

An Illinois Library Delivery Service White Paper

Purpose

An Ad Hoc Delivery Advisory Committee was appointed by Anne Craig, director of the Illinois State Library, in 2006 to investigate and address issues related to the vehicular library delivery services in Illinois. The purpose of this white paper is to highlight the preeminent issues and possible solutions to aid in the task force's work.

Because committee members possess considerable knowledge about Illinois library delivery, an in-depth description of library delivery services is not included.

Delivery Service Vision

Library users, regardless of their location in the state, can expect "returnable" interlibrary loan materials to be received at their home library within five working days 85% of the time, regardless of where the lending library is located. An affordable option for overnight delivery to home or office will be readily available at the patron's or borrowing library's expense.

Historical Overview/Background

Library system delivery services (intrasystem) began shortly after the library systems were formed in the mid-1960s. The statewide Illinois Library Delivery System "overlay" (intersystem) known as ILDS was started in 1980 in order to move materials more easily and quickly from one library system area to another. Direct stops at some academic libraries were added to the statewide delivery system through the years.

Several in-depth studies were undertaken over the years to review statewide and library system delivery routes, volume and other issues. These studies included:

- *The Illinois Interlibrary Delivery System Study: Final Report.* Chicago: De Leuw, Cather & Co., 1980
- *Illinois Interlibrary Delivery System Review: Final Report.* Chicago: De Leuw, Cather & Company, 1992.
- *Standards for the Services of Illinois Multitype Library Systems.* Springfield: Office of the Secretary of State, 1992.
- [Peterson, Fred]. *A Study of the Surface Delivery of Library Materials in Illinois.* Springfield, IL: Office of the Secretary of State, 1997.

Additionally, the Illinois State Library established a Delivery Task Force in 1999, and the former Illinois Library Computer System Organization (ILCSO) performed an internal assessment of ILDS Delivery within ILCSO in FY05.

Various pressure points relating to vehicular delivery have emerged in the past two years and led to the appointment of the ad hoc committee in 2006 to investigate the issues and identify solutions.

Due to the cost and time associated with an outside study via sponsored research or a contract with a transportation/engineering firm, the task force option was the best solution to address the pressing issues.

Problem Identification

Members of the ad hoc committee, in earlier discussions, have articulated the following delivery issues:

- 1. Spiraling costs:** Gasoline costs exceeded \$3.00 per gallon earlier in 2006, and continue to represent a significant increase over years past. The impact on library system and ILDS budgets is substantial. Costs for maintenance and replacement of delivery vans and trucks are also increasing.
- 2. Increased delivery volume:** The Illinois Library System Directors Organization reported in May 2006 that system delivery volume increased 43% in the past four years. Statewide ILDS service is also increasing annually, with a 22% increase in bags delivered from FY03 to FY05. The rapid increase in ILLINET/OCLC membership along with OCLC's aggressive efforts with Open WorldCat to make library holdings readily available via Google and other search engines are key indicators that delivery volume will continue to increase.
- 3. Limited funding:** Flat funding for library systems in recent years has led to unfilled staff vacancies, diminished delivery schedules and cutbacks in other services. ILDS delivery budgets have increased slightly from \$776,675 in FY06 to \$789,313 in FY07, which does not cover inflationary increases. The outlook for more money for delivery is not rosy.
- 4. Increased turnaround time:** The perception of many library staff members statewide is that delivery is taking longer and is more unpredictable than in previous years. Empirical data, based on a study by the former ILCSSO consortia, proves the point. In some cases, turnaround time has occasionally exceeded three weeks. Although some of the delays can be attributed to due to changes in internal library procedures, other reasons abound. Examples are the special circumstances related to delivery in congested Chicago and cutbacks in delivery frequencies by one or more library systems. Access to library buildings 24/7 is an important ingredient in making delivery service run more quickly.
- 5. Differing expectations:** Some libraries are satisfied with three, four or five-day (or more) turnaround time. For other libraries, 24-hour or 48-hour delivery is deemed essential.
- 6. Inequities in delivery frequencies:** Library system delivery frequencies vary; in comparison, the ILDS routes are covered five days each week. In many cases, library system delivery frequency is based on volume, but the volume criteria vary from library system to library system. On-demand delivery is available in some library systems.
- 7. Misperceptions by library staff about delivery:** One of the most pervasive myths about delivery is that all CARLI I-Share libraries receive ILDS direct stops. Consequently new I-Share libraries are disappointed when they are not added to an ILDS route.
- 8. Increased patron expectations and needs.** In some cases, patrons and/or borrowing libraries are willing and able to pay for expedited delivery service to the home or office but the lending library might not provide the option. Patrons are used to the Amazon.com model of various delivery options. Patrons don't know when their materials will arrive via delivery, but they know when orders from online retailers such as Amazon.com will arrive.
- 9. Vested interests.** Delivery service is arguably the most popular library system service. The library systems have placed a lot of time, energy and money into the service and are generally praised for the service. A complete overhaul of delivery statewide could be troubling to many libraries that are satisfied with the current service.

10. Identifying deliverable items: Clarification is needed statewide on the types of materials that may be shipped through Illinois library delivery services. Inconsistencies abound regarding whether or not computers, shelving, course booklets and other materials may be sent through delivery. Some library systems clearly specify that materials should not be transported unless they provide information for patrons.

Possible Solutions

Short-term: Improving the current two-tiered delivery service within the existing state funding parameters.

- 1. Develop a Request-for-Information or Request-for-Proposal for the statewide backbone:** The RFI or RFP would include existing ILDS stops and other libraries that are willing to pay to participate. The stated goal would be 24-hour turnaround time, with 48-hour delivery considered if costs are too high for 24-hour delivery. Five day a week delivery would be specified for the courier service.
- 2. Clarify standardized statistics to be collected.** The library systems and ILDS statistics-gathering procedures vary. Agreement needs to be reached on standardized reporting mechanisms including whether bags or items should be counted; how to address items sorted en-route; and whether materials should be counted when delivered to a requesting library or when the material is delivered and returned.
- 3. Establish a statewide baseline for delivery frequencies based on volume.** Currently, the library system standards require a minimum of two delivery stops per library, based on volume. In order to provide equity throughout the state, criteria needs to be established for the number of delivery stops per week, based on volume. Additionally, the libraries with higher volumes would contribute to increased turnaround time. Special circumstances relating to distance, traffic patterns and congestion should be considered.
- 4. Standardized performance expectations for participating libraries.** A succinct list for libraries on expectations at their institution to make delivery run more quickly and smoothly is necessary. The “Essential Elements of ILLINET” workshops in recent years provided useful information on good delivery practices. A one or two page summary on good delivery practices should be developed for all ILLINET libraries that also include recommendations on frequencies for processing interlibrary loan requests for other Illinois libraries in order to tie into the delivery schedule. Building access is another important issue and clear expectations should be specified. The forthcoming revision of the *ILLINET Interlibrary Loan Code* is another important factor.
- 5. Review the existing ILDS backbone:** During the RFI/RFP process for an expanded backbone, the existing backbone should be reviewed with possible minor adjustments if necessary. This is viewed as an interim solution.

Long-term

- 6. Long-term vision: How should delivery be designed in the future?** A “futures” task force looks at delivery as a blank slate and makes recommendations on how delivery service should be provided in the future. One area for possible investigation is the needs and contributions of OCLC libraries as compared to non-OCLC libraries.

Summary and Next Steps

The solutions should be discussed and assigned to working groups at the October 2006 Ad Hoc Delivery Advisory Committee meeting. By the end of 2006, each working group should thoroughly examine the assigned short-term solution and develop recommendations for the next full meeting of the ad hoc committee. The committee should review the proposed solutions and develop final recommendations in early 2007. An accelerated implementation process should then begin for the short-term solutions while also planning for implementation of the long-term vision.