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Interlending & Document Supply
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A framework for Interlibrary-loan implementation (in one semester)

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Abstract

Purpose – The purpose of this paper is to provide a framework for implementing and "going live" with a new interlibrary loan system (ILL), ILLiad Document delivery system and RAPID ILL, in one semester.

Design/methodology/approach – This paper provides a framework for implementing ILLiad and RAPID ILL through conducting a needs assessment, review of the existing practices and selection process of hardware/software, collaboration with stakeholders within the library and university for implementation, training and "going live".

Findings – This paper demonstrates how to implement a new interlibrary system in one semester. There are many benefits to implementing and "going live" in one semester. Staff training coupled with "going live" is essential to retain the new skill set and put it into practice. Finally, the most immediate and important impact of the new system was giving the university community (students and faculty) expanded access to collections and providing an overall better user experience.

Originality/value – This article provides a framework for other libraries to use as a model when considering implementing a new ILL system, such as ILLiad and RAPID ILL, in the course of one semester.

Keywords Information technology, Library services, Interlibrary loan, Academic libraries

Paper type Case study

Background

Seton Hall University (SHU) is a private Catholic doctoral degree granting university located in South Orange, New Jersey, USA, with a student full-time equivalent (FTE) of about 10,000. SHU belongs to the Virtual Academic Library Environment (VALE), Pennsylvania Academic Library Consortium, Inc. (PALCI), InfoLink, Rapid ILL and Westchester Academic Library Directors Organization (Waldo). These consortia are an important part of the university libraries lending and borrowing programs. In August 2012, SHU libraries undertook a review of the existing workflows in the interlibrary loan (ILL) department; the intention being to identify areas for improvement that supported the needs of the students, faculty and our reciprocating libraries and consortia and in support of the library's strategic plan to "simplify and strengthen ILL (Interlibrary loan) processes, document delivery (implement Rapid, ILIAD) and software efficiencies" (Seton Hall University Libraries Strategic Plan, 2012). This project was a high priority for the library because there were several known issues limiting the service to our users. These issues comprised the need to replace outdated technology hardware and software, including Ariel which was obsolete. The user community needed greater access to our collections and ILL

service; this access and use was hindered by frequent user errors in completing the request form. The newly appointed Access Services Librarian and Digital Services Librarian were assigned to lead and complete this project during the Fall 2012 semester. This paper will discuss the project framework and results.

Phase 1: assessing current workflows and technology

Site visits to academic library ILL departments and findings

To research the existing ILL practices in academic libraries, the Access Services Librarian made site visits to Georgetown University and American University, Washington, DC in August 2012. The visits provided an overview of the workflow presently being used. Both University ILL departments use ILLiad described by Online Computer Library Center (OCLC) – "the ILLiad Resource Sharing Management software (ILLiad) saves time by managing all the library's borrowing, lending and document delivery through a single, Windows-based interface" and helps to "improve service to end users by giving them the ability to initiate and track their ILL requests every step of the way through a simple Web interface[1]". The ILLiad keeps track of all entries by the interlibrary loan staff and from the automated connections

between OCLC and the other borrowing and lending libraries. It provides real-time tracking of requests, when the article or book loan is shipping, and when the book is due. ILLiad data can also inform collection development decisions. Seton Hall Law School, William Paterson University and Drew University ILL departments invited us to see a live demonstration of the ILLiad system which included ILLiad-compliant scanners. All this informed us of the existing trends in ILL and provided the background information needed to assess the needs of SHU Libraries.

Examine the existing SHU libraries workflows and identify areas for improvements

The first phase of the project included the review of current ILL practices. By conducting a needs assessment to evaluate the existing workflows (inefficiencies and/or points of disconnect), we were able to assess the training and technology needs for both hardware and software, which would later inform our recommendations and results.

Staff and user workflow

To carry out these tasks, we observed the ILL staff and student assistants routines on different days of the week at varying times to identify the workflow patterns. Many conversations with the staff occurred about their workflow during this period. Staff experienced delays due to slow computers and outdated software. The scanner was not of good quality or the right size to scan all the documents, which required staff to seek scanners in other library departments. Staff searching skills and knowledge of resources called for more training. We also reviewed user workflow by examining the request form data. We observed frequent incomplete citations as well as incorrect or illegible information. Processing time was delayed due to these user errors, lack of training and lack of adequate software and hardware

Existing technology and software

Prior to August of 2012, the SHU Interlibrary Loan and document delivery system consisted of outdated equipment: computers, scanners and software (Ariel®) that were incapable of meeting the needs of our faculty and students. We were also falling behind as a net lender to the reciprocating libraries in our region. Very significantly, the needs assessment uncovered software purchased but not implemented for RapidILL (Rapid Access Processing & Information Delivery), an express article service developed and managed by the Colorado State University Libraries' Interlibrary Loan Department.

In short, the ILL services were lengthy and cumbersome for both the users and staff. To improve the service immediately, we made recommendations for immediate fixes and longer-term solutions to improve interlibrary loan operations. The latter included the implementation of ILLiad and Rapid at the same time, purchasing an ILLiad-compliant scanner, in-depth training for staff, a user-friendly request form and tracking system and outreach to the SHU community.

Recommendations

Immediate fixes

To improve ILL services during the transition, short-term solutions included upgrading computers for the ILL department to improve efficiency; a shared ILL email account which gave student assistants access to information on the ILL requests; and finally, more training to improve the service.

Long-term solutions

ILLiad

After reviewing the existing software, receiving feedback from other academic libraries and examining our internal needs, we chose ILLiad as our replacement system; one of the many reasons being is because it is compliant with Rapid ILL. In addition, ILLiad is the standard software used by most libraries in the USA because it has the most efficient software for streamlining workflow. It addressed the need for a more robust system for tracking and placing requests, with enhanced reporting functions and is compliant with existing ILL technology. It also provides a streamlined workflow for both the staff and users. The staff module for ILLiad allows for the processing, status updates and data collection and the capacity to integrate with other software and hardware. The user is able to view requests in their account, which improves the user experience for the SHU community. Additionally, the hosted version of ILLiad also met our information technology (IT) requirements.

Rapid

One of the major goals of this project was to expand access to collections, particularly for articles, and Rapid ILL met this goal. Because we had an existing agreement with Rapid, this was an important reason to implement the service. The benefits include effective cooperation with several other consortia such as PALCI, the express article services providing an average fill rate of 96 per cent, and it integrates with ILLiad.

Widetek

The scanner recommended was the WideTEK25 scanner from Images Access. It is a state-of-the-art flatbed 18.5 "X 25" scanner that scans the largest image in less than 3 seconds with high-definition and picture quality resolution. The scanner stores our ILL pull or identification slip barcodes which identify the transaction and patron for each job. The first slip to scan is always the pull slip, registering user information is next, followed by the article emailed to the user.

User form

The ILLiad user form met our needs for a system to allow the user to place and track requests. To improve use, an OpenUrl could carry citations from searching to auto-populating the form.

Training and outreach

ILL staff training

Implementing a new ILL service required significant staff training for the new equipment and processes, which involved a fairly steep learning curve. This training was carried out by using webinars and hands-on training.

SHU libraries faculty/staff training

All library faculty/staff members needed to have an understanding of how the new system works. Library

instruction classes were modified to teach students how to use this service and set up library accounts.

Outreach

Outreach to the campus community also needed to be well coordinated because we went live during the middle of the semester. Outreach occurred via several channels: emails, news announcements and live demonstrations for SHU library faculty and staff and the university community on how to use the new ILL system. The outreach to the SHU community for ILL services included resources for information literacy instruction and reference. We created a user support guide and new Web pages for the interlibrary loan information on the library Web site. The Web site and our FAQ site needed to be updated to reflect these changes.

Phase II: evaluation and purchasing process

The evaluation and purchasing process for technology and software was done by a team from the library and university information technology department, thus ensuring effective integration with existing university IT practices and policies.

Phase III: training

Training for ILLiad (borrowing and lending), Rapid and B-Scan WideTek was held during the implementation process. We went live during the process and held training sessions for all three new services, which included a series of live webinars and hands-on training over several weeks. Sessions for B-Scan library software to use the WideTek ILLiad compliant high-end scanner consisted of organizing the equipment needed for the hands-on demo and providing training assistance. Training for Rapid commenced at the end of the fall semester in the same format as the ILLiad training.

Phase IV: implementation

Software and technology

Coordination between the library and university IT department was essential to integrate the new technology into the University's infrastructure. This included the use of Lightweight Directory Access Protocol (LDAP) authentication which allowed SHU users to sign-in with their university logins), facilitated Z39.50, and supported new equipment set up.

Integrating library resources for ILLiad and rapid

Additional support was needed from cataloging, electronic resources and systems to gather MARC Records, A-Z holdings, e-journals, Voyager Data, licensing, database holdings for RAPID and ILLiad to communicate and to gather our data electronically through Z39.50. Rapid will expedite article requests facilitated by ILLiad. We worked with Colorado State University librarians overseeing Rapid to set up the system and upload journal holdings to Rapid.

Timeline

The implementation of ILLiad and Rapid ILL had many facets and the coordination between the library, SHU IT, Atlas (developer of ILLiad) and Rapid training were challenging at times. Our main goal after choosing the right systems was to implement and begin using it immediately. The most important part of the project was to keep it on track and implement it in one semester. We did this in the middle of the semester because we concluded that if we were to do this during the slowest period in the year which is summer, we would not have had sufficient requests to get the staff and faculty up to par and understand the system. Below is a timeline of the project:

- 9/25/2012 OCLC receives our order for ILLiad.
- 9/28/2012 rapid reviews our electronic and print holdings.
- 9/28/2012 IT meetings regarding firewalls, IP addresses, Simple Mail Transfer Protocol (SMTP) server hosting, Z39.50 protocol to search the Online Public Access Catalog (OPAC).
- 9/28/2012 Atlas and OCLC confirm hosted SMTP services, communication with LDAP server confirmed, certificate for installation on the ILLiad server confirmed.
- 9/29/2012 conference call between OCLC/Atlas/SHU.
- 10/1/2012 rapid accepts our electronic and print holdings.
- 10/1/2012 atlas confirms training for lending.
- 10/2/2012 Digital Library Systems Group at Image Access recommends the WideTEK 25 ILL scanner system.
- 10/10/2012 SHU IT recommends lenovo-ThinkCentre-M92p with maximized RAM.
- 1012/2012 readiness testing for ILLiad.
- 10/15/2012 WideTEK bscan delivered.
- 10/19/2012 WideTEK webex to train the pull slips.
- 10/28/2014-11/05/2012 university closed for hurricane sandy.
- 11/12/2012 re-scheduled ILLiad lending training due to hurricane sandy.
- 11/13/2012-11/15/2012 ILL team support and video support and webex support from atlas.
- 11/21/2012-11/23/2012 closed for thanksgiving.
- 11/26/2012 rapid training – RAPID is live!
- 12/3/2012 configuration questions, open URL questions, a-z list questions with atlas.
- 12/4/2012 continued lending training with rapid.
- 12/4/2012 borrowing training for ILLiad with atlas.
- 12/7/2012-12/18/2012 continued ILLiad training with Atlas on lending, printing, emailing, html edits, user registration, awaiting unfilled processing, etc.
- 12/19/2012 webex training with WideTEK now use the new pull slips system.
- 12/20/2012-12/21/2012 Atlas training on borrowing returns, check in, auto process, transaction and ILL numbers, etc.
- 12/26/2012 email from Atlas to SHU – "This note is just to inform you that SHU has completed the Atlas Systems, Inc. ILLiad Installation and training process. You are now live with both Borrowing and Lending".

Operational consequences

Table I below represents the borrowing and lending requests that were filled through our interlibrary loan department prior to ILLiad/RAPIDILL and after implementation. Implementation went live in December of 2012 and Rapid was able to slowly bring us up to speed in the spring 2013 semester. After fully understanding the new systems, the 2013-2014 academic year

Table I Borrowing and lending requests

Type of request	2010-2011	2011-2012	2012-2013	2013-2014
Lending requests	2,726	2,838	2,930	4,328
Borrowing requests	3,196	2,948	3,116	6,720

shows the astounding increase in the borrowing and lending statistics.

The increase in the number of articles borrowed and lent is due to two distinct reasons: first, the unmediated requests for articles through Rapid ILL, and second, the consortium to which we belong. Ease-of-use is also a factor which can be attributed to the ILLiad's record management database which monitors all requests. Turnaround time decreased with Rapid ILL, the average turnaround time (TAT) borrowing articles for FY2013 was 10.6 hours and FY2014 was 10.8 hour. For lending, an average TAT for FY2013 was 112.9 hours and FY2014 was 11.9 hours.

ILLiad has also made it easier for staff to search for material with additional "Add-Ons". The end users are also enjoying the "Get It" button which locates the citation of an article and auto populates the ILLiad form for items we do not own.

We announced our new system through a blast email campus-wide from the Provost's Office; numerous presentations through library instruction and planned faculty and student meetings, showing students at the reference desk and a Web site re-design with prominent ILL features.

We reciprocate for free with libraries that do likewise with us. These include consortia and groups regionally, statewide and locally. For the libraries that charge us, we charge them a fee of $20 for most articles and books. We pay up to $20 for the SHU community, but over that figure the extra is paid by the student or faculty member. In some instances, the fees can be waived or extended.

Conclusion

The project was a significant library initiative to implement ILLiad and RAPID systems. Intensive training was very challenging at times, but necessary for learning by doing. At times, it was extremely exciting with the overlay of many difficult nuances. The learning curve was extremely high, and many libraries we spoke with about their implementation process took two and three times the length of time that we had taken to implement both lending and borrowing. We showed that it was possible to implement a new ILL system and go live in less than one semester. To do so, it was important to have a strong commitment from the administration for support to execute this project, so that we could draw on financial and staff support. Tying this service to the strategic plan was essential to receive the support needed. It was clear that ILLiad was the product for us to switch to. The most immediate impact was on the university community; giving students and faculty expanded access to collections and providing an overall better user experience. Finally, there is no perfect time to start; starting at the busiest time created the most challenges but produced the most learning.

Note

1 http://oclc.org/illiad.en.html

Reference

Seton Hall University Libraries Strategic Plan (2012), available at: http://library.shu.edu/strategic-plan-goals

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