

Preliminary Review of one-year of ARL Japan Project with Waseda University

Makoto Nakamoto

Dept. of Administrative Services, Waseda University Library

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By November 1999, almost one year has passed since Waseda University Library decided to join the ARL Japan Project. Meanwhile, as a result of the US-Japan Round Table on Document Delivery Service held in February, the US-Japan Pilot Project of Document Delivery Service, involving 7 Japanese institutions (mainly from the Association of National University Libraries) and 10 institutions in the US, began in November 1999. While still underway, I would like to take this occasion to review the progress over the past year of the Project with Waseda. The official review, to be made from the both sides as mentioned in the agreement for the Project, will appear on another occasion. For this reason, it should be noted that the statements or opinions in this preliminary review are of my responsibility and do not reflect the institution's or the Project's opinions.

First of all, I would like to outline the background history of the Project. At the initial phase, it was known that NCC requested the Japan Coordinating Committee for University Libraries, Tokyo University Library, Keio University Library, and Waseda University Library to join the Project. The reasons why Waseda University Library could make a positive response to the request were as follows:

1. Waseda University is still the sole institution in Japan that has been continuously providing the bibliographic/holding records of our whole Japanese monograph collection to the OCLC Online Union Catalog (OLUC).
2. As a result, the number of borrower requests for materials in our collections from overseas has been growing, and therefore, we decided to reconsider our lending policy for overseas requests.
3. In the meanwhile, Waseda University Library has not been the exception to demands from the University Administration to pursue cost savings; indeed the Library has been asked reduce its budget for the whole library operations, especially, the book purchase budget. At the same time the Library is facing the diversification of the library demands. In this context, we decided that we needed to enlarge the channels for access to various library collections as well as library resource sharing.

By the above reasons and/or the conditions, we did not hesitate to sign the agreement to participate in the Project with the conditions of using OCLC ILL and IFM systems for the actual ILL operations of the Project. But from the view point of actual ILL operations as a whole in Waseda University Library, the Project will be only a part of the overall ILL transactions, and we predicted that the co-existence of various (old-fashioned and brand-new) ILL channels, both for domestic and overseas, would be over-load of work for actual ILL operations. By the change of our lending policy mentioned above, it was expected that we might need to consider a drastic change of the policy as well as re-structuring of the present ILL unit, watching the ILL traffic of the Project for a while.

The number of ILL transactions through OCLC ILL system from the beginning till November 1999 and the major findings from this statistics are as below.

1. After one year of the Project, the number of filled lender requests and borrower requests have been almost even. (114:109 respectively). On the other side, the number of unfilled lender requests and borrower requests are 88 and 58 respectively.
2. Loan requests from the project constitute 60% of the total lender requests, and 80% of total borrower requests.
3. The number of transactions has been relatively stable despite some seasonal changes.
4. It is clear that there are ILL demands in both countries that cannot be satisfied domestically. These are demands for Japanese monograph collection in the US and demands for foreign journal collections in Japan.

Here are some comments to be considered by our colleagues.

1. Through OCLC ILL system, there have been a large number of unfilled borrowers requests from overseas because these were from non-participants of the Project. (These account for approximately 400 borrower requests for our Japanese collections out of a total of 1000 unfilled borrower requests) To avoid unnecessary confusion in our ILL operations, we limited the use of OCLC ILL system to requests from the libraries participating in the Project. Therefore, we could not help but return the requests as conditional. This should not be reviewed as part of the Project itself, but it is very important in the consideration of our future lending policy. It should also be noted that the other 600 unfilled borrower requests were for our foreign language collections and/or titles expected to be more accessible in the US.
2. Simplifying the management of charges is always a critical point in the management of actual ILL operations. OCLC IFM system, adapted for the Project, was highly valued by our ILL unit.
3. There were some cases of trouble in the actual ILL correspondence. It is suspected that many of these cases were originated from so called communication gaps or inappropriateness of initial procedures, but the situation should be improved.

As mentioned above, since ILL demands exist that cannot be met domestically in both countries, it seems to reasonable to increase the number of participating institutions, especially on the Japanese side. But in the meantime, it is evident that Waseda University Library has possessed a unique asset for the Project in Japan, that is its close relationship with OCLC. In this context, in the short and mid term, the ILL system widely used in each country should develop a common protocol for their transactions each other. On the Japanese side, we should consider the still existing institutional barriers for lending "returnable" collections among university libraries as well.

While Waseda University Library is participating the Project, we have adopted INNOPAC as our new library system and are the first user of INNOPAC in Japan. According to these initiatives, we are reconsidering our present library operations as a whole. At this stage, we would like to build a new library operation for the new environment by improving the quality of present

operations. Waseda University Library is just beginning to address changes for the new millennium and has started to discuss the critical issues for the change as follows:

1. Optimum allocation of user access.
2. Management of digitized collections.
3. Provision of integrated access to scholarly information in various media.
4. Training and recruitment of highly skilled librarians
5. Continuous maintenance of IT infrastructures

ILL operations are not the exception. In evaluating the present ILL operations, we should take a new step toward ILL/DD operation. Regarding loans and photocopies from our collections, we should simplify patrons' requesting procedures and expedite the provision of requested items. We are presently examining improving the in-and-campus-to-campus mailing system and introducing a delivery system using the Internet. Simplifying the management of charges should also be considered. By this, we expect to be able to avoid pressures to purchase unnecessary collections and reduce management costs. As a result, we will be able to improve resource sharing and access for our patrons. In terms of library organization, we are considering the reallocation of decentralized ILL units and relocation of the collections for ILL. Moreover, in a long range, we should examine the profitability of ILL/DD operations in order to keep and improve library operations as a whole.

In the sense of enlarging access for patrons, it should be noted that there are a large number of issues to be improved for the research library communities in the both countries. We need to continue to make progress.