Reinventing the Library from the Ground Up.

OR: How a natural disaster inspired Colorado State University (CSU) to develop a fast, equitable, and inexpensive ILL system.
What on Earth do you do when your library goes from this:
Overnight?

Some Facts and Figures (we’re library people, right?)

1. CSU finished a two year development project on July 25\textsuperscript{th} 1997.

2. On July 25, CSU received an 11” rainfall event in \textbf{TWO HOURS}.

3. Fort Collins’ annual average \textit{annual} precipitation is 14”, so the runoff system is not equipped to accommodate anything like this much rainfall.
Here is the Result:
Why is a Flooded Basement Such a Problem?

As part of the Expansion project, CSU had shifted all of its bound journal volumes to the basement!

The immediate loss, 2 weeks before the start of the fall semester, was the loss of our entire bound journal collection.

Remember: this is 1997 before the availability of online journal availability.
Where did we start off, and how did we survive?

• Our ARL ranking indicated that we were efficient borrowers, and we would have to enhance those processes.

• Our collection was so compromised that our lenders had to become borrowers

• We had to start someplace!!
We Could Only Survive if we Became “Students” Ourselves.

• In addition to the library collection, the entire bookstore was lost (there were fish swimming in what used to be the campus bookstore).

• The CSU library computer lab had just expanded into the basement, and was completely lost, leaving no access to digital information or an internet infrastructure.

• Our ILL department had no reasonable way to handle the expected increase in volume.

• Our only solution was to reinvent our entire way of “doing things” in order for the institution to survive without loss of credibility.
Words to live by in a new and frightening world

**USERS REWARD SIMPLICITY**...The lesson...for anyone trying to make sense of the social aspects of technology is simple: follow the users. Understand the theory, study the engineering, but most importantly, follow the adoption rate. The cleanest theory and the best engineering in the world mean nothing if the users don’t use them, and understanding why some solutions will never work in theory means nothing if users adopt it.

Clay Shirkey, 2001
Starting Rapid....A Whole New Way of Doing Things.

We didn’t know how lucky we were....
We Couldn’t Rely on Traditional ILL Alone

• 1. Despite the fact that so many libraries reached out to us, provided us free ILL, and high-quality service, we could not meet the needs of our users with ILL alone.

• 2. We found Four Libraries with Collections Similar to Ours:
  • Umass-Amherst
  • Washington State University
  • Arizona State University
  • University of Arizona

• 3. We were fortunate enough that each of them were willing to help us with our crazy idea
Getting Rolling....

• 1. We purchased equipment and paid for staffing and space at each library.

• 2. We took extracts of their OPACs.

• 3. We started matching requests with our partner libraries first, and this became the vast majority of our “ILL” traffic.

• 4. We hired a full time programmer to maintain the database and route the request traffic.
But how do they do it......????????

Each of the libraries were surprised that we were anticipating such a relatively small amount of staff time, and a high amount of computer equipment.

We took an extract of each libraries’ OPAC, and created a database that included their specific holdings, material physical location, call number and years of holdings.

We only routed a request to these libraries when we had an exact match.
And Now For Something **Really** Different!

- When we sent a request to a library, the request included the call number, location, and year of the journal item.

- We knew before we routed the request that the library owned the item.

- They could grab the requests off the printer, go to the stacks, and retrieve the article, without any verification at all!
CALL #: TA439 .R347 2007
LOCATION: COF :: Morgan Library :: MORGAN

TYPE: Book Chapter

BOOK TITLE:  

USER BOOK TITLE:  

COF CATALOG TITLE:  

CHAPTER TITLE: Transpor of Concrete Products for Interlocking Block Pavements  

BOOK AUTHOR: H. Nhar, T. Watanabe, C. Hashimoto, and S. Nagao  

EDITION:  

VOLUME: 243  

PUBLISHER:  

YEAR: 2007  

PAGES:  

ISBN: 9780870312359  

LCCN:  

OCLC #: COF OCLC #: 145741585  

CROSS REFERENCE ID: [TN:167783]  

VERIFIED:  

BORROWER:
Bringing the Users Up to Speed (ooops!)

• 1. Anticipation of complaints from users about electronic requesting, high quality citations, and the electronic delivery of articles (to those willing to try it).

• 2. Hire students to deliver articles to inboxes around campus to every academic department.

• 3 Work with Academic Departments to find a place to deliver student papers student.

• 4. What we found........
Our Users Started to Ask us Where We Had Been While They Were Becoming Digitally Aware...

1. We had a few holdouts, but very few users actually refused to type in their own requests – so they did not get them (we never used the term “enter into the computer”)

2. Our users started asking us why we were so late in bringing these services to them.

3. By December, there were Letters to the Editor in the campus paper telling the Libraries to not bring the books back, but keep the new services.
Normal Isn’t Normal Anymore.

• 1. While we were receiving vast amounts of assistance from our partner libraries, and other libraries around the country, the journal recovery project was proceeding slowly.

• 2. About 30% of the items were deemed repairable, but the pace of recovery was brutally slow.

• 3. We expanded the project to include recovering pages for damaged but repairable items, since not all items were a complete loss.
Recovery and Discovery

1. Our Partner libraries agreed to assist with filling requests for damaged pages.

2. In one year we were able to replace over 11,000,000 missing pages from the repairable part of our collection.

3. We knew that no matter what happened, our collection would always be compromised.

4. We don’t know who came up with the idea, but our partner libraries requested that we make a 2 way ILL system from our recovery software.
Rapid was Born.

• 1. We had 5 libraries in our group who asked us to add one more library and make our recovery software a two-way borrowing and requesting mechanism for all of the libraries.

• 2. They felt that the ease of use and the staff time savings created enough of an advantage to start a growing, dynamic group of libraries who could share with unparalleled speed.

• 3. We started with Umass-Amherst, Arizona State, The University of Arizona, Washington State, Northern Arizona, and Colorado State, BUT
Starting Rapid

• Considering the overlap of everyone’s collection, as well as the unique items, we felt that we needed one more strong library to start off Rapid.

• We worked at developing our two-way requesting system, and developed a complex routing and load-leveling algorithm.

• Our needs for a sixth library were met when The University of Michigan agreed to join, and we were able to start our first Rapid pod: The ARL Pod.
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Clay Shirkey, 2001
Rapid Growth and Expansion

• For the first two years, we limited ourselves to ARL libraries only.

• After many queries, we started accepting libraries from Carnegie classifications, and grouping them together to facilitate equitable borrowing and lending.

• Finally, we started adding groups of consortially based libraries, starting with The Boston Library Consortium, and adding several other groups, such as PALCI, and SECAC.
Continued Expansion

From our initial group of six libraries, we now number 250 libraries from around the globe, but primarily in the US.

Our largest pod, the Cosmo Pod, contains most of the Rapid libraries working together to facilitate resource sharing.

We continue to add libraries, and pods. Our most recent libraries are Harvard, Yale, and The University of Washington, and our most recent pod is SCELC.
What is a “Pod?”

• A pod is a group of libraries that agree to be each other’s primary lending partners in Rapid. We have academic pods and geographic pods.

• The Academic pods are based on ARL or Carnegie Classification designation. Any library may join any pod for which they are academically eligible (for example, CSU is in the Academic E and Academic I pod).

• Geographic pods are based on groups of libraries that are aligned in a consortia, and already work together. They benefit greatly from Rapid’s efficiencies.
Creating a Pod

• A pod is a group of aligned libraries that work together and share the same service commitment. For example, groups of consortia may form a pod, such as The Boston Library Consortium.

• A pod is often a Consorial group, but can also be a group of geographically based libraries. For example, it is entirely possible for there to be a pod of Michigan libraries.

• The minimum number of libraries to form a pod is generally seven academic libraries.
Service and Efficiency: The Secrets to Rapid

• Each RapidILL request is routed to a library based on a load leveling algorithm. This algorithm prevents a library from being a pod’s primary supplier.

• Each request has the LOCAL call number and location of the supplying library, and your OPAC has told us that library owns that year or volume. There is no time spent verifying ownership or citations.

• Because of these efficiencies, the average TAT in Rapid is approximately 12 hours, and the borrowing fill rate is between 95-97%
The System Does the Work

• The system knows the workload at each institution, and each Rapid member has the same service commitments, so Rapid selects the lender based on current workload.

• The system performs all routing if there is more than one lender.

• The ONLY Reason For No is “Not on Shelf” – so there is no time wasted in selecting a reason for no that doesn’t really help anyone in the long run.
Yes, It’s really that Simple.

• Rapid is a system that is dynamic, easy to use, invisible to the patrons, and a time and money saver for the ILL staff and library budget.

• There is no charging in Rapid (since the load leveling is equitable), and there is no time spent invoicing, billing, or calculating “charging” or transaction fees.

• Rapid’s growth rate has been amazing: