

Recent Publications

BOOK REVIEWS

Three Studies of Interlibrary Cooperation:

Palmour, Vernon E.; Olson, Edwin E.; and Roderer, Nancy K. *Methods of Financing Interlibrary Loan Services*. Washington: Association of Research Libraries, 1974.

Hayes, Robert M. *A System for Inter-Library Communication (SILC)*. Washington: Association of Research Libraries, 1974.

Palmour, Vernon E.; Bellasai, Marcia C.; and Gray, Lucy M. *Access to Periodical Resources: A National Plan*. Washington: Association of Research Libraries, 1974.

Rapid acceleration in the volume of interlibrary lending in the recent past, particularly among academic libraries, has placed an undue burden on the major research libraries and has prompted the Association of Research Libraries to sponsor a series of studies whose objectives were to define the problem and to recommend solutions to it. Three of these studies under review here are concerned with (1) financing interlibrary loan in such a way that the libraries carrying a substantial ILL load would find some relief, (2) a program for improved access to periodicals, and (3) the need for and design of an interlibrary communication system. All three studies were supported by a grant from the National Science Foundation. The Hayes study was completed under contract with Becker and Hayes, Inc. The two other studies were contracted by Westat, Inc. All three are well-documented studies.

Vernon E. Palmour, et al., in the study *Methods of Financing Interlibrary Loan Services*, examined means for improving the mechanics of the interlibrary loan process with particular emphasis on the development as quickly as possible of a fee structure that would compensate net lenders. Net lenders are defined in this context as libraries that lend more items than they borrow. Attention was to focus on the dis-

tribution of loans at the national level. Based on the findings of a previous study described by Palmour, et al., entitled *A Study of the Characteristics, Costs and Magnitude of Interlibrary Loans in Academic Libraries*, the responses to a questionnaire sent to directors and interlibrary loan librarians of 189 academic institutions, data on interlibrary loan activity available through other sources, and intensive study of lending patterns of seven libraries, the research staff concluded that cost of interlibrary loan was an urgent problem. They proceeded to develop a series of alternative approaches and options for financing, fee structures, and management. The four alternatives for financing that emerge as viable at this time are charging net borrowers or all borrowers or subsidizing net lenders or all lenders. The fee system options that were considered were a uniform fixed fee which could be large enough to recover average costs of the lending library either in full or in part or a variable fee for each transaction determined by the lending library. Methods of payment that were considered workable were coupons delivered with the ILL requests, charges to credit card accounts, or billing by a central clearing house such as the System for Interlibrary Communication proposed by the Hayes study. After evaluating each of the options and the possible impact of their implementation, the staff recommended that a system of payment be instituted that would allow all participating libraries to recover partial cost for interlibrary loans. Coupons were recommended as the medium for payment. A basic assumption underlying these recommendations was that the program could be implemented quickly and with few organizational problems. A system based on a central clearing house for all ILL communications including billing similar to that proposed by Hayes in his study was viewed as superbly capable of meeting the requirements set forth in this study, but speed in implementation would be difficult. Palmour's staff contend that if SILC is adopted conversion of the

system of fee payment by coupon to the SILC method would be easy.

Palmour was looking for solutions that could be implemented quickly; Hayes addressed himself to the various communications problems that are inherent in the interlibrary loan process and explored ways of using time-sharing computer systems to resolve some of them. The communication network that Hayes proposes would use the hardware and some software of an existing time-sharing system to facilitate the transmittal of interlibrary loan requests and other ILL messages; to refer requests to bibliographic data centers for better citations than appear on the request forms and for location information; to serve as a clearing house for billing and payment of fees; to provide statistical reports on interlibrary loan traffic and workload; and to provide access to on-line data bases. Teletype terminals would be used to access the system. A major purpose of the Hayes study was to evaluate the technical, operational, management, and economic feasibility of the proposed system. The evidence he has marshalled certainly supports his contentions that the "evaluations are essentially positive . . . and the report recommends proceeding further in development and pilot tests of the operation." Hayes has anticipated the likely questions about the proposal and has countered them in turn. His arguments are convincing. One is led to conjecture, however, about the implication of the adoption of the system. If TWX terminals are the means of access to the system, will small libraries be able to participate in it as fully as they would like? Will the pattern of interlibrary lending be changed by the system so that greater emphasis will be on local resources than now exists? Many libraries now participate in one or more consortia, systems, councils, networks, etc., one of whose functions is to promote interlibrary lending within the group. Will SILC facilitate this interaction as Hayes suggests, or will it be just one more bureaucracy for the ILL librarian to contend with? A pilot test of the system is recommended to get answers to these and other questions.

A National Periodical Resources Center which would serve as the referral center for periodical requests which cannot be met through local resources is the recommenda-

tion of Vernon Palmour, et al., in their study of access to periodical resources. The advantages of developing a new collection were weighed against supplementing an existing collection to serve as the center. The proposal is based to a large degree on the organization and practices of the National Lending Library for Science and Technology of Great Britain (NLL) before it became part of the British Library Lending Division (BLL). Palmour and his team contend that the critical need is for a new periodical collection. Does the merger of the NLL into BLL suggest a need here for a more comprehensive collection—one that could supply monographs as well as serials? If this question has any validity, then, would not an existing collection serve logically as the resource center for both monographs and periodicals? An essential question is: Would the recommendations of this study have been different if it had not been limited to periodical resources?

Programs proposed in the SILC study and the Periodical Resources Center study require funding. Both studies recommend some form of federal subsidy as a means of support. What priorities are given to these programs? The entire library community must be involved in determining those priorities if available funds are to be used to maximum effectiveness.—*Donald C. Cook, Assistant Director for Public Services, State University of New York at Stony Brook.*

Goodrum, Charles A. *The Library of Congress*. New York: Praeger Publishers, 1974. 292p.

This book should not be viewed as an encyclopedic work, or "What you always wanted to know about the Library of Congress but didn't know whom to ask." It was written for the Praeger Library of U.S. Government Departments and Agencies series; the author succeeds admirably in achieving his purpose of giving a general overview of the institution. The success is due to the author's writing ability and sense of humor. He is also very familiar with the library and very diplomatic. Because he knows his subject well and writes succinctly and lucidly, he has provided an excellent description of the library's history, organization, and functions for the nonlibrarian.