



**Focus Group 2 - Summary
TexShare ILL Working Group
February 5, 2002**

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1. Introduction

The Library of Texas is a program of the Texas State Library and Archives Commission (TSLAC) and the Texas Telecommunications Infrastructure Fund Board (TIF). The LOT hopes to bring the resources of Texas libraries to all Texans. The LOT will build upon the existing network infrastructure of Texas libraries and will encompass a number of components including:

- Online databases licensed by TSLAC for statewide access
- A government information locator and digital government information preservation program
- A virtual catalog enabled through the use of the ANSI/NISO Z39.50 information retrieval protocol
- An integrating search and retrieval interface to the LOT's multiple components
- A document delivery service based on interlibrary loan and other mechanisms.

The Texas Center for Digital Knowledge (TxCDK) at the University of North Texas, through the ZLOT project, has a contract with the TSLAC to demonstrate the feasibility of a Z39.50-based approach for distributed access to Texas' library resources. Specifically, ZLOT will develop specifications for critical components of the Library of Texas (LOT): a virtual catalog, an integrating search and retrieval interface, and a document delivery service framework.

1. Virtual catalog: To search across multiple library catalogs from a single interface to identify library resources without regard to geographical location of either the searcher or the resources.
2. Integrating search and retrieval interface: From a single interface, to integrate access to library catalogs, the state licensed online databases, and other resources.
3. Document delivery service framework: Once resources have been discovered and identified, to provide resource delivery services, e.g., interlibrary loan for materials or electronic access for digital resources.

While the purpose of this focus group was to collect qualitative data in the following three areas, document delivery services were the major interest and the participants were selected for their expertise in this area.

- User resource discovery needs currently not being addressed
- User expectations of the integrated search and retrieval interface
- User expectations of the ZLOT document delivery services.

2. Methodology

2.1 Description of the Participants

With one exception, focus group participants were members of the TexShare ILL Working Group. In all, 14 persons were invited to participate and eight agreed. Of the eight participants, three work in academic libraries ranging from small to large in size, four work in public libraries of various sizes, and one serves as the TexShare-Texas State Library liaison. The range of Texas locations represented extends from Houston to Richardson and from Lubbock to Commerce. These participants varied in their experiences with virtual libraries. One had six years experience with another state's virtual library and a few were involved in library efforts in support of distance education. Six of the libraries represented indicated they provided access to TexShare databases to their reference staff, four provided both in-house and remote access to patrons, and two provided in-house only access to patrons.

2.2 Description of the Process

The meeting was held on February 5, 2002 from 1:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m. via teleconference, with supporting materials accessible through the ZLOT project's web site. Participants dialed into a phone bridge at the University of North Texas in Denton and were requested to access the web site from their



locations. The web site provided an agenda for the meeting that included hyperlinks to two data-gathering forms participants completed and to two presentations used by the meeting facilitators. Upon entering or leaving the meeting and prior to speaking during the meeting, participants identified themselves in an effort to provide a context for their comments and to personalize the meeting. The three hour meeting began with introductions of the ZLOT staff, the TSLAC representative, and the focus group participants. The principal investigator guided participants through an overview presentation of the Library of Texas, highlighting the ZLOT project's focus.

Next, participants were asked to complete a brief online form describing their background and their library's experience with TexShare. After a 15-minute break, the focus group discussion began. Participants were directed to consider the needs of their patrons as a primary focus for their comments; however, a stated intent of this focus group meeting was to elicit these participants' particular expertise regarding document delivery issues. The ZLOT project manager, who guided the discussion through the following areas, facilitated the focus group.

1. Definition of LOT
2. LOT search and retrieval interface
3. Resource access and delivery services
4. Concerns about LOT

At the close of the focus group, participants were asked to complete an online feedback form, which allowed them to echo their contributions to the group meeting or to make additional contributions regarding issues and user needs vis-à-vis the Library of Texas. Overall, participants communicated in an open and interactive fashion. Most of the participants knew one another from professional contacts and the meeting had a respectful collegial climate.

2.3 Data Analysis

Notes were taken during the meeting by the ZLOT principal investigator, a research assistant, and the focus group moderator. Both the research assistant and the moderator analyzed their notes in accord with the needs and expectations specified in the purpose of the focus group:

- User resource discovery needs currently not being addressed
- User expectations of the integrated search and retrieval interface
- User expectations of the ZLOT document delivery services.

The focus group moderator integrated these two analyses, which were reviewed by the principal investigator. Additionally, participants' responses to the information and the feedback forms completed during the focus group were evaluated and are included in this summary report.

3. Needs and Expectations

3.1 Virtual Libraries

In feedback forms completed anonymously at the end of the focus group meeting, participants identified two primary characteristics of virtual libraries. These characteristics are listed below along with participant comments that exemplify them.

Ease of Use

- A consistent, uniform interface for searching multiple information resources
- Providing a more seamless integration to the resources of the state

Expansion of the Local Library

- Improving equal access to all Texans, regardless of geographical affiliation
- Linking every library as one library online



Other characteristics of virtual libraries included "diverse content", that is, including digital and physical formats, and "ease of delivery", that is, letting users identify and easily obtain materials they need. One participant noted that "the jury is out" on virtual libraries, commenting that there will likely be as many problems with virtual libraries as with traditional libraries and adding that the former may translate into spending more money and great effort for less service.

3.2 The Library of Texas

Also in the feedback forms completed anonymously at the end of the focus group meeting, participants identified two key concepts that characterized their perception of the Library of Texas. These concepts are labeled as: Single Interface and "It's Happening". Comments typifying these concepts are listed below.

Single Interface

- Many Texas information resources are underutilized because people do not know about them or about how to access them. A single well-publicized access interface could greatly increase awareness and use of these resources.
- Virtual catalog that enables single search to a single logical resource
- The integrating search and retrieval interface and the document delivery service

"It's Happening"

- There are some incredible challenges and opportunities in this venture
- That details and more specific reports should be emerging soon
- Great idea!
- Problems can be worked out

Participants identified the two most important user needs that the LOT would address in their libraries on the feedback forms completed at the end of the meeting as:

1. Resource availability
2. Remote access

User needs for resource availability included the ability to search other library collections expeditiously and to access information and resources not available in the local building. Remote access included a uniform interface and access to TexShare databases and, for regional libraries, the ability for users to more easily request materials by accessing information regarding resource availability.

When asked in the focus group meeting to describe their concept of the Library of Texas, participants noted that academic library users already have "extensive resources" and the LOT offers nothing new for them. Their users identify the information they need from available databases and make use of ILL requests through their institutions to obtain the resources. However, there was general agreement that the LOT will be better for public libraries, especially for those whose users are not in a metropolitan area. For these users, the LOT will offer much broader access to information resources.

3.3 Expectations of the Integrating Search and Retrieval Interface

Searching interfaces need to be developed to accommodate different user needs and capabilities. Regarding the organization of resources on the LOT interface, one participant thought subject organization would be useful and another participant stated "regional grouping is good" as "users are willing to go within certain areas" to obtain resources. For some libraries it is important to provide a bilingual interface. One participant asserted that if the LOT "is for all Texans, it makes sense" for the interface to be bilingual. Academic libraries have essentially four user groups: undergraduates, graduate students, faculty, and staff. Public libraries have "a wider range of user groups", including patrons who come to the library to use the computers, grade school students, and academic users.



Users, even at libraries where a common interface to local library resources and services has been established, face multiple interfaces when interacting with databases. Participants perceived that their users do not have much interest in learning different interfaces. A simple and uniform interface that provides LOT users with a common "look and feel" is preferred; "now we train users to search different catalogs and databases and that requires more technical skill." Some participants from academic libraries believed their users prefer the database interface with which they have gained familiarity. In general, participants agreed both academic and public library patrons have a low tolerance for search interfaces that require mastery of complex instructions.

One participant stated "the internet is training users to use key word searching" and, in fact, there was general agreement among participants that keyword searching is the dominant searching method in both public and academic libraries. In the latter case, this was decidedly true for undergraduates and less true for graduate students, who do use more advanced search criteria. One participant described keyword searching as a first step in a tiered search process in which additional criteria were employed in subsequent steps to narrow down the initial search results. Another participant indicated that subject-based groupings could be a second tier search interface after keyword searching. There was general agreement that advanced users would expect to search using criteria such as date of publication, ISBN, and OCLC number.

Participants generally agreed that users would like an indication of resource availability in search results, which would include whether access is restricted to local library users and an estimation of the timeframe to obtain an item. One person noted that full-text resources could be delivered instantaneously. Additionally, the format of the materials, for example, full-text, large print, video, or book-on-tape, would be of benefit in selecting resources. One participant thought that it would be useful to indicate in the retrieved results whether resources were "fee or free" to the patron and another participant added that the results should indicate the owner of each resource.

3.4 Expectations of the Document Delivery Service

Participants were very interested in expressing their thoughts and concerns regarding interlibrary loan services. Overall, there was agreement that a very cooperative and effective ILL infrastructure exists in Texas and that Texas libraries share a commitment to providing extensive interlibrary loan services.

Participants briefly identified the current range of options for resource sharing. Academic libraries and the larger public libraries use OCLC's ILL services. Smaller, non-OCLC member public libraries submit their ILL requests to one of the ten state library sponsored TexNet Interlibrary Loan Referral Centers. One participant from a TexNet Center library indicated that over half of the requests they receive are filled from their own collection. OCLC is their primary external source for processing ILL requests. Academic libraries receive reimbursements for loans made to Texas public libraries.

Among the options available for resource delivery are Ariel and Prospero, both of which are integrated resource delivery packages that use email and ftp for document delivery, and TExpress, a courier service that the TexShare web site describes as offering "five day-a-week pickup and delivery service to participating libraries, with deliveries around Texas in two days." One participant estimated that 80% of Ariel documents are delivered via email. One large academic library estimated that 40% of the resources they receive via ILL are from locations within Texas and 5% are from international locations. Resources are also delivered via UPS or US mail.

All participants agreed that non-mediated ILL was not feasible at this time and perhaps not even desirable. A few reasons for this position were identified.

1. Local resource availability screening. "One item may have many records and patrons may want to get it right away" without regard to its availability in the local library. Mediation assures that the local library is the loaner of choice prior to requesting the item from another library. One participant offered that it would be fine for users to initiate ILL requests given



information about resource availability. However, another participant noted the LOT system would "have to have geographical intelligence of the locations of resources."

2. Local patron screening. There was general agreement that priority for resource sharing requests is given to a library's own patrons. "We are obligated to our local patrons first." One participant stated that it is not always possible to extend access to other libraries' patrons, much less to all Texans. Another participant observed that this was an example of "the mediated advantage", that is, "there is an actual review before a request goes anywhere."
3. Load leveling. Participants suggested that large and Z39.50-compliant libraries might be overwhelmed with requests from other libraries in the LOT.
4. Financial responsibility. With current ILL methods, "financial responsibility of the institutions is clear. But with individuals it is different." What "authority" would assume liability for resources in the absence of the local library?
5. Citation verification. Mistakes in patrons' citations on ILL requests are identified and corrected in the mediation process. This saves time and money involved in processing incorrect requests. How would citations be verified if patrons directly submitted their requests to lending libraries?

In summary, participants did not believe that Texas libraries are ready for non-mediated document delivery services. Additionally, they stressed any new LOT document delivery services must build on existing services and methods that address the financial responsibilities of all parties in ILL transactions.

4. Issues

4.1 Equal Access

"The LOT concept suggests equal access to all resources for all Texans." One participant noted commercial database licenses limit user access and, in this regard, are not in concert with the "open-to-all" LOT environment. "The door is not open to all Texans. The LOT has to deal with that. Even then, firewalls and proxy servers can still block people. Equal access is not doable yet for us." Another participant cautioned, "It sounds good to say that all Texans can see the contents of every collection in the state. But most patrons won't really care that 200 libraries own book X. The real question is 'Can I get it? How? How soon? Will it cost me?' You don't want to spend huge amounts of time and money over-answering the question."

4.2 Authentication

In current practice users must be affiliated with a local library for purposes of authentication. Participants thought the TexShare card offers a good model for LOT authentication. In this model, a user's home or local library assumes financial responsibility for materials borrowed from other TexShare libraries by their patrons. The local library performs any necessary patron screening procedures and maintains patron contact information. One participant suggested that other authentication mechanisms, such as the one used in the state of Illinois, should be considered for the LOT. Illinois "divides the state into several regions and each region has a database of users." Another participant liked this idea and stated such a concept was "missing in the TexShare program."

4.3 Funding

Funding issues will need to be addressed in order for the LOT to succeed. In the current environment, public libraries' usage statistics for interlibrary loan and document delivery services are critical for determining State Library funding for TexNet referral centers and State Library reimbursements for academic libraries. How will the LOT document delivery services impact these existing procedures?



Additionally, management responsibility for the LOT raises several funding questions. Will there be a LOT staff at the State Library? Will the legislature provide all the funding? Will libraries have to pay for LOT services? The funds required to participate in the LOT, as well as sustainable funding for the LOT, are concerns for libraries.

5. Analysis and Summary

In general participants were open and interactive in their responses to the moderator's questions. The participants' expertise in ILL services was evident and they brought a good deal of experience to the discussions. At times there were pronounced gaps between what may have been either naïve questions or uninteresting topics posed by the facilitator and the responses of the group. It was evident that ILL and, in particular, non-mediated ILL was the topic of greatest concern to this group. Nonetheless, participants did identify users' needs and expectations of the LOT and its search and retrieval interface.

The search and retrieval interface of LOT should be easy to use, providing LOT users with a common "look and feel", and possibly bilingual. In general, participants agreed both academic and public library patrons have a low tolerance for search interfaces that require mastery of complex instructions. The LOT interface might present users with the option of searching subsets of resources grouped by subject matter or geographic region. A tiered searching approach to accommodate a range of users was proposed. The initial tier would offer a keyword search interface. A second tier might group the initial search results by subjects. More sophisticated users should be offered advanced searching criteria, which might include date of publication, ISBN, and OCLC number. The search results should indicate resource availability, format, cost, and ownership.

Participants had many concerns about document delivery in the LOT and emphasized the LOT document delivery services should be built on existing systems and policies. Participants rejected the concept of non-mediated ILL for the LOT. The following concerns related to non-mediated ILL were identified.

1. Local resource availability screening. Mediation assures that the local library is the loaner of choice prior to requesting the item from another library.
2. Local patron screening. Priority for resource sharing requests is given to a library's own patrons. It is not always possible to extend access to other libraries' patrons, much less to all Texans.
3. Load leveling. Participants suggested that large and Z39.50-compliant libraries might be overwhelmed with requests from other libraries in the LOT.
4. Financial responsibility. What "authority" would assume liability for resources in the absence of the local library?
5. Citation verification. How would the accuracy of citations be verified if patrons directly submitted their requests to lending libraries?

Participants identified three additional issues for the Library of Texas: (1) equal access for all Texans to LOT resources, (2) funding for the management responsibilities of the LOT, and (3) authentication of users to ensure financial responsibility and copyright compliance.

In general, participants thought the LOT would primarily be of value to public libraries, especially smaller and more rural libraries. For these libraries' users, the LOT would offer broader access to information resources and provide integrated resource discovery. However, some public libraries will be very concerned with the associated costs and resources needed to achieve these benefits. For academic libraries, participants predicted the LOT would have less significance. Academic libraries already have "extensive" resources and some already provide a common interface to library services. Larger academic libraries in particular may have little enthusiasm for participating in the LOT and may fear becoming overburdened by resource sharing requests.