

## **UNMEDIATED DELIVERY: A HELICOPTER VIEW**

H. THURLOW

*Client Services and Collections, State Library of Queensland, Brisbane,  
Queensland, helen.thurlow@slq.qld.gov.au*

### **ABSTRACT**

Libraries have built services around substantial print collections which support research and learning. However today, in addition to this print material, research and learning is supported by electronic items, free internet resources and improved access to scholarly publications. Many resources are available directly to clients, and libraries are redefining their role in facilitating research and learning. The National, State and Territory Libraries of Australia and New Zealand (collectively known as NSLA) are aiming to enable greater access to their collections by providing a consistent and easy client experience across libraries. Improved delivery of resources, particularly the unique content held by NSLA libraries, is dependant on effective document delivery. To inform a review of effective delivery services, an environmental scan has been undertaken to identify current activity and issues associated with unmediated delivery. This paper provides an overview of the findings.

### **1. INTRODUCTION**

Rapid changes in information technology and access to information are continually shifting the needs of our clients and driving ongoing review of service delivery. To address these changes, the National, State and Territory Libraries of Australia and New Zealand (collectively known as NSLA) have developed the *Re-imagining Libraries Strategic Plan* [1]. The Plan has three key strategies:

- 1) One Library
- 2) Transforming our culture
- 3) Accessible content.

The strategies are being delivered through ten projects. An environmental scan was undertaken to inform and support the work of the Delivery Project which will contribute to the achievement of a key outcome under the One Library strategy: *Improved delivery of content and resources*.

The purpose of the environmental scan was to:

- identify existing activity related to unmediated interlending and document delivery services

- identify issues for consideration in developing a model for unmediated document delivery.

This paper provides an overview of current literature and activity relating to unmediated delivery services across libraries in a range of sectors. Over 55 sources (articles and websites) were reviewed during the scan. With reference to many of these sources, the paper outlines components identified as requirements for clients and libraries for the successful delivery of unmediated services.

## **2. NEW CHALLENGES**

Drivers for change in the area of inter-library loans and document supply are articulated in the NSLA document *Big bang: creating the new library* (2007) [2].

### **2.1. Access**

The NSLA Libraries have extensive content, collections, services and expertise. These resources need to be universally discoverable and immediately available.

### **2.2. Client expectations**

Much information seeking is undertaken independently of libraries and their resources, and the ability and expectations of clients have changed. Many clients no longer expect libraries to serve as warehouses for research, but they do expect seamless digital discovery and delivery of print based copy [3]. The 2009 *Borrowing Library Books Online* study, commissioned by MLA (Museums, Libraries & Archives, based in England) advises that clients expect high quality performance and presentation. The study also noted that, with many clients expecting service online, there is a risk for the future relevance of delivery services in not offering a service such as 'Library Loans Online' [4].

### **2.3. Changing collections**

Changes in publishing have resulted in increased online content and reduced acquisition of physical resources. Libraries are transferring subscriptions from print publications to electronic licences [5]. Protocols for document supply change when access to electronic content can be governed by licensing agreements which prevent resource sharing. Essentially, libraries have moved from 'building up collections' to 'establishing connections' [6].

### **2.4. Resource sharing**

Service delivery can be enhanced by collaboration with other organisations. Joining with other libraries to implement resource-sharing strategies, policies and procedures will optimize access to the information resources of all participating libraries.

### **2.5. Skills and capability / Innovation**

Advances in online content and new technologies have revealed the inadequacies of traditional 'process-centred' document supply services. To meet client expectations via a 'client-centred' service, staff need to challenge existing traditions and assumptions about service delivery, and to develop the capacity to plan and implement innovative service models.

### **3. KEY FINDINGS**

#### **3.1. Definition**

Current literature refers to *unmediated requesting* and *delivery*. This means library staff do not intervene in the request process, and document delivery is direct to the client. The transaction may occur within a library service or across library services. The degree of intervention in the process varies between libraries [7]. Kuntz et al suggest an unmediated service requires a shift in thinking from the *process* of resource sharing to the *client experience* of discovery and delivery [8]. This is supported by an observation from the MLA Study that online *lending* represents the world from the libraries' point of view, while online *borrowing* is naming the service from the client's perspective [9].

Leibold suggests that unmediated delivery usually necessitates being part of a consortium [10]. However, Orange Country Library Service in Florida began a home delivery service in 1974. Initially, requests were mediated over the telephone or in person. By 2008, 85 per cent of requests originated online, resulting in items being delivered directly to the client's home [11]. This is evidence of a successful unmediated document delivery service operating independently of a consortium.

Discussion about unmediated delivery can also be assisted by the division of library resources into loans (predominately print and audio visual material) and non-returnable copies (print, electronic, digitised). This paper focuses on loans, with some references to non-returnable copies. The latter category requires further investigation regarding system interoperability and licensing conditions.

#### **3.2. Unmediated delivery models**

The literature reveals many examples of resource sharing activities with a move to unmediated services. Developments in unmediated delivery have most often occurred in academic libraries, particularly those who are participants in one or more consortia. These libraries have well defined client groups, with predetermined requirements and processes for authentication and authorisation. Further, unmediated delivery generally utilises existing models for delivery; ie couriers, electronic.

Effective models which comprise libraries from a range of sectors include Subito, based in Germany and 'Books to your doorstep', based in Denmark [12][13]. Alternatively, some libraries advocate buying a book requested by a client rather than using interlibrary loan. Alder advises that this model can provide a faster service and be less expensive than traditional interlibrary loans [14]. Yet another

model used in the academic and special library sectors enables clients to request articles directly from a commercial supplier [15]. Such services may also be known as 'pay per view' and are offered by online content suppliers such as IngentaConnect, LexisNexis and ScienceDirect.

To support the move to an unmediated delivery model, a useful set of principles for resource sharing and delivery has been developed by the Rethinking Resource Sharing Group. The Group's *Manifesto for Rethinking Resource Sharing* supports the role of libraries in the expanding information environment and should be considered when developing a new model:

- 1) Restrictions only imposed as necessary
- 2) Library clients given appropriate options
- 3) Global access to sharable resources
- 4) Sharable resources includes those held in a range of cultural institutions
- 5) Reference services are a vital component
- 6) Libraries should offer service at a fair price
- 7) Library registration should be easy [16].

### 3.3. Client and Library requirements

Davidson describes unmediated service by posing questions from the client's viewpoint [17]. The following table outlines client questions and library requirements in response to the questions.

Client queries	Library requirements
<i>Who has it?</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Comprehensive database offering federated search across range of sources</li> <li>• Agreement on management and operation of request and delivery services</li> </ul>
<i>Can I get it?</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Proprietary software and/or web interface to process requests</li> <li>• Record and track requests, whether from within own collection, or from external source</li> </ul>
<i>Is it available?</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Adhere to standard protocol for interrogating circulation status</li> </ul>
<i>Is it available to me?</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Authenticate and authorise client to access item</li> </ul>
<i>At what cost?</i> <i>And how soon?</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Clear policies regarding lending, delivery, costs and payment</li> <li>• Consistent information available via library websites</li> <li>• Reasons for non-supply</li> </ul>
<i>In what format?</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Offer client options at time of request</li> <li>• Adhere to copyright obligations</li> <li>• Deliver quality assured outputs</li> </ul>

Table 1: Client and Library requirements for unmediated delivery

### 3.4. Client response to unmediated service

Clients indicate support for unmediated services. Orange County Library Service reports that their home delivery service is 'treasured by clients'. Thirty-three per cent of survey respondents used the library exclusively via the website and home delivery [18].

An Australian trial of unmediated delivery indicated that Australians are willing to use unmediated services. Information Australia was developed as a portal service to improve access to Australian print and online resources, and was trialled in five public library services from October 2003 to June 2005. A mid term evaluation of the trial reported a very high client satisfaction rate, with 87 per cent of respondents indicating they were extremely satisfied or very satisfied [19].

In 2006, OCLC and 13 libraries in Montana undertook a pilot project to test the NISO Circulation Interchange Protocol (NCIP). One of the goals of the pilot was to offer clients a home delivery service. It was found that users 'loved' home delivery, with 90 per cent stating they would recommend it to others. Over 70 per cent of users said they chose the service because of its convenience [20].

## **4. ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION**

The literature revealed a number of issues that can inhibit the implementation of an unmediated delivery service. A summary of these issues follows. Actions to address these issues need further investigation and consideration, and will vary across libraries.

### **4.1. Discovery**

The content a library can offer its clients is no longer restricted to what is stored in their building. By sharing data, libraries can utilise global discovery platforms. However, identification of some library holdings needs to be improved to facilitate discovery.

- The extent of library holdings can be difficult to establish where collections are not catalogued online and collection records are not aggregated for easy discoverability.
- Serial holdings are often not comprehensive or current, making access to serials unreliable.
- Clients discover items in online indexes or catalogues and are offered no means of having the items delivered to them. Such 'dead ends' are a dangerous situation for libraries as clients will seek other information options such as discussion lists and web content [21].

### **4.2. Technology**

The technology and protocols to support unmediated delivery are generally available. However, systems are not utilising these protocols [22].

- Delivery systems need to be designed to work with title-level information sources, such as a catalogue, and to accept orders from metadata entered directly into Web forms by clients [23].

- Item availability should be displayed to clients at the time of discovering the item.
- When creating online forms and links to services, terminology and placement should be considered from the client's perspective [24].
- Support is required for client registration and authentication to seamlessly verify access.

### **4.3. Client registration**

Current registration processes often require specific documentation from new clients. Requirements need to be reviewed, with consideration of the RSS *Manifesto* which recommends 'Library registration should be as easy as signing up for commercial web based services' [25].

### **4.4. Copyright and licence compliance**

Libraries are obliged to supply documents according to current legislation and licencing agreements. Australian libraries adhere to the same copyright law, but will have different licence agreements with vendors. Issues include:

- Supply of copies for other than private study or research use (eg commercial)
- Supply of copies from licensed databases
- Embargoes / Limited transactions.

Current convention is that the borrowing library is responsible for ensuring copyright compliance. Unmediated delivery changes the role of (and may replace) the 'borrowing library'.

### **4.5. Delivery**

The offer to clients should include a range of delivery options, physical and electronic, with appropriate charges. Significant issues to be considered include:

- Cost of physical delivery is high
- Client interfaces to systems do not present service options and information in a coordinated way, requiring clients to interpret the service offered by each library.

### **4.6. Library policies**

For libraries to collaborate in offering unmediated delivery services, a range of local policies needs to be considered. Opinions on the need for consistent policies across a resource sharing group vary. Kuntz et al recommend that the client should be able to expect the same level of service, regardless of the source of the material, with service standards, loan periods and charges consistent across all participating libraries [26]. The Montana home delivery pilot also recommends that for a service across different constituencies to be successful, policies and procedures must be common [27]. Nevertheless, other US consortia maintain and apply local policies [28].

Australian libraries generally adhere to the *Australian Interlibrary Resource Sharing (ILRS) Code*. However, the Code does not specifically address the delivery of items generated via new

technologies (eg digitized items, surrogates), or turnaround times for electronic delivery. Further, clients require a consistent framework in which to pay for lending or copying, and charges need to ensure the viability of the service while remaining acceptable to clients.

A range of circulation specific issues must also be considered, including:

- What can/cannot be requested, and restrictions on access
- Charges, payments
- Delivery options and turnaround times
- Processes for lost/damaged items and non-return of items
- Performance measures / statistical reporting
- Issue resolution.

## **5. CONCLUSION – WHERE TO NOW**

This paper has provided an overview of selected current literature and activity relating to unmediated document delivery services. While issues which impact unmediated services may take some time and resources to resolve, the literature indicates that improved access to collections, improved turnaround times and increased client satisfaction justify the pursuit of an unmediated delivery service.

## **REFERENCES**

- [1] National & State Libraries of Australasia: Re-imagining library services strategic plan; NSLA, 2008. Retrieved 2 February, 2010 from <http://www.nsla.org.au/publications/papers/2008/pdf/NSLA.Discussion-Paper-20080708-Re.imagining.Library.Services.Strategic.Plan.pdf>
- [2] National & State Libraries of Australasia: The big bang: creating the new library universe; NSLA, 2007. Retrieved 2 February, 2010 from <http://www.nsla.org.au/publications/papers/2007/pdf/NSLA.Discussion-Paper-20070629-The.Big.Bang..creating.the.new.library.universe.pdf>
- [3] Jilovsky, C., Genoni, P.: Changing library spaces: finding a place for print; *VALA2008: Libraries / changing places, virtual spaces*; Melbourne, 2008. Retrieved 18 February, 2010 from [http://www.valaconf.org.au/vala2008/papers2008/49\\_Jilovsky\\_Final.pdf](http://www.valaconf.org.au/vala2008/papers2008/49_Jilovsky_Final.pdf)
- [4] Hopkins Van Mil: Creative Connections in association with Customer Interpreter: Borrowing library books online: a study to establish potential demand; Museums, Libraries & Archives, 2009. Retrieved 7 December, 2009 from [http://www.mla.gov.uk/what/policy\\_development/current\\_consultations/Borrowing%20Library%20Books%20Online](http://www.mla.gov.uk/what/policy_development/current_consultations/Borrowing%20Library%20Books%20Online)
- [5] Anthony, S., et al: Transitioning from print to electronic information delivery, *Journal of Interlibrary Loan, document Delivery & Electronic Reserve*, Vol. 19, pp. 235-246 (2009).

**ALIA Access 2010**  
**Brisbane, Australia**  
**1 – 3 September 2010**

- [6] Mark, N., Knakkegaard, L.: Interlibrary lending and document supply: past, present and future, *Interlending & Document Supply*, Vol. 32, no. 1, pp. 41-46, (2004).
- [7] Bowler, J.: Unmediated document delivery: the issues and possibilities, *The Australian Library Journal*, Vol. 52, pp. 327-39 (2003). Retrieved 18 February, 2010 from <http://alia.org.au/publishing/alj/52.4/full.text/bowler.html>
- [8] Kuntz, J., Shrauger, K., Waltner, R.: Uborrow: a new service of the State University Libraries of Florida, Phase 1, Submission, 2008, p.2. Retrieved 17 February, 2010 from [http://fclaweb.fcla.edu/uploads/Aleph/UB\\_Nov2008\\_final\\_0.doc](http://fclaweb.fcla.edu/uploads/Aleph/UB_Nov2008_final_0.doc)
- [9] Hopkins Van Mil, op. cit., p. 29.
- [10] Leibold, S.: Patron initiated Interlibrary Loan: streamlining ourselves out of a job? *Third Midwest Interlibrary Loan*
- [11] Myers, J.: Home delivery at the Orange County Library System: an exemplar from the USA, *Interlending & Document Supply*
- [12] Home page - Subito: documents from libraries society. Retrieved 15 February, 2010 from <http://www.subito-doc.dk>
- [13] Home page – Deff search services. Retrieved 15 February, 2010 from <http://katalog.deff.dk/>
- [14] Alder, N.: Direct purchase as a function of interlibrary loan, *Journal of Interlibrary Loan, document Delivery & Electronic Services*
- [15] University of New England: University Library – Document suppliers. Retrieved 18 February, 2010 from <http://www.unew.edu.au/library/>
- [16] Rethinking Resource Sharing Initiative: *A Manifesto for Rethinking Resource Sharing*. Retrieved on 7 December, 2009
- [17] Davidson, E.: How close are we to having a global “Get it for me” service? *Interlending & Document Supply*; Vol. 37, No. 1, pp. 7-12, 2009
- [18] Myers, J.: op. cit., p. 86.
- [19] Missingham, R, et al.: Evaluating the public library portal; Staff paper, National Library of Australia, 2005. Retrieved 18 February, 2010 from <http://www.nla.gov.au/evaluating/>
- [20] OCLC: Montana NCIP home delivery report; OCLC, 2009. Retrieved on 20 February, 2010 from <http://www.oclc.org/research/reports/mtncip/>
- [21] Gatenby, J., Goldner, M.: International sharing and delivery of library resources, *Interlending & Document Supply*
- [22] Davidson, E.: op. cit., p. 64.
- [23] Anthony, S., et al.: op. cit.
- [24] Irwin, J.: Reaping the harvest: end user access and staff savings at the University of Auckland, New Zealand, *Interlending & Document Supply*
- [25] Rethinking Resource Sharing Initiative: op. cit.
- [26] Kuntz, J., Shrauger, K., Waltner, R.: op. cit., p. 4.
- [27] OCLC, op. cit., p. 4.
- [28] Central Library Consortium: How we work. Retrieved 17 December, 2009 from <http://www.clcoho.org/join/work.php>