Investigation into performance levels of interlending and document supply in GAELIC member libraries

Introduction:
The GAELIC Interlending and Document Supply Project was the fortunate recipient of a SALI Trust grant of R15 000 to investigate the performance levels of the ten GAELIC member libraries in supplying and requesting books and articles within the interlending system of South Africa. The duration of the project was from January to September 2005.

The Project was led by Heidi Visser of the Academic Information Services at the University of Pretoria. The team members were:
Janet Zambri University of the Witwatersrand
Rebecca Fani Vaal University of Technology
Marlane de Bruyn Unisa
Antoinet Davis University of Johannesburg (Doornfontein)
Santi Steyn & Cressida Heslop Sabinet Online

Background to the project:
GAELIC, a regional academic library consortium, was established in 1996 under the umbrella of its parent body FOTIM with the intention to collaborate in the purchase of a common library system, strengthen resource sharing and document supply services as well as to initiate collaborative projects to face the challenges of severe budgetary constraints within the higher education sector. As GAELIC edges towards its second decade of operation, a key component of its business strategy is to provide strong leadership to find research-centred solutions to common problems within the consortium.

Among the nine member libraries of GAELIC, the interlending and document supply services continue to provide a central service to libraries within and beyond the region. Collectively, the GAELIC libraries represent a large proportion of library budgets, collections, e-resources, library staff expertise, staff and students. It is, therefore, critical that best practice criteria apply to these services and that delivery standards are maintained at an optimal level.

Currently, the service provider Sabinet Online manages the interlending and document supply system known as ReQuest and is responsible for collating the statistics. With the exception of manual requests received via fax or post, the statistics for the GAELIC libraries are maintained by REQUEST and can be extracted as required. A few GAELIC Libraries have maintained manual statistics for comparative purposes. Within GAELIC, a workgroup called "Interlending and Document Supply" has played an active role in the region through a strong network of ILL staff, workshops and collating statistics. It has taken a number of initiatives to identify problem areas, provide training, liaise with Sabinet Online and provide valuable input to the development of the ReQuest service. An important function of the Workgroup has been to collate GAELIC Management Information with respect to the fill-rate performance levels of the interlending and document supply services. The statistics for the year ended 2003 showed disappointing performance levels for the region, as indicated below:
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Lending – loan requests received</th>
<th>Universities</th>
<th>Technikons</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Books</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>44%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Articles</td>
<td>62%</td>
<td>34%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Supplier- loans requested</th>
<th>Universities</th>
<th>Technikons</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Books</td>
<td>68%</td>
<td>77%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Articles</td>
<td>88%</td>
<td>81%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Speculations for the low fill-rate performance levels have been made but the causes had not been verified by research-centred investigations. From the detailed GAELIC Management Information, it appears to be a problem common to most of the GAELIC Libraries and it was critical that a solution to this common problem be found. Recommendations and remedial steps are required to ensure that there is an improvement 2005 in fill-rate levels across GAELIC Libraries. The findings are likely to be applicable to other academic library consortia.

**Purpose & objectives of the project**

The purpose of this research project was to investigate and determine:
- if the fill-rate statistics collated by the Sabinet Online REQUEST system are accurate
- identify the reasons for the non-supply of materials in GAELIC libraries

The project had four objectives:
- determine the accuracy of the REQUEST System statistics
- sample, collect and analyse ILL data for a 3 month period
- determine reasons for low fill-rate performance levels in GAELIC libraries
- determine capacity, training needs and challenges in ILL sections in a sample of libraries

**Expected outcomes of the project**

- the reasons why libraries are not able to supply materials for interlending
- an assessment of the accuracy of the REQUEST system statistics
- an assessment of the accuracy of the library holdings on the Sabinet Union Catalogue
- an assessment of the capacity and training needs of ILL staff in GAELIC libraries
- a set of best practice criteria for interlending and document supply services
- a procedure for ILL sections to assess on a regular basis reasons for the non-supply of materials
- a practical workshop to train/retrain ILL staff.

**Project documentation**

The CD-ROM contains a full set of the project documents and is intended to represent a complete record of the study:
- The final report with findings
- An executive summary of the report
- 14 annexures containing data and statistics
- Notes to be read with the annexures
• Library profiles
• Power point presentation of the research findings presented to the GAELIC Governing Board on 2 August 2005
• A 15 minute videoclip of the IL play presented at the training workshops on 7 and 28 September 2005.
• The code of best practice criteria for interlending and document supply services

Summary of the research findings and the scope of the work carried out during the project

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>OBJECTIVES OF THE PROJECT</th>
<th>EXPECTED OUTCOMES OF PROJECT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The purpose of the project to research &amp; determine:</td>
<td>The main reasons were identified and remedial actions were proposed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. if the fill rate statistics on ReQuest are accurate</td>
<td>The manual stats of the University of the NW, Potch campus were compared to their system stats. It was found that the latter was reliable and accurate &amp; could be used for the research</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. identify the reasons for the non-supply of materials</td>
<td>It was found that 20-25% of all reasons for unfilled requests were related to inaccuracies on SACat. Each institution should be held responsible to regularly update and add their holdings.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Objectives</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>1. determine the accuracy of the ReQuest System statistics</td>
<td>Site Visits to all the GAELIC member libraries were done – a profile was constructed for each one to provide Director and staff with an ILL Performance profile. A very basic time study was conducted to determine the time needed for the IL processes. The results can be used to calculate if the staff capacity in an IL office is sufficient to render an efficient service. Problems due to training needs were noted and addressed during the training sessions.</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. sample, collect and analyse ILL data for a 3 mont period</td>
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<td>3. determine reasons for low fill rate performance levels in GAELIC libraries</td>
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<tr>
<td>4. determine capacity, training needs and challenges in ILL sections in a sample of libraries</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>EXPECTED OUTCOMES OF PROJECT</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>1. The reasons why libraries are not able to supply materials for interlending</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. An assessment of the accuracy of the request system statistics</td>
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<tr>
<td>3. An assessment of the accuracy of the library holdings on SACat</td>
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<td>4. An assessment of the capacity and training needs of IL staff in GAELIC libraries</td>
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<tr>
<td>5. A set of best practice criteria for interlending &amp; document supply services</td>
<td>A Code of Best Practice for Interlending Workers was created and copies were distributed at both meetings. Issues that can enhance the ILL ReQuest system have been forwarded to Sabinet Online for attention and followup.</td>
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<tr>
<td>6. A procedure for IL sections to assess on a regular basis reasons for the non-supply of materials</td>
<td>This information is already available on the ReQuest program under REPORTS. IL staff received instructions on how to access management information in order to measure their productivity and performance.</td>
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7. Design a practical workshop to train/retrain IL staff.

| Two workshops were held:  
| 7 September for LIASA/GAELIC ILL staff  
| 28 Sept – repeated at LIASA Conference for all ILL staff  
| Content included:  
| - feedback on the research findings  
| - a training session, based on the Code of Best Practice for IL workers and on problems that were picked up during the research  
| - industrial play was designed to emphasise importance of attitude, commitment & training. - a 15 minute video of the play was made.  

8. Interim and final reports

| Interim reports were provided by the Project Leader for the GAELIC Governing Board and FOTIM Board  
| Final Project report completed with 14 appendices & an explanation to interpret tables  
| 15 minute video of industrial play for ILL training purposes  
| Executive summary report for GAELIC Governing Board  
| Power Point Presentation of results made to GAELIC Governing Board – Aug 2005  
| A CD-ROM with the complete research project report, appendices and video to be distributed to GAELIC member libraries  
| Final report to SALI Trust – November 2005  

**Conclusion:**
GAELIC wishes to thank the SALI Trust for having made this grant available to conduct a thorough investigation of ILL performance levels in its member libraries. The study achieved the following:

- Determined the reasons why libraries are not able to supply materials for interlending and addressed them through the training workshops and providing SAbinet Online with a list of issues requiring attention
- Compared manual with system generated statistics and has concluded that the ReQuest system statistics are accurate and reliable.
- Conducted site visits and had an excellent opportunity to discuss and determine the training needs of ILL staff in GAELIC libraries.
- Developed and distributed a code of best practice criteria for interlending and document supply services to ILL staff across the country.
- Presented two successful workshops. The result has been a motivated group of ILL staff, improved service delivery and increased capacity through improved skills in place.
- Raised awareness among Library Directors about the importance of the fill-rate performance levels and the need to ensure that they are properly monitored and that below-acceptance levels are addressed. Each Director received a profile of the ILL performance levels for the library as well as the perceived training needs for the ILL staff.

Gwenda Thomas
GAELIC Office
November 2005