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Enhancing ILL with Online Submission Forms and E-Mail Notification NYLA Poster Session – October 20th, 2007

Background

Prior to 2007, the Montante Family Library in D'Youville College only had paper forms for Interlibrary Loan requests. These were available in hard copy at the reference desk, and they were also available as PDF files on the library website. Patrons needed to submit them in person, or send them to the library via mail or fax.

When items arrived, the library did not notify patrons. Instead, a paper list was kept at the reference desk, containing the names of all patrons who had items awaiting pickup, or patrons who had placed requests that could not be filled. Patrons needed to come to the library and look for their name on the paper list, or call the reference desk to ask if an item had arrived.

Problems with the existing system:

- Paper forms were inefficient for students conducting research while at home, particularly the students who commute from Canada.
- The responsibility was on the patron to continually check with the library (either in person or by phone) to find out when their items have arrived.
- Because patrons are told that it takes 7-10 days for items to arrive, many of them did not check with the library until that time. In cases where a request was not filled, the patrons did not find this out until they checked with us a week later.
- Many requested items were never picked up at the reference desk, either because the patrons wrongly assumed they would be contacted, or they forgot to check with the library.

The Solution:

We created a set of online forms that students can use to make their requests through the library website. Once they submit their request, it gets sent to an e-mail address created for the ILL department. The student also receives an automatic confirmation e-mail to say that their request has been received. Once the ILL item is available for pickup, a librarian sends an e-mail to the patron to let them know.

See our forms online at <http://library.dyc.edu/ill.html>

Features of Our Online Forms:

- Before showing the request form, the website asks the student some questions to verify that he/she has already checked our resources.
- The request form has a filter to accept D'Youville College e-mail addresses only.
- The students receive an e-mail "receipt" when the request is placed. (This feature was added based on feedback during our pilot testing period.)
- Students have the option of pasting the entire citation into the form, instead of just individual fields for title/author/etc.

Other Library Forms that We Looked at:

Reeves Memorial Library – Seton Hill University
http://maura.setonhill.edu/~library/illrequest_journal.html



*Last Name:

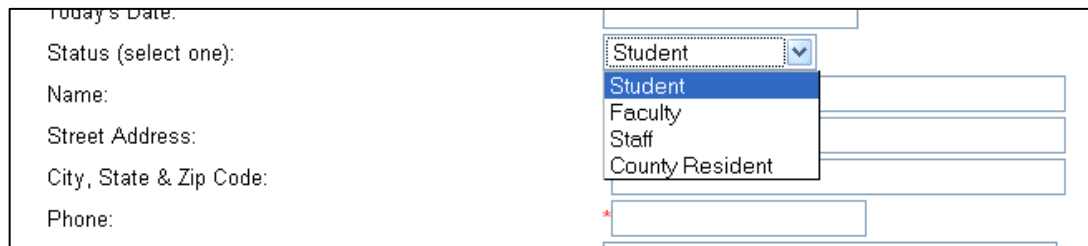
*First Name:

SHU Mailbox Number:

*Email Address:

This form already has "@setonhill.edu" in the e-mail field to get students to use their college e-mail address. We took this one step further by only asking students to enter the first part of their e-mail address, and automatically adding "@dyc.edu" when the form is processed. There is no need for the student to enter the "@" symbol, and in fact, the form will show an error message if they do, because it often means they are trying to enter a different address.

Hartford Community College Library
http://www.harford.edu/Library/lib_info/illjournal_form.htm



Today's Date:

Status (select one):

Name:

Street Address:

City, State & Zip Code:

Phone:

We borrowed their idea of using a dropdown box for the patron to select his/her status. This looked cleaner than our original idea of using radio buttons.

Iona Libraries – Iona College
<http://www.iona.edu/library/services/interlibraryloan/articlerequest.cfm>

Southern Peaks Public Library
<http://alamosalibrary.org/request.htm>

Benefits of Our ILL Enhancements

- Students can be contacted immediately if their request poses a problem – for example, if they have fines on their account, or if they request an item that our library already owns.
- ILL requests can be made from off-campus at any time, even when the library is closed.
- Students do not need to keep coming to the library (or calling) to check on the status of their request.
- When the form is submitted, the student receives an e-mail confirmation which includes a full record of the request.

Timeline of Planning / Implementation

September 29, 2006 – First meeting of newly formed ILL committee. Initial plans are made in developing new policies & procedures. The committee decides to research how other libraries are handling electronic submission/notification for ILL.

October 12, 2006 – Meeting. The committee decides to request a new e-mail address to use for all ILL transactions. Appearance/features of the electronic forms are discussed. The committee chooses the first day of the spring semester as the start date for the ILL enhancements.

October 26, 2006 – The head of reference posts a message to the ILL-L listserv asking for professional insight and guidance on best practices. She receives substantial feedback, including links to some other libraries' ILL forms.

November 2006 – Online forms are created, and revised several times. Flyers and other promotional materials are created to promote the ILL enhancements to the college community. Electronic forms continue to be revised and debugged.

December 2006 – Electronic forms are completed. A “pilot” test is conducted with some members of faculty, and their comments are incorporated into further revisions of the forms.

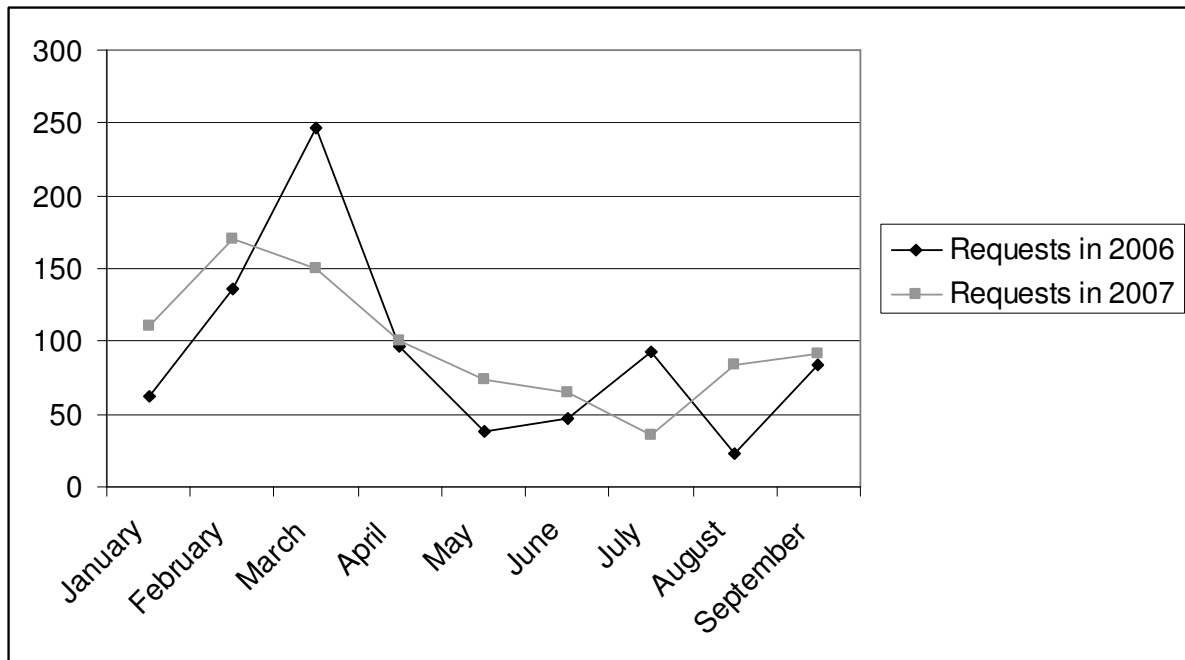
January 10, 2007 – Members of the committee present the new ILL enhancements to all librarians and staff.

January 15, 2007 – Start of spring semester. Electronic submission/notification for ILL goes into effect.

March 7, 2007 – Follow-up meeting is conducted with all ILL Librarians to discuss how the implementation went, and any new issues with the electronic enhancements.

ILL Statistics

We implemented the ILL enhancements at the beginning of 2007. Below is a comparison of the number of requests placed in 2006 (when we only had paper forms) and 2007.



With the exception of March and July, the number of requests placed in 2007 was greater than the same month in 2006. This may be due to several factors, including the fact that some new doctoral programs were also introduced in the spring 2007 semester. However, it is worth noting that the majority of our ILL requests now come through the website, rather than with the paper forms:

Month	Requests in 2006	Requests in 2007	Requests Placed Online in 2007
January	62	111	59%*
February	136	170	93%
March	247	150	85%
April	97	101	95%
May	38	74	100%
June	47	65	82%
July	93	36	17%**
August	23	84	96%
September	84	92	90%

* The ILL forms first became available on the 15th of this month.

** Due to server issues, our online forms were unavailable for part of this month.