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Restructuring the Academic Library: Teams-based Management and the Merger of Interlibrary Loans with Circulation and Reserve

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ABSTRACT. The Ryerson University Library has recently adopted a teams-based management model in order to ameliorate growing pressures on service points consistent with increased demand for interlibrary loans, growing circulation activity, stagnant staffing levels, and a larger influx of students as a result of the "double cohort". The opportunity to redesign the entrance of the Library has allowed the Library to plan for a merger of Interlibrary Loan with Circulation and Reserve. The background to this merger and library goals are discussed. *[Article copies available for a fee from The Haworth Document Delivery Service: 1-800-HAWORTH. E-mail address:<docdelivery@haworthpress.com> Website: http://www.HaworthPress.com © 2003 by The Haworth Press, Inc. All rights reserved.]*

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KEYWORDS. Team-based management, circulation, interlibrary loan, reserves, staffing

Introduction

The Ryerson University Library (located in Toronto, Canada), like many other academic libraries, has undergone major reorganization over the past twenty years. An ongoing concern of this reorganization at Ryerson has been to determine the most appropriate administrative and physical positioning of the Interlibrary Loans Department (ILL). Staffing cuts, increasing numbers of requests, space issues, and systems migrations have all been factors in the decision making process. Recently, Ryerson Library's Council (a policy-making committee comprised of all the librarians) decided to merge Interlibrary Loan services with Circulation and Reserve as part of a larger team-based reorganization. Although this restructuring is still in its early stages, we present the background to this restructuring, and look forward to a physical redesign of the entrance that will permit more efficient use of service points and also create needed space in the Library entrance. This physical redesign is particularly important in light of the increase in first year university enrollment as a result of a recent provincial government decision to abolish the final year of high school. For September 2003, a "double cohort" of graduates of grades 13 and 12 will be applying for placement at university and all Ontario universities, including Ryerson, are required to accept additional numbers of students.

Ryerson University, Canada's leading centre of applied, professional education, offers more than 40 undergraduate and graduate programs, with an enrollment of over 15,000 full-time students and more than 56,000 registrants in its Continuing Education Division (Canada's largest).

The Ryerson Library collection consists of over 480,000 books, 2,500 print journal titles and over $1 million of electronic resources. The Library's staff is comprised of approximately 70 full-time positions, including 18 professional librarians.

Literature Review

The literature on Interlibrary Loan staffing and the location of Interlibrary Loan units within academic libraries is not extensive and is contradictory. Interlibrary Loan is often considered to be an extension of Reference, largely because of the use of verification and location tools. Conversely, however, the lending and borrowing of materials has made it a logical fit for Circulation. In many cases, Interlibrary Loan departments stand alone, while some have been incorporated into other departments, such as Technical Services. There is no consensus on where to place the department, and no clear trend is evident.

Lois Gilmer has reported on surveys of interlibrary loan staffing (1). One survey reported that in a plurality of libraries, Interlibrary Loan was part of the Reference Department. (2) A later survey found that the placement of Interlibrary Loan departments was divided, almost evenly, between Reference, Circulation, or a separate unit. (3) More recently, a survey conducted by Mary E. Jackson concluded that ILL is generally located in the Public Services Department or the Access Services Department in research libraries, while in college libraries, ILL is most likely to be located in the Public Services Department or the Reference Department. (4)

Christina Yu has made a good case for keeping Interlibrary Loan together with Reference because of the searching and verification components, and because Interlibrary Loan and Reference "share a common vocabulary." She concluded that "combining Interlibrary Loan with Circulation will result in less productive operations." (5)

Olga Paradis (6) published an article in which she reported on an experiment that combined Interlibrary Loan with a Reference department. Increasing demand for ILL services (both lending and borrowing) combined with unchanging staffing levels prompted this Baylor University library to undertake the merger. The author concludes that the merger effectively increased staff and workspace.

Two articles have addressed the issue of merging an Interlibrary Loan department into a Circulation department. In describing such a merger at Indiana State University, Judith Tribble (7) highlighted the conditions that prompted this reorganization. Budgetary concerns, duplication of service, increased Interlibrary Loan requests, and a desire to share workloads were the primary issues. After two years, the Library began to notice efficiencies, and concluded that this merger improved service.

Jack Fritts (8) has described the reorganization of Interlibrary Loan and Circulation departments at National-Louis University into a cooperative venture as being driven by increasing workloads and service orientation, most notably the University's strong commitment to supporting off-campus students. The resulting cross-departmental involvement of public services staff has had some benefits throughout the Library. Fritts

points to increased fill rates and faster turnaround times as evidence that the cooperation of public services staff has made this change successful.

The topic of "Where is your ILL department?" was addressed on an Interlibrary Loan listserv in September 2002. A tally of the responses from nearly 70 libraries in the United States found that the greatest number of ILL departments were under Circulation or Access Services (26). An equal number fell under Reference or within an independent ILL department: (12 for each). Other alignments were as follows: Technical Services (7); Collection Development (5); Public Services (4); Serials (2).

Ryerson University Library conducted an informal survey of university libraries in the Province of Ontario in December 2002. Results indicate that the majority of Interlibrary Loan departments are part of Reference departments, with the next most common configuration being Access and Related (a multi-unit organization that may include Circulation, Reserve, or Audio Visual, for example), or independent departments, and thirdly within Collections Management/Technical Services departments. For a number of years, the Ryerson Library has experimented with a variety of organizational locations for Interlibrary Loans. The recently chosen team-based management model has created a new administrative unit called Borrower Services, comprising of Circulation, Reserve, Communications, Community Relations and Advancement, AV/ILL, stack maintenance, and a dedicated systems librarian to support the entire unit. The focus of this new department is on enhancing access and promoting user satisfaction.

Team-based Management

In 2001, the Ryerson librarians began a review of their portfolios—professional responsibilities—and elected to move towards a team structure (figure 1. Team-based Management). Audio Visual/Interlibrary Loans (AV/ILL) became part of the newly constituted Borrower Services Team. Relationship with our users and a strong customer focus are the foundation of this new team. Our mission is to provide for the greatest possible use of materials, owned or not owned by the Library, regardless of format. The strong public relations component of AV/ILL, the commonality of the borrowing/lending/reserve and resource sharing functions of all the units, and the value-added convenience of providing one-stop shopping for the user, made it a logical step to merge these departments. The remaining step to be completed is the physical redesign on the main floor to amalgamate these units into a contiguous area. This relocation will be the cornerstone in maximizing process articulation and staff efficiencies. For these reasons, we believe we have finally found the right fit for departmental and Library organization.

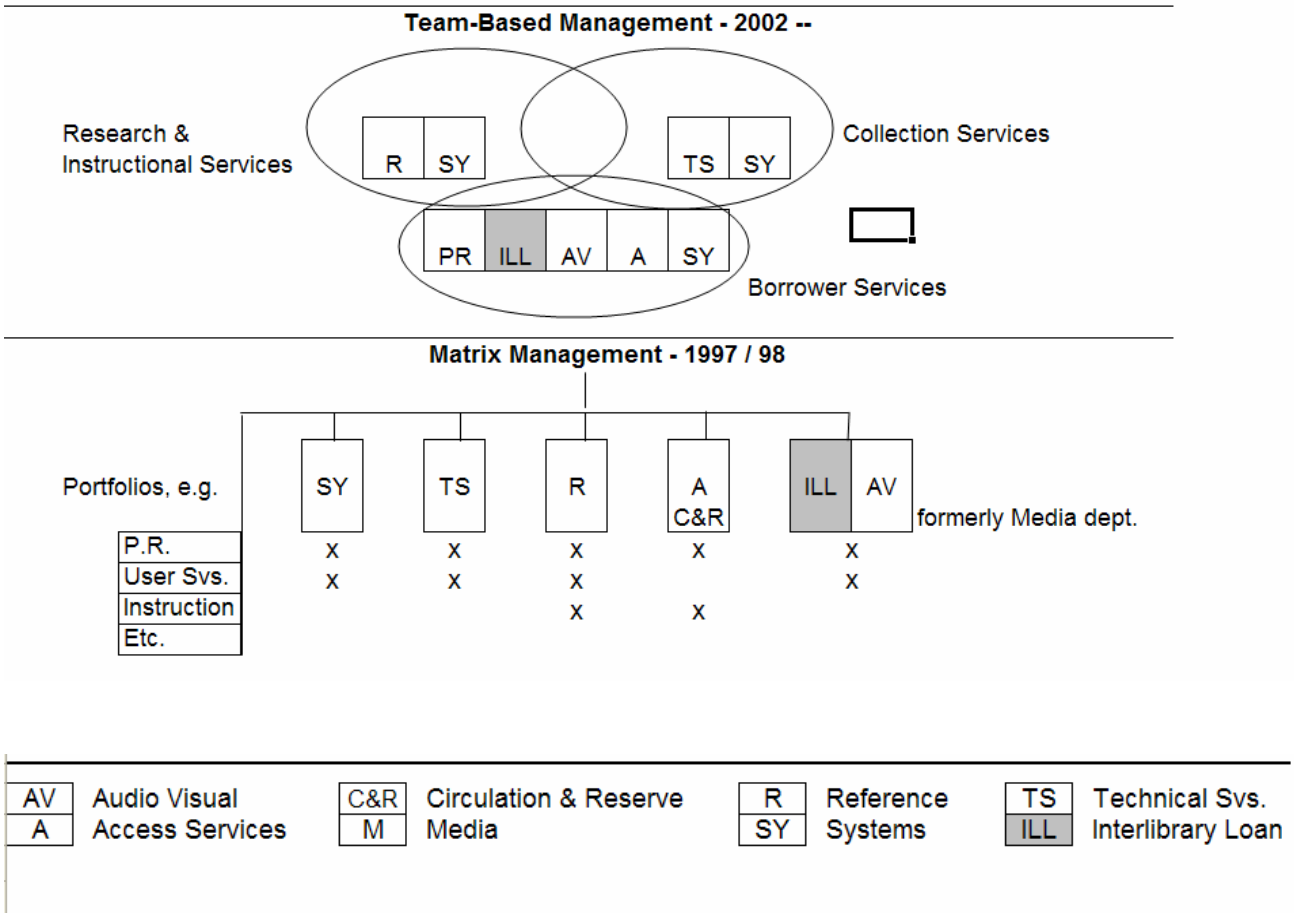
Administrative changes and impact on Interlibrary Loans

Decentralized model:

Historically, the location of Interlibrary Loans has been influenced to a large extent by changes in the administrative and physical structures of the Library. Ryerson University developed rapidly from 1948-2002, as evidenced by its successive name changes: Ryerson Institute of Technology, 1948-63; Ryerson Polytechnical Institute, 1964-1992; Ryerson Polytechnic University, 1993-2002 and finally, Ryerson University in 2002.

Each name change brought predictable challenges to the Library in the developing university. Library budget and collections were virtually non-existent from 1948-63, then steady, if unspectacular, progress was made from 1963-1972. The collection grew from 1,000 to 15,000 to 90,000 volumes during this period. In 1974 a 10-storey tower was built to house the newly-formed Learning Resources Centre. A new Director then established a decentralized, subject-focused grouping of collections and service points

Figure 1 **MANAGEMENT MODELS - RYERSON UNIVERSITY LIBRARY**



on most floors. Subsequently, the 5 subject collections were later subdivided into 6 and located on separate floors: A Media/AV collection; an Information Center (general reference); and three separate service points (one each for Circulation, Reserve, and book

returns/fines). (figure 2) In the 1980s, Interlibrary Loans became part of the Information Center department and was physically located close to the Information Center reference desk in this decentralized structure.

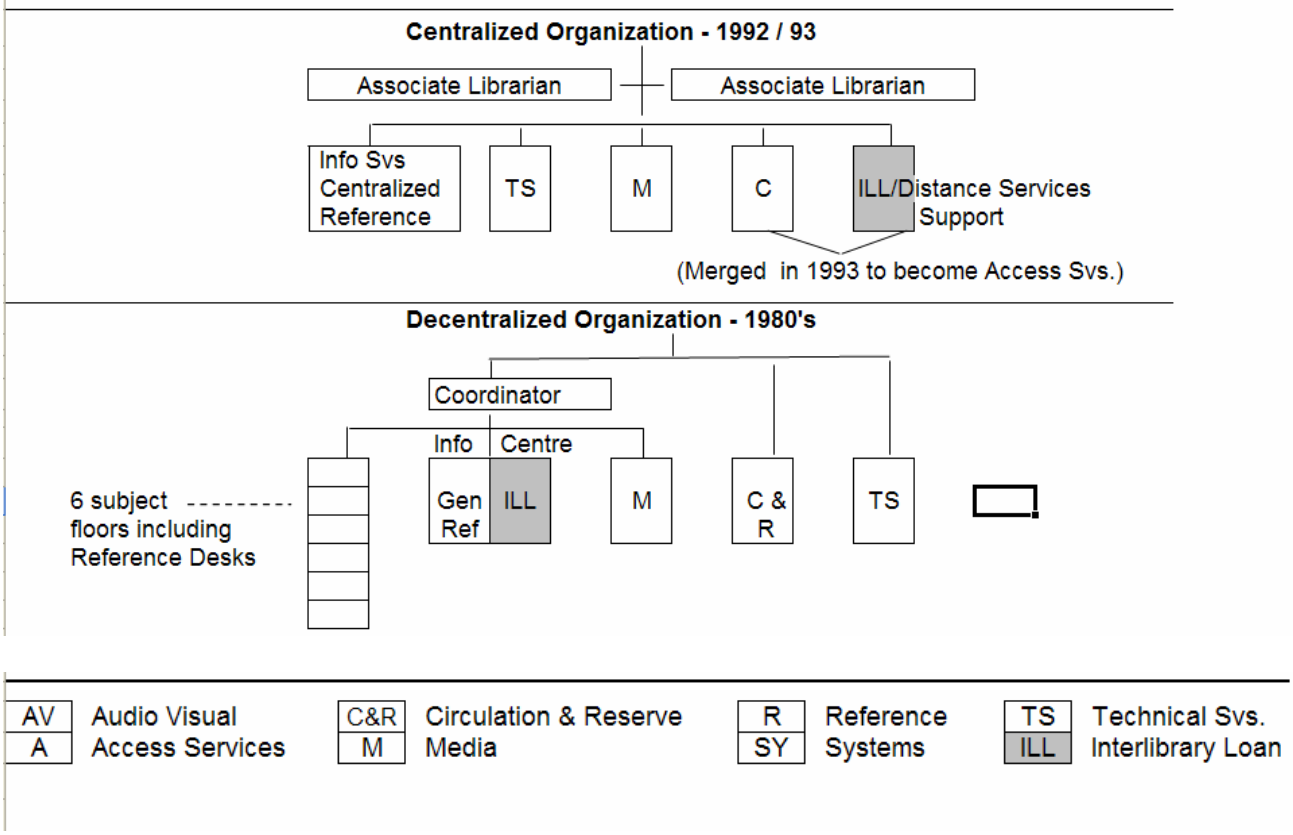
Centralized model:

At this time, the decentralized model made it difficult to support the Library's multiple subject divisions, unique in the province for their narrow subject focus. Increasingly, an interdisciplinary curriculum required expensive duplication of resources. Where resources were too expensive to duplicate, particularly with the advent of stand-alone CD ROMs, staff frequently referred users to reference points throughout the Library, resulting in rising user dissatisfaction. Finally, the 1990s brought budgetary retrenchment and staff reductions, necessitating that the seven reference service desks be collapsed to two.

In this new centralized structure (figure 2), ILL became part of Distance Support Services, which subsequently merged with the Circulation Department, renamed Access Services. ILL remained on the second floor with Access, while the main Reference Desk was relocated to the fifth floor and AV Services on the third. At this time, in anticipation of a surging interest in a new distance education model being planned by the university's Continuing Education Division (Canada's largest and most successful), there was logic in placing ILL services under the management of a newly created Distance Support/ILL Librarian, who also assumed responsibility for Access Services, including Circulation, Reserve, and Stack Maintenance.

Much of the physical reorganization that had occurred during the 1990s had been preceded by a revised administrative structure that included job rotation and term positions for a number of librarians and technicians. Two Associate Librarian staff positions were created to extend for a 3 year term: one to oversee the Public Service policy changes and the human resources transitions that were required in a highly unionized environment; and the other was an Associate for Technical Support and Systems that oversaw the implementation of an integrated library system and the necessary systems and technological changes. However, once the physical relocation

Figure 2 **MANAGEMENT MODELS - RYERSON UNIVERSITY LIBRARY**



was in place, the need for the Associates was considered unnecessary and a flatter administrative structure was sought.

Matrix Model:

This need to realign librarian responsibilities resulted in a redrafting of the Library's strategic goals and major "portfolios" were created to cover each of the administrative or policy areas that were deemed vital in the coming 2-3 years. (figure 1. Matrix management) Librarians were then placed into each of these portfolio positions, usually according to declaration and/or aptitude. This process has been described by Richard Malinski , then Chief Librarian, in his paper on job rotation in an academic library (9). Most of the Librarians sensed a need to realign their responsibilities to shift with the demands that Web-based library work was rapidly driving. Retrenchment pressures continued, driving further Library staff reductions, and in an attempt to realign management functions to maximize efficiency, service points were again collapsed. The Audio Visual Department was moved to the second floor and physically and administratively combined with ILL. It seemed an odd marriage but the AV service had been increasingly involved in the lending and borrowing of films and videos to and from external sources just as ILL provided access to resources beyond the Library's owned collections. Access Services (Circulation, Reserve, and Stack Maintenance) was remodeled into one physical space; the Reference Desk was relocated on the same floor at the entrance level, consolidating all the main service points on one floor.

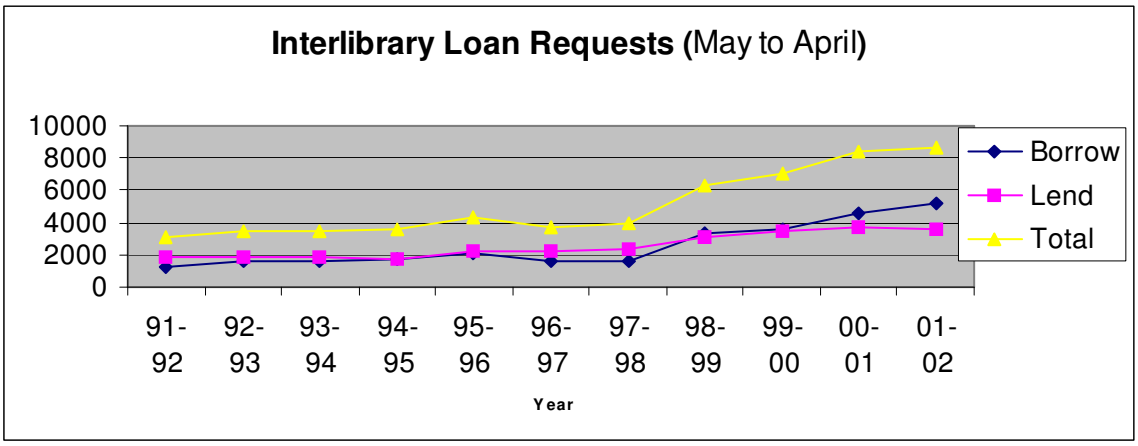
Teams:

For four years, the matrix of portfolios permitted individually-focused work effort. However, there were increased demands for librarians to take up extensive committee work as well. Library Council undertook a lengthy strategic review of the portfolio model and a new teams-based structure emerged to include a Borrower Services Team, a Reference, Research and Instruction Team, and a Collections Team.

Increase in Interlibrary Loan requests

Apart from these external driving forces, changes in ILL workflow and the nature of the service played an increasing role in influencing the location of the unit. The dramatic increase in ILL requests in the 1990's necessitated a re-examination of workflow and staffing to cope with the volume. The total of ILL requests grew by 155% between 1991 and 1998 (from 3042 to 8648), but more significantly, our borrowing requests increased by 320% (from 1220 to 5126). There are a number of reasons for this dramatic rise in ILL requests. In the 1990's Ryerson Library began to invest heavily in electronic databases, easing the patron's ability to identify resources. Ryerson Library became a member of OCLC in1994 for shared cataloguing data, and thus our holdings became more readily identified by other libraries. In June 1993, the institution received University status, which included an augmented research mandate. In September 2000, the first of a number of graduate programs was introduced, again boosting the amount of research conducted at the university. Beginning in September 2001, Ryerson Library became part of the CNSLP (Canadian National Site Licensing Project – the consortial digital library initiative established by the Canadian research library community to purchase electronic

scholarly journals and research databases), which provided our users with, among other databases, the major citation indexes in *Web of Science.* Also, beginning in the mid-1990s, an electronic ILL request form became available remotely to our users on our Library Web site. The predominant factor in the jump in ILL requests, however, was most likely the introduction of "No-Fee ILL" in November 1997. The Library absorbed the user costs of interlibrary loans for faculty at that time, and expanded this to students in 1998. In 1998/99, the Library heavily promoted free ILL and this was reflected by a big leap in borrowing requests (up 110% between 1997 and 1999 alone). This free ILL service has been a major success story for Ryerson Library public relations. At the same time, it heightened the need to re-organize the Interlibrary Loans staff complement to meet the increased demand.



New Interlibrary Loan initiatives

Apart from the escalating demand for traditional ILL service, the Department has embarked on a number of new initiatives that require additional staff support and different levels of staff expertise. In December 2001, the ILL department began a pilot project of fully-subsidized document delivery service from CISTI Source (formerly Swetscan), an electronic table-of-contents database service from CISTI (Canada Institute

for Scientific and Technical Information in Ottawa), covering over 14,000 international scientific and technical journal titles. Initially, this service was only available to faculty, but in October 2002, the program was extended to graduate students. Under this system, the end user can directly order documents from the CISTI database, which is linked to the Ryerson Library catalogue, preventing our own holdings (print as well as electronic) from being requested. This service relieves some of the pressure on our constantly-growing borrowing requests for journal articles, but also creates higher expectations of ILL turnaround time. Managing this document delivery service takes on new dimensions, with added emphasis on publicity, web page design, user instruction, maintaining a usage database and developing user satisfaction surveys to measure the performance of the service.

Focus on users

These new initiatives have heightened the importance of responsiveness to users' needs and public relations skills. While in the years of the centralized model, the focus had been on internal re-organization, the 1997 repositioning focused on users. Two new positions were created: a Public Relations, Publications and Advancement Librarian and a Users' Librarian, who was responsible for surveying and monitoring user needs and satisfaction. However, it was not until 2002, with the team-management model in place, that public relations was formally placed in partnership with ILL and other access service functions.

Systems Issues

As our interlibrary loan requests continue to increase and staffing remains unchanged, the Library is relying on technology to streamline the ILL workflow and speed up delivery of documents to users through electronic means. The Library is a member of OCUL (the Ontario Council of University Libraries), a consortium of nineteen libraries that coordinates and promotes resource-sharing initiatives as part of its mandate. Through OCUL, in the early1990s, the Library began using the Ariel software package for scanning, storing, printing, and transmission of documents over the Internet. In April 1997, the Ryerson Library began using AVISO, an interlibrary loans software package designed to automate and manage borrowing, lending, financial transaction, and statistics. The batch-processing mode of the stand-alone DOS-based AVISO system was sufficient to meet the moderate ILL volume of the early 1990's. However, with increased ILL volume and users' expectations of faster turn-around time, it was imperative that Interlibrary Loans switch to a system that permits real-time communication with ILL partners and multi-staff access to expedite workflow. Staff were also frustrated with the lack of dedicated technical support for AVISO.

At the end of 1999, the Library migrated from DRA (Data Research Associates) to the Innovative Interfaces integrated library system; however, the Innovative ILL module seen to be insufficient for our borrowing and lending functions. Part of this reluctance to join the Library's integrated system was due to the OCUL consortium decision to move from AVISO to the VDX (Virtual Document eXchange) system. VDX, a second generation

ILL management software package is designed around the International Organization for Standards (ISO) ILL standard 10160/10161, so that the system can communicate with other libraries that use software based on the ISO protocol. The system uses ZPORTAL, the WWW/Z39.50 gateway that has allowed for the creation of the OCUL Virtual Union catalogue, which is now available on-line at http://racer.scholarsportal.info. "Racer", the OCUL VDX system, promises a closer link between Interlibrary Loans and circulation functions, and greater interaction with users. Users can search the virtual catalogue of academic libraries in the province of Ontario, as well as selected databases such as the national AMICUS database, CISTI catalogue, or even the British Library and Library of Congress catalogues. Data retrieved from these searches can autopopulate the ILL search request forms, saving users' time and labour in re-keying. Users will also be able to check the status of their ILL requests and receive e-mail notification from the ILL staff. Though supported centrally by the OCUL technical group, maintenance of the local systems with all these sophisticated features would demand the dedicated support of a systems librarian, who has intimate knowledge of the set up as well as the daily operations of ILL.

Staffing support

Throughout this time, increasing sophistication of interlibrary loan technologies required improved skills and training of staff. Under the decentralized model, one library technician, a paraprofessional who also undertook Information Center general reference duties, and one library assistant with clerical duties, both of whom reported to the Information Center Librarian, staffed ILL. Staff used standard ALA print ILL forms and

the post for interlibrary loan requests. This manual system was augmented by the acquisition of the ENVOY100 communication system, which was used only for requests from other libraries that also had this system.

The proliferation of information resources on the web, as well as Ryerson's expanded research requirements, have made the ILL searching process more complex and challenging. The ILL staffing level was adjusted in response to these new demands. In 1994, the Library Assistant position was removed and one technician whose major duty was ILL and another technician contributing half time in ILL then staffed the department. As the librarian who supervised ILL was also the Access Services librarian, he was able to assign Access Services staff to provide clerical support on a limited basis. This kind of rotational, casual clerical support was not well received by ILL staff. In I996, the pool of library technicians began a rotation into additional duties. More technicians were recruited into ILL but the issue of clerical support was still not resolved. In April 1998, a new librarian took responsibility for AV/ILL as a formally-merged independent department. This new arrangement enabled staff from the two areas to share some duties and provide backup. The two AV library assistants took on responsibilities in both AV booking and ILL retrieval, dispatch and patron notification. With the advent of the "double cohort", an influx of approximately 1,000 additional first year students, an increase of 20% over the normal intake, in the fall of 2003, the Library needs a creative way to do more with less. Merging with Access Services is a logical step to increase the scope of cross utilization of staff resources in units whose common goal is to assist users with their borrowing needs. However, until the physical redesign of the area is achieved,

and the service points combined, our ability to take full advantage of the merger is somewhat limited.

Conclusion

The evolution of Interlibrary Loans into its current home in the Borrower Services team has been a lengthy one. External factors such as staffing cuts, ILL request increases, space considerations and systems implications, and internal process evaluation and discussions of form, function and management have resulted in physical and administrative structural changes in the Library. The coming years will require a continuing assessment of the efficiency of our service delivery within this new administrative framework in order to ensure that we are following the best route for user satisfaction.

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