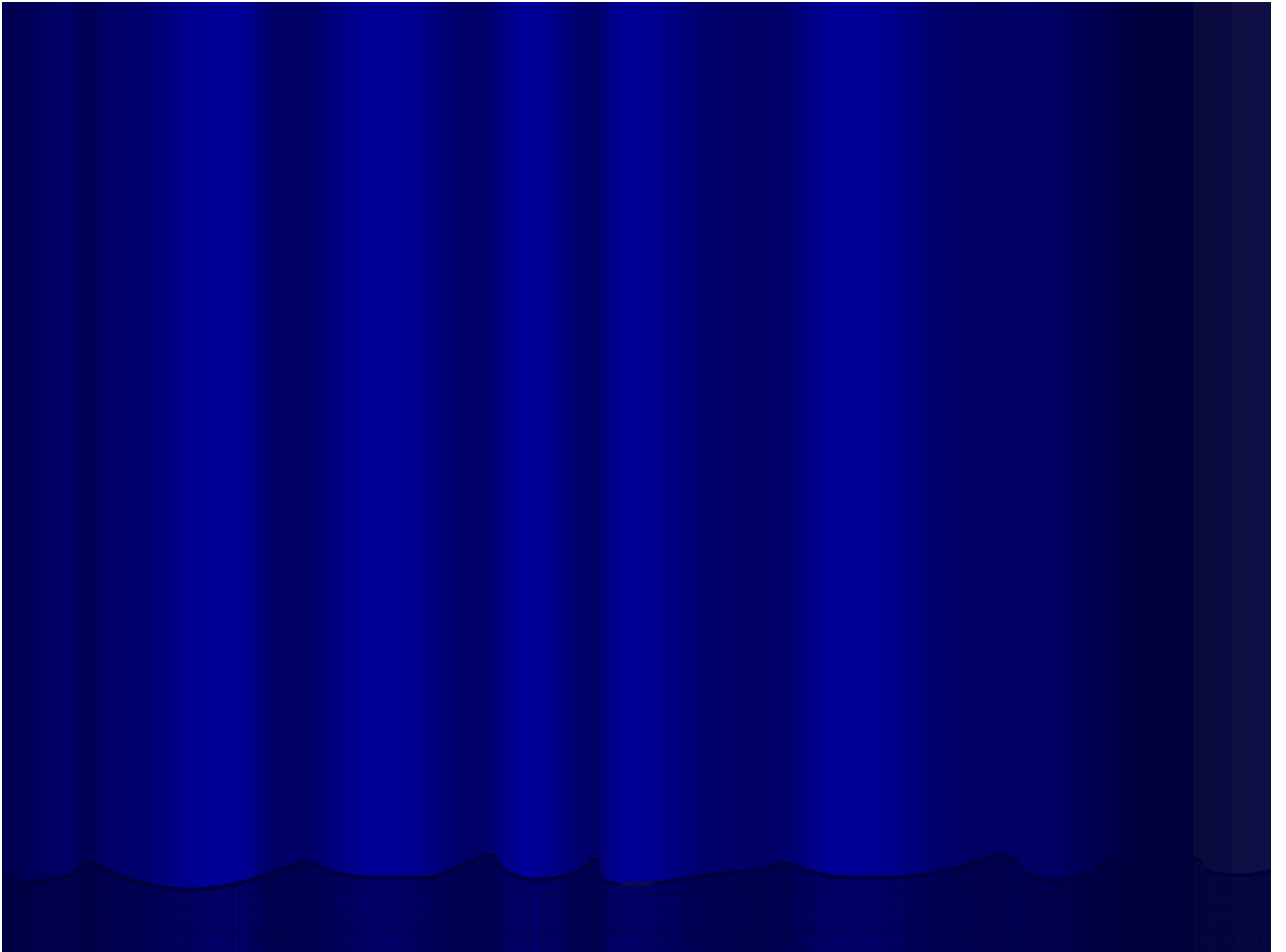# Lifting the Curtain on Unfilled Interlending Requests

Heidi Visser
University of Pretoria

Janet Zambri
University of the Witwatersrand

Discussion on -

- Current situation of interlending in South Africa
- Why unfilled requests?
- Role of staff
- Performance indicators and unfilled requests
- Grouping of libraries
- Reasons for unfilled requests
- Issues to be addressed to enhance interlending services

Technological Advances in Interlending in Southern Africa

- 52% libraries working online
- 7% libraries allow unmediated requests to be placed
- 13% libraries use ARIEL software
- More than 90% articles shipped electronically
- Electronic delivery of articles to e-mail of patrons
- Interlending Fee Management System
- Electronic retrieval of management information

Information Retrieval in South Africa

- 85% researchers first use the internet to obtain information
- 1% researchers first use the library catalogue

Research Project

- Gauteng and Environment Library Consortium (GAELIC) initiated the research project

- South African Library and information Trust (SALIT) funded the project

Goals of the Research Project

- Investigate the reasons for unfilled requests
- Suggest remedial actions
- Determine the training needs

Methodology

- Selection of a 3 month period, including a peak period
- Data retrieval:
  - Number of new requests placed & received
  - Number of filled documents
  - Reports on reasons for unfilled requests
  - Data to calculate turn-around time

Impact of Staff on Interlending Services

- Best performance by fulltime, specialized staff
- Interlending service influenced by:
  - Attitude: motivated & committed staff
  - Training and experience
  - Capacity: insufficient number of staff

Interlending Performance and Unfilled Requests

- Focus on relationship between unfilled requests and
  - productivity (number of requests handled)
  - fill rate (quality of work and efficiency of staff)
  - turn-around time

Fill Rate

- Represents the percentage of filled requests

- Reflects quality of work and efficiency of staff

- A low fill rate implies a high number of unfilled requests

Requesting Fill Rate

- More important

- Crucial to satisfy patron's needs

- Unfilled requests often caused by inability of staff to select the correct supplying libraries

Number of Attempts to Fill a Request

1	2	3	4	5	>5	Total analyzed
63%	21%	9%	3%	2%	2%	438

Supplying Fill Rate

- Lower than requesting fill rate
- Fast turn-around time important
- Search shelves only once
- Unfilled requests to move immediately on to next library

Grouping of Libraries According to Size - Requesting

Library size Requests handled	Number of libraries	Unfilled requests
>1000=Large	6 (Placed 53% of all new requests)	33%
300-399= Medium	14	25%
1-299= Small	19	44%

Grouping Libraries According to Size - Supplying

Size	Libraries	Unfilled requests	Expired
>1000 = Large	8 (Received 76% of all requests)	43%	6%
300-999 = Med	11	50%	17%
0-299 = Small	20	64%	27%

Grouping Requesting Libraries According to Fill Rate

- Requesting and supplying libraries with the least unfilled requests, handled the most requests

- Supplying libraries have had the least expired requests

Grouping Libraries According to Turn-Around Time

- No definite correlation

- A high percentage unfilled requests does not necessarily correspond with a slow turn-around time

Reasons for Unfilled Requests

- 25 reasons to choose from on ReQuest, the Southern African interlending system
- Incorrect usage of reasons

Most Used Reasons for Unfilled Requests

Requesting point of view		Supplying point of view	
Not owned	19%	In use-on loan	20%
Expired	18%	Not owned	17%
In use-on loan	16%	Not on shelf	13%
Not on shelf	11%	Expired	10%

Not Owned (1)

- Human error is frequently the cause for unfilled requests
  - Lack of commitment
  - Lack of experience/training
  - Insufficient number of staff

Not Owned (2)

Inaccuracies on SACat (South African Catalogue) result in staff placing unverified requests

- Records not found on SACat
- Multiple records on SACat
- Incorrect information on SACat

Not Owned (3)

- Libraries not updating information on SACat and other bases regarding
  - Lost books
  - Books on order
  - Numbers of volumes not received
  - Cancelled serial subscriptions
  - Journals with only title holdings

Expired Requests

- 98% of expired requests due to supplying staff not attending to requests within the stipulated time
- Human error

In Use – on loan

- Less books are bought due to ongoing cuts in budgets
- Demand for available books grows – patrons revert to interlending
- Requests have to be rerouted more often
- Late return of books

Not On Shelf

- Books shelved incorrectly
- Books not returned to shelves soon after they have been checked in
- Lack of experience and searching skills
- Students/clients hiding books
- Library staff keeping books in their offices

Issues to be Addressed in Order to Enhance Interlending Services

1. Service Provider (Sabinet Online)

- Revise list of reasons for unfilled requests
- Supply separate reports regarding unfilled requests for books & articles
- Eliminate multiple records on SACat
- Provide reliable turn-around time reports

Issues to be Addressed in Order to Enhance Interlending Services

2. Libraries

- Ensure that whole stock is reflected on SACat and international databases
- Regularly update loan status of records & holdings
- Patrons to be encouraged to use electronic resources and the internet.

Issues to be Addressed in Order to Enhance Interlending Services

3. Library Management

- Study interlending management information to detect:
  - progress or decline
  - training needs
  - need for additional staff

Issues to be Addressed in Order to Enhance Interlending Services

4. Interlending Staff

- Should be well trained
- Attend workshops that focus on:
  - new developments
  - advanced practices
  - general updating
  - common errors
- Should report database inaccuracies

Conclusions: Staffing and Databases

- Assumptions regarding unfilled requests proved to be correct

- Commitment, training, experience & sufficient staff are keys to service excellence

Conclusions: Databases & Books

- Regular updating of databases
- Shortage of books
- Overdue books must be addressed
- Shelving issues to be attended to

Conclusions: Fill rate

- Enhancement of requesting fill rate
- High fill rate + cost effectiveness + fast turn-around time = service excellence!

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