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# FINAL REPORT OF THE CAUL-CBUA RELAIS OPTIMIZATION WORKING GROUP

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Interlibrary loan (ILL) and document delivery have historically been a critical service provided by libraries in support of the research and curricular needs of its users. The shape of this service has evolved over the years with the rise in popularity of electronic resources, and with this evolution the CAUL-CBUA member needs in terms of its ILL and document delivery systems has also evolved.

CAUL-CBUA has used OCLC's Relais ILL system for 20 years as the foundation for its shared ILL and document delivery service. In recent years, there has been a recognition that this system, or the way in which it was implemented those many years ago, is not supporting the current needs of member libraries. Following on the recommendation of the 2017 CAUL-CBUA ILL and Document Delivery RFI Working Group, the Relais Optimization Working Group focused on assessing the various options for implementation of Relais ILL to determine which might best meet the current, and future, needs of member libraries. This assessment focused not just on system needs, but also on the needs for the consortial service.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Three implementation options were identified by the Working Group: 1) The current shared implementation of Relais ILL; 2) Separate instances of Relais ILL for each participating library; and 3) A move to OCLC's D2D ILL and document delivery service. Based on a comparison of these three implementation options for Relais ILL against a [needs assessment rubric](#) developed in consultation with members of the CAUL-CBUA Document Delivery Group (DDG)<sup>1</sup>, the Working Group proposes the following recommendations to the Board for moving forward in this area:

1. Create a permanent sub-committee under the auspices of the Document Delivery Group consisting of three to four DDG members to implement proposed changes to Relais ILL at both the individual institution and consortial levels. The focus for this Sub-Committee would be to provide ongoing oversight and leadership of the RelaisILL system and CAUL-CBUA ILL and document delivery service; develop and maintain training materials and documentation; enable training and development opportunities; and regularly assess member needs and coordinate approaches to align the system and service with those needs.
2. Create a working group under the auspices of the Document Delivery Group to review current shared policies and recommend revisions. The deliverable for this group would be recommendations to the DDG for revisions, additions, and/or amendments to the shared policies. The DDG Sub-Committee would be responsible for implementing these recommendations.
3. Collect, update, and/or create training documentation (e.g. Katie Puxley's Quick Help Guide is a great resource but is many years out of date).

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<sup>1</sup> The CAUL-CBUA Document Delivery Group (DDG) is a CAUL-CBUA committee that operates on a "community of practice" model where any staff member at a CAUL-CBUA member institution who works in ILL and document delivery may participate.

4. Enable a venue for representatives from each of the DDG member libraries to meet at least once a semester virtually and once a year in-person to discuss issues and share information. These meetings might include an informational/instructional component on Relais ILL features.
5. Review and assess the Relais ILL reporting functionality against member report needs. This includes assessing the existing reports and recommending changes, identifying any new reports desired by members, and investigating alternative means for extracting statistics from the system, e.g. Pre-Defined Queries and on-site use of SQL.

## INTRODUCTION

The Relais Optimization Working Group (ROWG) was created in response to concerns raised during the ILL and Document Delivery Request For Information (RFI) process in 2017. The mandate for that process was to ascertain whether or not to continue that Group's long-standing use of RelaisILL (an InterLibrary Loans management product created and supported by Relais International (RI) now wholly owned by OCLC), or to implement an alternate system. This process involved extensive consultation with ILL staff, administrators, and technical staff across CAUL-CBUA, using both questionnaire and focus group sessions to elicit comments and feedback on what CAUL-CBUA members require in an ILL/document delivery management system.

During the RFI process, a number of issues and deficiencies were identified within the existing RelaisILL functionality and implementation, but analysis of alternate systems were not viable, so the final recommendation of the working group was that CAUL-CBUA continue its longstanding partnership with OCLC. Further to this, the working group also recommended that a working group be created to study the current configuration of CAUL-CBUA's instance of RelaisILL to improve its functionality and better address member needs related to ILL and document delivery. In response to this recommendation, the Relais Optimization Working Group was constituted.

Three implementation options were identified by the current Working Group: 1) The current shared implementation of Relais ILL; 2) Separate instances of Relais ILL for each participating library; and 3) A move to OCLC's D2D ILL and document delivery service. A [needs assessment rubric](#) developed in consultation with members of the CAUL-CBUA Document Delivery Group (DDG) was used to compare each of these three implementation options for Relais ILL.

## HISTORY

The relationship between CAUL-CBUA and OCLC began in 1999 when RelaisILL was a very new and incomplete system. It was initially designed to be used by individual libraries, but CAUL-CBUA wanted to share one instance (that is, one shared database) for the small group of initial members and this was accomplished with a fair amount customization. Over time the number of participating CAUL-CBUA members grew and the question was raised as to whether the unique configuration changes needed to accommodate consortial use had led to some inefficiencies in the functionality of RelaisILL and further, it was wondered, would it operate more efficiently if each member of the consortium were to run its own standalone instance version of the Service.

In 2012, Clare MacKeigan, OCLC Relais Operations Director, created a report at the request of the CAUL-CBUA Administrator and the CAUL DDG Relais Administrator on the possible advantages (and pitfalls) of separating the current shared instance of RelaisILL into separate, standalone instances. The scenarios outlined in that document, "[Separate or Shared](#)" were not deemed to be attractive to the DDG and were not acted upon at that time. Much in the way that RelaisILL is used by the DDG has changed since 2012 (that each member now runs the Relais software locally has many implications) and it was felt that it was worthwhile to revisit the "separation" proposal as a possible solution to some if not all of the problems identified in 2017.

Marlyn McCann, a senior ILL clerk at Dalhousie University with an extensive knowledge of RelaisILL gathered over almost 20 years of working with its several CAUL-CBUA versions, created a [document](#) which dealt in considerable detail with many of these concerns, as well as many other outstanding RelaisILL issues. This document was forwarded to Ms. MacKeigan and Mark Finlay, OCLC Relais Senior Application Specialist, and they were asked to use it as a reference in providing the ROWG with an [updated assessment](#) of the potential benefits separation could bring to the DDG in relation to these issues, along with the general feasibility of separating the CAUL-CBUA instance.

Email and phone discussions ensued but this assessment was accomplished most productively during a meeting with Mr. Finlay after the Relais Users Group meeting on June 12<sup>th</sup>, 2018, during a site visit at Dalhousie with Ms. McCann and Joe Wickens.

In addition to this consultation with OCLC an informal email survey was taken via the Relais user group listserv of other Academic libraries in Canada that use RelaisILL about their experiences with their “separate” instance of RelaisILL.

## ANALYSIS

In light of the information gathered from these two sources the following brief analysis is offered on the potential effect of separation on these major classes of issues.

### RELAIS IS COMPLICATED

One theme from both the feedback from the RFI sessions and more generally for DDG staff and administrators is the complexity of RelaisILL. From the survey of other Academic Library RelaisILL Users the issue of the system’s complication was noted but it was not seen as a major failing and one comment made during the RFI Focus Groups made the point very succinctly: “ILL is complicated”. Given a fairly high base level of complexity there are some elements of RelaisILL that are, perhaps more complex than need be. Mr. Finlay thought that one example of such a complication of the shared system from Ms. McCann’s list (i.e. the special ways that we must use Loan Tracking for items loaned within the DDG) was worth further investigation. In the shared environment RequestFlow and application configurations are no more complex than they would be if one were to separate the CAUL members into separate RelaisILL systems. Within the shared system this routing is managed seamlessly via the configured RequestFlow. If each site had its own instance each request would be treated as an external request. Routing to other CAUL-CBUA members would require ISO or GSM communication. Messaging regarding renewals etc. would be an ISO transaction and issues experienced with ISO communication could affect communication between CAUL-CBUA members. Within the shared environment CAUL-CBUA members are able to deliver directly to other CAUL-CBUA member patrons. This processing would be more complex if CAUL-CBUA members are separated.

## USING STANDARD RELAISILL REPORTS AND DOCUMENTATION

The standard version of RelaisILL includes “canned” reports. As the CAUL-CBUA instance of RelaisILL is non-standard (that is, it consists of multiple, but separate users in the one instance) we have never been able to make use of these reports. The reports we do have were written many years ago either by CAUL-CBUA staff or on contract by OCLC staff. Addition of members, new cancellation codes and anomalies caused by the routing of requests within one instance create anomalies and complications when using these reports.

The email survey of the RelaisILL users indicated limited use of the canned reports but many respondents also said they make use of querying the database directly and in-house report creation.

Mr. Finlay pointed out that CAUL members currently have read-only access to the host database which enables ad hoc queries to be executed by anyone who has an SQL query tool. OCLC Relais support is available to assist in identifying where data elements associated with a desired query can be identified (what field in what table(s) or view(s)) to help staff who are familiar with creating SQL statements and often can provide an SQL query for those who do not have such expertise.

OCLC Relais does not provide much in the way of training documentation concentrating almost exclusively on technical issues via the Relais confluence site. As with the CAUL-CBUA DDG, other RelaisILL users seem to rely on locally produced documentation for training and trouble-shooting purposes. During the meeting with Mr. Finally he expressed a willingness for OCLC staff to conduct webinars or other training and demonstration events on topics deemed useful by the DDG, e.g. how to customize configuration settings.

## SYSTEM PERFORMANCE

Though there were some reports of system performance being a fairly widespread problem across the DDG, after implementation was completed of the Locally Hosted version of Relais, system performance is no longer an ongoing issue for CAUL-CBUA members, with the exception of Dalhousie University Libraries. Dalhousie’s IT and Document Delivery staff have been working with OCLC on this problem for some time and will continue efforts to identify the source of the problem and implement a solution.

## CONCLUSION

Based on the analysis, the Working Group has concluded that there is no appreciable benefit that can be gained for the CAUL-CBUA DDG by separating our RelaisILL instance. Greater are the practical benefits that can be gained from sharing one instance of RelaisILL (e.g. direct delivery of scanned files supplied within the group to end-users), as well as the less tangible advantages that

arise from working in a shared environment where expertise and assistance from the group is available. Rather than split the CAUL-CBUA instance of RelaisILL, the Group recommends that CAUL-CBUA (as a group as well as individually) should focus on working with OCLC to increase awareness of the available RelaisILL customizations and configurations, and to work with OCLC to implement them.

During our discussions with Mark about these issues it became apparent that there is much more flexibility and customization to the current instance of RelaisILL that we were aware of. This applies not only to the changes that we can make across the consortium but, more surprisingly, changes that can be made at the individual site level. This is in contrast to the way things were when CAUL-CBUA used RelaisILL via the hosted server at RI (Rocky) that was a shared instance that limited the amount of change that could be made.

Going forward we believe it is important to provide some kind of formal process for gathering members' suggestions for improvements and changes to the CAUL instance of RelaisILL and to investigate both their desirability (if other group members would be affected by the change) and feasibility. If there is one thing we can learn from this current process it is that many more changes can be made to the existing system than we were aware of.

With regard to the overarching question that we started with: would breaking the CAUL-CBUA instance of RelaisILL into separate instances be beneficial, it is our opinion that any gains that would be realized (e.g. simplification in the handling of loans with the DDG) would not be worth the effort and loss of beneficial features we and our users have come to expect with RelaisILL (e.g. direct, unmediated delivery to the patron of articles supplied by other DDG member libraries).

Not included in any of these considerations is, of course, the time, effort and money that would be expended in making it happen.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS FOR MOVING FORWARD**

1. Create a permanent sub-committee under the auspices of the Document Delivery Group consisting of three to four DDG members to implement proposed changes to Relais ILL at both the individual institution and consortial levels. The focus for this Sub-Committee would be to provide ongoing oversight and leadership of the RelaisILL system and CAUL-CBUA ILL and document delivery service; develop and maintain training materials and documentation; enable training and development opportunities; and regularly assess member needs and coordinate approaches to align the system and service with those needs.
2. Create a working group under the auspices of the Document Deliver Group to review current shared policies and recommend revisions. The deliverable for this group would be recommendations to the DDG for revisions, additions, and/or amendments to the shared

policies. The DDG Sub-Committee would be responsible for implementing these recommendations.

3. Collect, update, and/or create training documentation (e.g. Katie Puxley's Quick Help Guide is a great resource but is many years out of date).
4. Enable a venue for representatives from each of the DDG member libraries to meet at least once a semester to discuss issues and share information. These meetings might include an informational/instructional component on Relais ILL features.
5. Review and assess the Relais ILL reporting functionality against member report needs. This includes assessing the existing reports and recommending changes, identifying any new reports desired by members, and investigating alternative means for extracting statistics from the system, e.g. Pre-Defined Queries and on-site use of SQL.

## APPENDIX A: EVALUATION RUBRIC

### SYSTEM REQUIREMENTS

- Database hosted by system supplier and access is web-based
- A bilingual system
- Available 24/7 to the public
- Supports current ILL standards and protocols
- Works well with IE, Firefox, Chrome, Safari, MACs, PCs, Windows (7, 8 and 10)
- Ability to work in a consortial environment but that allows for individual institution configurations
- Lending functionality
- Borrowing functionality
- Interoperability via ISO with resource sharing management systems (i.e. Relais, OCLC, VDX, RapidILL)
- Ability to flag libraries to alert staff to any specific notes regarding the library.

### SUPPLIER/LIBRARY DATA

- One database
- Updates to data by way of downloads from other systems or manually by an ASIN DDG staff member
- Searchable by name, address, keyword, postal code, NUC code, OCLC code, email address, Ariel address
- Include fields for OCLC code, RapidILL, status, contacts, invoicing levels, notes field, copyright compliance
- Ability to block by individual ASIN institution or globally for consortium

### PATRON DATA

- Individual institution patron data – accessible to affiliated site only
- Entered via a patron load or through NCIP
- Searchable in system by keyword, patron name, ID number, email address
- Ability to block access to individual patrons or classes of patrons
- Ability to flag libraries to alert staff to any specific notes regarding the library. CH: I moved this to the supplier section as noted by CM.
- "Patron account that includes access to listings of past and present requests with the ability to contact document delivery staff and a way of logging that correspondence"

## SUBMITTING REQUESTS

- Separate web request forms for patrons and libraries available 24x7
- If forms down, automatic notification of system administrators at host site
- Automatic population of web form with patron information and bibliographic information from database searches (including IS #s and OCLC #s) (OpenURL)
- Ability of system to download incoming requests via GSM, ISO, and Web
- Ability to add, edit, or cancel requests (patron or library) manually
- Ability to create a new request from an existing one

## SEARCHING/MATCHING

- Auto searching by Z39.50 of all CAUL- CBUA catalogues and other designated library catalogues
- Manual search of requests to catalogue
- Auto search of requests to catalogue
- Manual search of requests of resolver holdings
- Auto search of requests of resolver holdings
- Auto and manual matching to resolver holdings by ISSN and publication date
- Ability to list, sort, and tag items in a search or review queue

## ROUTING OF PATRON AND LIBRARY REQUESTS

- Auto-routing of requests matched to control numbers within CAUL- CBUA consortium
- Manual routing of requests to CAUL-CBUA member libraries
- Manual routing of requests to selected external libraries via GSM or ISO
- Ability to edit routing lists
- Ability to establish and edit routing rules based on patron type, library type, and exception codes
- Routing queues for various types or statuses of requests

## RECEIPT /TRACKING/RETURN OF MATERIAL

- Ability to manually update database upon receipt, renewal, or return of material
- Print book wrappers and cover sheets which include due dates, renewal status
- Ability for staff, libraries and patrons to search for current and closed requests using various criteria, e.g. request numbers, title, author, call number, control number, etc.
- Ability to edit, cancel, renew requests
- Presence of current status of request and audit log with ability to add notes

- Auto return of material in Circulation database when item returned in ILL/document delivery system

### DELIVERY OF MATERIAL

- Ability to manually update database upon delivery of material
- Auto sign-out of material in Circulation database
- Auto updating of request when item scanned
- Attaching and delivery of electronic articles at desktop
- Scanning in different modes (ex. colour, grayscale) with auto updating of request
- Re-scanning of items or pages
- Direct Delivery to any CAUL-CBUA desktop from any CAUL-CBUA scanner
- Delivery via fax, Ariel, mail, email, email Web
- Ability of patron to open requested files on mobile devices

### COMMUNICATION/NOTIFICATION

- General message to libraries, notify patron from system via email, mail, fax
- Cancellation messages to libraries and patrons
- Canned and free text library and patron notification messages
- Ability to receive formatted (GSM, ISO messages) which auto update the system
- Ability to receive GSM messages and respond to them directly from the system

### BILLING/STATISTICAL REPORTS

- Ability to provide patron and library invoices directly from system or via 3rd party software
- Ability to create a variety of statistical reports for individual CAUL-CBUA libraries or the consortium
- Ability to establish and edit charging policies based on patron/library type and material type
- Ability to establish, edit and auto deliver overdue notices to libraries and patrons

### SUPPORT

- Dedicated vendor technical support
- Vendor-provided training and documentation