

SILS Access Services Harmonization Pilot Report (October 2019)

Background

The Access Services Harmonization Pilot was established in June 2019 and group members met monthly through October 2019. Membership was made up of the heads of access services, or individuals in similar positions, at each of the 10 UC Libraries, SRLF, and NRLF. The pilot was intended to both test the process of attempting harmonization across the campuses, as well as to try to determine possible areas for harmonization. Thus, the original scope of the pilot was set as investigating alignment of loan periods for “students + monographs + general/main collection.” This focus was chosen because it was initially anticipated to be relatively uncontroversial and manageable in a short period of time.

The pilot group was facilitated by the chair of the SILS Harmonization (SILS H) group, reporting to the SILS Working Group. While the pilot concludes with this report, members expressed a strong desire to continue preparing for the upcoming SILS implementation by continuing to stay in touch informally and to gather information that could be passed on to future harmonization groups.

Pros & Cons of Alignment

The group felt a variety of benefits could come from unification of loan periods throughout the UC Libraries, including:

- Creating a consistent user borrowing experience and loan period, regardless of lending institution.
 - Students at home for the summer with a UC campus nearby could borrow from there with the same loan periods as at the UC Library where they attend school, where applicable.
 - Faculty researching at another UC campus would have similar experiences across UC libraries.
 - Though the number of users to which this currently and historically applies is unclear, this is likely to happen more often following SILS implementation, wherein discovery and requesting of items across the UC collection will become more seamless.
 - Depending on the new system, transactions currently thought of as ILLs could become standard circulation transactions, like a page from another campus.
 - It is worth asking for future analysis: What is the quantification for “impact”? How many people must alignment benefit to make it worthwhile?
- Serving as a positive talking point at rollout for outreach to users on the benefits of the new SILS.
- Simplifying what users need to remember about loan periods for each of their items.
- Streamlining ILL and local campus workflows.
 - Simplifying ongoing staff work, and potentially freeing up resources for other work.
- Simplifying and expediting work needed for migration into the SILS.
 - Aligning on certain practices now means doing less configuration to get into the SILS, and less work to maintain those configurations.
- Simplifying what staff need to remember about loan periods across the UCs when talking with users.
 - Loan periods and borrowing workflows would be the same for borrowers visiting from another UC.
- Having a loan period that would encompass at least one term for whatever campus one is at would be beneficial.

The group also brainstormed some challenges to such alignment, including:

- Some campuses currently feel that their local practices align best with their local user or operational needs.
- Some circumstances exist where allowing local campuses to support local needs might be appropriate. For example, UCSF has really short loan periods for reasons that are worth investigating.
- *Decreasing* a loan period to be “aligned” with other libraries would potentially cause blowback from users accustomed to the longer period.
- It is worth asking for future analysis: How do we know what the users actually think and need?
- Because loan period alignment isn’t necessary for SILS technical success, some felt alignment in this area at this time wasn’t essential.

Observations on How the Process Worked

The initial thought that our limited scope might be manageable and uncontroversial proved not quite true as we furthered our discussions.

Openness to alignment varied across campuses, as did resistance to change, risk aversion, and fear of unknown consequences. Some group members and/or local stakeholders felt very strongly about existing local periods, while others were more willing to consider possible changes. In some cases, commitment to local loan periods was strengthened by a campus’ relatively recent review and update of its periods to best suit current/local needs or preferences, while other campuses had not undertaken such a review in several years and were more open to doing so at this time. Some saw the pilot as an opportunity to consider expansive changes to benefit users across UC, while others saw less benefit to doing so.

Because existing loan periods across the campuses vary so widely (see inventory of local practices), any proposed alignment period could require a significant change for some campuses, say, from 90 or 120 days to 365 days, or vice versa. Some campuses which would need to lengthen their periods a great deal were uncomfortable with that, while those whose periods might shorten significantly were also resistant to such a dramatic change.

All of the pilot members were focused on making sure patrons had quick and easy access to the materials they needed. There was a difference of opinion and experience about how to do that and how loan periods would affect this need. Would a longer loan period restrict patron access to materials, because they may be unwilling to recall items in use? Would users instead turn to ILL to acquire the material, or go without the materials? Would shorter loan periods mean that materials would be more findable on the shelves, and thus more available for subsequent users? While much data may be available to inform these considerations (for example, number of recalls or ILLs over a period of time), it’s unlikely to be definitive, could be difficult to interpret accurately, and would take substantial time to pull together and analyze. These questions could be posed and tested in future reviews.

In terms of assessing the impact of unifying, streamlining, or revising loan rules at a local campus, of those who have recently conducted such reviews and revisions, none report any “nightmare experiences” or patron complaints. Instead, most report positive user feedback from simplifying and/or extending loan periods and have seen meaningful staff efficiencies and time savings as well.

Another challenge formed around the breadth of the scope we selected. Following discussions, some felt that a more holistic look at loan periods for multiple user groups, as well as related elements like recalls and renewals, should be taken, rather than looking at a single element. For example, loan periods are just one part of a complex web of loan rules to a variety of users, many of which are interrelated. This discussion of scope creep took additional time and prevented solidification of a final recommendation.

Because many felt that undergraduates only needed items for one term, having campuses with both quarter- and semester-long terms posed a challenge. Many also felt that the academic needs of graduate students and undergraduates were significantly different, and should therefore have loan periods appropriate to their specific needs, while some campuses already have a single loan period for all students or all users. The group briefly discussed distinctions between student groups and faculty, including whether graduate students were more aligned with undergraduate students or with faculty/academics. Unresolved or disparate perspectives here suggest the need for clearer articulation of needs for various patron types.

Another challenge was whether those on the group had the authority to make a final decision in this area for their campuses, given all of the local stakeholders that might need to be consulted. At least in some cases, Library leadership might need to make the final decision, even with a recommendation made by the head of access services, particularly where various local stakeholders disagree.

The group did discuss again later in its deliberations whether loan periods were worth investing efforts toward alignment, and agreed to continue. However, both group members and stakeholders at some campuses questioned the value of and need for this, since loan period alignment isn't technically required to ensure SILS migration success and because we never ultimately came to full agreement.

Overall, the process we underwent was not an easy one in the case of loan periods. After six hours of in-person calls and many more hours per person outside of monthly calls, we reached our October call with continuing disagreement and uncertainty. Perhaps those areas not technologically required for SILS could be postponed for a future date following go-live for the system?

Ultimately, going through the discussions (even without coming to agreement on alignment) proved beneficial to pilot members, including for creating the framework for harmonization in the future.

Recommendations

The group first discussed whether we felt it worth aligning loan periods across the UC Libraries, and relatively quickly agreed that alignment was worth pursuing, recognizing the potential or perceived benefits outlined above.

In the end, however, we found it challenging even to establish a proposed loan period for our scope to which some or many campuses could agree. If a proposal for loan period alignment for “students + monographs + general/main collection” is put forward, some campuses may choose to remain as exceptions to any proposed alignment, or in several “cohorts” of aligned campuses.

After months of discussion, the group identified 180 days as an aligned loan period for students (grad and undergrad) around which at least several of the campuses could likely agree. Alternately, a 120-day loan period for undergraduate students alone was amenable to nearly all campuses and would cover campuses with both

quarters and semesters. Because of the perceived relationship of graduate students to faculty, or perceived lack thereof, agreeing on a loan period for graduate students proved more challenging, particularly without also considering faculty loan periods.

Next Steps

Full commitment by each campus would yet be needed for any proposal to be put forward. While many campus stakeholders were consulted over past months for general perspectives, any true proposal would likely need to go through a more formal approval process at each campus. Some stakeholders, such as student groups, may not have been available over the summer and therefore, may not yet have been consulted at all.

Further, the group should consider a mechanism for gathering feedback directly from undergraduate and graduate library users at multiple UC campuses before any final decision is made.

As mentioned above, many in the group also felt that other factors should be more fully investigated, such as recalls, renewals, and loan periods for other groups, before making a final proposal. This would require significantly more time than already expended, so **the group now proposes that the Heads of Access Services group take on the work of compiling local practices in preparation for future harmonization and migration efforts.** Space will be made to start with a document of particular pain points / points of interest / impact points (given that gathering ALL local documentation is a massive undertaking). This group hopes such a document will provide a starting place for triaging and prioritizing work to be done in the implementation phase.

We recognize that the new SILS will provide us with opportunities to improve and simplify the patron experience and to simplify staff workflows and gain efficiencies for staff time. Future harmonization will also be driven by technological needs, in that there may be some limits to the software that require alignment. There may also be some areas that would benefit from alignment (even if it isn't strictly required). Reviewing current practices will hopefully provide some insight into areas that could benefit by immediate harmonization efforts, and identify which can wait until after go-live.

Additionally, we wish to point out the limitations of approaching this problem from our current reality: 10 different campuses with 10 historical ways of doing things. What if we approached harmonization from the position of being able to build a new UC Library, spread across multiple geographic locations, from scratch? In that case, we would almost certainly establish loan periods and other loan rules differently, ensuring alignment from its inception. **We recommend that future harmonization efforts rely less on recreating what we are already doing than on imagining better ways of doing things, and adapting current policies to come closer to that vision.** We imagine that patrons are already expecting this of us: As technology makes tasks easier across the board, users will want rules and processes that match the ease of access and discoverability that is allowed technologically.

Finally, we acknowledge that simply starting this work now is a huge success. The work is hard, complex, sometimes contentious, and time-consuming. This group is encouraged by the collegial discussions and brainstorming done so far, and looks forward to continued future work.

Enhancing Future Processes

Observations from the pilot that could improve future harmonization work:

1. Having an overall vision from higher up, such as a statement from CoUL, that supports the pursuit of alignment would be useful. Such a statement might explain or reinforce that the UC collection should be considered a single collection dispersed across the campuses, and that the entire collection, regardless of home/storage location, is intended to serve all UC users, regardless of *their* location. It would clarify that all campus users, across each UC location, are ultimately, and in fact, *UC* users. Such a statement would support the group's thinking about how to make the UC collection available in a streamlined fashion to all UC users, rather than allowing each campus to think first or exclusively about its own users locally.
2. Establishing principles for the process, including a user focus and simplification (for both staff and users), as we did, was important, including reflecting on them throughout exploration and decision-making. However, in some cases, the principles could be interpreted differently across individuals or campuses, which posed a challenge.
3. Establish clear list of expected benefits that can be shared in discussions with local campus/library stakeholders. Such a list will help offset compromises that might be needed at the local level.
4. Gauge whether the discussion should start from scratch or from a list of current practices across the campuses. For example, should the group consider what loan period would work best for library users, as if no campus already had established periods, or should the group begin by reviewing each campus' existing loan periods?
5. Consider early on whether user feedback would inform decision-making, and if so, whether any exists or how feedback might be effectively gathered. The same could be true for statistics or other quantitative or qualitative data to support the investigation.
6. For any needed user feedback or student stakeholder input, be sure that the timing of the process allows for this. For example, groups such as Associated Student or Library Student Advisory committees may not be available in the summer (or the busy fall term).
7. Determine who at each campus will have the authority to make a final decision, even following any group proposal.
8. Consider initially whether voting, consensus, or other methods will be used to decide on final group proposals, as well as the acceptability of exceptions among the campuses.
9. Have a clear and specific proposal before going to local stakeholders for input to avoid confusing, broad, or unactionable input.
10. Be sure to draw out and test the wealth of assumptions brought to the discussions by group members on what users need/want/think/do, why a particular loan period is preferable over another, etc.

Membership Roster

Joe Ameen, UCM
Ellen Dario, NRLF
Jon Edmonson, SRLF
Kristine Ferry, UCI
Kymberly Goodson, UCSD
Robin Gustafson, UCD
Marti Kallal, UCSB

Mark Marrow, UCB
Carlo Medina, UCLA
Vincent Novoa, UCR
Andy Panado, UCSF
Sarah Troy, UCSC
Jutta Wiemhoff, NRLF

Christine Barone, SILS H
Lynne Grigsby, SILS H
Cathy Martyniak, SILS H
Caitlin Nelson, SILS

Appendices

Appendix A: Access Services Harmonization Pilot - Statement of Work (below)

Appendix B: [Inventory of UC student loan rules \(XLSX\)](#)

Appendix C: [Local stakeholders to be consulted for access services-related harmonization \(PDF\)](#)

Table 1: Informal voting from 9/17/19 conference call (see table below)

	UNDERGRADS					GRAD STUDENTS				
	Current (Days)	Likely Would Agree To... (9/17/19 Call)				Current (Days)	Likely Would Agree To... (9/19/19 Call)			
		90 Days	120 Days	180 Days	365 Days		90 Days	120 Days	180 Days	365 Days
SRLF	90					90				
SF	45			Maybe, need more feedback & recall/renewal discussion	Maybe, need more feedback & recall/renewal discussion	42			Maybe, need more feedback & recall/renewal discussion	Maybe, need more feedback & recall/renewal discussion
I	28 (90 Honors)					90				
SB	28 (90+ Honors)					90+				
SD	90	For undergrad only	For undergrad only	Maybe, need more feedback & sufficient renewals	Maybe, seems too long for undergrads	365	For undergrad only	For undergrad only	Maybe, need more feedback; prefer longer for grads	
M	180		For undergrad only	For undergrad only		365		For undergrad only	For undergrad only	
B	90			Maybe, depends on faculty/other user types		90			Maybe, depends on faculty/other user types	
NRLF	60					60				
R	90					90				
SC	Quarter+					Quarter+				
D	28					Quarter+				
LA	90				Would have to be all UC patron categories	90				Would have to be all UC patron categories

Yes	Maybe, with Caveats
No	No Response

Appendix A: Access Services Harmonization Pilot - Statement of Work

Prepared June 4, 2019 by SILS H

Introduction

Harmonization is a process where the campuses, RLFs, and CDL come together to investigate and decide the practices, procedures, policies, and workflows that need to be aligned within the consortium in order for the SILS to be successful.

Why do a pilot? Moving forward, harmonization will involve complex topics with complex histories. Before tackling these tough topics, SILS H is proposing to run pilots on two “easier” topics to develop the process. We will tackle real topics with real stakes as well as using the opportunity to improve the harmonization process as well. In other words, pilot success is just as much about creating a successful process as it is about the outcome of the harmonization recommendation.

Reporting

The Harmonization Team will report to SILS H. SILS H reports to the SILS Working Group (WG). SILS H Chair will update the Working Group regularly on pilot progress.

Pilot Work and Scope

This team will:

- 1) Identify a specific combination of lending period practices (patron type + item type + collection) that can be investigated for harmonization.
 - a) Currently proposed: Undergraduates + monographs + main collection
- 2) Compare current local practices for that combination.
- 3) Identify stakeholders for those local practices (who has input, authority, etc.)
- 4) Identify which lending period combinations would be appropriate for alignment, if any (Recommendation #1).
- 5) Of those candidate practices / periods, recommend how alignment among the UC Libraries consortium would best proceed (how & when) (Recommendation #2).

Pilot Deliverables and Timeline

1. Pilot topic chosen and approved by Working Group (early June 2019)
2. Harmonization team members identified (early June 2019)
3. Deliverable #1: Inventory of local practices and stakeholders (due early July 2019).

For this particular combination:

- a. Which patrons are included in this type? Why?
- b. How long is the lending period? Why?

- c. Who has a stake in this lending period combination? Why / for what purpose? Who decides what changes can be made to these practices?
4. Compare and investigate local practices with an eye toward Recommendation #1 (due mid-August).
 - a. Recommendation #1 answers the question: “Is it worth aligning these practices across the UC Libraries? Why or why not? If not, might it be worth revisiting in the future?”
5. For those practices that can be aligned, discuss with stakeholders, and prepare Recommendation #2, (due end of October).
 - a. Recommendation #2 answers the question: “For those practices that should be aligned, what is the best way to proceed to do so? Why? When?”
 - b. Who needs to be consulted to make this recommendation, and why?
 - i. Stakeholders with input on the length of time - end users, staff processors, etc.
 - ii. Decision-makers with input on changing the fields at all
 - iii. Stakeholders who would need to be the ones actually changing their workflow
 - iv. etc.

Commitment / Frequency

Members should expect to meet monthly, unless otherwise needed and decided by the group. Some writing and editing will be required to produce the recommendations. Work will be needed to compile current practices and to engage with local stakeholders.

Membership of the Pilot Harmonization Team

Caitlin Nelson, SILS H Chair, facilitator

Other members, representing the 10 campuses, the RLFs, CDL Acquisitions, and the Shared Cataloging program as appropriate.

Communications and Workspace

- Listserv
- Slack channel
- Google Team Drive