

Purchase Express for any user request

The University of Virginia Library offers delivery in seven days

by Lynda Fuller Clendenning

One day last May, Professor "Smith" requested that the library purchase *The American Presidents*. Five days later the book was delivered directly to his office. Later that month, Environmental Sciences graduate student "Jones," requested *Practical Biostatistical Methods*. Six days later, she received an e-mail message that the book she ordered was being held for her at the Science and Engineering Library. Both library users took advantage of a new service offered by the University of Virginia Library called "Purchase Express," which expedites requests for books and information.

Using the "Purchase Request" link from the library's homepage, users request the materials they need that are not already available in the university library system. The request is then routed to individual subject librarians (selectors) who authorize the purchase of the item and forward the request to acquisitions order staff. The library's goal is to acquire any item a user requests within an average of seven days. To the delight of users and library staff, domestic items arrive within an average of five-to-six days.

One user reported, "Purchase Express is phenomenal. Just a few days ago I sent a purchase request recommending that the library replace its lost copy of Stegner's *Angle*

of Repose. Within days, a copy of *Angle* was delivered to me."

How does the library do it?

Acquisitions order staff take advantage of the Internet and local bookstores, including the University Bookstore, to expedite orders. Out-of-print titles, if available on the Internet through Bibliofind or other online book sources, can often be acquired as quickly as "in-print" titles. Using Amazon.com and the new foreign online book sites, e-mail, fax, phone, and credit cards, library staff can meet promised delivery times for titles published in the United States. Foreign items may take longer, but still arrive in Charlottesville much quicker than the traditional norm of three to six months. Even faxed purchase orders to European book dealers often result in delivery within a few weeks.

Every staff member handles each user-requested item like a "hot-potato" moving the material through selection, funding, order, receipt, cataloging, and processing in a few hours at each station. Nearly 200 users request items through Purchase Express each month, and each requestor receives notification from a selector when the request has been ordered.

Purchase Express complements the library's most popular service, Library Express

About the author

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On-Grounds (LEO), the library's interlibrary loan and document delivery service.

"With the borrowing power of LEO and the ability to buy materials via Purchase Express, users of the library now have timely access to virtually any books or articles they require," the Director of Interlibrary Services Doug Hurd reports.

These services meet the library's goal of expediting delivery of information to users when they need it. Users select among the request options of purchase an item, ILL, or recall a circulating item depending on their particular need and preference. Internally, we may make a different decision based on which delivery method will get the book most quickly. Only new journal subscriptions, rare materials, and products requiring licenses are excluded from the list of formats and items that the library acquires through Purchase Express.

Academic libraries are learning from online bookstores (our competitors) that we need to offer excellent customized services to our users or they will go elsewhere for the information they need.

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At the University of Virginia Library, we want to be the place our users come for information, and, we hope that Purchase Express and LEO are the services that make us the first thought in our users' minds when they need information the library does not already own.

Deputy University Librarian Kendon Stubbs notes, "Through Purchase Express and LEO, we now offer quick access to over 50 million titles available through purchase from online vendors or by borrowing from over 6,000 libraries around the world." ■

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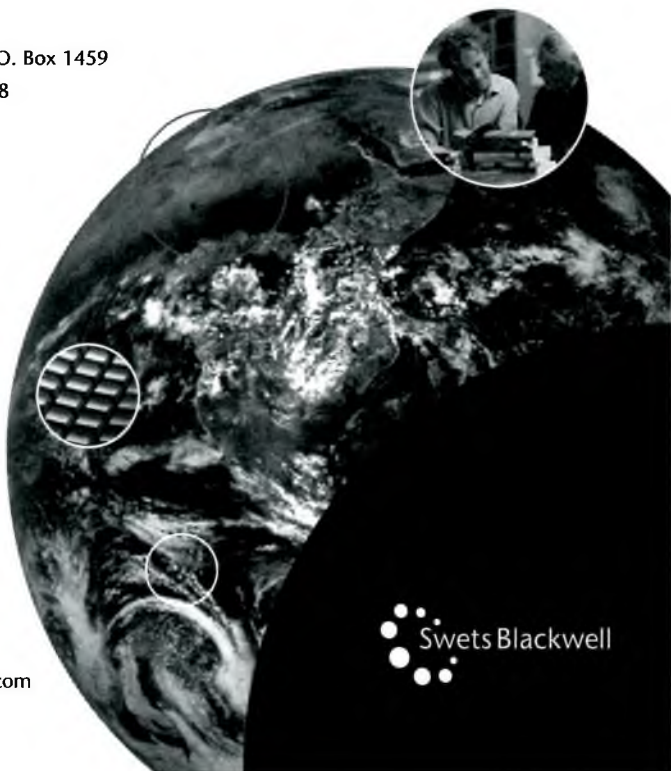
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