Statewide Library Delivery in Wisconsin:
The Present and Future Landscape

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The Wisconsin Libraries Delivery Service Network

The library delivery network operating in Wisconsin today connects:

- Academic libraries – including all campuses of the University of Wisconsin System and all UW-Madison Campus Libraries, the Wisconsin Technical College System, the Wisconsin Historical Society/Archives Division and University of Wisconsin System research centers, and most private colleges in the state.
- Public libraries – all seventeen public library systems, and through them, every public library and branch in the state.
- School libraries – through public library systems, most public school districts and many private schools.
- Special libraries – Federal and state correctional institutions, medical center libraries, corporate libraries, mental health institute libraries, special resources such the Cooperative Children's Book Center and a number of State agencies.
- Wisconsin Libraries Distribution Service – the free distribution of informational materials from libraries, educational institutions, government and non-profit agencies to members of the Wisconsin Libraries Delivery Service Network.

The delivery of materials between libraries is the final piece of the Interlibrary loan process and is a direct service to the patron. The COLAND Biennial Report "Wisconsin Libraries, 2006-2007, Progress, Challenges and Recommendations" states:

"The public benefits of library service in Wisconsin are further multiplied through high levels of interlibrary cooperation. Wisconsin's libraries cooperate through regional library systems and statewide services and organizations. Every year, millions of library items are shared among all types of libraries throughout the state. This statewide sharing of library materials means that everyone in Wisconsin has access to over 7 million titles owned by Wisconsin libraries of all types. Resource sharing is also a cost-effective method of avoiding unnecessary duplication of purchasing.

"Wisconsin now ranks #1 nationally in per capita public library interlibrary loans. Public library system efforts to develop shared integrated systems have greatly

contributed to the accessibility and growth of resource sharing. Currently, 83 percent of Wisconsin residents are served by the 310 public libraries participating in shared integrated systems. Interlibrary loans continued the double-digit annual growth that began in the mid 1990s. This increase in interlibrary loans has been supported by a corresponding expansion of regional and statewide interlibrary delivery services, an activity heavily supported by public library systems. "

History

The Wisconsin Libraries Delivery System Network was built piece-by-piece over time through cooperative planning and cost sharing. (A timeline is attached at the end of this paper.)

The networking of academic and public library system members has historically been complimentary because academic participants accounted for the majority of miles traveled and public library systems handled more volume. Based on data gathered during sample periods each year, the average number of items dropped off and picked up at delivery network locations across Wisconsin increased 113% from 1997 to 2007.

The goal of the network is to have as many libraries as possible connected to the statewide network to provide the most cost effective method for shipping library resource materials. The balance needed is maintaining affordable and equitable pricing for all participants whether their interlibrary lending and borrowing volume is large or small.

Affordability

Affordability can be determined based on whether the cost to ship an item via the statewide delivery network is less than traditional package delivery options such as USPS, UPS or FedEx.

In 1997, a study titled *Delivery of Library Materials in Wisconsin* was conducted by Ruth Bessant for DLCL (now DLTCL). Bessant determined at the time that the cost per item, including postage/delivery charge, packaging materials and labor cost, was $2.41 for USPS library rate and $4.28 for UPS commercial ground service. Ten years later, in 2007, the average cost to ship one item through the statewide delivery network from one library to another was 84 cents. Within regional delivery systems, the cost to ship one item from one library to another is as low as 20 cents.

In 2003, the Library Research Service issued a report for the Colorado State Library titled *Colorado Courier Cost Comparison Study*. This study concluded that using a courier for library delivery, as opposed to the traditional package delivery options, is much more cost effective. In this study it was determined that

USPS would cost over 3 times as much as their courier service did and UPS would cost over 4 times as much.

Challenges

The South Central Library System operates the Wisconsin Libraries Delivery Service Network, or the "backbone" of the statewide delivery system. Each public library system in the state pays a share of the cost of the Wisconsin Libraries Delivery Service Network and operates as a regional network "hub." In addition to the statewide traffic, each public library system also provides delivery of local materials among their member libraries. Shared automated library system catalogs within each system are now are generating about 98% of interlibrary loans and are growing at a faster rate than the statewide delivery traffic.

Here are examples highlighting the impact of shared catalog use on local delivery volume within three Wisconsin public library systems.

Indianhead Library System Local Delivery Volume: Items Sent and Received
- 2002 = 451,850
- 2007 = 1,388,150
- Growth = +207%

South Central Local Delivery Volume: Items Sent and Received
- 1996 = 3,862,421
- 2007 = 10,271,560
- Growth = +166%

Waukesha County Local Delivery Volume: Items Sent only
- 2004 = 253,914
- 2007 = 691,688
- Growth = +172%

The sustainability of the statewide delivery network is dependent upon the stability of local system delivery services. The incredible growth in local delivery volume is causing a fiscal strain on public library systems in Wisconsin. Demand for materials accessible through shared catalogs has necessitated that public library systems allocate more of their funds to local delivery services within their system areas. Additional money from public library system aid is used to either fund increased contract costs with private couriers or to expand in-house delivery services to cover additional vehicles, drivers and sorters, fuel and vehicle maintenance, insurance, supplies and other delivery related expenses.

The Wisconsin experience is not unique. In Massachusetts statewide interlibrary loans grew nearly 400 percent between 1996 and 2006[1] and the effect is felt

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[1] Eric Moskowitz , "Good circulation...", *The Boston Globe* (July 29, 2007)

especially at the regional level. Sunny Vandermark, Regional Administrator of Massachusetts' Metrowest Regional Library System, is quoted as saying, "In fiscal year 2006, roughly 40 percent of the region's $1.3 million budget went to delivering materials among local libraries; by comparison, the same service represented about 15 percent of the budget three years earlier".[2]

Affects of Network Participant Changes

If a participant in the Wisconsin Libraries Delivery Service Network has to drop out because they can not find the money to continue to participate, their cost share of the route must be absorbed by other participants. Because of this, other participant's cost per item increases, which could lead to another participant choosing a different shipping option. In the end, pricing must achieve cost recovery for the provider and be formulated for participant affordability according to their use needs (frequency and volume). However, pricing cannot be solely tied to volume, and in any case, we should avoid making resource sharing decisions based on delivery cost.

For public library systems in Wisconsin, the balancing act is complicated. In addition to having to fund their cost share of the statewide delivery network, public library systems, as noted earlier, are seeing local system delivery service costs take up a greater share of their operating budgets. With the increased number of libraries participating in shared catalogs, the high percentage of patron requests is filled locally. In addition to handling local system ILL, regional delivery services support material transfers for children services, book sale materials, furniture, equipment/computers and other needs of libraries where a dedicated delivery service can provide cost effective transport.

Without additional funding to systems, some systems may choose to drop out of the network as a business decision. With limited resources they may decide that they need to place all their delivery funding resources toward the provision of local delivery in support of their shared catalog, where they fill the majority of their patron requests. This could lead to regions of the state having inequitable intersystem delivery from the rest of the state and jeopardize the future of the statewide delivery network.

Action Plan

New and continued efforts can be made to secure the stability of delivery services both on the regional and statewide levels. The major key to near and long-term viability is the funding of public library systems, as these regional delivery services cooperatively make up the network statewide delivery is founded upon.

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[2] Eric Moskowitz , "Good circulation...", *The Boston Globe* (July 29, 2007)

The following areas are where efforts need to be made:

- Find one stable funding source for the Wisconsin Public Library Systems' cost share of the Wisconsin Libraries Delivery Network to ensure its continuation as long as it continues to be the most cost effective method of accomplishing this task.

- Continue the best practice work of the Statewide Delivery Services Advisory Committee to ensure that efficiencies are maximized in relation to transit volume and that best material handling practices and solutions are shared (whether manual or automated).

- Increase or find new funding for public library systems both for those contracting with commercial couriers and for public library systems running in-house delivery services. Seed money may be necessary for systems with potentially instable vendor options in order to assist them with starting their own service, whether individually or cooperatively.

- Seek state fuel tax relief for systems managing an in-house delivery service.

- Partner with other agencies throughout the state to increase regional and statewide delivery services revenue.

In 2006, what has become known as the Moving Mountains project, a national network of people involved or interested in interlibrary physical delivery formed at a symposium in Denver, CO titled "Moving Mountains". Since then a national email list, web-site, blog, and ASCLA discussion group have formed and a book is being written sharing the best practices and future potential directions of physical delivery for libraries. Delivery service expansion is happening everywhere and many are seeking solutions to best model delivery services to support the current demand and future potential of modern resource sharing.

Wisconsin is already a model and many around the country are looking to us for solutions. Together we can continue to improve statewide library delivery services to provide the necessary support to enable Wisconsin libraries to meet their resource sharing needs. Without a stable source of funding, however, what we have built together over the years may fail to survive.

History/Timeline

December 1991: Twice-a-week intersystem delivery service was established to the six Northeastern Wisconsin Public Library Systems of Eastern Shores (Sheboygan), Manitowoc-Calumet (Manitowoc), Mid-Wisconsin (Fond du Lac), Nicolet (Green Bay), Outagamie-Waupaca (Appleton) and Winnefox (Oshkosh). Funding Source: Cost-sharing by participants.

January 1993: A one-year LSCA grant was awarded to demonstrate three-day-a-week intersystem service by connecting the six Northeastern Wisconsin Public Library Systems to the seven Southern Wisconsin Public Library Systems of Arrowhead (Janesville), Kenosha County (Kenosha), Lakeshores (Racine), Milwaukee County (Milwaukee), South Central (Madison), Southwestern Wisconsin (Fennimore) and Waukesha County (Waukesha). Funding Source: Federal grant.

January 1994: UW-Green Bay/Cofrin Library and UW-Oshkosh/Polk Library joined 13 public library systems to successfully complete the project in its cost-recovery stage. Funding Source: Cost-sharing by participants.

January 1995: Another one-year LSCA grant was funded to demonstrate three-day-a-week intersystem service by connecting the northeastern and southern Wisconsin public libraries to their counterparts in central and western Wisconsin. In addition, University of Wisconsin System libraries and private colleges in all four regions became LSCA project participants. Began archival records delivery service between State Historical Society of Wisconsin Archives Division and its ARCs located on the UWS campuses of Eau Claire, La Crosse, Green Bay, Milwaukee, Oshkosh, Parkside, Platteville, River Falls, Stevens Point, Stout and Whitewater. Funding Source: Federal grant and cost sharing by participants.

January 1996: The Wisconsin Intersystem Delivery Service was established connecting 16 public library systems, 20 UWS campus libraries and 14 private colleges. Level of service: twice daily, Monday-Friday to SHSW/Archives and WILS, daily Monday-Friday in Milwaukee and 3-day/week to the other areas of the state. Funding Source: Cost-sharing by participants.

August 1996: Upgraded southeastern Wisconsin delivery service from 3-day/week to daily Monday-Friday at Carroll College, Carthage College, UW-Parkside and UW-Whitewater. Funding source: cost-sharing among participants.

January 1998: Upgraded southeastern Wisconsin delivery service from 3-day/week to daily Monday-Friday at Kenosha County, Lakeshores and Waukesha County library systems.

September 1998: Upgraded northeastern Wisconsin delivery service from 3-day/week to daily Monday-Friday to Lawrence University, Manitowoc-Calumet, Mid-Wisconsin, Nicolet, Ripon College, UW-Green Bay and UW-Oshkosh. Funding source: Shared cost by participants.

November 1998: The DLTLC Statewide Delivery Service Advisory Committee was established to coordinate study and discussion of delivery service matters affecting Wisconsin libraries.

December 1999: Awarded University of Wisconsin System Delivery Service Contract to provide ground courier services to libraries on its 26 campuses.

January 2000: Added MWF direct delivery service to the previously unserved UW campuses of Fox Valley, Manitowoc, Marshfield, Platteville, Richland, Rock County, Sheboygan, Washington County and Waukesha.

June 2001: Launched new and improved SCLS Delivery Service web site to provide more delivery information for participants.

March 2002: UW-Madison Campus Book Retrieval Service implemented to provide patron-initiated returnable book transfers from one campus library to another.

July 2002: UW-System Universal Borrowing service now provided to all UW campuses except for the Madison campus.

January 2004: Contracted with Reference and Loan Library to handle all aspects of All Library Mailing program. Upgraded service to allow agencies and non-profits sending materials to use an online form to target distributions more effectively.

December 2004: SCLS is awarded no-bid, sole source provider contract for UW-System delivery service by Governor Jim Doyle.

November 2005: Weekly record high for Statewide Delivery Network volume set at 33,001.

November 2006: Weekly record high for Statewide Delivery Network volume set at 36,791. Statewide Delivery Network annual volume is a growth of 7.6% over 2005.