

Time Test Report

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September 13, 2007

Introduction and Goals:

In the fall of 2006 Access Services, Cataloging and Metadata Services, and Preservation Services joined forces to conduct an End Processing Time Test. The goal of the test was to track randomly selected items from the daily New Book Truck and to gather information on how long it takes for the various end-processing activities to be completed.

The New Book Truck is an aggregation of nearly all materials cataloged within a given day. It also includes materials that have been assigned a new call number or library location during that day. The materials gathered on the truck are already cataloged, and are ready for attachment of spine labels and other end processing functions.

We started with a rough estimate of ten days from date of cataloging to date of shelving, but wanted to confirm this information. We also wanted to discover if term break times in the academic calendar had an impact on the workflow due to the reliance on student employees for end-processing tasks.

Knowing how long it takes for an item to be available to our library users is important because the Innovative system and other locally-developed systems use the date of cataloging to drive a number of user notification processes. These include:

- "New-On Way to Shelf" Status message in the Library Catalog display, which is currently set to automatically change to "Available" after five days.
- New Acquisitions Lists, generated monthly, which are currently set to show users any materials cataloged 10-40 days ago.
- "Preferred Search", which is currently set to send weekly emails to users listing all the citations that match their search criteria and were cataloged 10-17 days ago.

The overall goal is to arrive at an accurate time estimate so that the timer on these services is set properly. Notifying users of new titles before they are available for circulation is not desirable.

Method:

In order to capture a representative sample the test was run in two portions, each lasting one week. For each week approximately 25% (40-60 volumes) of items on the daily "New Book Truck" were randomly selected. Total sample size was approximately 250 volumes per week. The New Book Truck contains nearly all new library materials with the exception of web-based digital materials and maps. Two time periods were selected: October 30 – November 3; and December 4 – 8. The October date would represent the

library at full student employee strength, the December date would represent declining student workers because of end of term.

This test depended on the assistance of staff throughout the library system. Once an item was randomly selected from the New Book Truck a streamer was placed in it and staff were requested to date and initial the streamer as it arrived in their processing area. Items typically move off the New Book Truck to the Revision Truck for review by Cataloging staff then on to Access Services or the various libraries for shelving. That path can have numerous side journeys if an item needs repair, binding, or revision. The authors of this report would like to thank all library staff that faithfully dated and initialed the hundreds of streamers this test generated. Without their participation the test would have failed.

Results:

There was a wide variation of processing time but generally new materials moved from the New Book Truck to the shelf within nine days during the regular term, twelve days during term break. Jones DVDs usually arrived within one day; items for commercial binding took the longest amount of time. Other than Jones no location had exceptional speed of processing.

Intersession had a tremendous impact on processing turn-around time. Items tested in October took an average of nine days to be processed; 83% of the items were on shelf within twenty days. The December sample shows a dramatic increase in processing time; the average turn-around increases by three days to twelve days but more significantly slightly more than half of the collection (56%) is processed under twenty days. This is a decrease of 28% when compared to October with full student staffing.

Recommendations:

1. Change the automatic message, "New – On Way to Shelf" from five days to ten days from the date of cataloging except for Jones. The Jones message could be revised to two days.
2. Leave the "New Acquisitions List" and "Preferred Search" time formula as is.
3. Future automatic alert functions should be set for ten days.
4. Within the Library define what is an acceptable turn-around time for end processing and make commitment to meeting that goal. Reducing the turn-around time would require identification of new staff resources. The book vendor consolidation process might bring end processing time savings but what and how much is not yet known.
5. Reexamine dependence on student staffing of production-oriented workflows. The test results demonstrated a measurable increase in end processing turn-around times during term breaks.