

What makes high performance: the ILL/DD benchmarking study

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All library managers and practitioners should look out for the the results of the major benchmarking study of interlibrary loan and document delivery (ILL/DD) operations in Australian libraries. The report will be released in September and will identify best practice characteristics of high-performing requesting and supplying operations.

The National Resource Sharing Working Group (NRSWG) has undertaken the study to:

- identify the characteristics of high-performing ILL/DD operations,
- be an instrument for raising awareness and changing practices, and
- assist any library to benchmark their operations against a standard set of data.

The study is the largest and most comprehensive study of ILL/DD operations ever undertaken of Australian libraries. The study has the support of the Council of Australian University Li-

brarians (CAUL), the Council of Australian State Libraries (CASL) and the Australian Library and Information Association (ALIA).

Libraries from all sectors participated, which will enable the study to identify high performing characteristics applicable to each sector. The following numbers of libraries were included in the analysis:

- thirty-two universities;
- all state and national libraries;
- twenty public libraries; and
- thirty special libraries.

The study commenced in April last year with a survey undertaken in October and November. The Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) has analysed the results and the NRSWG has considered the implications of their report. The ABS considered fifty variables for requesting activities and forty-two for supplying activities against the following performance measures:

Requesting activities:

- turnaround time,
- fill rate, and
- unit cost

Supplying activities:

- fill rate, and
- unit cost

The ABS identified strong and weaker correlations which make an ILL/DD unit effective and efficient. The NRSWG is interpreting these results to:

- understand the implications for the variables found to be significant,
- undertake additional analysis of variables with a weaker correlation to determine if they indicate other possibilities for efficiency, and
- examine in detail the characteristics of high and low performing libraries identified in the general questionnaire to draw out further efficiency indicators.

The study provides a rich source of information for identifying efficiencies in each library sector and across all library sectors. The detailed data collected by the study and the professional analysis of the data provides a solid basis on which to argue for change.

The report of the study will recommend best practice in ILL/DD operations, and perhaps more importantly, the NRSWG will use the findings to develop strategies for improving the performance of ILL/DD operations in Australian libraries over the next few years. These will include:

- promoting the results through papers at conferences and seminars,
- developing and conducting training in best practice,
- conducting seminars to discuss policy issues,
- identifying and promoting workflows and equipment which assists best practice, and
- facilitating any library to benchmark their operations against the general results.

The results of the study will also enable ALIA to set new national ILL/DD charges between libraries. ■

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