

Implementing Holds Limits in OWLSnet

Setting the limit to 10 vs. 15

At the Jan 2009 AAC meeting, OWLSnet staff concluded that reducing the number of holds allowed per person would be a reasonable and effective way to curtail the growth in delivery volume and resource sharing. We believe that reducing the holds limit to 15 is likely to have a significant impact on volume while affecting a small number of patrons.

However, as we discussed at that meeting, we believe this is only likely to reduce the volume 10 to 15 percent of the total. Considering that ILL has been growing from 15 to 20 percent annually for the last three years, it's possible, perhaps even probable, that reducing the holds to 15 will *not* have a significant *long-term* impact on delivery volume and resource sharing. In light of this discussion, OWLSnet staff were asked to estimate the impact of reducing to 10 the number of holds allowed per person.

The best data we have available is the one-day snapshots from Millennium's View Holds – which includes detailed information on every hold existing in the system on a particular day. A snapshot of March 12, 2009 shows a total of 53,650 holds, placed by 11,857 patrons. 574 of these patrons have more than 15 holds. If the total number of holds were reduced to 15, the total number of holds would be reduced to 48,374, a reduction of about 10 percent. 1,116 patrons have more than 10 holds. If the total number of holds were reduced to 10, the total number of holds would be reduced to 43,801, a reduction of about eighteen percent.

These numbers suggest that reducing the holds limit to 10 would have a much stronger affect on delivery volume and resource sharing, and also affect many more patrons - about 22 patrons per building, rather than about 10 patrons per building on any given day.

Proposed Implementation Plan for reducing holds limit

OWLSnet staff were also asked to develop an implementation plan for limiting the number of holds. We would recommend that the change starts far enough in the future that libraries are able to effectively inform their patrons – perhaps June 1st?

Here are a few of the things we can do to help the transition go smoothly:

Place information about the change in InfoSoup (home page and my account page)

The proposed limit is a *maximum* holds limit, rather than a set holds limit. Libraries are still free to have a lower hold limit if they choose. However, if a limit of 10 holds is implemented, no libraries are likely to have a limit lower than the maximum; if a limit of 15 holds is implemented, the Appleton Public Library will keep their holds at their current limit of 10. So - the actual limit we choose has implications for notifying patrons of the change in InfoSoup. If we choose a limit

of 15, any entry in InfoSoup will need to be relatively generic, but if we choose a limit of 10, the entry in Infosoup can be more specific.

Prepare bookmarks to offer to your patrons

We'll work with member libraries to design and print a bookmark that you can hand out to your patrons, explaining the upcoming change.

Develop announcement about the change that libraries can place on their own homepages

We'd expect ours to read a bit differently, but here's the text that one library system used when making a similar change:

Beginning February 2, the number of holds you can have on your record at any time will be reduced from 20 to 10. This decision was made by the C/W MARS Executive committee in an effort to reduce delivery costs throughout both the Central and Western regions in light of current budget constraints and anticipate budget reductions in FY 2010.

If you attempt to place any holds after you have reached your limit of 10 holds, you will see the following message: "There is a problem with your library record. Please see a librarian." At this point, you will not be able to place any holds until some of your outstanding requests come in and are checked out by you, reducing your number of holds to less than 10.

During the transition time, this new policy will not affect the number of holds placed before February 2 that exceeds the new limit of 10 holds.

Hold pickup slips can be edited to include this information

We'd be happy to work with member libraries on adding information about the change to the hold pickup slips during the transition period. Once that period is over, this additional text can be removed from the hold slips.