

What do users want from HeadLine?

This paper summarises the results from research into current user enquiries in order to assist design of the HeadLine system. The results are drawn from the observation of Information desk enquiries (at the 3 partner sites during autumn 1998) and the staff consultation event (16th February 99 2-4pm). 'Participants' referred to in this document, are the participants from the staff consultation event (members of staff from the 3 partner sites who work on information desks).

Please note that the features of the HL system suggested or mentioned are ideas for discussion and do not represent what the service will undertake to provide.

Commonly received enquiries

Questions which were observed frequently during observation were also cited by staff as being common to them too.

Following the prioritisation of enquiries (from the most to the least useful for HL to answer) the enquiries were scored and ranked as follows (the last column indicates the number of times each enquiry was observed in the autumn):

	LSE staff	LBS staff	UH staff	Total	No. times observed
Locating electronic services	5	5	5	15	25
Locating shelfmarks	5	5	5	15	19
Locating facilities	5	5	5	15	13
Subject enquiries	4	4	4	12	17
Grey lit - ann reps, working papers	4	3	1	8	6
Grey lit - reading lists	4	3	1	8	6
Navigating electronic services	3	2	2	7	10
Use of lib - what can I do?	2	-	5	7	25
Journals	3	-	3	6	17
Training	1	2	2	5	2
Other libraries	2			2	5
Missing items	1			1	

Useful HeadLine solutions

The following solutions to these enquiries were considered to be useful (and feasible) by the HL team and staff consulted.

- **Map** - for shelfmarks, services and facilities
- **Resource Finder tool** - i.e. a top level services which would integrate all the disparate and often confusing resources available. This should aim to simplify access and use of these resources and provide value-added features provided by partner sites (e.g. FAQs).
- **Journals** - it would be particularly useful to help users find out where journals can be accessed (this is being solved to a degree with journals metalists) but it would be ideal if HeadLine could integrate journal holdings information with other services that provide references to journal articles.
- **User information** - the concept of the system 'knowing' what the user was entitled to use (and only presenting the user with these resources) and also knowing where he or she was, in order to tailor results to location (but with the option of showing what they could use if they came into the school/library). The idea of profiling also seemed beneficial.
- **External users** - the idea of having a special login for external users, providing access only to what they are entitled to use, but the login available on any computer, was also popular.

- **Simplified access management** - the suggestion of making the system 'know' what the user could have access to seemed worthwhile, as many participants agreed that the current process of deciding who can access what is time consuming. Most people saw a single point of authentication as a good thing. These measures could assist enforcing access policy and simplify access to library services which, everyone agreed, is currently complex and problematic.

Extra suggestions by staff

- **Improved reading lists** - the idea of giving support for reading lists, by helping explain abbreviations (online abbreviation look-up?). Also to include journal articles on Unicorn reading lists, and some help locating these, and to make journal articles better all-round, with the inclusion of links to full text material.
- **Other libraries** - access information and holdings. It was suggested that HeadLine should provide a link to other libraries, so that if users didn't find what they wanted from their own institution they had the option of finding it elsewhere. The union list of serials is often consulted to tell users where they can find journals not held on site, and it was suggested that it would be advantageous if HeadLine could search the union list of serials simultaneously (if possible). It would also be good if HeadLine could provide information about other libraries that the user was entitled to visit (as part of his or her profile) and links to their catalogues.
- **Admissions information** was also an area where staff received many enquiries - so that it may be useful if HeadLine could provide some information about use of the library (this may be covered in the login for external users).
- **Link to a bookshop's database** - this suggestion was not unanimously supported as it is not clear whether students should feel encouraged to buy books when they've paid for a course and when the library 'ought' to provide texts. However this was suggested as a possible feature.

Irrelevant Enquiries

HeadLine won't be able to answer all problems, and so some enquiries which are received frequently, fall outside the scope of the project, either because of resource restrictions, scope or because they duplicate the work of another library service for instance:

- Card catalogue
- Enhancing reading lists (links to full-text etc.) - copyright restrictions and also these are produced by individual tutors.
- IT problems (i.e. printer jams)

Staff perceptions of what users want:

- **One stop shopping and electronic full-text where possible** - i.e., to have to plough through as few different services as possible, preferably to get the full text of their article, electronically from the first source they use.
- **Value added resources**, i.e. FAQs to go with electronic services, access to an electronic helpdesk, links to the LSE expert, and also the option of personal help (so HeadLine should show where they can have access to face to face help, either link to a webpage about the information desk at each site, or an email service - in addition to providing guides to resources and services - accessible wherever the resource is listed on the system).
- **To do their own research** in many cases - although on the whole postgraduates do most of their own research and undergraduates have tended to follow reading lists as their main source of information, participants agreed that even undergraduates are increasingly reading around their subject (either if the set text isn't available or to get extra marks). Concern was also expressed about the idea of spoon feeding users and limiting them to set texts and course materials; HeadLine should aim to support independent research as well as facilitating access to popular and recommended material.
- **Off-campus access** - Users increasingly want to be able to work from home and to access electronic resources there. This is particularly true of LBS students, who all have their own computers, and who have some services available from any geographical location via the Forum, this service is very popular and there is great demand for providing access to other services in this way.