Scanning Services for Library Users

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Scanning Services for Library Users

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Introduction

Recent library literature emphasizes the increase in technologically savvy library users and the development of "information commons" or "digital and media services" to serve them. However, little has emerged to give insight on the details of offering complex and technologically advanced services, such as scanning, to library users. The ability of a library to offer scanning services carries with it a large learning curve, for both users and library staff, along with financial and technical support issues. This survey provides a snapshot of what scanning services are currently being offered to users in ARL libraries and the variety of ways these services are offered, secured, evaluated, and publicized. Sixty-nine of the 123 ARL libraries (56%) responded to the survey. A combined total of 56 (81%) offer some kind of scanning service to their users. Most common is self-service scanning (35%), followed by a combination of self-service and scan-on-demand (30%) and scan-on-demand only (16%.) Thirteen of the responding libraries (19%) do not currently offer scanning services but two of those have plans to do so in the near future.

Background

Scanning services in libraries are not necessarily taking the place of photocopying services. In fact, an overwhelming number of the responding libraries are offering or planning to offer scanning in addition to photocopy services (54 of 57 responses), most of this being self-service scanning (47 of those 54). Only 13 respondents (23%) said they are offering scanners as a substitute for photocopying.

Reasons for offering scanning services vary, but the most frequent responses were that scanning services fit into the library's existing mission (93%) and that scanning services are being offered due to user demand (86%). Forty-seven percent of the respondents stated that scanning services were the result of recommendations from a committee or staff members, while roughly thirty-five percent reported that scanning was either an ancillary benefit of an existing library digitization initiative or one of the services in an information commons. Other scanning services originated in faculty instructional support facilities, began as a project for students with disabilities, or grew out of electronic document delivery initiatives.

Interestingly, most respondents who initiated scanning services because of a digitization initiative (17 of 21) offer scan-on-demand and all 20 respondents who include scanning services in an information commons offer self-service scanning. Such responses indicate that information commons are more user-centered and self-service oriented, whereas digitization centers in libraries have the staff and structure to offer scanning on demand for users.

Facilities and Equipment

Forty-three of fifty-four respondents (80%) locate

scanning workstations in the main library. In this location, self-service scanning workstations outnumber scan-on-demand workstations by nearly a six-to-one ratio (251 self-service vs. 42 scan-on-demand). Art and design libraries are the next most popular place to locate scanning workstations (19 responses or 35%)—which makes sense, considering the need for visual information by art/design library users—and 82% of these are self-service. A significant number of respondents also have scanners in special collections/rare books (16 or 30%), health sciences (13 or 24%), and science libraries (13 or 24%). Only eight respondents (15%) report scanners in map libraries; three (6%) report scanning workstations in a library copy center.

Scanning workstations are located in a number of other locations, as well. The "Other location" responses to the survey show the great variety of specialized library settings in which scanning services are found. A wide variety of departmental libraries—from architecture to business to education to music to veterinary medicine to name but a few—have found uses for scanners. Also on the list are information commons units, multimedia centers, assistive technology rooms, electronic resources centers, and undergraduate libraries, among others.

Overall, the number of self-service workstations is more than three times that of scan-on-demand workstations (473 vs. 141). Only special collections and library copy centers have more workstations devoted to scan-on-demand than self-service scanning. The staffing and structure of library copy centers more than likely facilitate scan-on-demand services; the fragile nature of special collections materials is probably the reason for the preponderance of scan-on-demand workstations in those locations.

The installation of scanning workstations and services for users in libraries is fairly recent. Only four libraries report any scanning services for users before 1995. One health sciences library made scanners available as far back as 1990, but the number of libraries installing scanning workstations remained in the single digits until the year 2000 when 12 libraries report installing new scanning equipment for users. The most activity was in 2003 when 21 libraries initiated these services. New installations have dropped off since then.

Most of the responding libraries (47 or 85%) provide at least a standard-size flatbed scanner and twice as many report that these are self-service scanners as scan-on-demand (40 vs. 20 responses). Fifty-eight percent of the respondents offer larger-size flatbed scanners (11" x 17" or larger) and fifty-six percent offer slide scanners. Almost half of the responding libraries supply automatic document feeder (ADF) scanners and film (24 mm or 35 mm) scanners. Other self-service equipment includes photo scanners, hand-held scanners, and microfilm/fiche scanners. Scan-on-demand locations tend to have the higher end equipment such as overhead scanners, high-quality digital cameras, high-volume slide scanners, and high-volume sheet-fed scanners.

Many downloading and printing options exist for users of both self-service and on-demand scanning workstations. Almost all of the responding libraries (51 or 93%) provide CD/DVD-R/W as a basic download option. The top three output options are e-mail, CD/DVD-R/W, and USB ports for self-service workstations; and CD/DVD-R/W, black-and-white printing, and e-mail for scan-on-demand services. Responses are pretty evenly spread across the remaining download/printing options: 3.5" floppy disks, color printers, network servers, FTP or SSH (secure shell) client, and ZIP disk drives. Unique export options include printing to plotters (one was the library's geographic information system plotter), smart card readers, and FireWire devices. One scan-on-demand facility scans articles to a secure server in PDF format and then notifies the patron via e-mail.

More than half of the respondents report that scanning workstations are physically located in a reading room or reference area with other general-use computers and 44% report they are found in a library computer lab. Most other respondents

make the scanning stations available in a variety of locations, including copy centers, information commons-type settings, and other offices either within or separate from the general library.

When asked about security for scanning equipment, 30% of the respondents with self-service scanners and 64% of those with scan-on-demand services admitted to taking no special precautions, while the remainder secure the scanning equipment with some combination of hardware and/or software enhancements. Hardware precautions include cable locks, Anchor Pad, security labels, and locked rooms. Software security varies from general Windows security modules and administrative logins to using specialized software such as Deep Freeze and Fortress or firewalls and antivirus protection programs.

Technical Support and Training

The vast majority of libraries offer some kind of training for the staff who provide service or support in the scanning areas, even in the areas designated as self-service. Only nine respondents indicated that no training is provided at all (four self-service, five scan-on-demand). This is probably an indication of service expectations within the library. Public service staff members who are called upon to assist with scanners are unlikely to refuse to give service even if the scanners are designated as self-service. One respondent commented that "the scanning workstation is intended to be self-service—we primarily offer assistance in getting the equipment ready for use." Scanning services staff are sometimes trained by the libraries' systems staff (29 of 55 responding libraries) but are more often trained by non-systems library staff (44 of 55 responses). Eleven of the responding libraries say that their commercial equipment vendors provide some training and five scan-on-demand locations receive support from their software vendors. Only five of the fifty-five respondents receive training from their parent institutions' systems staff.

The comments in the training section of the survey indicate a variety of other training approaches. At one self-service center the IT help desk coordinator and the IT help desk staff train each other. Two other respondents describe similar environments in which they rely on student assistants or staff members who undergo "peer training" or "self training." Two respondents commented that a technical liaison or a "library technology expert" is designated to support the public workstations with help from the library systems staff. Reference librarians do the training in another self-service facility. One comment from a scan-on-demand facility describes the primary trainer as a "processing room supervisor," presumably from a digitization center of some sort as opposed to a public service commons area.

While a surprisingly high number of respondents (26 or 53%) use library systems staff to assist patrons in self-service scanning workstation areas, in 69% of the responding libraries users receive help from other library staff (probably public service staff). Trained student employees provide support to patrons in over half of the responding facilities. Only six respondents (12%) report receiving technical support for users from the commercial vendors of their equipment and only four or five receive assistance from their institution's campus systems office. Another four rely at least partially on posted tips and "brief instructions." Three units are truly self-service, relying on posted tips and help documentation only. One "other" commenter said that "Desktop Support Services" and "Graduate Library Technical Support Staff," presumably also library staff, help their users. It is interesting to note that what are called "self-service" areas in fact require a lot of library and systems staff time.

One would probably expect most of the maintenance and repair of scanning workstations to come from the libraries' systems department, and the vast majority of respondents (43 or 80%) indicated that systems staff do indeed service scanning areas. This is the case in 35 of the 45 self-service facilities and 24 of the 29 scan-on-demand areas. Tied for second place are non-systems library staff and commercial hardware vendors, both used at 21

of the responding libraries. Sixteen of these libraries receive vendor assistance in scan-on-demand areas; six also receive assistance from their commercial software providers. Nine institutions rely at least partially on campus IT staff and eight respondents allow trained student employees to do some maintenance.

Responses to this question and previous support questions indicate that libraries make good use of their IT-oriented staff and trained liaisons to the libraries' systems office. This trend clearly extends to maintenance of the workstations. The high number of facilities using commercial vendor support is a little more surprising. Clearly, many of the scan-on-demand centers, as well as a fair number of self-service operations, are entering into agreements with commercial vendors and it seems likely that most of these vendors also operate the photocopying services that most libraries still have. (See question 3 in the following Survey Questions and Responses section.)

Financial Support

In most of the responding libraries, the initial purchase of scanning equipment was accomplished with help from a number of different funding sources, but the general library budget was the primary one (37 responses or 69%). The library systems budget ranked second for self-service equipment funding (17 responses or 36%) and tied for second with grant funding for scan-on-demand equipment (8 responses or 30%). While grant funding ranked third for self-service equipment, that represents a much smaller percentage than for scan-on-demand (9 responses or 19%). Gift funding was the fourth most common source of funds for both self-service and scan-on-demand (11% each). At first glance, it appears that the frequency of parent institution/university support was very low (only five responses) but a closer look at the "Other" answers shows that at least five additional respondents actually describe, in more detail, receiving funding from an institutional budget such as IT.

Funding for self-service equipment also came from student technology fees and state government. Only one self-service facility received a commercial vendor donation, so clearly vendors and libraries are not entering into this kind of partnership, even in fee-based facilities. Funding for scan-on-demand equipment also came from the state and endowments. As might be expected, several scan-on-demand facilities and one self-service unit indicated that they operate as auxiliary units that must, at least in part, cover the cost of equipment from their service revenue.

Ongoing maintenance and replacement of equipment quite closely follows the pattern of initial funding except that, as might be anticipated, grant and gift funding drop off after the initial equipment purchase and institutional funds seem to take over, either from the library or the parent institution budget. Fee-based services appear to continue to support themselves.

Overwhelmingly, the self-service units do not charge for scanning services (43 responses or 93%). This is clearly not the case for scan-on-demand facilities; only six of the thirty respondents (20%) reported no fees at all. The fee recovery mentioned above comes into focus in the comments from respondents to survey question 14. Fifteen of the scan-on-demand respondents indicated that charges apply per scan, but the comments reveal more complex systems. Some do not charge local patrons, but charge for interlibrary loan or document delivery transactions. Some charge based on the difficulty of the job (cropping, oversized, etc.) One respondent reported that they charge according to the time used to do the job; another charged by article. Items for instructional or faculty use are not charged at one facility and another makes the distinction based on whether the job is research-related or not. One facility is clearly part of the campus copy service and as such, follows their fee schedule.

Policy

Of the functions specified for the self-service scanning workstations, the majority of respondents

(53%) designate priority use for scanning over all other activities, such as Web browsing, use of the library catalog, etc. Just over a quarter of respondents make no specific designation whatsoever and 13% reserve the machines for scanning use only. Only one library lets other functions take priority over scanning.

At most of the responding libraries, library policy does not seem to dictate what materials users can scan. Two-thirds of the libraries said they do not place any limitations on original material being scanned, even personal items. Twenty-six percent do limit use to scanning of library-owned materials. Of these, almost all (13 of 14 responses) were for scan-on-demand, suggesting that having staff responsible for scanning is instrumental in upholding this stricter policy. Other libraries report limitations on scanning due to size of material or physical restrictions of the equipment (20%). Only 11% limit scanning to materials for educational or research use.

When asked about the posting of copyright and fair use statements near self-scanning workstations, just over half of the respondents (26 of 50) report posting at least a statement about copyright law (e.g., Title 17 US Code). Almost one-third report posting no statements whatsoever and just over one-fourth post a statement about "fair use" guidelines. Only two libraries post a statement that scanning is for educational purposes only. Other respondents post statements about Canadian copyright law, post statements in the building but not near the workstations, or plan to post statements in the near future.

Publicity and Evaluation of Services

Upon implementing a new service, libraries typically undertake efforts to publicize the new service to their users through the use of media such as newsletters, Web sites, e-mail, flyers, and even radio and TV programming. However, major publicity efforts were not the norm for most libraries in this survey. When asked how they promoted new and ongoing scanning services, an overwhelming majority of the respondents simply used word of mouth (46 or 87%). Such reticence in promoting a new service may be due to the learning curve and technical support required for implementing a service that is largely technological. The second most popular means of promotion were signs and flyers (38 or 72%), closely followed by announcements in library classes and orientations (36 or 68%). Other traditional methods included use of faculty and library newsletters, library Web sites, campus newspapers, and e-mail, but no library used radio or television programming, perhaps because they are cost-prohibitive for perceived rates of return.

Like publicity, the evaluation of scanning services tends to be informal in most of the surveyed libraries. When asked about techniques used to evaluate the effectiveness of the scanning services, the largest portion of respondents (47 or 87%) simply listen to informal user feedback. A third or fewer actually track the number of scans (18 responses) or users (14 responses) and, as one might expect, a majority of the tracking locations are scan-on-demand facilities that are more likely to be required to keep statistics and/or budget figures. Ten libraries report that they do not evaluate or track their scanning services at all. Nine libraries track technical support questions and eight libraries include scanning in their formal user surveys.

The final question of the survey's evaluation section reveals an important but not surprising trend. Of the 37 libraries that keep scanning service usage statistics, almost all report an increase in use of the service since it was initiated. Only two libraries reported that use has stayed the same; both of these are self-service facilities. The only decrease in use was reported for a scan-on-demand service by a respondent who also reported an increase in use of their self-service workstations.

Benefits and Challenges

Probably the most enlightening parts of the survey are the open-ended responses from libraries when asked to list three benefits and three challenges of providing scanning services to library users. Over-

all, the number of unique statements for benefits seems to outnumber those for challenges. The responses are quite varied but do tend to fall into some discernable categories.

When looking at the advantages, a large number of respondents mentioned convenience as the primary benefit: "Patrons can do it themselves;" "Researchers can easily save information;" "Convenience for saving page images;" "Users do not have to retype texts;" "Easily manipulated in electronic format." Almost as many libraries suggest that scanning has actually *increased* access to their collections: "Ability to provide images of materials that normally would not leave the library;" "Makes microform documents more accessible," "Provides greater access to archival materials to off-site patrons;" "Allows quick access to resources in high density storage;" "Introduces users to digital resources." A number of other responses talk about the added benefit of integrating additional resources into students' and faculty's research and assignments: "Faculty digitizing old slides for use in new PowerPoint lectures;" "Scanning of images needed for manuscripts;" "Produces electronic equivalents that can be employed in … student papers;" "Users can use the scanned documents in term papers, lab reports, class notes." Probably the most enthusiastic comments came from libraries who feel scanning services have brought them good publicity: "Enhances library's reputation;" "Boosts the image of the library…. [Users] claimed this is the best service that the library has ever offered;" "Creates a technologically rich environment of collaboration, discovery, and creativity;" "Demonstrates the library's role in providing info tech services;" and "This additional service is another opportunity to attract users to the library." Other rewards mentioned include the cost saving and environmental friendliness of scanning over traditional printing and photocopying, as well as the ability to do full-color scans in the absence of color photocopiers.

In terms of challenges to offering scanning to users, most of the responses centered on hardware and software issues. Several libraries referred to "keeping up" with needed upgrades to hardware and software on scanning workstations—one felt they were "2–3 versions behind"—and others were finding it costly to do periodic upgrades. One respondent cited the problem of "finding the right combination of software and drivers ...." Another found it difficult to find "software that provides a simple interface for public use." Quite a few also point out frustrations concerning initial and ongoing training for scanning. Providing training for both library personnel and end-users seems to be of most concern ("Large learning curve for users and staff.") One library quite aptly declared: "Users of scanning equipment sometimes need specialized assistance … [and] we do not currently have library staff members trained to provide this level of assistance." Lack of proper training seems to go hand-in-hand with comments concerning a general lack of proper technical support ("[S]canners generate a lot of questions, not necessarily related to the use of the equipment: file formats, image manipulations, etc.") and staffing ("Need to have enough man power to keep the service going.") In addition to keeping up with hardware, software, training, and technical support, several libraries reveal just keeping up with user demand as a challenge. Not only are users queuing up at scanning workstations, but some libraries are "overwhelmed with requests" or feeling "pressure to maintain or increase scanning services in other library functional areas." Other statements bring up issues of copyright ("Use of images in non-licensed ways"), cost recovery ("Somehow users expect to pay for paper printed copying but not anything electronically created"), service to non-affiliated users, and publicity ("Continuous marketing is needed").

Conclusion

While the intention of this study is not to offer a "best practices and procedures" scenario for libraries, results and documentation from the survey are offered in order to show the variety of models that currently exist for providing scanning services to library users. Libraries considering initiation of

scanning services or other kinds of "high tech" services can assess their own unique policies and infrastructure and perhaps make more informed decisions based on the experience of ARL libraries and the issues pointed out by the survey. Most responding libraries embrace the challenge and offer scanning just as they would provide photocopying, but it is how they offer this service that brings its own unique challenges. One must think of the large impact of putting a scanner out for public use: Who can use it? When can they use it? How do they use it? Who will provide and maintain the equipment? Who will provide technical support? Who will train the users? Who will train the staff? What policies will govern its use? These questions and many more emerge before, during, and after scanning becomes a part of any library's public service policy.