



WESTERN NEW YORK LIBRARY RESOURCES COUNCIL

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

WNYLRC's AcademicSHARE Program Assessment Report for Fall 2013

Buffalo, NY, February 25, 2014 – During the fall semester, academic member libraries of the Western New York Library Resources Council (WNYLRC) participating in its AcademicSHARE program conducted a review to collect and assess patron and circulation statistics of the program. The program is an initiative of WNYLRC's long standing Resource Sharing Committee (RSC).

Overall, the statistics show that the program has been a great success. Additionally, it has streamlined internal operations as compared to the precursor to AcademicSHARE – the InfoPass program. Anecdotally, patrons are excited about having easier access to expansive collections.

Of the thirteen participating libraries, nine welcomed visitors from other AcademicSHARE participating institutions. Seventy-two patrons visited an AcademicSHARE participating library other than their home library and checked out a total of 166 items. Niagara County Community College was the leading lending library, loaning out just over half of the total number of items circulated. Buffalo State College received the most visitors, registering twenty-one AcademicSHARE patrons. D'Youville College stated that the "service [was] functioning smoothly" and other academic libraries reported positive reactions to program marketing efforts. Students enjoyed the freedom to visit other academic libraries without having to get prior permission.

Participating libraries encountered minimal problems with the program. Only one issue of a guest patron breaking policy at another institution was reported, but the issue was resolved quickly and appropriately between the patron's home library and the library visited by the patron.

Survey results also indicated that training and marketing are critical to high usage. Desk staff, particularly student workers, was not always aware of the program's existence. Therefore, an increase in marketing could help increase the program's visibility as well as usage. As a result, RSC will increase its outreach efforts to participating libraries by encouraging additional staff training and stronger marketing strategies.

It has also been noted that five member libraries did not register any visiting patrons through the program. Distance and location may be one factor affecting some libraries' statistics; Jamestown Community College and St. Bonaventure University are located in the southern tier – about 1.5 hours

from the Buffalo metropolitan area where the majority of academic institutions in the region are located. A second factor may be that several of these member libraries are open to the community at large or have additional reciprocal borrowing agreements. Therefore, it is possible that program participants using those libraries were registered in the library's system as regular community users, rather than specifically as AcademicSHARE patrons.

Regardless of the total numbers, the results from the assessment seem to prove that there is little basis in purported fears that materials will be lost and the demands on a library's individual collections will be great. The RSC believes the opposite is true. When given a choice, patrons, for the most part, prefer their own library and are often willing to wait for an ILL or will consider using alternative sources. However, giving patrons the option of getting materials in person, many will opt to do so either due to the value of the resource or the convenience of where the other participating library is located. As such, AcademicSHARE participating libraries no longer let geographic or institutional boundaries inhibit student or faculty access to materials and are beginning to view WNYLRC's six counties an "open region." The AcademicSHARE program will continue to facilitate barrier-free scholarly pursuits by both students and faculty and serve as a model for regional collaboration.

AcademicSHARE is a program of the Western New York Library Resources Council's Resource Sharing Committee.

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