 3% for two libraries to 63% each for two libraries who experienced the steepest decline. The average drop across all libraries that saw a decrease was 2,879 loans. However, 32% (eight out of twenty-

five) of GWLA libraries filled more loans from all sources via interlibrary loan borrowing in FY14 compared to FY10. This increase ranged from three libraries increasing 3%, 5%, and 6% respectfully to one library increasing 61%. This upward trend by 1/3 of GWLA libraries continues to put pressure on collections and policies even as 2/3 of GWLA libraries have seen a decrease in ILL borrowing. This impacts consortia partners. Of the seventeen GWLA libraries where overall ILL borrowing is down only three of them increased their borrowing with GWLA. Of the 8 libraries where overall ILL borrowing is up, five of them have also increased their borrowing within GWLA including the three with the largest overall increase in requests.

This wide range of borrowing activity within GWLA continues. In fact, a recent five-month period of time illustrates how wide the need is to borrow from within GWLA. Chart 2 illustrates that three libraries have borrowed from other GWLA libraries the same amount of materials as 21 consortia members. It should be stressed that GWLA does not have a policy related to borrowing levels so no policy is being broken. These totals though do help raise the question as to whether current collection development and resource sharing policies and practices are sustainable.

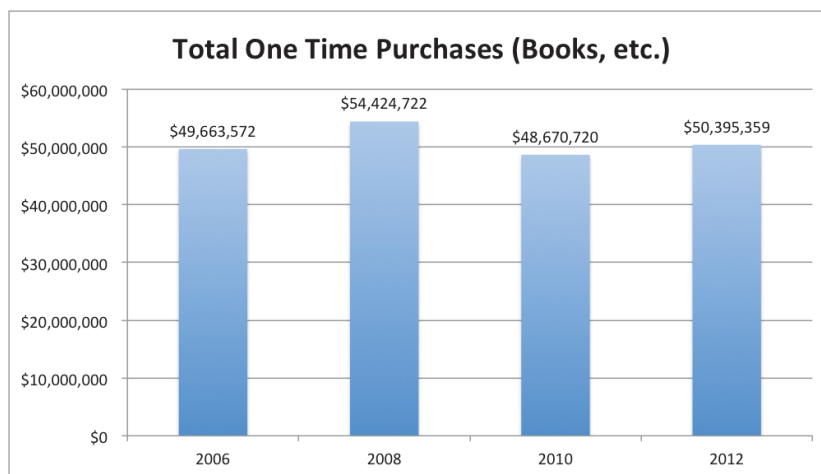


Figure 2. Recent five-month OCLC borrowing activity with GWLA. The top three libraries totals are equivalent to the bottom twenty-one in library activity.

As GWLA libraries collective borrowing power decreases and libraries rely more on DDA and e-format titles, there is some concern that the shared collections will become less diverse and

there will not be as many unique title holdings to meet patrons needs from within GWLA. Most libraries do have a number of resource sharing agreements, but generally speaking it takes

longer for materials to arrive from nonpreferred partners. These materials also have shorter loan periods.

Final Thoughts

The solution to these questions remains opaque. A critical question is how much each library really values the building of a cooperative collection. When asked about how much they think about the GWLA collections in terms of their individual CD strategy, only a few outliers said that thinking about the shared collection was absolutely central to their strategy. By far the most common response was that people thought about it a bit. However, libraries still rely on shared collections to meet patrons' information needs, as demonstrated by the volume of borrowing activity.

Although no clear patterns emerged from this survey on how local collection development

policies affect consortium interlibrary loan activity, the study does illustrate that resource sharing and collection development are very closely intertwined. The diversity of GWLA institutions' patron composition, fiscal resources, and local practices make it difficult to identify concrete effects of one unit's activities upon the other. What remains clear is that communication between the two units is essential to stretch limited resources and provide quality services to patrons. It is time for libraries to move beyond rhetoric. On the collections side, librarians have stated that it is possible to buy and/or lease everything and on the resource sharing side libraries don't need to buy they can just borrow from their partners. The reality is that no library can buy everything and at least one library needs to buy an item before someone else can borrow it. In spite of the complex results, this survey has illustrated the symbiotic mission and work of collection development and resource sharing.

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