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# Regional Alternatives
# for Interlibrary Loan:
# Access to Unreported Holdings

*Encouraging recent progress in documentation of library holdings has facili-*
*tated interlibrary lending, but the problem of more complete bibliographic*
*access will persist for some time. In the meantime, a highly structured tele-*
*type system used by several libraries in western Illinois has resulted in*
*filling about 50 percent of the members' requests for monographs, despite a*
*nearly total lack of knowledge of holdings in one another's collections. This*
*system has been very inexpensive and takes advantage of rapid document*
*delivery through regional cooperation. Some recent experimentation using*
*the OCLC interlibrary loan subsystem has indicated that both it and the*
*teletype system are viable alternatives for regional resource sharing under*
*conditions of less than perfect bibliographic knowledge.*

INTERLIBRARY LENDING has been a popular theme in library literature in recent years, and the considerable attention in journals seems justified in light of the increasing extent to which resource sharing is becoming integrated into the daily routine of librarianship. Attendant with the increase in resource sharing, in part a cause and in part a response, has been growing sophistication in the technology and organizational structure designed to facilitate sharing.

It was barely two decades ago that the first five-year cumulation of the *National Union Catalog (NUC)* was published with

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the locations of participating libraries, and it was as recently as 1968 that the first volume of the Mansell publication of the *NUC Pre-1956 Imprints* appeared. During the 1970s, automated systems, such as OCLC and RLIN, that list holdings have increased the number of known locations of materials far beyond the scope of *NUC* and other printed sources.

On the organizational level, the number of local, state, and regional library networks has increased dramatically through the 1970s. The most recent edition of the *American Library Directory* lists more than 330 "Networks, Consortia, & Other Cooperative Library Organizations," a majority of which explicitly specify interlibrary loan, union lists, or other locational projects among their list of primary functions.[1]

Formal organizations devoted to resource sharing vary greatly with regard to size of membership and range of activities, but even in the most ambitious, comprehensive plans, there seems to be a recurring emphasis on the "region" as a basic component of library cooperation.

The imprecision of this term is due to the fact that it may be defined on varying scales of geographical proximity. But certainly less elusive than the precision of its definition is its prominence in statements on resource sharing. The National Interlibrary Loan Code of 1968 elucidated the principle of geographical proximity in Section VIII.1, *Placement of Requests.* That section urged libraries to send requests "to nearer institutions known to possess the desired material."[2]

More recently, the National Commission on Library and Information Science reiterated the value of regional cooperation, at least on the state level, in its statement on goals for action, recognizing the states as the "essential building blocks in any national information system."[3]

Despite the obvious advantages of regional cooperation, such as the capacity for rapid document delivery and the proliferation of regional networks, major obstacles still confront such endeavors. Historically, one of the more important has been lack of bibliographic access to regional holdings. This has not been as great a problem with respect to periodicals, for which it is often financially feasible to draw up a list of holdings and to compile regional union lists. But for monographs, the production of such an easily distributed list has been economically and technically less practical.

Prior to the advent of automated systems, efforts to locate copies of monographic titles regionally were often thwarted by the absence of locational tools. The alternatives were to practice "blind searching" regionally or send to one of the libraries reporting its holdings to printed sources, such as *NUC*. While this latter alternative would not necessarily violate the principle of regional proximity, the relatively small number of libraries reporting to *NUC* resulted in anything but lateral cooperation.

The availability of systems such as OCLC has provided a mechanism to facilitate lateral lending among smaller and medium-sized neighboring libraries. In the process these libraries have found their interlibrary loan costs reduced and the speed of service improved over previous conditions in which they called on major research libraries for even the most common titles.

While these developments have had important consequences already, it would be premature to assume that the problem of bibliographical access to regional resources has been solved. OCLC is the predominant automated system in smaller and medium-sized academic libraries, but its distribution is certainly not universal among them; and in those libraries that are members, the recording of comprehensive holdings through retrospective conversion will not be an overnight process.

A recent survey to which 172 colleges responded serves to illustrate this. Though 65 percent of the responding libraries replied that they were members of OCLC, most of these indicated that they had entered only a very small percentage of their holdings into the OCLC data base. Of the eighty-two libraries that provided an estimate, only thirty-four indicated that their holdings symbol had been entered for as much as 10 percent of their collection.[4]

The implication of these results is that, despite positive inroads, there are still a great many titles in American libraries for which the number of known locations is but a tiny fraction of the actual number of locations.

Progress in documentation of holdings in automated systems might be expected to be accompanied by a refinement of and reliance upon regionally defined cooperative arrangements, but in the meantime the problem of unreported monograph holdings is likely to persist for some time.

These unreported holdings may not be as inaccessible, though, as they generally appear, at least on a regional basis. Since the spring of 1977, seven libraries in west-central Illinois with combined holdings approaching 1.5 million volumes have participated in a venture that, despite poor bibliographic access to each other's holdings, has resulted in filling about half of each library's monograph requests within the region.

The system for access used by the West-Central Illinois Library Cooperative is ultimately based on "blind searching," but it is organized in such a manner as to minimize the time spent and costs incurred at each member library. The basis of the system has been a highly structured tele-

type transmission loop for the routing of requests.

While this system continues in use in west-central Illinois, a six-week experiment by three member libraries using the OCLC interlibrary loan subsystem suggests that the new subsystem provides a further viable alternative for gaining access to unreported regional monograph holdings.

## THE TELETYPE SYSTEM

The West-Central Illinois Library Cooperative was formed in April 1977 to facilitate resource sharing among seven libraries in west-central Illinois, listed below along with the extent of total volumes held by each.

| | |
|---|---|
| Augustana College | 200,000 volumes |
| Bradley University | 290,000 volumes |
| Carl Sandburg | |
| Jr. College | 35,000 volumes |
| Knox College | 185,000 volumes |
| Monmouth College | 150,000 volumes |
| Western Illinois | |
| Library System | 90,000 volumes |
| Western Illinois | |
| University | 500,000 volumes |
| | 1,450,000 volumes |

Since six of the seven member libraries had previously compiled and distributed a list of serials holdings, an intense level of interlibrary loan of journal articles had been going on within the region for some time.

The situation was quite different, however, with regard to monographs, since there was a nearly complete lack of knowledge of each other's holdings. Except for a few titles in special collections, none of the member libraries had reported regularly to *NUC*, and three of the seven had only recently joined OCLC, while the other four were not yet members.

The problem then, if the advantages of regional cooperation were to be realized, was to gain access to one another's monograph holdings effectively and inexpensively. A solution has been found through a teletype system that uses a central processing point and a daily transmission loop to transmit requests from one member to another.

The procedure begins each weekday afternoon when all member libraries transmit a list of blind search monograph requests to the Western Illinois University Library (WIU), the central processing point of the cooperative. WIU checks these requests against its holdings the same afternoon to see which requests it can fill. It then collates those which cannot be filled into a single list arranged alphabetically by main entry. Each request includes author, title, and imprint data; a three-letter library identification code; and a request number supplied by the originating library.

This collated list is transmitted to the Knox College Library at 8:00 a.m. the following day. There, Knox checks the requests against its holdings and deletes any titles that can be filled. This revised list is transmitted to Augustana at 9:00 a.m., where the same search and deletion procedure is conducted. It is then forwarded by Augustana to Bradley University at 10:00 a.m.

These steps are repeated at each member library until the list reaches the final member of the cooperative, the Western Illinois Library System (WILS). After the list is checked at WILS, the only requests remaining are those which no library in the cooperative can fill, and this final list is transmitted back to the central processing point.

These unfilled requests, identified only by library code and local request number, are appended at the bottom of the next day's transmission loop, thereby informing member libraries which of their requests submitted two days before cannot be filled within the cooperative.

Though this system is based on blind searching, its structure and its use of a batch approach minimize the amount of time required for each library to search the requests submitted by the other members.

Once the list has been collated, it is not necessary to retype requests at each library that is unable to fill them. The reproduction of the list can be done on the teletype machine itself, since incoming messages may be recorded on tape and outgoing messages may be transmitted the same way. When a library is able to fill a request and must therefore delete it from the list, it can do this by simply running the tape through the machine locally and manipulating the

tape function so that the filled request does not transfer onto the new tape to be sent to the next library.

Even at peak times when as many as forty requests per day are on the list, the allotment to each library of one hour has been sufficient for checking the requests against its holdings, revising the list accordingly, and transmitting it on to the next library. With the exception of these periods during the middle of each academic term, the handling of the daily list seldom takes more than twenty or twenty-five minutes at each library.

## Volume and Fill-Rate

By recording the number of requests received at the central processing point and the number of requests sent back unfilled, Ronald Rayman at Western Illinois University gained some measure of the overall performance of the West-Central Illinois Library Cooperative during its first year of operation.

Between April 1977 and March 1978, the cooperative generated a total of 4,146 blind search requests. The number of requests varied considerably according to the time of year, ranging from a monthly low of 143 in August 1977 to a monthly high of 739 in October. The overall fill-rate within the cooperative during its first year of operation was slightly above 51 percent; of the 4,146 requests submitted, cooperative members filled a total of 2,114 requests.[5]

Since the degree and method of statistical bookkeeping practices vary within the cooperative, it is not possible to provide comparable data on volume and fill-rate for each library involved. Approximations have suggested, though, that borrowing is fairly evenly distributed, with each member library accounting for between 10 percent and 20 percent of the total.

Based on discussions at semiannual meetings, the fill-rate also appears to be fairly similar at all institutions. Detailed records at the Knox College Library reveal a 51.8 percent fill-rate for its requests during a two-year period between 1977 and 1979, and other members have also estimated their fill-rates to be approximately 50 percent.

While the volume of requests submitted and fill-rate appear to be fairly equal among the member libraries, there is little doubt that Western Illinois University is the heaviest lender in the cooperative. There are two reasons for this: It is the largest library in the cooperative, and in its role as the central processing point it is also the first library to check all incoming requests against its holdings. From the standpoint of the system as a whole, it is most efficient to place the largest member in the first position for checking requests, since this minimizes duplicate searching for the cooperative as a whole, but it does place a disproportional burden on that library.

WIU has been willing to accept this burden without financial compensation, but alternatives such as rotating the central processing function or compensating the central processing point could be explored if the burden proved too heavy for one library to assume on a permanent basis.

## Document Delivery and Speed of Service

The primary advantage of regional cooperation rests in its capacity for rapid document delivery. Courier delivery is most feasible when provided within a relatively limited geographical area, and even if delivery must rely instead on mail service, the average time a document spends in transit is generally dependent upon the distance it is sent.

Since April 1977 six of the seven member libraries of the West-Central Illinois Cooperative have used a three-day-per-week courier system, though during vacation periods and transitional phases it was necessary to mail documents between all participating libraries. In either case, member libraries have consistently found delivery within the cooperative faster than delivery from libraries outside the region.

A document delivered via courier generally arrives within three to five days after the request is submitted to the central processing point, and a mailed document usually arrives within five to eight days. Records at Knox College for the period extending between April 1977 and March 1979 indicated an overall average of 4.5 days between the time a Knox request was sent to the central processing point and the

time a document was delivered and processed. This is an average that is probably fairly typical for the cooperative as a whole.

By way of contrast, the average document delivery time at Knox for monograph requests mailed on ALA forms to libraries outside the cooperative was 15.9 days during the same two-year period.

In addition to more rapid delivery, a courier system has other advantages over a system based on postal delivery. There is greater ease in preparing and handling documents, since they do not have to be individually or even collectively wrapped, resulting in a savings in time and materials.

Besides the monograph requests filled via the teletype transmission loop, there is about an equal number of periodical requests filled within western Illinois by direct library-to-library requesting, and these materials are also carried on the courier. Because of the capacity for rapid delivery, it is often feasible to send bound volumes of older issues of periodicals rather than individually photocopied articles. This represents a considerable savings in time and materials at the lending library.

The greatest disadvantage of a courier system is its basic operating cost. For the volume of delivery within the West-Central Illinois Cooperative, the cost of delivery approaches $2 per completed transaction. During one of the two years since its inception, the West-Central Cooperative has secured outside funding for courier service, while during the other year member libraries have funded the service directly.

The average delivery cost could probably be reduced by at least 33 percent using mail during off-peak periods rather than attempting to provide year-round courier delivery and by eliminating the segment of the courier that connects the cooperative to the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. The West-Central Illinois Cooperative members have, however, felt both of these elements to be important for providing consistently high-quality service.

Even at $2 per completed transaction, this may not really be so exorbitant, considering the elimination of two-way postage, the reduction in time and materials spent on wrapping documents, and the possibility of sending bound volumes of older periodical issues rather than individual photocopies.

## General Cost Considerations of the Transmission Loop

At first glance, it might appear that the processing and sending cost associated with a teletype transmission loop such as the one used in the West-Central Illinois Cooperative might be considerably greater than that involved in an operation relying solely on sending requests to known locations. This is not, however, the case. While each member library in the cooperative does incur additional operating expenses through its handling of the daily transmission loop, there is a reduction in costs in other areas over those associated with traditional channels of interlibrary loan, such as in verification, typing and sending requests, and communications and materials costs.

The processing and sending costs associated with Knox College's participation in the West-Central Illinois Cooperative during a five-month period in 1978 are outlined in table 1. During this period, Knox submitted 335 requests to the cooperative, 182 of which were filled. The total processing and sending cost for the five-month period was about $280, or an average of $56 per month.

The greater part of the expense was clearly the "cost of responsibility" involved in checking other libraries' requests on the daily transmission loop and sending the list to the next library each day, which altogether accounted for about $212 of the total $280.

While the cost of handling the daily list is fairly substantial, the cost of processing and submitting individual requests to the cooperative is extremely low. The total cost at Knox for submitting 335 requests during the five-month period in 1978 amounted to only about $70, or an average of about twenty cents per request, an amount far less than is required for processing and sending a request through other channels of interlibrary loan.

As indicated in table 1, there is hardly any cost of labor at all for verification in sending a request through the cooperative. Since member libraries have traditionally held so little knowledge about one another's monograph holdings, requests submitted at

TABLE 1

PROCESSING AND SENDING COSTS FOR KNOX COLLEGE'S PARTICIPATION
IN THE WEST-CENTRAL COOPERATIVE, JANUARY–MAY 1979

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Cost of submitting 335 Knox requests to the central processing point: | | |
| Verification* | 335 × 0.5 min./req. × $6.00/hr. | $ 16.75 |
| Typing and Sending | 335 × 1.5 min./req. × $3.00/hr. | 25.13 |
| TWX Charges | | 24.11 |
| TWX Paper and Tape | 335 × ½¢/req. | 1.68 |
| Subtotal | | $ 67.67 |
| Cost to Knox for handling daily teletype transmission loop: | | |
| Labor† | 24 min./day × 110 days × $3.00/hr. | $132.00 |
| TWX Charges | | 68.95 |
| TWX Paper and Tape | | 11.00 |
| Subtotal | | $211.95 |
| Total cost for five months | | $279.62 |

*This represents time spent in supplying essential bibliographic details occasionally omitted by the requester on the in-house request form. Cost for verification is calculated using an entry-level professional salary; all other costs are based on student assistant wages.
†The amount of time used here is an average daily figure for the five months.

a member library are generally sent through the cooperative before any holdings verification is made, and because of the rapid response of the system, bibliographic detail is seldom verified unless critical information has been omitted or is unclear on the in-house request form. As a result, the total amount of time spent in verification in Knox's overall interlibrary loan operation is reduced by about one-half, since only those requests not filled regionally need to be put through the normal, often time-consuming verification process.

There is also less time spent in typing and submitting a request to the cooperative than in sending it elsewhere, since only essential bibliographic detail, a three-letter library identification code, and a local request number are included on each request sent to the central processing point of the cooperative. The practice of including only essential information results in a minimization of communications costs, since each request requires very little connect time in its transmission to the central processing point, and the proximity of the libraries involved enables the cooperative to take advantage of the lowest per-minute connect rates available on TWX.

Thus the $56 per month that Knox has spent for its participation in the cooperative is not really entirely above and beyond the amount that would be spent in a traditional interlibrary loan operation. In exchange for the monthly expenditure, a great deal of professional time and expense is saved, since only about one-half of all monograph requests submitted by students and faculty need to be put through the verification process.

By spending seven cents per request in communications costs for submitting a request to the cooperative, the much higher communications cost involved in sending a request via ALA form, by teletype to a more distant library, or through the OCLC/ILL subsystem is borne for only those requests which are returned from the cooperative unfilled.

Because of these savings, a system such as the West-Central Illinois Cooperative raises the cost of the total interlibrary loan operation a very small amount indeed compared to what would be spent in an operation relying solely upon sending requests to known locations. At the same time the ability to gain comprehensive access to regional holdings greatly improves the quality of service available to users of interlibrary loan.

IMPLICATIONS OF THE
OCLC/ILL SUBSYSTEM

As of the summer of 1979 four member libraries in the West-Central Illinois Cooperative employed OCLC terminals in their operations, two awaited delivery of terminals, and the seventh was still examining the possibility of membership.

In early April 1979 a meeting was called at Bradley University to discuss the implications of the OCLC interlibrary loan (OCLC/ILL) subsystem for library cooperation in western Illinois. The decision was made that, pending further developments at the three cooperative members not yet in OCLC, the teletype transmission loop would continue to serve as the basis of regional cooperation.

However, during a period of several weeks Knox College, with the cooperation of Bradley University and Augustana College, conducted an experiment designed to examine the feasibility of using the OCLC/ILL subsystem as a communications device for regional searching. During that period Knox used two strategies for sending monograph requests. Part of the requests submitted at Knox were sent through the teletype transmission loop, and those returned unfilled were then sent via the OCLC/ILL subsystem to known locations outside the cooperative.

Other requests, however, were not sent on the transmission loop at all but were rather sent through the OCLC/ILL system, using what will be termed here a *two-three* strategy. On these requests, the five-position lender chain on OCLC consisted of two cooperative member libraries in the first and second lender positions, regardless of whether or not their holdings symbols appeared on the OCLC record, followed by three known locations taken from the OCLC record.

The first of these strategies does not alter the way in which Knox participated in the West-Central Illinois Cooperative, but represents a change in the handling of follow-ups not filled within the cooperative. Whereas previously such follow-ups were sent to a single known location via ALA form, they are now sent to as many as five known locations via the OCLC/ILL subsystem. The performance of the subsystem is compared to previous results using ALA forms in terms of fill-rate and speed of delivery in table 2.

Though two months is a very brief period upon which to base a firm conclusion about the performance of the OCLC/ILL subsystem, these results do suggest that the subsystem promises considerable improvement in the quality of service over sending ALA forms. If anything, the subsystem's performance may be underrated in these results. During April and May, not all libraries on OCLC appeared to have been using the ILL subsystem, and if such libraries were specified on a lender chain, this could result in a lower fill-rate and slower delivery time than would be expected under conditions of more complete participation.

An interesting feature of this experiment has been the distribution of OCLC/ILL responses according to position on the lender chain. For the seventy requests that Knox sent only to known locations during a six-week period in April and May 1979, the distribution of the requests filled by each position on the lender chain is shown in table 3.

It is rather surprising that only 48.6 percent were filled by the first known location specified in the lender chain, but part of the explanation for this may have to do with some libraries' not using the subsystem yet in April and May 1979. Of special interest, though, is the fact that of the sixty-five requests that were filled altogether, sixty were filled by one of the first three positions in the lender chain. Again, this proportion might have been even higher had more OCLC libraries responded to the subsystem.

This already high percentage, though, raises the question of whether there might be a more effective way to take advantage of

TABLE 2

FOLLOW-UP STRATEGIES COMPARED:
USE OF ALA FORMS AND OCLC/ILL SUBSYSTEM

| Follow-up Strategy | Period Covered | Sent (Number) | Filled (Number) | Fill-Rate (Percent) | Delivery (Time) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| ALA Form | April 1977– March 1979 | 426 | 284 | 66.7 | 15.9 days |
| OCLC/ILL Subsystem | April–May 1979 | 70 | 65 | 92.9 | 10.8 days |

TABLE 3

DISTRIBUTION OF REQUESTS FILLED BY POSITION
ON LENDER CHAIN (KNOWN LOCATIONS)

| Position in Lender Chain | Requests Filled by Each Position (Number) | Cumulative Total (Number) | Cumulative Percent of Total |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1st Position | 34 | 34 | 48.6 |
| 2d Position | 19 | 53 | 75.7 |
| 3d Position | 7 | 60 | 85.7 |
| 4th Position | 3 | 63 | 90.0 |
| 5th Position | 2 | 65 | 92.9 |
| Expired | 2 | 67 | 95.7 |
| Unfilled | 3 | 70 | 100.0 |

the five-lender capacity on the subsystem than by specifying five known locations, since there is a relatively small difference between the fill-rate after the third position and the fill-rate after the fifth position on the lender chain.

This consideration formed the basis of the second strategy used for interlibrary loan by Knox during the six-week period in April and May. Instead of being sent through the regional teletype loop first, sixty-eight monograph requests were routed immediately to the OCLC/ILL subsystem using the *two-three* strategy described earlier. For these requests, Bradley University and Augustana College were always specified in the first two positions of the OCLC/ILL lender chain, followed by known locations in the final three positions. The outcome of these requests is shown in table 4.

As might be expected, the overall fill-rate was less for the two-three strategy than for lender chains with five known locations, 86.8 percent compared to 92.9 percent. A rather surprising result, though, is that nearly 40 percent of these requests were filled by one of the two cooperative members, thus enabling more rapid document delivery for these items than had they been filled by libraries outside the region.

The pattern demonstrated in these results suggests that the OCLC/ILL subsystem provides an alternative whereby limited regional blind-searching may be combined in one effort with sending to known locations. While this strategy may be valuable for two, three, or four libraries, it is less clear that this approach would be more effective or less expensive for a larger regional consortium than a dual system with a teletype loop as the first stage such as that used in western Illinois.

The teletype loop used by the West-Central Cooperative allows for six regional searches and is expandable, whereas regional searching of uncertain locations is more limited on the OCLC/ILL subsystem. While it would be possible to specify five uncertain regional locations in a lender

TABLE 4

DISTRIBUTION OF REQUESTS FILLED BY POSITION
ON LENDER CHAIN (TWO-THREE STRATEGY)

| Position in Lender Chain | Requests Filled by Each Position (Number) | Cumulative Total (Number) | Cumulative Percent of Total |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1st Position (Uncertain Location) | 19 | 19 | 27.9 |
| 2d Position (Uncertain Location) | 8 | 27 | 39.7 |
| 3d Position (Known Location) | 20 | 47 | 69.1 |
| 4th Position (Known Location) | 10 | 57 | 83.8 |
| 5th Position (Known Location) | 2 | 59 | 86.8 |
| Expired | 3 | 62 | 91.2 |
| Unfilled | 6 | 68 | 100.0 |

string on the subsystem, the lender string would have to be modified on requests not filled regionally before forwarding them to known locations. This change of lender string may eventually result in an additional transaction charge for each such request. With an expected regional fill-rate of around 50 percent, this could become a fairly expensive strategy.

A further advantage of using a teletype loop for regional searching is the amount of time required for verification. Whereas requests sent via the teletype loop in western Illinois do not require initial searching and verification, all requests sent on OCLC using the two-three strategy did require searching and verification, even for those requests that turned out to be filled by one of the two regional cooperative members specified.

As for communications costs, a regional teletype loop is fairly-inexpensive; the TWX charges given in table 1 average about seven cents per request submitted to the regional processing point; even if a request must be sent through the entire loop, the maximum communications cost for the system as a whole is fifty-six cents.

It should be emphasized here that the success and cost-effectiveness of a teletype loop such as that used in western Illinois depends to some extent on the volume of requests sent through the system, the fill-rate achieved, and the number of libraries involved.

During the six regular ten-week academic terms between April 1977 and March 1979, Knox College sent a total of 1,047 monograph requests through the cooperative, or an average of about 17.5 per week, of which 51.8 percent were filled, and these figures appear fairly typical of most libraries in the West-Central Cooperative.

If the volume of requests were smaller, the fill-rate lower, or the number of participating libraries three or four rather than seven, it is quite possible that a teletype loop would be more expensive than the one described in this paper. In that event, the adoption by a group of cooperating libraries of something similar to a two-three strategy using the OCLC/ILL subsystem may prove a more viable alternative.

Especially when the subsystem is put into use in a greater number of OCLC libraries than it perhaps was during Knox's experiment, the identification of three known locations, and perhaps even two, should be sufficient to fill an extremely high proportion of requests, thus presenting an opportunity for nearby libraries to enter into cooperative "blind searching" ventures if it would prove beneficial to do so.

In any case, if results in using the OCLC/ILL subsystem at other libraries have been similar to those at Knox, it appears that whether used by itself or in conjunction with other interlibrary loan strategies, the subsystem promises a substantial step forward in the cooperative borrowing and lending of library materials.

## CONCLUSION

The ideal circumstances for interlibrary loan would be those in which there was little or no need to devise mechanisms for gaining access to unreported holdings. This would require, of course, far more complete locational knowledge than is currently available in American libraries. Progress in the documentation of holdings has made significant strides in the past quarter century, and there seems little doubt that this represents the most promising direction for the future.

This documentation has taken on many forms, the most popular today in small and medium-sized libraries being the OCLC data base. There are other developments in the sphere of on-line systems as well, one of the more recent the development of the Library Computer System (LCS) at the University of Illinois.[6] Thanks to grants from the Illinois Board of Higher Education, a number of other libraries in Illinois are to be tied into LCS and will be entering their shelflist into the system. While these and similar developments may indicate the most promising direction for the future, such advances are not realized overnight nor at all libraries at the same time. The strategies described in this paper are perhaps indeed interim measures but are ones that, at least in western Illinois, have proved successful and are likely to continue to be so until bibliographic knowledge of regional holdings is more complete.

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