A Comparison of the Results of 
Academic and Public Libraries 
in the 1999 
Canadian Resource- Sharing Survey

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September 23, 1999

1. Background

In early 1999 a resource-sharing survey was sent to a number of Canadian libraries in every province and territory. One hundred and seventy-three libraries responded, including 50 academic libraries and 104 public libraries. Survey results can be considered accurate + or - 7.5% 19 times out of 20.

The responses of public, including municipal and regional or county libraries, and academic, including research libraries, university libraries and colleges, are compared and analyzed in this document. The document is organized according to the major themes from the survey questions.

2. Organizational Change

Approximately half of the respondents indicated that there had been organizational or administrative changes in the last five years which had impacted on resource sharing. Slightly more public (59.5%) than academic (50.0%) libraries reported this.

3. Membership in Consortia

More academic (88.0%) than public (73.1%) libraries have joined consortia. This may be a reflection of the role of provincial libraries in those provinces where the provincial library offers services which are similar to the services offered by consortia.

For both groups, negotiation of site licenses is the most frequently mentioned benefit of consortium or provincial library membership. Within the academic library sector site licensing is listed by 86.0% of respondents. The next most popular services within academic libraries are document delivery (60%) and priority ILL and negotiation of hardware/software purchases (both 50.0%).
The public library pattern is quite different. There are a number of services listed all in the range of 40%-49%. These specific services are:

- Negotiation of site licenses (49.0%)
- Priority ILL (47.1%)
- Technical/networking assistance (44.2%)
- Reference (40.4%)

As a point of comparison, only 16.0% of academic libraries listed reference services and only 22.1% of public libraries listed document delivery.

These results indicate that, other than the negotiation of site licenses, public and academic libraries use different services and probably have different reasons for joining consortia. It is also interesting to note that, despite site licensing being the major benefit from consortium membership, significant numbers of respondents, 64.0% of academic and 32.7% of public, negotiate their own licenses on behalf of their user community.

3. National Coordination

The two groups of respondents also have divergent views on the usefulness of national coordination. More academic libraries consistently reported that national coordination would be beneficial. Fifty eight percent (58%) of academic libraries, compared to 27.9% of public libraries, indicated that some of the services offered by consortia should be coordinated nationally. When specifically asked if national coordination of site licenses would be beneficial, 42.0% of academic libraries and only 13.5% of public libraries said yes.

4. Impact of Internet and WWW

More academic than public libraries are making their on-line public access catalogue (OPAC) available directly on Internet but a significant percentage of public libraries (60.6%) do report that their OPAC is available over Internet. For 33.7% of the public libraries the catalogue is available as part of a provincial network. For 56.0% of academic and 49.0% of public libraries this availability is having an impact on the library.

Roughly the same percentage of academic (64.0%) and public (61.5%) libraries indicate that Internet and the WWW have had an impact on the library and its resource-sharing services. Perhaps it is more surprising that approximately 40% did not indicate an impact. Within public libraries this may be because some have only recently been connected to the Internet or Internet access may not yet be generally available to the public at the library. Public libraries are changing rapidly in relation to their use of technology. Funding levels to support technology from municipalities are increasing somewhat which means the gap between academic libraries and public libraries should decrease over time.

5. Interlibrary Loan (ILL)
5.1 Lending

More public (58.7%) than academic (46.0%) libraries report an increase in interlibrary lending and the increase they report is of a greater magnitude. Twenty-six percent (26%) of academic libraries reported the increase to be between one and twenty percent, while 17.3% of public libraries report a 21%-40% increase. Eight percent (8%) of academic and 4.8% of public reported an increase of more than 100%.

Conversely, more academic (22.0%) than public (13.5%) libraries reported a decrease and the decreases were larger in the academic libraries -- 16% reporting decreases of 21%-40%.

These figures indicate that interlibrary lending continues to be a heavily used service and that public libraries are playing a greater role than in the past. A number of factors likely contribute to this, for example, the implementation of provincial networks, the availability of catalogues on Internet, and a more knowledgeable and demanding patron base.

Both academic (44%) and public (49%) libraries indicate that they are lending to different partners now than they did five years ago.

5.2 Borrowing

The pattern for interlibrary borrowing is virtually the same as the lending picture, but fewer libraries report an increase in borrowing (50.0% academic and 60.6% public). One minor difference is that about the same percentage of academic (14%) and public (16.3%) libraries report a decrease in borrowing. The use of reciprocal borrowing (patrons from one library can borrow directly from another library which is part of a different system or municipality) is prevalent in both sectors (66.0% of academic and 70.2% of public libraries).

5.3 Patron Self-Sufficiency

At present, patron-initiated services are found primarily in academic libraries. Twenty percent (20%) of academic libraries allow patrons to request material directly from other libraries and 26.0% allow patrons to order directly from document suppliers. Public libraries, however, are beginning to offer these services with more (10.6%) allowing patrons to request from other libraries but only 2.9% allowing them to order directly from document suppliers.
Amongst both groups it is usually the patron who pays any charges (26.0% of academic and 17.3% of public). Both groups also indicate that in some cases the charges come out of the ILL budget (12.0% academic and 4.8% public) but only academic libraries (12.0%) indicate that fees come from the acquisitions budget.

5.4 Document Delivery

More academic (40.0%) than public (20.2%) libraries report having specially negotiated contracts with couriers for document delivery. This difference indicates the different time-pressures that exist in academic and public libraries.

5.5 ILL Management Software

Both sectors report an almost equal penetration of ILL systems (48.0% of academic and 42.3% of public).

6. Catalogue Access

Academic libraries are the clear leaders in providing access to their OPACs from outside the library (82.0% vs 65.4% of public libraries), providing access to their digital collections through their OPAC (48% vs 9.6% of public libraries) and providing a single gateway to different types of information resources for their patrons (60.0% vs 38.5% of public libraries).

7. Union Catalogues

7.1 Reporting to Union Catalogues

According to the survey, the majority of libraries (76.0% academic and 73.1% public) report to at least one union catalogue; however, the majority, 66%-67% report to regional catalogues. Within academic libraries, 14% report to a local catalogue, 44% to a national catalogue, and 24% to an international union catalogue. Significantly fewer public libraries report their holdings to local (5.8%), national (9.6%) or international (1.9%) union catalogues. Thirty-two percent (32%) of academic and 6.7% of public libraries report to the National Library’s AMICUS union catalogue. Among academic libraries, 18% report to OCLC. These reporting patterns demonstrate the importance of regional union catalogues in national resource sharing.

7.2 Use of Union Catalogues

Patrons have access to union catalogues in 58.0% of academic and 48.1% of public libraries.
Library staff in both academic and public libraries use union catalogues primarily for ILL searching (82% academic and 78.8% public) and ILL requesting (70.0% academic and 73.0% public). Their usage for other functions is ranked differently. For academic libraries the ranking is: to find cataloguing copy (58%), reference (48%), acquisitions work (42%), and to locate authority records (38%). Among public libraries the ranking is as follows: reference (49%), to find cataloguing copy (35.6%), to locate authority records (26.0%), and acquisitions work (25.0%). The use of a union catalogue is varied but the traditional ILL usage continues to be the single most important reason for maintaining a union catalogue.

8. Virtual Catalogues

Roughly the same percentage of academic (30.0%) and public (25.0%) libraries indicated that their catalogue is part of a virtual catalogue but many more academic (70.0%) than public (46.2%) libraries indicated that they search virtual catalogues. Some respondents defined a virtual catalogue as a catalogue based on Z39.50 searching of disparate databases but others considered general web access to individual catalogues to be a virtual catalogue.

The patterns of usage for virtual catalogues are different between the two groups as the table below illustrates:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Academic</th>
<th>Public</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>locate cataloguing copy (58.0%)</td>
<td>ILL (34.6%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ILL (54.0%)</td>
<td>locate cataloguing copy (29.8%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>reference (40.0%)</td>
<td>reference (26.0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>collection development (32.0%)</td>
<td>locate authority records (18.3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>acquisitions (30.0%)</td>
<td>collection development (15.4%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>locate authority records (24.0%)</td>
<td>acquisitions (11.5%)</td>
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9. Conclusions

These results would seem to indicate that more academic libraries are using technology to provide access to their catalogues and collections and to support patron-initiated services but that public libraries are closing the gap. As particularly demonstrated by the data on ILL, public libraries are beginning to play a more predominant role and resource-sharing patterns and partnerships are changing.

An equal percentage of academic and public libraries report their holdings to union catalogues. Most report to regional union catalogues and a much larger percentage of academic than public report nationally and internationally.

A much greater percentage of academic libraries than public use virtual catalogues although issues remain to be resolved related to the development of virtual catalogues which are capable of emulating the functionality of a centralized union catalogue. Until issues such as the implementation of a common agreement on the choice of options within the Z39.50 standard for multiple database searching are developed, the exploitation of virtual catalogues will be limited.

The survey results show clearly that Canadian libraries are living in a hybrid environment which will continue for some time into the future. New electronic services, such as virtual catalogues and patron-initiated ILL, are being implemented but traditional resource-sharing activities, such as reporting to centralized union catalogues and shipping printed material on ILL, are continuing. One of the challenges being faced is how to effectively exploit the potential of technology and the future while continuing to provide traditional services valued by Canadian library patrons.