

Brainstorming 'bout Browsing

Background

At the September 2009 AAC meeting, after the discussion of rental collections, OWLS was asked to present information on options to more effectively and efficiently put materials into patron's hands. The group reviewed the document "[More Face time!](#)" and talked through the options presented.

At that meeting, we agreed to table two ideas, making some items local pickup only and browsing collections of specific types of items, such as videos. Interest was expressed in looking at three other options, browsing collections, shortening the time on the holdshelf and having a short loan for DVDs. Instead of attempting to explore all of these at once, we decided to start with one. Cherie from Oconto Falls, Rebecca from Black Creek, Colleen from Appleton and Kristie from Shawano agreed to get together to brainstorm about browsing collections.

On Wednesday, October 28, Cherie, Rebecca, Colleen, and Gerri (from OWLS) met to discuss implementing browsing collections in OWLSnet. (Unfortunately, at the last minute, Kristie was unable to attend.)

What is the problem we're trying to solve?

In the group's opinion, browsing collections answer the question, "Why don't you ever have anything new on the shelf?" For some patrons, the quality of our collection matters less than their ability to walk in and check out something new from off the shelf. Browsing collections are unlikely to have a significant effect on delivery and holds volume. However, browsing collections might help us do a better job of serving the patron who primarily browses for new material.

Issues

The group recognized the following as potential problems in implementing browsing collections:

- Cost of maintaining another collection might be prohibitive for some libraries, making them unable to participate.
- The system needs to be fair to all OWLSnet member libraries – materials still need to be available to lend on an equivalent basis.
 - If some libraries can't participate, browsing collections might be inequitable.
- Because libraries have limited materials budgets, this will mean that libraries would purchase fewer items for their regular collections
- Reduction in regular collections may lengthen hold lists and patron wait times.
- We need shared parameters to make the program (relatively) simple to administer and operate.

Recommendations

- Language: for the purpose of our discussion, we're using the term "browsing collection." However we also like the term "lucky day collection", which some patrons may be familiar with. In any case, the group strongly recommends that we use one term and be consistent with it in all OWLSnet libraries.
- Browsing collection items should not be holdable.
- We recommend that browsing collection items should not be eligible for set-asides.
 - This *does mean* that browsing collections are only useful for patrons visiting a specific location. While we recognize that the county libraries have expressed some concern about this model, it does seem to be the standard model for a browsing collection, even in those libraries with multiple sites.
- Browsing collection items should check out for one week and not be renewable.
- Patrons should be limited to checking out one or two browsing collections items at a time. The group recommends that we choose either one-at-a-time, or two-at-a-time as a system-wide setting.
- Since this collection is aimed at addressing a patron need, we should consider preventing staff from checking out browsing collection items.
- In order to put an item in a building's browsing collection, the building must first have a copy in their standard (holdable) collection.
 - However, for county libraries, the library may add an item to a browsing collection if the library owns three additional copies shelved in standard, holdable collections – even if those copies are shelved at different buildings. Expressed as a ratio: for every three copies of an item in their regular collections, they may have one copy in a browsing collection.
- A maximum number of browsing collection items should be designated for each library, ranging from approximately 20 items to 200, based on a yet-to-be determined formula.
- The group discussed a lot of different ideas for allocating the number, but didn't decide on one specific plan. We did agree that the number of items allowed in each libraries browsing collection could be based on:
 - Size of the library
 - OWLSnet fee shares
 - Book budget of the library
 - Lender/borrower ratio
 - Some combination of the above
- Browsing collection items should be configured in Millenium as follows:
 - A separate ltype should be assigned to browsing collection items.
 - These items should be suppressed from display in InfoSoup.
 - Browsing items should also have a browsing location code at each library, so it's easy for staff from other libraries to see in the Millenium client when an item belongs to a browsing collection.