

## "Get This Item" Coming to a Library Near You

by Patti Butcher, Director, Statewide Resource Sharing

Unmediated patron interlibrary loan is coming to a library near you. Under the State Library's current contract with Auto-Graphics for the Kansas Library Catalog, patrons will soon have the ability to request items directly through the system.

Libraries may choose to switch from the default setting of unmediated (meaning the librarian does not review each request) to mediated. This is an individual library decision.

During the past year, Coffey County Library has been serving as a pilot project for unmediated patron interlibrary loan. Library patrons were directed to the Kansas Library Catalog if they didn't find what they were looking for in the Coffey County catalog. Initially the percentage of requests was fairly small—only 10% of all interlibrary loan requests. During the past few months, usage has increased. In April 2007 patron ILL requests equaled nearly one-third of all ILL requests placed. They accounted for 108 out of 350.

Both the librarians and the patrons love the new system. Librarians find it cuts their staff time in the ILL process by almost half. Patrons are able to track their own requests through the system, and are notified when the item has arrived.

So, how does patron-initiated interlibrary loan stack up overall? Here are some of the concerns that have been raised.

What if patrons request items owned by the library?

- Put your library FIRST in the lender list—if you own the item you'll see the request first. 10-12% of requests are owned locally so the library will want to catch those.

What if our postage costs go up?

- Libraries can still say "no."
- Remember, the request is for a real person with a real need.
- Courier funds will be requested again by SLK in 2008.

What if patrons order too much stuff?

- Individual libraries can set limits on the number of requests per patron.
- Patrons quickly realize with the new service they don't need to "over order" and self-limit.
- You know the patrons who may need some guidance.

What if I have too much work?

- Time is saved on the borrowing end because users are selecting and placing their own requests.

What if my patrons need training?

- Not much training should be needed because it is a user-friendly system, but patrons may need to be made aware of the service.
- Libraries will be able to use Coffey County tutorial.
- Our users are generally more savvy than we think.

What if my patrons request the wrong format?

- They do that now.
- Most likely they will only do it once, and realize their mistake.
- It is possible to mediate requests by format.

What if I'm out of a job--the patrons are doing my work?

- Patrons still need librarians.
- Everything is not on the Internet; neither can everything can be provided by interlibrary loan.
- Mediated ILL will continue.

What if I don't see my patrons as often?

- Your patrons may find the self-service aspect much more efficient, speedy, and easy to use. That doesn't mean you won't see them for other things.
- They will still have to pick up the items!

What if an "unknown" patron places an ILL request? How does the system know if they are a patron in good standing?

- Check with your ILS vendor about SIP2 or NCIP modules and pricing for your library. The AGen system can check patron status via your local library's system--but only if your system has implemented this capability.
- For smaller libraries, a mini-patron database can be created at Auto-Graphics to allow ILL patrons access to the statewide system.

We live in a self-service world. State Librarian Christie Brandau comments: "We need to serve people who will not seek or use information in the way that libraries currently provide it."

Patron-mediated interlibrary loan offers us a unique opportunity to remove barriers, and to create a more user-friendly service that provides equality of access and resources to all Kansans.

If YOUR library would like to participate now, contact Rhonda Machlan at [rmachlan@kslib.info](mailto:rmachlan@kslib.info)

for assistance.

To check out Coffey County's website and tutorial, go to <http://www.cclibraryks.org/>.

For more information about the statewide project, contact Patti Butcher or Jeff Hixon at the State Library.