Customer Satisfaction with Interlibrary Loan Service– deliverEdocs: A Case Study

Zheng Ye (Lan) Yang

ABSTRACT. In 2002, the Texas A&M University Libraries implemented a new electronic document delivery service called deliverEdocs. The service uses Illiad software. We began to offer free desktop delivery of any article, even those found on our own Libraries' shelves.

This was a new concept for the library staff and for our users. While we received many comments from our users, we also needed an objective method to fully evaluate the new service. A customer satisfaction survey was developed to gain a better understanding of users' responses to deliverEdocs. The survey was sent in February 2003 to 400 registered users, and had a response rate of 54%. Among the areas surveyed were factors of users' satisfaction, users' expectation of turnaround time, change in order activity since deliverEdocs, users' preferred means of communication with interlibrary loan staff, and areas for improvement. The results of the survey gave us valuable feedback. The survey proved that users truly appreciated the new service. *[Article copies available for a fee from The Haworth Document Delivery Service: 1-800-HAWORTH. E-mail address: <docdelivery@haworthpress.com> Website: <http://www.HaworthPress.com> © 2004 by The Haworth Press, Inc. All rights reserved.]*

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INTRODUCTION

On June 17th, 2002, Texas A&M University Libraries implemented a new interlibrary loan and document delivery service, named deliverEdocs. At the same time, the Libraries switched from the Interlibrary Loan Management Software Clio to ILLiad. With the initiation of deliverEdocs service, the Libraries began to provide free electronic desktop delivery of articles and book chapters to about 50,000 patrons including faculty, staff, graduate, and undergraduate students, as well as registered distance-learning students. The Libraries' philosophy is "to get the material for our patrons, no matter where the material resides, either in the Texas A&M University Libraries or anywhere in the world." We deliver photocopied articles to the patrons electronically and deliver loans to campus branch libraries for patrons to pickup. To anticipate the overwhelming requests we would receive after announcing the new free service, the Texas A&M University Libraries purchased three additional Fujitsu 4000 series scanners for the Interlibrary Services unit, bringing the total to six scanners. From the start, the service was well received. There was a 159% increase in usage of Interlibrary Services between the periods September 1, 2001 to March 31, 2002 and September 1, 2002 to March 31, 2003. We processed 84,783 requests between June 17th, 2002 and March 31, 2003, of which, 48,759 were for interlibrary loan and 36,024 were for document delivery. Five full-time staff members and five FTE student assistants processed an average of 400 borrowing and document delivery requests per day.

Because no assessment of the Texas A&M University users' satisfaction had been undertaken in many years, it was decided to conduct a survey to determine both strengths and weakness. The objectives of the study were to:

- Determine if there was an increase in the number of requests because of the new services;
- Identify the reasons patrons were satisfied with the new services;
- Examine the areas that could be improved based on users' suggestions/comments;
- Determine users' expected turnaround time;
- Ascertain whether Interlibrary Services meets users' expectations in terms of turnaround time;
- Examine users' preferred means of communication when they have questions regarding their deliverEdocs requests;

- Determine the effectiveness of posting Interlibrary Services Polices and FAQs on the web.

LITERATURE REVIEW

A literature review revealed a number of studies had been done to examine users' satisfaction with Interlibrary Loan (ILL) and in-house document delivery services. In 1994, Martin and Kendrick presented a vision of how users may expect to conduct research and use document delivery and interlibrary loan in the not-too-distant future.[1] In 1995, Perrault and Arseneau surveyed user satisfaction and expectation of ILL services at Louisiana State University and found that there was a high level of satisfaction with the ILL service.[2] In 1996, Levene and Pedersen compared the results of a 1995 ILL user satisfaction survey conducted among the Greater Midwest Regional Library Consortium (GMRLC) members with those results specific to Iowa State University and University of Arkansas. They described and compared policies and procedures at these two institutions to determine how different service strategies may affect customer satisfaction.[3]

Using the customer satisfaction survey results from the Greater Midwest Research Libraries Consortium member libraries, Weaver-Meyers and Stolt (1996) discussed the factors that influenced complete customer satisfaction.[4] Fong (1996) analyzed comments drawn from GMRLC customer satisfaction survey and assessed how users value interlibrary loan services in research environments. She confirmed the theory that customer satisfaction relies on multiple characteristics of service and not only on turnaround time.[5]

In 2001, Landes surveyed the entire faculty, staff, and student body of State University of New York at Geneseo aiming to find out whether patrons using ILL are satisfied with the service and to discover the reasons why non-ILL users are not using the service.[6]

The present study was undertaken to compare the findings from this survey with those earlier studies and compare and contrast those previous conclusions.

METHODOLOGY

The current survey using 23 questions was conducted in February 2003 (see Appendix). There were about 5,600 registered deliverEdocs users as of February 1, 2003. The author randomly selected four hun-

dred patrons and distributed the survey to them. Two hundred sixteen participants returned the survey yielding a 54% return rate. No second mailing was undertaken to achieve a higher return rate. Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) was used to tabulate and analyze the survey data.

FINDINGS

Users' Profile

Graduate students (57.9% of users, 125) seemed to be the main users of the deliverEdocs service, followed by faculty (21.3%, 46.) Undergraduate students (6.0%, 13) were not heavy users of Interlibrary Services. Over half of the respondents (54.2%, 117) were males.

The return rate was highest from those identifying themselves as representatives of the College of Liberal Arts, 26.2% (54), and College of Agriculture, 25.2% (52), followed by College of Medical Sciences and Veterinary Medicine, 10.7% (22), College of Business, 8.7% (18), College of Engineering, 8.3% (17), College of Education, 7.3% (15), and College of Science, 5.3% (11).

About 22.6% (48) of the respondents had never used the Interlibrary Services before the implementation of deliverEdocs.

Awareness of the New Service and Pattern of Order Activity

The Libraries advertised the new service via several avenues, including advertisements posted in the campus newspaper, flyers distributed to the colleges, and announcements distributed via the campus-wide listserv. Ironically, only 12.5% (27) of the respondents found out about the new services through these means. Over 30% (65) of the respondents came across the new service by submitting the requests to our previous web form, which redirected them to deliverEdocs, while 29.6% (64) of the respondents started using our new service because of their friends'/colleagues' recommendations, and 20.8% (45) were referred by the library staff to try the new service.

Close to fifty percent (46.3%, 100) of the respondents submitted their requests on a weekly basis, 36.1% (78) monthly, and 5.1% (11) indicated that they submitted their requests on a daily basis.

Users were asked if their ordering activity had changed since the implementation of deliverEdocs. As the author had expected, 62.8% (131)

reported that they submitted more requests, 35.8% (75) indicated that there was no change, and only 1.4% (3) said that they ordered less (Figure 1).

DeliverEdocs promised to provide free copy service for items held in the Texas A&M University Libraries. Thus, it is not surprising to find out that more than one-third (36.4%, 78) of the respondents used deliverEdocs mainly to obtain items held in the Texas A&M University Libraries. Still, almost half (47.7%, 102) of the respondents requested items not owned by Texas A&M, and 15.9% (34) did not know whether their item received came from Texas A&M University libraries or elsewhere. The intent of deliverEdocs is to provide a seamless document delivery service to the users.

It is encouraging to realize that 86.6% (187) of the responding users claimed that they did check our Libraries' online catalog before submitting requests to deliverEdocs.

Factors of Users' Satisfaction

The new service was overwhelmingly well received and appreciated. Close to two-thirds of the respondents (69.9%, 151) replied that they were "very satisfied" with deliverEdocs, and 26.4% (57) said they were "satisfied," a 96.3% approval rate. Five of the respondents (2.3%) were undecided about their opinions about the service. Two participants responded negatively, and one indicated that she was very unsatisfied with the service. The approval rate compares favorably with the "93.26 percent combined approval rating of satisfactory to excellent" from Perrault and Arseneau's finding in their survey.[7]

When asked approximately what percentage of their requests were filled, 77.6% (166) received over 90% of their requested items, 17.8% (38) received about 70%, and only 4.7% (10) indicated that they received near or less than 50% of the requested items. There is no strong correlation between the filled rates and customers' satisfaction. For those ten respondents whose filled rates were near or under 50%, six (60.0%) of them were either "satisfied" or "very satisfied" with our services. The other three respondents were undecided about the service and their reported filled rate was 50% or under.

Table 1 shows the factors that influenced respondents' satisfaction with deliverEdocs services. "Documents are delivered electronically" and "deliverEdocs is a free service" were both cited as the main reasons respondents were satisfied with the services (84.1%, 179). "Requests were filled promptly" (77.9%, 170) was the next highly recognized sat-

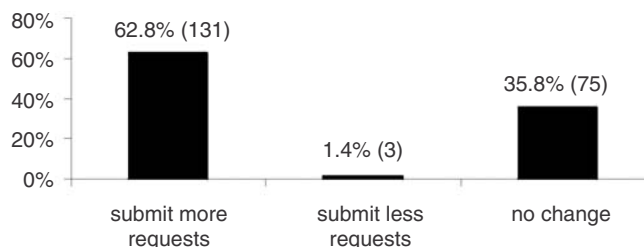FIGURE 1. Change in Respondents' Order Activity Since deliverEdocs (N = 209)

TABLE 1. Factors of Users' Satisfaction (N = 213)

Questions: If you are satisfied with Interlibrary Services and deliverEdocs, it is because:

(users are encouraged to choose as many answers as applicable)

Factors	% (N)
Documents are delivered electronically	84.1% (179)
deliverEdocs is a free service	84.1% (179)
Requests were filled promptly	77.9% (166)
I don't have to go to the library to copy	69.9% (149)
I get timely e-mail notification of my request availability	50.7% (108)
I can track the status of the requests online 24/7*	42.7% (91)
Interlibrary Services staff are very helpful	38.5% (82)
The quality of scanned item is good	34.3% (73)
I can resubmit the requests online 24/7	32.7% (70)
I can renew the requests online 24/7	28.6% (61)
I can cancel my requests online 24/7	24.9% (53)

* Twenty-four hours a day and seven days a week.

isfactory factor, followed by "I don't have to go to the library to copy the item myself" (69.9%, 149) According to the responses, the "e-mail notification of the availability of the requested items" was not regarded as one of the key factors that satisfied users, because only 50.7% (108) of the respondents appreciated this function. Even though the customers

were very pleased with the service, the responses show that the respondents did not realize the fact that it was the staff that made good services possible because only 38.9% (82) explicitly indicated that they were satisfied with the services because of helpful staff. The findings from this study differ from those in Fong's whose analysis of the comments drawn from a customer satisfaction survey among the Greater Midwest Research Libraries Consortium found that staff interaction was ranked in the top three reasons for users' satisfaction.[8] The reason for the difference may be that users in 1996 were probably more dependent upon the library staff for answers and assistance than users in 2002 because of less mediation. Under the current deliverEdocs system, where the majority of transactions take place online, mediation does not take place.

Users' Expectation of Turnaround Time

Based on the returned responses, users' expectation of turnaround time is high. For items held in the Texas A&M University Libraries, 43.1% (88) perceived that they should get it within two days, 31.9% (65) thought they should have the item within three days, and 7.8% (16) did not care how long they had to wait, as long as they received it eventually (Figure 2).

More than half of the respondents (54.5%, 104) reported that Interlibrary Services met their expectation "most of the time," and 28.3% (54) indicated that Interlibrary Services "always" met their expectation (Figure 3).

Users are fairly realistic about their expectation of turnaround time for items not owned by Texas A&M University Libraries; only 6.1% (13) expected to receive it in three days. However, they are not shy about expressing their expectation level; 40.7% (87) thought items should be available within four to seven days, and 32.2% (69) considered two weeks to be adequate time to receive their requested items. About 13.1% (28) of the respondents did recognize that the turnaround time was dependent upon item availability, and 2.3% (5) did not mind the time they had to wait, as long as they would receive it eventually (Figure 4). This finding is almost identical to earlier studies. Landes found that 74% of the respondents indicated an acceptable turnaround time would be 1-2 weeks, and "only 6% said they thought 1-2 days was acceptable."[9] Perrault and Arseneau noted "the largest proportion of responses fell in the category of two weeks."[10] The finding also echoed Weaver-Meyers and Stolt's survey result which claimed: "customer perceptions about timeliness suggest that materials received within

FIGURE 2. Users' Expectation of Turnaround Time for Items Held in Texas A&M University Libraries (N = 204)
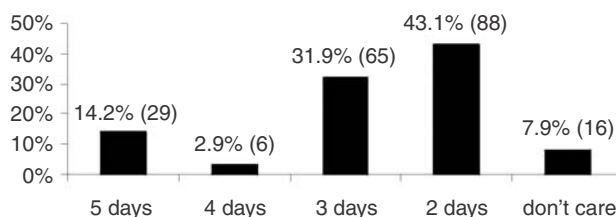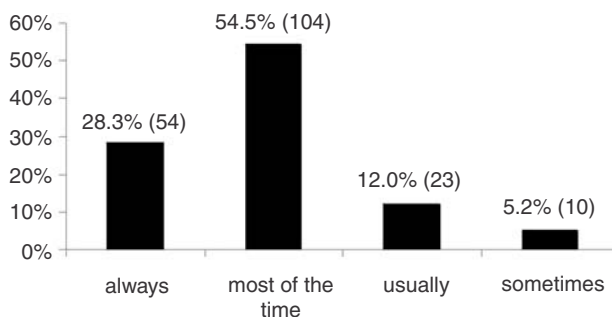

FIGURE 3. Interlibrary Services Meets Users' Turnaround Time Expectation for Items Held in Texas A&M University Libraries (N = 191)

two weeks satisfy the average academic's "window of usefulness" for loaned items."[11]

Three-fourths of the respondents either replied that Interlibrary Services "always" (20.7%, 43) or "most of the time" (49.5%, 103) met their expectation (Figure 5).

Four respondents (1.9%) indicated that Interlibrary Services rarely met their turnaround time expectation. Ironically, three out of these four respondents were still "very satisfied" with Interlibrary Services and deliverEdocs. They all had requested items held in the Texas A&M University libraries, and Interlibrary Services either "always" or "most of the time" met their second day turnaround time expectation. Overall, those four respondents were "very satisfied" with the service. This might also suggest and reconfirm the statements that there is "no corre-

FIGURE 4. Users' Expected Turnaround Time for Interlibrary Loan Items (N = 214)
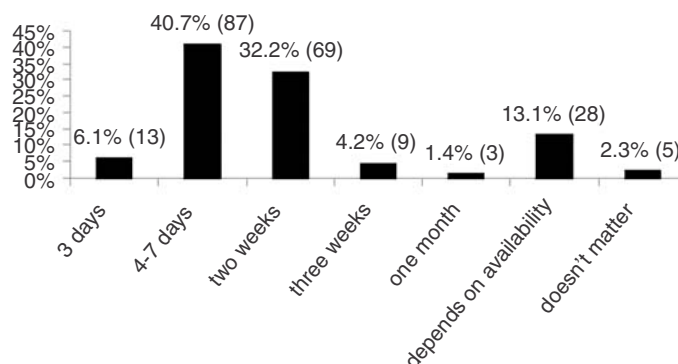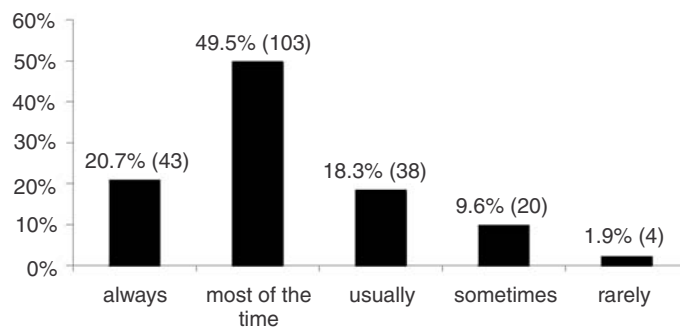

FIGURE 5. Interlibrary Services Meets Users' Turnaround Time Expectation for Interlibrary Loan Items (N = 208)

lation between delivery speed and user satisfaction,"[12] and "ILL users are much more forgiving than one might anticipate."[13]

Means of Communication with ILL Staff

Interlibrary Services staff would appreciate if patrons could specify the date that they no longer needed the requested item, so that we do not have to keep pursuing the unfilled requests to the next string of libraries. However, the survey findings suggest that still there are a little over

one-third of the respondents (34.7%, 74) who rarely indicate the "not wanted after" date in the electronic request form. More than half (57.5%, 122) of the responding users never read the Interlibrary Services/deliverEdocs policies and FAQs posted on the website. When patrons encounter problems, 34.6% (65) called Interlibrary Services office to find the answer, 30.3% (57) browsed the polices/FAQs pages on the Web, another 29.3% (55) opted for e-mailing Interlibrary Services staff.

Users' Comments and Areas for Improvement

The survey asked users for suggestions that could help improve Interlibrary Services and deliverEdocs. Almost half of the respondents provided comments. The comments were very positive; examples included the following:

> "Interlibrary Services is the best part of the library–invaluable."

> "Fairly rapid return on requests for resources held at other libraries. I think it is a spectacular service. If it continues to work as well as it has been in the past, I will be happy."

> "Currently, this is an excellent and first-rate service and staff. Thanks for your great work–my research depends on it!"

> "Keep up the good work, your service has been an *extremely* valuable time saver and it has been greatly appreciated."

> "deliverEdocs is a *GREAT* service, essential to the academic community. It allows me to get more work done faster!"

> "Please do not change anything, I love deliverEdocs."

> "Keep it free and easy to use."

Some respondents confirmed the main purpose of offering interlibrary loan by commending: "The library doesn't hold many items I need for research, only by going to Interlibrary Services can I get a full and complete literature search."

Other patrons suggested that we should hold more seminars for students on how to use the services, publicize deliverEdocs more, and make the link available from Texas A&M University's main home page, because "the advertising is poor."

Only 13.1% (28) respondents were displeased with the quality of the scanned articles delivered to the Web because some pages were tilted, or

missing, and some had black margins that would consume too much ink when printed One patron noted: "use .txt or .doc format, .pdf sucks." Another suggested to "use other program to read/scan documents, because Adobe Reader takes forever to print."

CONCLUSION

It is clear from the survey results and from the increasing number of requests that users are truly satisfied with deliverEdocs. They submitted more requests because they like their requested articles delivered to them electronically and they do not have to pay to get this fast service. Interlibrary Services staff worked very hard to meet users' expected turnaround time, and succeeded in reaching this goal as indicated by the survey results. When users encountered problems with deliverEdocs, the majority of them opted to call or e-mail staff rather than browse the policies and FAQs of deliverEdocs posted on the Web.

The results of the survey gave Interlibrary Services timely usable feedback. We started to pay extra attention when scanning articles to ensure the highest quality possible without leaving any black marks at the bottom or sides of the page. We placed the deliverEdocs linkable logo on the front page of the Texas A&M University Libraries' home page for ease of use. We have decided to offer Interlibrary Services open house at the beginning of each semester to make people aware of the services. We also encourage our subject specialists/library liaisons to periodically remind their departmental faculty, students, and staff the various library services offered to them, especially deliverEdocs. We learned that referrals could be an important source of new users, with 50.5% (109) of respondents finding out about deliverEdocs from friends, colleagues, or library staff. This new service definitely is reaching users previously not served by Interlibrary Services, with 22.6% (48) of the respondents being new to Interlibrary Services.

The findings regarding user expectations were similar to these of other recent studies, with most users considering a turnaround time of four to seven days acceptable. In both this study and Landes' study, only 6% of the users thought the turnaround time should be 1-2 days to be acceptable. This shows that users' expectations of document deliver/ILL are not rising drastically.

Another survey will be undertaken in eighteen months. All Texas A&M University faculty, students, and staff, rather than only those who have registered with deliverEdocs, will be invited to participate.

NOTES

1. Harry S. Martin III and Curtis L. Kendrick, *Library Administration & Management* 8, no. 4 (Fall 1994): 223-227.

2. Anna H. Perrault and Marjo Arseneau, *RQ* 35, no. 1 (Fall 1995): 90-100.

3. Lee-Allison Levene and Wayne Pedersen, *Journal of Library Administration*, 23, no. 1-2 (1996): 55-71.

4. Pat L. Weaver-Meyers and Wilbur A. Stolt, *Journal of Library Administration*, 23, no.1-2 (1996): 23-42.

5. Yem S. Fong, *Journal of Library Administration*, 23, no.1-2 (1996): 43-54.

6. Sonja Landes, *Journal of Interlibrary Loan, Document Delivery & Information Supply*, 11, no. 4 (2001): 75-80.

7. Anna H. Perrault and Marjo Arseneau, *RQ* 35, no. 1 (Fall 1995): 94.

8. Yem S. Fong, *Journal of Library Administration*, 23, no.1-2 (1996): 50.

9. Sonja Landes, *Journal of Interlibrary Loan, Document Delivery & Information Supply*, 11, no. 4 (2001): 78.

10. Anna H. Perrault and Marjo Arseneau, *RQ* 35, no. 1 (Fall 1995): 96.

11. Pat L. Weaver-Meyers and Wilbur A. Stolt, *Journal of Library Administration*, 23, no.1-2 (1996): 23.

12. Pat L. Weaver-Meyers and Wilbur A. Stolt, *Journal of Library Administration*, 23, no.1-2 (1996): 24.

13. Lee-Allison Levene and Wayne Pedersen, *Journal of Library Administration*, 23, no. 1-2 (1996): 68.

APPENDIX. Customer Satisfaction Survey

Interlibrary Services / deliverEdocs
Texas A&M University

1. Are you?
   O faculty
   O graduate
   O undergraduate
   O staff
   O other
2. Are you?
   O male
   O female
3. Which college are you affiliated with? _____
4. Before deliverEdocs, did you use Interlibrary Services?
   O frequently
   O regularly
   O sometimes
   O rarely
   O never
5. How did you learn about deliverEdocs? (check one)
   O Interlibrary Services home page
   O colleague's/friend's recommendation
   O library announcement in The Battalion or listserv
   O library staff
   O other (please specify) _____
6. How often do you submit requests via deliverEdocs?
   O daily
   O weekly
   O monthly
   O seldom
7. How has your ordering activity changed since the implementation of deliverEdocs?
   O more requests
   O equal number of requests
   O fewer requests
8. Are your requested items mostly held in TAMU Libraries?
   O yes
   O no
   O uncertain

APPENDIX (continued)

9. Do you check TAMU Libraries' online catalog (https://libcat.tamu.edu) before submitting your requests via deliverEdocs?

   O yes

   O no

   O sometimes

10. Do you check TAMU Libraries' Electronic Resources (http://library.tamu.edu/resources) for full-text journals available online before submitting your requests via deliverEdocs?

    O yes

    O no

    O sometimes

11. If you chose "No" for questions 9 and/or 10, please specify. (check all that apply)

    O I am not aware of the resources pages.

    O I usually forget to check.

    O I did not know that I should check before submitting requests.

    O I did not think it was my responsibility to check.

    O other (please specify) _____

12. Approximately what percent of your requests are filled?

    O more than 90%

    O more than 70%

    O near 50%

    O less than 50%

13. Are you satisfied with Interlibrary Services and deliverEdocs?

    O very satisfied

    O satisfied

    O undecided

    O unsatisfied

    O very unsatisfied

14. If you are satisfied with Interlibrary Services and deliverEdocs, it is because (check all that apply)

    O Requests are filled promptly.

    O Documents are delivered electronically.

    O I do not have to go to the library to copy the item myself.

    O deliverEdocs is a free service.

    O Interlibrary Services staff is very helpful.

    O I can track the status of my requests online 24/7.

    O I can cancel my requests online 24/7.

    O I can resubmit my requests online 24/7.

    O I can renew my requests online 24/7.

    O I get timely e-mail notification when Interlibrary Services cannot fill my request.

O Scanned item quality is good.

O other (please specify) _____

15. If you are not satisfied with Interlibrary Services and deliverEdocs, it is because (check all that apply)

O requests are not filled promptly.

O I do not like to receive items electronically.

O Interlibrary Services staff is not helpful.

O the online request form is confusing.

O scanned item quality is poor.

O I had trouble retrieving my electronic article.

O I had trouble printing my electronic article.

O other (please specify)

16. What is your expectation of turnaround time for items held in TAMU Libraries?

O within 2 business days

O within 3 business days

O within 4 business days

O within 5 business days

O Anytime, so long as I receive my requested item.

17. Does deliverEdocs meet your expectation of turnaround time for items held in TAMU Libraries?

O always

O most of the time

O usually

O sometimes

O rarely

18. What is your expectation of turnaround time for items borrowed from other libraries?

O within 3 business days

O within 4-7 business days

O within 8-10 business days

O within 2 weeks

O within 3 weeks

O within one month

O I realize turnaround time is dependent upon item availability.

O Anytime, so long as I receive my requested item.

19. Does deliverEdocs meet your expectation of turnaround time for items borrowed from other libraries?

O always

O most of the time

O usually

O sometimes

O rarely

APPENDIX (continued)

20. When you submit requests, do you indicate a specific "Not Wanted After" date? (default 6 months)

    O always

    O most of the time

    O usually

    O sometimes

    O rarely

21. Have you ever read the Interlibrary Services Policies and FAQs located on our home page?

    O yes

    O no

22. When you have questions concerning deliverEdocs, you

    O browse Interlibrary Services Policies and FAQs

    O e-mail Interlibrary Services

    O call Interlibrary Services

    O other action (please specify)

23. Please suggest ways we can improve Interlibrary Services and deliverEdocs.

    _____
    _____
    _____

Thank you in advance for your assistance!