



Evidence Summary

Follow-Up Study on Free Document Delivery and Interlibrary Loan Service Demonstrates Customer Satisfaction and Generates Improvements

A Review of:

Yang, Z. Y. (L.), Hahn, D., & Thornton, E. (2012). Meeting our customers' expectations: A follow-up customer satisfaction survey after 10 years of free document delivery and interlibrary loan services at Texas A&M University Libraries. *Journal of Interlibrary Loan, Document Delivery & Electronic Reserve*, 22(2), 95-110. doi:10.1080/1072303X.2012.708390

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Abstract

Objective – Texas A&M University Libraries have delivered free documents and interlibrary loans for ten years via the *Get it for me* service. This study explores whether the needs of customers are being met, areas for improvement, acceptable turnaround times, why some resources are never picked up, preferred format and steps to obtaining resources, places searched before submitting a request, and whether users ever purchased resources after obtaining them through *Get it for me*.

Design – Online questionnaire.

Setting – Large academic library system located in Texas, United States.

Subjects – Researchers used responses from 735 registered users of the *Get it for me* service (12% undergraduates, 49% graduate students, 21% faculty, 15% staff, 1% distance education, 2% other).

Methods – The authors emailed all currently registered users of the *Get it for me* service ($n=23,063$) inviting them to participate in a survey. The survey ran for two weeks, with no follow-up emails sent.

Main Results – The return rate of 3.18% ($n=735/23,063$) surpassed the participant goal to achieve a confidence level of 95%, with a confidence interval of 4%.

Researchers found that 79% of respondents are satisfied with turnaround time, with 54% of respondents desiring items within three days. Expectations increased with position in the academy. Time is the significant factor in users not retrieving ordered items; items are no longer needed after deadlines pass or other related materials are found. Responses revealed that 55% of users prefer print to e-books, although 70% of participants would accept an e-book version if print is not available. Participants were evenly split between reading documents online and printing them to read offline. About one quarter of respondents bought or suggested that the library purchase an item requested via *Get it for me*. When participants encountered a problem, 55% of respondents would contact library staff and 45% would check the service FAQ. Of those that contacted staff, there is a 94% satisfaction rate. Overall, 95% of respondents checked the libraries' online catalogue for availability, 83% looked in e-journal collections, and 74% checked Google or Google Scholar. *Get it for me* was complimented on its user-friendly interfaces and policies, and the money and time it saves its users. In terms of criticism, users requested better quality scanned documents, longer interlibrary loan times, and a PDF instead of a link when an article is found by staff.

Conclusion – The author concludes that the document delivery and interlibrary loan services delivered by *Get it for me* are meeting the expectations of users, with 99% of respondents reporting that the *Get it for me* service meets or somewhat meets their needs. Areas that required improvement were identified and strategies put in place to improve service. This questionnaire can be applied to other libraries to assist them in learning about document delivery and interlibrary loan service users and their expectations.

Commentary

Studies on interlibrary loan and document delivery services are not new in the library community. This survey updates previous work by including questions never before asked about preferred formats of books and methods of receiving electronic documents, as well as whether service use inspires personal purchase.

The participation rate of only 3.18% is low, but well within the authors' desired confidence range. The method used for data collection makes sense for this type of study, and the questions reflect clearly stated objectives. The authors do a good job of explaining how results differ by subsets of participants based on academic rank (undergraduate, graduate, professor, etc). However, the authors do not compare the respondent demographics to those of the university population.

While this study is assessing a local service, the authors ask questions and provide suggestions that are relevant to other institutions. Unfortunately, the authors never give a complete list of questions utilized, leaving people wishing to duplicate their efforts having to comb through the article in order to piece together questions to ask. The service improvements made are clear and transferable across many institutions, including reiteration of the importance of request details to staff, high standards for scanned documents, addition of ability of users to re-submit a request for a paper resource that might first come to them in e-book format, highlighting the service's tutorial link, and reducing the number of times customers need to log in to access library records.

This study is an example of one step in an excellent assessment cycle of this service. When the document delivery and interlibrary loan service first debuted in 2002, it was the subject of a user survey a year later. In the decade it has been in existence, tweaks have been made to the service and its name. Instead of simply leaving the service alone, it was

assessed again and clear improvements were made. As technologies change, it is critical to review past decisions and explore new opportunities to ensure the best service for library users.