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MESSENGER

EXTRA

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End User Comments about the MEDD Electronic Interlibrary Loan Service

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You may recall that MINITEX funded a study of Outcome-Based Evaluation in 2003:

“Applications of Outcome-Based Evaluation to MINITEX Interlibrary Loan, Delivery, and Reference Services”: (see: <http://www.minitex.umn.edu/publications/reports/outcome.asp>)

One of the report’s findings, which was checked with a consultant advising the federal Institute for Museum and Library Services (the agency that distributes LSTA funds to the individual states), was that it was probably impossible for MINITEX to provide a clear cut outcome-based evaluation for statewide services like interlibrary loan, reference services and training, and overnight courier delivery. IMLS describes ‘program’ as a series of services or activities that have a clear beginning and distinct end, leading toward a distinct and measurable outcome. According to the report, MINITEX provides services that are components of a program or an activity within a program. The study concentrated on development of pilot test surveys and proposed end-user surveys that incorporated outcomes-type indicators along with customer satisfaction indications.

This seemed a reasonable and appropriate perspective for evaluation of MINITEX services.

Our first end-user survey was prepared to solicit user responses for the MINITEX Electronic Document Delivery service (MEDD), a custom-built, web-based document delivery system. Through MEDD, material is scanned and posted on a password-controlled web page for the patron to retrieve. MEDD then sends an email message to the patron to let him/her know the material is ready for download. Articles can be retrieved from any web browser that has Adobe Acrobat (4.0 version or newer) installed. Articles can be viewed up to five times or for seven days after e-mail notification (whichever comes first), and the patron can decide to read, print, and/or download the article.

Through the MEDD end-user survey, which began in June 2004, end users are encouraged to click on a link, answer five questions, and provide any comment they wish. We are especially interested in their purpose for using interlibrary loan. In the 28 months since the MEDD survey was posted, we have received more than 500 responses. This is neither a scientific process nor a large sample of the total MEDD articles delivered, but it does provide useful feedback from end users who, we assume, are probably users of interlibrary loan about how they use interlibrary loan.

Below are some of comments that respondents made from July 1-Oct. 11, 2006. We plan to conduct similar studies in other MINITEX service areas, however, these will take more time and effort and involve local library staff in the process.

Comments from MEDD users:

- *Provided me with a wealth of publications from obscure journals, many of them very old and from England, in order to complete my research on Mary Anning.*
- *I am a teacher, and I could not survive without this type of loan system. It is incredible that it is free, and it has always met my needs.*

- *The article I received was on a topic directly related to my job and helped me make an argument to my boss as to why something she was thinking of doing wasn't a good idea.*
- *Helped me with a graduate student project for a case study. I am working on my master's degree in Clinical Laboratory Science.*
- *This service allows me to complete research for my education and for educating. I am a faculty member and appreciate updating the information I give to students in class.*
- *Hugely important. As a grad student, I would be at the mercy of my individual university's library collection, or else waiting for weeks for a book to come in. This service allows me access to all the journal articles I need from the convenience of my own home.*
- *It helped me obtain reference materials quickly and easily for my master's thesis.*
- *Interlibrary loan services helped me to complete research for a professional presentation for an internship in dietetics. It would not have been possible to access the articles I did without this service.*
- *This helped me prep for a new course that I have never taught before.*
- *Needed background material for a paper I am writing on animal movement.*
- *I'm always on the lookout for work-related information; I use ILL a "fair" amount.*
- *Helped in mentoring undergraduate students doing chemistry research.*
- *The paper you provided help me to find key information for a class research work.*
- *Helped me with work related research that would have required travel to a large library otherwise.*
- *It has brought me articles from a literature survey I conducted while preparing an article for a book on Norwegian-American women.*
- *Assists me to obtain needed background for my teaching position.*
- *It facilitated research to help prepare lessons for my high-school students.*
- *Yes, this is helping me complete my research for a journal article I plan on publishing later this school year.*
- *I am a beginning doctoral student. I was provided two articles that I am using in assignments for my first classes.*
- *Enabled me to obtain materials for my research/teaching that would otherwise have been unavailable to me.*
- *Having been out of graduate school for four years and [am] now going back to complete my final project. I have found this to be an invaluable resource as I do not have access to a university library where these types of materials are housed.*
- *It was a quick response, and I got the information I needed before it was too late. This is a wonderful resource and I will recommend it to friends in the future.*
- *Gave me quick access to materials for both my own research (esp. upcoming sabbatical) as well as for teaching. I am always looking for more recent and more effective essays to use in my classes and ILL via MINITEX has been useful for obtaining these.*
- *I teach statistics and constantly have my antennae out for new methods that may help my graduate students in nurse anesthesia. Because I teach only one semester per year, I have plenty of time to expand my own education.*

- *Helps me get needed publications to write timely, up-to-date lectures, and to write publications and grant proposals.*
- *Helped me have easy, quick access to journal-articles which aren't available locally and which I need for doing research on papers I want to publish.*
- *As a professor, it provided me with access to very valuable teaching materials that are unavailable in hard copy form at my university. This is a service of immeasurable help.*
- *Helped me in my research and writing. I especially like the electronic format.*
- *ILL helped me get many of the resources I needed to write articles to a variety of peer-reviewed journals.*
- *The ILL protocol we have is outstanding and getting better all the time. You do a great job!*
- *The chief benefit is rapid access to foreign and domestic scholarly journal articles for better and more complete research pertinent to current writing projects. MINITEX Electronic Document Delivery (MEDD) is a very impressive improvement to the traditional Interlibrary Loan Program of local libraries, with user-friendly online viewing of PDF documents containing the scanned journal articles. Delivery is weeks faster than heretofore.*

Graphic art is scanned with a view to readability so that it can be intelligently appreciated as well. This shows that MEDD staff are well-trained and aware of their responsibility for customer service.

MINITEX and local libraries (in my case Blue Earth County Library) are working together seamlessly in a truly impressive Interlibrary Loan Program to make journals and books accessible statewide, economically and efficiently, avoiding the handling and printing of paper and the costs of postage previously incurred.

Lawmakers should note that taxpayers are well-served by MEDD and MINITEX in a program that benefits Minnesota's knowledge-based economy, which relies on prompt access to the huge mass of information contained in public and university libraries.

Statistical Compiled Results from MEDD User Survey (over 550 since June 2004)

1. How familiar are you with the role of "MINITEX Library Information Network" in Minnesota's system of local, regional, and statewide partnerships for interlibrary loan?
 - **20.5%** Very familiar
 - **49.2%** Somewhat familiar
 - **29.4%** Not at all familiar
2. As a result of using interlibrary loan services over the past year, how did you benefit (check all that apply)?
 - **11.3%** Provided relaxation/enjoyment/personal growth
 - **63.7%** Provided professional or work-related growth
 - **76.2%** Provided information for education and studies
 - **0.7%** No benefit
 - **3.1%** Don't know, I have never used interlibrary loan services before

3. How satisfied were you with the following aspects of interlibrary loan services in the past year?

- Received in time frame that met needs
 - **79.1%** VERY SATISFIED
 - **17.1%** SATISFIED
 - **2.0%** UNSATISFIED *
 - **0.7%** VERY UNSATISFIED*

- Information/item was relevant to needs
 - **80.8%** VERY SATISFIED
 - **16.9%** SATISFIED
 - **0.0%** UNSATISFIED
 - **0.7%** VERY UNSATISFIED*

- Overall process
 - **71.0%** VERY SATISFIED
 - **22.9%** SATISFIED
 - **3.1%** UNSATISFIED*
 - **2.0%** VERY UNSATISFIED*

- Received in format desired
 - **73.1%** VERY SATISFIED
 - **20.7%** SATISFIED
 - **1.8%** UNSATISFIED*
 - **3.1%** VERY UNSATISFIED*

(The issue of dissatisfaction is one we take seriously. Usually, the comment has been made and recorded into the statistics when MINITEX staff are then made aware of the problem and step into help the end user with a download, correct the problem, or send a hard copy to the end user. However, the unsatisfied comment has already been recorded.)*

4. How valuable do you think MINITEX interlibrary loan services are to your community and the library or libraries that you use?

- **92.0%** Very valuable
- **4.7%** Somewhat valuable
- **0.5%** Not valuable
- **2.0%** Don't know

5. From which type of library did you request this material through MEDD?

- **85.7%** College/university library
- **5.3%** Public library
- **4.9%** State/federal government library
- **1.1%** K-12 school library/media center
- **1.3%** Hospital/health sciences library
- **1.3%** Other