

# END-USER INITIATED INTERLOANS: PLACEBO OR PANACEA?

by Shona McCartin and David Reid

## 1. Introduction

Lincoln University is located approximately 30 kilometres from Christchurch. Originally established in 1878 as the Lincoln School of Agriculture, between 1896 and 1930 it was known as Canterbury Agricultural College. In 1961 it became Lincoln College and it was in 1990 that Lincoln became a fully autonomous university. From teaching agriculture and horticulture the University now teaches into courses including animal and food sciences, applied management and computing, commerce, environmental management and design, human sciences, and soil, plant and ecological sciences. It is an internationally recognised University with students from over forty countries completing either internal or extramural studies worldwide. The library is housed in Ivey Hall, the principal heritage building on campus named after the founding manager-director, William Edward Ivey. Library services are available to approximately 3,500 students and 580 staff.



The Lincoln University Library Mission statement sets four corporate goals:

- Providing the University community with equitable access to information and recorded knowledge;
- Acquiring, organising and making available information resources appropriate to the University's educational purpose;
- Teaching information skills to all Library users as the basis for life-long learning;
- Promoting information services in a manner which reflects the distinctive character of the University.

The National Library of New Zealand is a government department governed by an Act of Parliament. Updated earlier this year, the new act clarifies the role of the Alexander Turnbull Library (which curates the heritage collections) and establishes guardians for it, strengthens the Māori dimension of the library's work, and updates legal deposit provisions to take account of electronic publications. It also establishes a Library and Information Advisory Commission empowering the National Library to work alongside other bodies with related aims. The Act<sup>1</sup> specifies the National Library's purpose as:

- To collect, preserve, and protect documents and make them accessible for all the people of New Zealand;
- To supplement and further the work of other libraries in New Zealand;
- To work collaboratively with other institutions having similar purposes, including the international library community.

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<sup>1</sup> National Library of New Zealand (Te Puna Mātauranga o Aotearoa) Act 2003



In 2001 Lincoln University, expressed an interest in being a pilot site to trial end-user requesting as identified in the document, Te Puna Strategic Direction<sup>2</sup>. This document identified a future initiative to “investigate options for responding to emergent demands for direct use of National Library products and services”. In July 2002 the National Library of New Zealand and Lincoln University Library began discussions that would allow end-users to initiate their own requests and project approval was received in August. Project documentation identified a global trend of end-users initiating requests with an associated reduction of costs. Against this background it was noted that Australian research<sup>3</sup> reported faster fill rates for requests electronically submitted by end-users. Thus it was within this landscape that both organisations were keen to pursue a method enabling end-users to initiate their own interloan requests.

## 2. Context

Te Puna is the National Library of New Zealand’s flagship electronic service. It is inspired by the organisation’s Māori name, Te Puna Mātauranga o Aotearoa, meaning the wellspring of knowledge.



Te Puna’s electronic services went live in June 1999. They provide a web-based search, cataloguing and interloan service. There is also a PC-based cataloguing client. The search and cataloguing services utilise Voyager products from Endeavor Information Systems. The interloan service uses VDX from Fretwell Downing. The National Library provides these services to libraries in New Zealand on a subscription basis. In a sense the National Library has become the vendor. Te Puna is based on the concept of a centralised utility, providing services to libraries and their staff to meet the needs of resource sharing.

Te Puna gives access to the National Bibliographic Database and Archive, the National Union Catalogue and Index New Zealand. Most recently, Cadence, a database of choral and orchestral performing sets held by libraries, orchestras and choirs was added to the range of databases. Gateway access to international library databases is also available through the service. Recent utilisation of another Endeavor product, ENCompass, has enabled the online delivery of a collection of visual images and audio recordings to support the visual arts and music disciplines of the Arts/Ngā Toi curriculum in schools.

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<sup>2</sup> National Library of New Zealand 2000, Te Puna Strategic Direction, p14

<sup>3</sup> National Resource Sharing Working Group, 2001, Interlibrary Loan and Document Delivery Benchmarking Study, p4, 51



This paper concentrates on access by end-users to Te Puna Search (Voyager) and the use they make of it to register their requests in Te Puna Interloan (VDX). This venture is a first for both partners as previously Te Puna's request function was the domain of library staff. The lessons and results of this pilot project are now being used to guide further development of this service.

### **3. Aims of the pilot project**

The pilot project set as its goal to implement a methodology for end-users to initiate requests in Te Puna Interloan. Later in this paper the authors will describe how this was achieved. The project team identified four key result areas:

- To test workflow processes for end-users and staff, and ascertain impacts
- To ascertain system impacts and maintenance requirements
- To develop a set of best practice guidelines
- To recommend future developments and/or implementation.

Documentation also identified a set of principles to guide the development and implementation of the pilot project. The three principles were:

- Selected participant needs to be an institution that is small in order for the pilot to be manageable
- National Library looking to build on participant's expressed enthusiasm for end-user requesting
- Pilot to progress on a partnership model.

The last of these principles is very timely in light of the statement of purpose in the new, National Library Act.

The pilot project needed to be of such a size that the number of end-users was manageable, not only from the perspective of the numbers to support but also from the perspective of the number of transactions that would be generated. It was considered that Lincoln University, as New Zealand's smallest university, offered an opportunity to implement end-user requesting without generating a burdensome level of support for Lincoln University staff, National Library support or being hungry of system resources.

As noted earlier, Lincoln University had already indicated a willingness to proceed with work of this nature. Investigations at Lincoln University into end-user requesting showed this trend was worldwide. From a Lincoln University Library Planning Day in 2000, the objective to "Complete a review of Interloans Service" was developed. To "investigate end-user requesting" was part of this objective. By late 2001 end-user requesting from SilverPlatter databases at Lincoln University was being well used. It seemed a natural progression when Te Puna Strategic Direction was published, to approach the National Library to ascertain whether a project was feasible, and whether Lincoln University could be a part of it.

With the strong theme towards end-user requesting that came through at the 7<sup>th</sup> Interlending and Document Supply Conference, the National Library was keen to investigate the ramifications within a utility environment. Therefore the enthusiasm of both partners was high from the start and remains high as we consider how to further expand the pilot project.

The project team comprised staff from both organisations, with additional expertise called in where required. This included technical advice about the Lincoln University environment and application expertise to redesign the holdings display and Voyager request screen. Shona McCartin and David Reid took lead roles for the pilot project, while overall project management remained with the National Library.

#### **4. Methodology**

After the second meeting of the two partners at which the workflows were established, the interface for end-users became clear. The project team agreed to use Te Puna's Search (i.e. Voyager) interface that was available to Lincoln University end-users, to initiate their requests. At this time there was little alternative as the end-user interface from within Te Puna Interloan was excluded from New Zealand's implementation of the VDX software. One reason for this was because VDX was implemented to replace a pre-existing system available only to library staff. The other was for simplicity of implementation. Furthermore end-users are not registered within Te Puna Interloan, not because they cannot be, but rather because of the sheer size of the task.<sup>4</sup> An estimated 45,000 records could require central maintenance. User authentication on this scale only becomes possible once a Standard Interchange Protocol becomes a feature of VDX. This limitation influenced the next steps.

##### **a. Holdings re-sort**

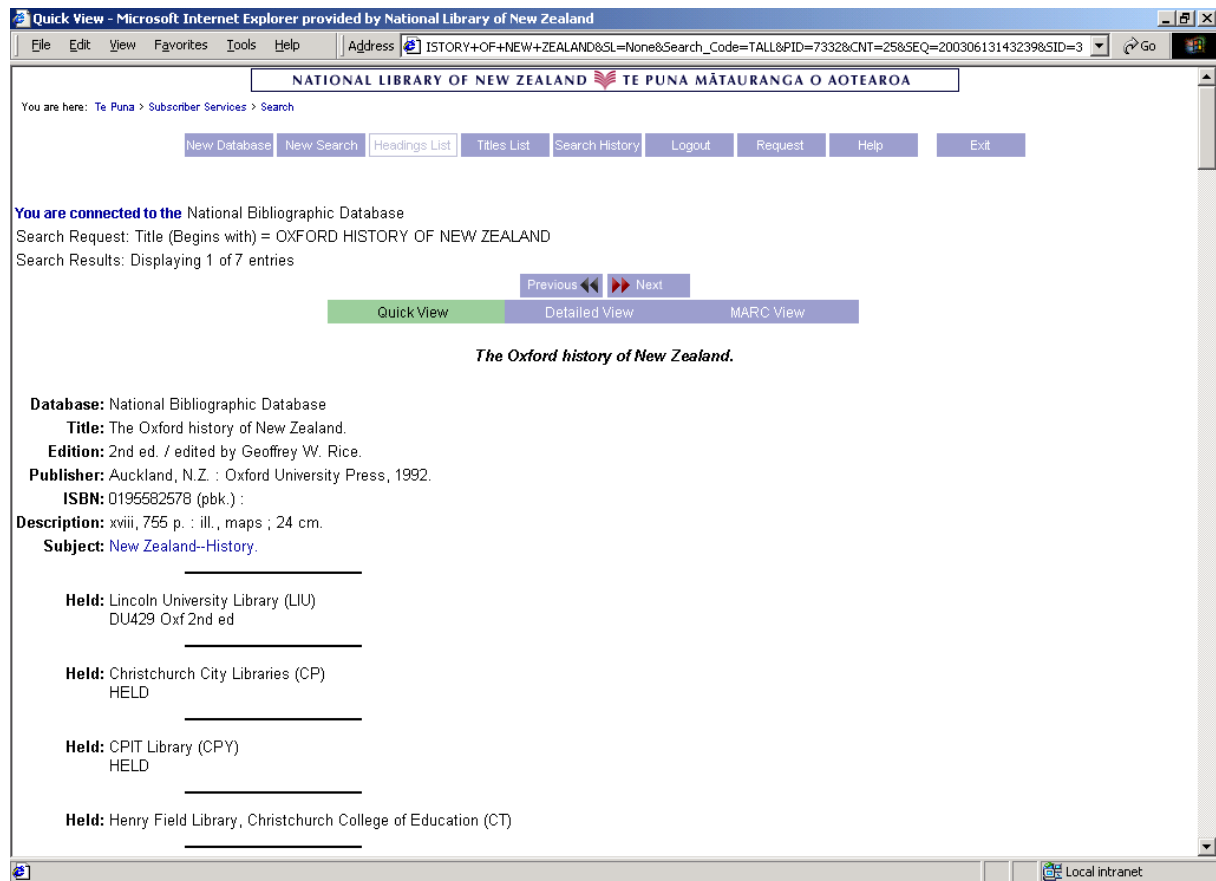
Lincoln University interloan staff raised the issue of the display of library holdings and how best to present these to achieve the maximum benefit for end-users. Geographical and/or reciprocal holdings account for nearly 80% of the requests supplied to Lincoln University. The project team agreed that it would be beneficial to end-users that geographical holdings display first, and then reciprocal holdings.

First in the holdings display was Lincoln University. This was to prevent end-users requesting titles already held at Lincoln. By identifying other local holdings, end-users could make an informed decision about visiting that library to obtain the item. The re-ordering of the holdings display in this manner was a first for National Library staff and has since been applied to one other Library's holding display order. This method of re-ordering of the holdings display had, however, been put in place without an appropriate policy being written by the National Library.

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<sup>4</sup> Farrelly, Janice and Reid, David. Interlending & document supply: international perspectives in a New Zealand context. LIANZA Conference 2002, Wellington, November 2002. p7

Fig1. Holdings re-sort



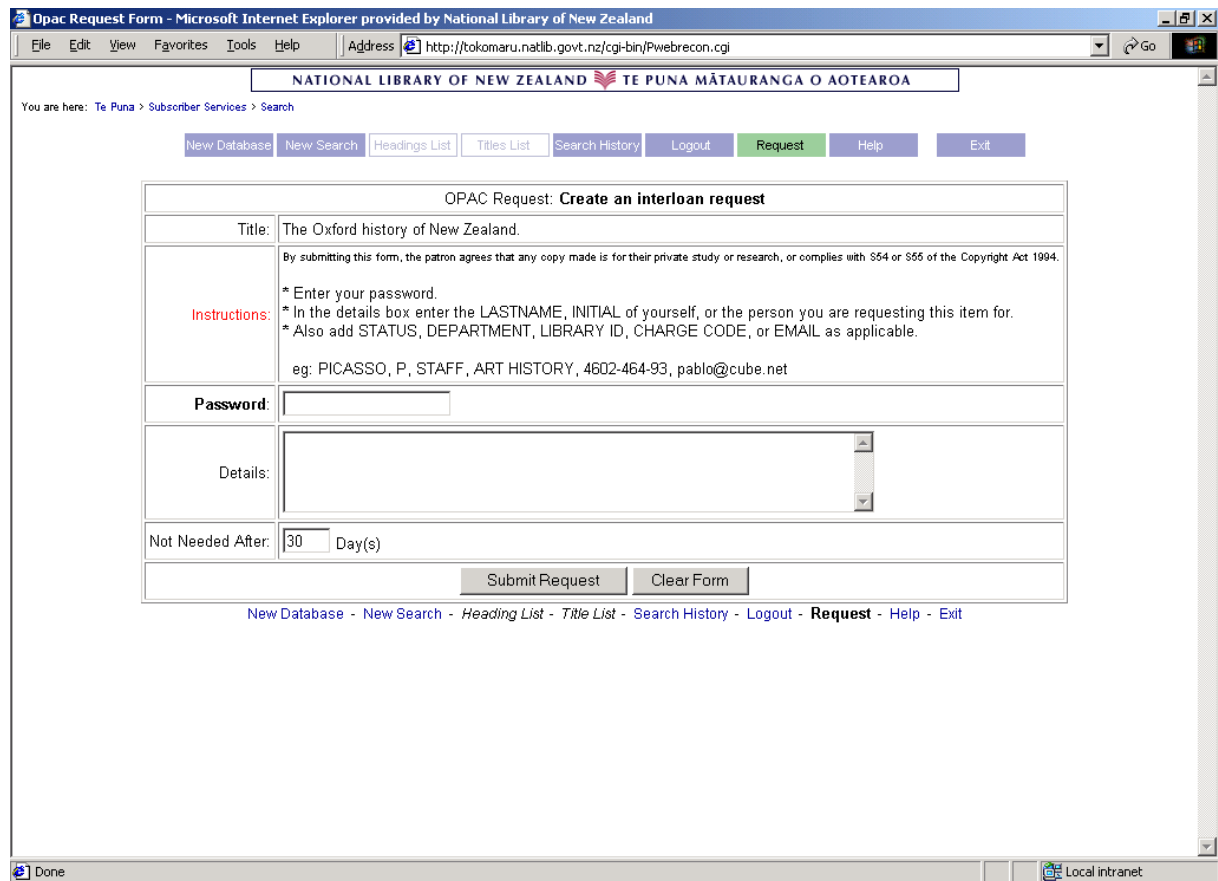
## b. Request screen redesign

As stated above any access point for end-user initiated requests in New Zealand is currently through Te Puna Search. Te Puna Subscriber Services were viewed as primarily a system for library staff. However, the possibility existed that client libraries, in managing the relationship with their patrons, could allow them to submit requests using the Voyager functionality.

Questions arose about this limitation. Could the existing request form in Te Puna Search be altered? The alternatives offered included amending the existing form or creating a new form. While National Library staff could change some instructional text, the "Notes" field appeared only in this particular form. Any change to the "Notes" label would perform global changes across all other Voyager based forms. One possibility was to re-name the field "Name / Charge Code". Creating a form visible only to certain users was another option.

Testing by National Library revealed that the requests from Voyager continued to map the "Notes" field to the "Notes" field in VDX. Amending the Perl script resulted in re-mapping of the Voyager output to the "Client Name" field in VDX. Re-naming the Voyager field as "Details" offered the opportunity to populate a VDX field with requester and request details. Once created, requests are transferred to VDX where they await intervention by interloan staff.

Fig 2. Redesigned request screen



### c. End-user instructions

Lincoln University staff undertook the training of their end-users. It was decided to concentrate on a selected group of regular interloan users from academic staff and post-graduate students. The National Library provided documentation that took this group of end-users through the request process. Initiating an End-User Request in Te Puna Search is a two-part process. The patron needs to sign on to Te Puna Search and Library Staff need to sign on to Te Puna Interloan to authorise and submit the requests.

The patron would conduct a search and select the required item from a resulting list and display the details for that item. Clicking the 'Request' button (from the Te Puna toolbar) the Password screen displays and then End-users are prompted to complete their details.

Fig 3. Password screen



After entering the End-user Password and User Name and clicking Submit, the choose Type of Request screen displays.

Fig 4. Choose request

NATIONAL LIBRARY OF NEW ZEALAND TE PUNA MĀTAURANGA O AOTEAROA

You are here: Te Puna > Subscriber Services > Search

New Database New Search Headings List Titles List Search History Logout Request Help Exit

Please Choose the Type of Request

Create an interloan request

OK Reset

New Database - New Search - Heading List - Title List - Search History - Logout - Request - Help - Exit

Clicking on OK results in Te Puna's request form displaying (see Fig 2.).

This may include personal information such as name and cost centre code, as well as citation details in the case of a serial request. This data transfers to the Client Name field. The date may also be adjusted and this transfers to the Need before Date field. Once submitted, the end-user receives a message stating 'Your Patron Request was successful'. Some patrons either print the details of their request or copy the citation for their personal records.

Marketed as "D-I-Y Interloans" (Do-it-yourself Interloans), this new venture was promoted through Lincoln University's Library Newsletter (<http://www.lincoln.ac.nz/libr/>). There were also links from the Library's homepage (Fig 5) to Te Puna Search, where patrons followed the documentation provided by the National Library. Further promotion occurred at seminars for new staff as well as in a Library User Guide for Staff and Post-graduates using Interloans to support their research needs.

Fig 5. Promotion on the Lincoln University Library web page

Lincoln University Library  
Making an Interloan Request from Te Puna

Information Sources  
• Library Catalogues  
• Databases

Postgraduate students and staff can now initiate interloan requests themselves directly from the [Te Puna](#) databases.

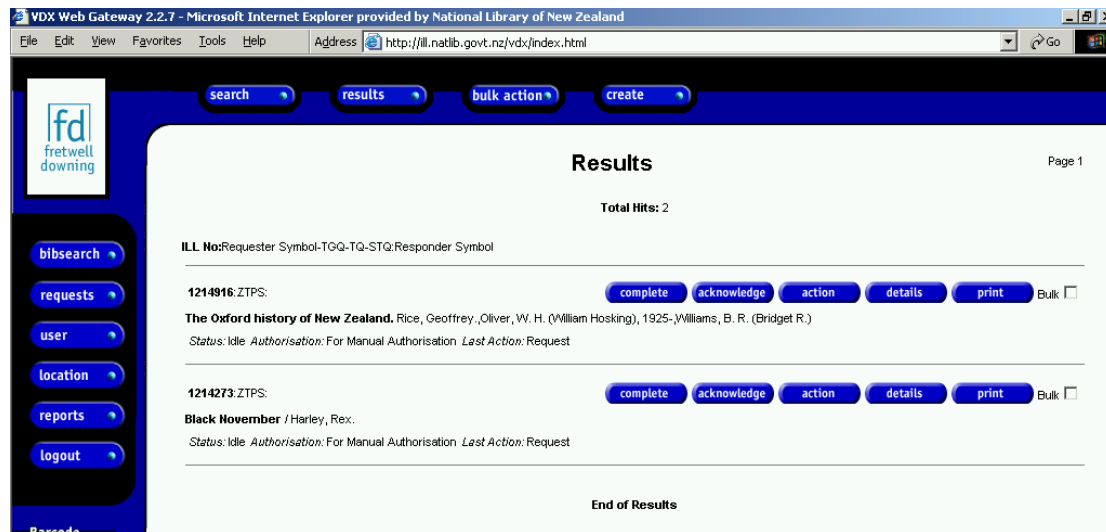
#### d. VDX work processes

Within the VDX web administration interface, the National Library has turned off the Users domain. This decision was taken to prevent users changing passwords, self-registering and changing request details. The National Library also believed that Lincoln University would not want their users performing these actions either. Therefore, while end-users could access Te Puna's Search interface, library staff could use Te Puna's Interloan interface to intervene and adjust rotas, amend request details and authorise requests.

It was also possible to have requests, created by end-users, go directly to a rota. This was not a favoured option as requests might be generated unnecessarily. But more significantly, the alphabetical ordering of the rota meant Library names beginning with 'A' would get inundated with requests.

In Te Puna Interloan end-user requests are identified via the status "Idle" and "For manual authorisation." For serial requests details are removed from the Client Name field to the appropriate fields on the request form. Monograph requests already correctly populate the necessary fields. The authorisation status is changed to "To Be Authorised", the rota adjusted and the request submitted. The National Library provided documentation that outlined these steps.

Fig 5. Identifying end-user requests

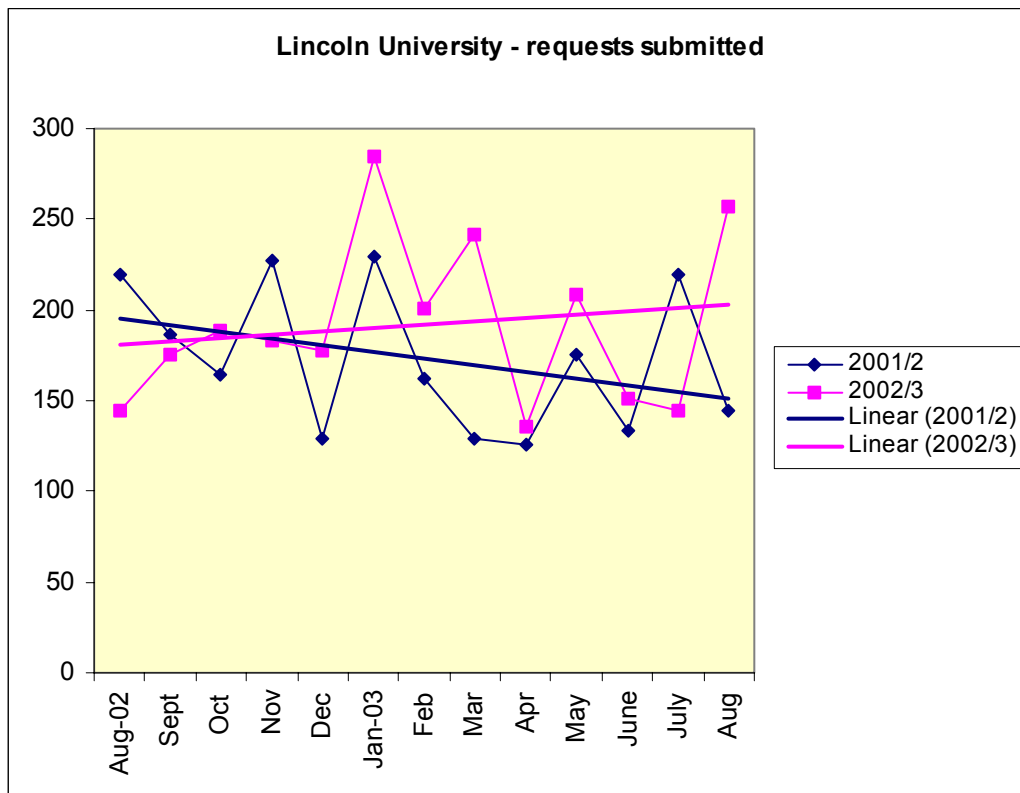


## 5. Achievements of the pilot project

### a. Trends and growth patterns

Two important trends emerged. The first was the growth in requests compared with the same period in the previous year. Request traffic has grown by 20%. The second trend is that end-user requests account for 28% of the request traffic generated. During the early part of the pilot project the smoothing out of the request pattern was in marked contrast to the peaks and troughs of the previous year. The spikes in Lincoln University's requesting during January and March this year most likely coincide with the academic lifecycle.

Fig 6. Requests submitted



The project partners agreed to concentrate on requests generated from the National Bibliographic Database. There were two reasons for this. Firstly, in the case of the citation database, Index New Zealand, most of the titles are already held by Lincoln University.

Secondly an unresolved technical issue prevented the generation of requests from this database.

The underlying assumption was that the majority of end-user initiated requests would be for monographic material. But the experience has differed. Copy requests make up 75% of end-user initiated requests. Comments from end-users indicate they already have the citation details and transfer these to the request screen.

Anecdotal evidence, corroborated by statistical reports, shows that end-user initiated requests are supplied more quickly than requests submitted by library staff. 49% of end-user requests are supplied on the day created, or the day following. Selective use of reciprocal libraries and those offering rapid response times is instrumental in this result.

#### **b. How the end-users coped**

End-users found few problems using Te Puna Search to create their Interloan requests. Instructions are easy to follow for most end-users. Some first time users got into difficulty by giving too much personal information and insufficient citation details.

Problems arose in three areas:

1. Incorrect input details;
2. Lack of input details;
3. The wrong item selected from the Search hitlist.

To resolve these problems Library staff would contact the patron by e-mail or phone and ascertain the correct details. Use was made of this opportunity to reinforce the correct entry of details for an End-User Interloan Request.

An unexpected result of the pilot project was the spread of end-user interloans to additional users. Successful use of the system resulted in on selling to new users by word of mouth. The original pool of end-users was 46 and this has since grown by a further 24 – a growth rate of just over 50%. It is clear that other colleagues and fellow students readily adopt new initiatives that prove successful.

#### **c. Customer reaction**

End-users were surveyed for their opinions and responses to the pilot project. 90% said they would use the system again. Ease of use and the clarity of instructions were positive factors contributing to this. End-user “likes” were categorised into three main areas:

- “Savings in use of time, it’s more efficient and quicker”;
- “The ability to make requests off-site [from the library], in a time and context convenient to them”;
- “The process is streamlined, there’s no [manual] form filling, and it is less susceptible to error”.

Dislikes were identified in broad areas related to:

- The complex nature of Te Puna’s Website;
- System constraints related to the secondary login procedure, and the reverse order of login and password at this point;
- Uncertainty that the request was accepted, or was in process.

End-users suggested improvements related to system design and layout, retention of personal details within a session, the creation of a library specific request form, and a confirmation mechanism when a request is accepted.

These dislikes should not detract from an overwhelmingly positive response from end-users. In answer to possible improvements, one end-user simply said, “It was great!” That says it all.

#### **d. Benefits for Interloan staff**

Interloan staff report four major benefits with end-user initiated requests. These are:

- Requests are legible and there is a degree of reliability with the citations;
- There is certainty that the request is input and awaits processing;
- Minimal keyboarding reduces the time required to process a request;
- End-user requests require less follow-up as accuracy of the details ensures a greater certainty of supply.

#### **6. Recommendations and lessons**

The end-users themselves have given a clear indication that they like the system and have also identified areas for improvements. Te Puna is a complex website. Placed in a more prominent position, the Search Tutorial provides assistance to end-users. The possibility of a hidden login is another area for improvement. Currently end-users must complete a secondary login in order to initiate requests. End-users also expressed a desire to receive an indication that their request had been processed. These are actions for the future.

The possibility of the Details Box being turned into a Library specific request form would cut down on the few errors by some first time users not reading the instructions. This improvement would be beneficial to both end-users and Interloan Staff.

The re-naming of the system from End-User Initiated Interloans to Do-It-Yourself (D-I-Y) at Lincoln University helped spread the word about this new initiative. There is a need to further promote the system to gain the maximum benefit to all staff and post-graduate students. This is especially so as many manual requests continue to come in. Frequently requesters have got the citation from materials already in their possession.

As previously stated, the assumption was that the majority of requests would be for monographic material. The higher use of serial article requests was a surprise outcome.

Interloan staff learnt very early on that end-user requests needed to slot into the daily workflow. Timetabled sessions for manually input requests have always been part of the daily workflow. End-user requests are actioned directly from Te Puna Interloan at any time. It was decided to print and action each request inside an allotted time frame. The new workflow method is working very well. Workflows need to be carefully thought out so as not to disadvantage patron's different methods of requesting interloans.

#### **7. Where to next?**

The National Library has used the experience from this pilot project in a number of ways. Often there are requests from branch libraries wanting to place requests and have the material delivered to them directly. The recent upgrade to VDX 2277 has provided the ability to better facilitate delivery to local branch libraries while retaining a single location record at the central library. Adding delivery address details to the user record ensures precedence over address details at the location level. At this time the National Library does not identify individual holdings at a branch level. The Voyager application is limited to displaying approximately 105 holdings records. Displaying branch holdings would soon exceed this limit in many cases.

The National Library has begun working with the Government Information Group with a view to trialing end-user initiation in another context. Applying the end-user concept, there is investigation of how an email, generated from an aggregator, can populate a request in Te Puna Interloan. Theoretically it is simple to modify the Perl script and apply it to the output of the aggregator at the back end. There are unknowns, including identification of the end-user and their delivery details. But the excitement of this proposal lies in the ability to deliver requested material to the end-user, in a timely manner, without any form of mediation.

Although the National Library is keen to pursue a pilot project of end-user initiated requests with a public library network, finding the right partner is not proving a simple task. Generating sufficient request traffic is one issue. Seeking an easing of the central control of interloan functions is another. At this time, tentative discussions with one of New Zealand's research institutes have begun with a view to taking end-user requesting to their staff. This work will have to consider the issues of mediated versus unmediated requesting, delivery to end-users, and training and ongoing support of end-users over a widely dispersed work environment.

Where does Lincoln University fit in these scenarios? Undoubtedly Lincoln University Interloan staff would say "me too"! But without a Standard Interchange Protocol (SIP) in place the likelihood of such a scenario is limited. Fretwell-Downing is due to deliver a SIP in VDX 3.1. At that time, end-user authentication against Lincoln University data is a possibility and is an area of development recommended by the pilot project. What remains uncertain is whether end-users will submit their requests in an unmediated fashion. Data from the pilot project indicates that locally held materials were requested on an infrequent basis. This suggests the methods and structures put in place were sufficient to prevent this. But expanding the pilot project to a sizeable staff and post-graduate community will present challenges for Lincoln University staff in the areas of training and support.

For Lincoln University this is only the beginning. At the start of the pilot project Lincoln University identified two goals – reduce the workload for staff by reducing the data input of requests, and achieve a faster turnaround time for patrons. Extending the pilot project to the entire staff and post-graduate community and allowing unmediated requests could reduce the input and processing time further, grow the number of transactions, and possibly achieve faster turnaround times as requests are transacted through Te Puna Interloan unimpeded. Response times to the end-user will improve as direct delivery eliminates the central collection point. In time the probabilities are a reduced staff workload at the data input level, a greater monitoring role by staff of requesters and responder's performance, and a less cluttered work environment. Not quite the paperless office, but perhaps a more environmentally friendly "less paper" office.

## **8. Placebo or Panacea?**

What then of the question posed at the start of this paper, End-User Initiated Interloans: Placebo or Panacea? A Panacea, of course!

The main reason for the setting up of the pilot project was two fold. Create a more efficient system for end-users to request interloans and ease manual inputting by interloan staff. Other spin offs are:

- Less paper involved;
- Savings on associated administration costs;
- Faster turnaround times.

When one of the authors started working in Interloans the New Zealand Bibliographic Network (NZBN) had just been implemented at Lincoln University. The principal idea that interested the author in interloans was the sharing of resources nationwide. Secondly, interloans provided Lincoln University staff and post-graduate students with equitable access to information and recorded knowledge to assist with their research. The volume of interloan traffic, both requesting and supply, was very large. The burden of inputting requests manually had a high hand-loading impact on Interloan staff. Turnaround times as a result were disappointing. Te Puna Interloan created another change in the workflows of interloan departments.

Since 2001 manual volumes have dropped away due to the many full-text databases now available. Requests now intermingle with mediated requests from the databases at Lincoln University. End-user initiated requesting provided the Panacea for many Lincoln University patrons. This coupled with the addition of Ariel and Prospero (Desk-top delivery software) has served these patrons very well. The turnaround times have been halved in many cases.

This desktop delivery pathway is leading to less printed material. This has led to less use of postal services with associated savings on administration costs. Perhaps the future will see unmediated requesting being an option for some libraries. The 50% increase in patrons in the last six months at Lincoln University speaks volumes about this new and innovative system. Interloan staff are more than happy to see this increase happen. They wish all those who use this system in the future the same benefits as have been found at Lincoln University. The National Library can be justly proud of this mediated service that promotes use of its collection as well as those of all participating interloan libraries for the benefit of research in New Zealand.

This was a very successful pilot project. The now ongoing service has the interloan requests making a very fast return and the Interloan staff enjoy watching their speedy pathway.

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