

THIN, FAST AND FLEXIBLE: NO, NOT ME, BUT THE FUTURE OF DOCUMENT DELIVERY IN AN

AGE OF SHARING IN THE CLOUD, SOCIAL MEDIA AND E COMMERCE

This paper will look at the volatile and disruptive environment surrounding document delivery at present and discuss the changing client expectations of clients deeply immersed in an ebay world and the solutions that cloud based Library Management Systems coupled with specifically designed thin front ends will provide.

Cloud based Library Management Systems

The death of Document Delivery as predicted by some observers 10 years ago was, as they say, greatly exaggerated. The advent of e-journals and direct consortia borrowing was predicted to be about to put document delivery and inter library lending out of business. In fact, request numbers continue to grow for many organisations including Universities. The advent of cloud based Library Management Systems, with their more open structure and the ability to develop APIs and Apps for integrated add on functions creates some exciting opportunities to re think how we provide access to our clients to resources we don't hold (physically or otherwise) in our collections.

Those cloud based systems offers new opportunities for collaboration and sharing while also promising cost savings and improved workflows. So the impact of cloud computing is not so much about specific technology, but rather how it helps libraries manage the shift of information from print and physical media to electronic resources for our clients. Using a "thin" front end that sits in the discovery catalogue and some intelligent automated decision making to link to a request consolidating service such as that provided in Australia by LADD Enhanced Requesting Service or the British Library's Document Supply Service now provides the most effective way to provide a service using what the new technologies can provide in the most economically responsible way.

New breed of clients

Our clients are using discovery catalogues to identify a much broader range of resources but, of course, finding content is not gaining access. So discovery has been simplified and the Library needs to simplify the ways for clients to gain access to the discovered resources. Those clients are demanding convenient, simple, accurate, and fast access to the documents they need. They actually don't care whether the resource is acquired by the Library for its collection or made available to them in some other way.

This change is influencing Library client expectations about their interactions and the way their needs are met. They are used to an “eBay” type of interaction with on line shopping and are now looking for (if not yet expecting from us) concepts such as self service beyond just placing the request, request tracking and 24/7 availability.

Buy VS borrow

The acquisitions process for University libraries is moving to where many resources, particularly e resources, can be acquired quickly, often at least as quickly as the existing inter Library or document delivery requests can be provided. In these circumstances it often makes sense to acquire the resource for the collection if possible. In the US some Library systems have a direct link to Amazon and when a client identifies a book that is not held, its availability is automatically checked on Amazon and an order is generated and the book is delivered to the Library within 24 hours.

Other environmental demands

At the same time research activity continues to grow in importance in our Universities while at the same time Universities consign more of their physical resources to long term offsite storage. So the now the more easily discoverable ephemeral and esoteric resources, often still only in available in print needed by those researchers are even more likely to be the subject of document delivery requests.

Indeed some are making the hard decision to discard their print journals altogether. Like us at Curtin, other University Libraries are now using document delivery to source articles for clients that would have previously been sourced from their own discarded or stored journals. This is going to become increasingly difficult or expensive as more Universities do the same thing. Some institutions who have established large accessible cooperative collections will become large net providers and in a monopoly situation may be able to charge whatever they like to provide the access.

<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>



Attribution 4.0 International