



The Library of Congress
Office of the Inspector General



Library Services
Collections Access, Loan, and
Management Division

*Follow-up Review of
the Not-on-Shelf Rate*

Report No. 2011-PA-107
May 2011

FOR PUBLIC RELEASE



UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS

Memorandum

Office of the Inspector General

TO: James H. Billington
Librarian of Congress

May 23, 2011

FROM: Karl W. Schornagel
Inspector General

SUBJECT: Follow-up to *Survey of Collections Access, Loan, and Management Division*
Report No. 2011-PA-107

This transmits our final report summarizing the results of the Office of the Inspector General's follow-up review on our Survey of the Collections Access, Loan, and Management Division (Audit Survey Report No. 2007-PA-101, issued March 2007). Specifically, we assessed the Library's current "Not-on-shelf" rate. The executive summary begins on page *i*, and our recommendations appear on pages 4 to 10. Based on the written comments to the draft report, we consider all of the recommendations resolved. Please provide, within 30 calendar days, an action plan addressing implementation of the recommendations, including an implementation date, in accordance with LCR 2023-9, *Rights and Responsibilities of Library Employees to the Inspector General*, §6.A. The final report will be publicly available.

We appreciate the cooperation and courtesies extended by the Collections Access, Loan, and Management Division during this follow-up review.

cc: Chief of Staff
Associate Librarian for Library Services

▶▶ TABLE OF CONTENTS

▶▶ Executive Summary	<i>i</i>
▶▶ Background	1
▶▶ Objectives, Scope, and Methodology	3
▶▶ Findings and Recommendations.....	4
I. The NOS Rate has Improved.....	4
Recommendation	5
Management Response.....	5
II. Significant Factors Which Are/Could Be Yielding a Higher-than-Necessary NOS Rate.....	6
Recommendations.....	9
Management Response.....	9
III. Timeliness and Quality of CALM’s Retrieval Service	9
▶▶ Conclusion	11
▶▶ Appendix: Management Response	12

▶▶ EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Collections Access, Loan, and Management Division (CALM) of Library Services provides the Library's primary retrieval service for general collections, comprising approximately fourteen million non-rare items. CALM responds to approximately 1,500 retrieval requests each workday. We surveyed the division's material retrieval service in early 2007 and found that 12.7 percent of requested materials were in "Not-on-shelf" (NOS) status according to data provided by CALM.

In view of the significance of the NOS rate, we performed a follow-up review on our 2007 survey. We determined the current NOS rate based on our own statistically representative sample of 203 general collection items; identified significant factors which are, or could be, yielding a higher-than-necessary NOS rate; and evaluated the timeliness and quality of CALM's material retrieval service. The following sections provide a summary of our follow-up review.

The NOS Rate has Improved—The NOS rate for our 203-item sample was 7.9 percent compared to the 12.7 percent rate we reported in 2007. At a status conference, we provided Library Services with a list of the 16 items not located after CALM's normal search procedures entailing three separate searches. CALM officials subsequently located 11 of the 16. Recognizing the issues brought to light by this review, CALM is attempting to accomplish improved service through training and quality control reviews. This includes performing quality control checks on 100 percent of the NOS reports. Previously, this quality assurance activity was not performed on all NOS reports. We recommend that CALM track the NOS rate by deck attendant and utilize this information in managing staff performance.

Significant Factors Which Are/Could Be Yielding a Higher-than-Necessary NOS Rate—While performing our statistical sample testing, we observed several issues that are or could make the NOS rate artificially high. These issues include:

1. ILS permits patrons to request “In-Process” items that likely are not on the shelf;
2. Foreign language materials may be more difficult to locate because for much of the collection acquired prior to calendar year 2000 which is in the custody of the Area Studies divisions, the Online Public Access Catalog record incorrectly shows the item should be requested through the general reading room;
3. Decks in the Jefferson and Adams Buildings are cluttered with books on the floor and books double shelved;
4. Errors on the call number label or catalog record may affect locating the item; and
5. The ILS system is not set up to automatically route the offsite copy if the local copy is NOS. Instead of automatically routing the offsite copy, readers are alerted by the ILS system that an offsite copy will be delivered the following day only if requested.

We recommend that CALM: 1) ensure that items shown with incorrect locations (such as foreign materials) be corrected and 2) track whether there is a correlation between NOS items and “cluttered” deck shelving.

Timeliness and Quality of CALM’s Retrieval Service—

CALM personnel generally retrieve requested items promptly and, when necessary, perform additional searches to locate elusive items within reasonable lengths of time. If CALM personnel determine that an item is in NOS status through a first search attempt, the CALM Quality Assurance Team conducts a second search on the day following the initial search.

Management concurred with our findings and recommendations.

▶▶ BACKGROUND

The Collections Access, Loan, and Management Division (CALM) of Library Services provides the Library's primary retrieval service for general collections, comprising approximately fourteen million non-rare books, bound serials, and other materials included under the Library of Congress Classification System. This includes all items not assigned to the Library's special collections and area studies reading rooms. CALM responds to approximately 1,500 retrieval requests each workday, providing this service to users of seven reading rooms in the Jefferson and Adams Buildings and staff members throughout the Library. In addition, CALM shelves approximately 2,000 items each day, of which about half are new additions to the collections.

We surveyed the division's material retrieval service in early 2007 and found that 12 percent of requested materials were in "Not-on-shelf" (NOS) status.¹ The NOS rate is a significant performance measure for the Library, especially considering its mission – *to support the Congress in fulfilling its constitutional duties and to further the progress of knowledge and creativity for the benefit of the American people* and related strategic goal, *to acquire, preserve, and provide access to a universal collection of knowledge and the record of America's creativity.*

CALM's methodology defines an item as NOS if it is not located during an initial search by a Retrieval Technician. In those cases, a member of the "Quality Assurance Team" automatically performs a second search the day following the initial request.² If the item is still not found, a third special search is performed, but only by patron request. During the third search, CALM searches the shelves periodically over a 30-day period, employing advanced search techniques to try to locate items which may have been misshelved or mis-cataloged; checks both manual and online databases to ensure

¹ Survey of Collections Access, Loan, and Management Division (Audit Survey Report No. 2007-PA-101, March 2007).

² Beginning the summer of 2010, CALM began performing the second search automatically for all searches initially resulting in a NOS. Prior to the summer of 2010, CALM conducted the second search on a priority basis: Requests from Congressional staff, Kluge Center, Congressional Research Service, other government agencies, and Study Facility patrons received first priority. As workload permitted, CALM conducted the second search for requests from reading room patrons, interlibrary loan requests, and all other Library staff.

accuracy of information and possible reassignment of the item; and if unsuccessful, searches for and informs the patron if other libraries may have the item.

We received a complaint related to the quality of CALM's retrieval service and the NOS rate just before initiating this review. The complaint was filed by a researcher who was informed that 5 of 12 items (42 percent) that he had requested from the general collections were in NOS status. The researcher alleged that copies of the NOS items were available at an offsite storage facility, but CALM personnel did not search the facility for those copies.

In view of the significance of the NOS rate, we performed a follow-up review on our 2007 survey. The following sections provide a report on our follow-up review.

►► OBJECTIVES, SCOPE, AND METHODOLOGY

The objectives of our review were twofold – to follow up on our 2007 report and to determine whether the NOS rate regarding the researcher’s 12-item request (i.e., 42 percent) represented the current rate for the Library’s general collection materials. To address our objectives, we determined the current NOS rate based on a statistically representative sample of general collection items; identified significant factors which are, or could be, yielding a higher-than-necessary NOS rate; and evaluated the timeliness and quality of CALM’s material retrieval service.

To fulfill our objectives, we 1) contacted officials from the Library’s Integrated Library System (ILS) Program Office who explained to us how the ILS loan module operates and made it possible for us to access up to approximately nine million records/titles which are included in the ILS database; 2) randomly selected a sample of 203 LC Control Numbers which correspond to collection items/titles;³ 3) requested the retrieval of each of our sample items through the ILS database; 4) requested that CALM management send sample items found on the shelves to the CALM loan station on the ground floor of the Madison Building; 5) recorded the search status of the sample items as found, delivered to the loan station, found during a subsequent search, or not found at all; and 6) requested that CALM officials conduct a final thorough search for the sample items which CALM personnel could not find during its standard search procedures.

We performed our review from May 24 through August 2, 2010, in accordance with LCR 211-6, *Functions, Authority, and Responsibility of the Inspector General*. We believe that the evidence we obtained provides a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our objectives.

³ Our sample size of 203 items represents a confidence level of 95 percent, with an error rate of plus or minus three percent. We excluded from our sample items which require the identification of a volume, date, and year (i.e., newspapers and magazines, periodicals); books without a call number (undergoing catalog processing); electronic source materials; and titles which must be requested through the Library’s special reading rooms.

►► FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

I. The NOS Rate has Improved

The NOS rate for our 203-item sample was 7.9 percent compared to the 12.7 percent rate we reported in our 2007 report. In that report, we used data provided by CALM on the NOS rate for all 244,093 book requests made during FY 2006 (most recent data available at the time of our fieldwork). In this review, we independently tested a statistical sample of book requests rather than using CALM’s data. We tested 203 randomly selected Library of Congress Call Numbers from the Library’s Integrated Library System database and recorded whether CALM located the items. A breakdown of our test results is presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Breakdown of 2010 Test Results and Comparison with 2006				
Category	Subcategory	2010 Test Results		FY 2006
		Requests	%	%
Items Located	Item located after first search	174 ⁴	88.7	83.0
	CALM Quality Assurance Team Located the Item (the following day)	13	6.4	4.3
	Total Located	187	92.1	87.3
NOS Items	NOS - item not found after repeated CALM searches	16	7.9	12.7
Totals		203	100.0	100.0

At a status conference, we provided Library Services with a list of the 16 items not located after CALM’s normal search procedures entailing three separate searches. CALM officials subsequently located 11 of the 16. Six were held in the special collections (four in Asian Division, one in Rare Book Division, and one in African and Middle Eastern Division) rather than the general collections (please see §II. 2 for a further discussion). The other five were found on the shelves in the general collections including a sixteen-page pamphlet shelved between larger books. We verified that the items were, in fact, located.

Taking into consideration the books located by CALM, the Library’s NOS rate is 2.5 percent (5 of 203 items tested not

⁴ 3 items were lost in-transit to the charge station. The OIG located 2 of the 3 items.

located). Recognizing the issues brought to light by this review, CALM is attempting to accomplish improved service through training and quality control reviews. Retrieval Technicians receive training about the LC classification system, the ILS Voyager Automated Call Slip (ACS), and basic Online Public Access Catalog (OPAC) procedures. Further, technicians receive training on how to search the various deck areas, differences between editions and copies, nuances of unconventional collections, and unique properties of serials.

In the summer of 2010, CALM established a permanent Quality Assurance Team to, in addition to other activities, perform quality control checks on 100 percent of the NOS reports. Previously, this quality assurance activity was not performed on all NOS reports. Feedback from the work of this Team, as well as quality control reviews performed by supervisors serve as a training tool to enhance the skill of the Retrieval Technicians and to discuss more complex issues for which they need to be alert.

CALM also informed us that it offers an Advance Reserve Service that patrons may use to better ensure their requests are filled. For this service, CALM will conduct extensive searches, if needed, prior to the patron coming in-person to the Library. While CALM requests advance notice of at least one week, CALM will do its best to satisfy last minute requests. When enough notice has been provided, CALM can provide the patron with a detailed report of the availability of specific items requested, as well as other editions available if the specific item requested is unavailable. If specific items needed by the patron are unavailable, this report to the patron may avoid an unnecessary trip.

Recommendation

We recommend that CALM track the NOS rate by deck attendant and utilize this information in managing staff performance.

Management Response

Management concurred with our recommendation and noted that “staff in lesser-used, less crowded areas of the stacks may have a significantly lower NOS rate, which may reflect the

condition of the specific stack areas more than actual staff performance.”

II. Significant Factors Which Are/Could Be Yielding a Higher-than-Necessary NOS Rate

1. *ILS Permits Patrons to Request “In-Process” Items*

At CALM’s request, the ILS Program Office set up the Online Public Access Catalog (OPAC) to allow researchers to view and request all items acquired by the Library, including ones which are “in process” (i.e., undergoing catalog processing).⁵ CALM will search the shelves for the item despite the “in process” status. CALM management made this decision because it believes that some items which have been actually returned to the shelf may still be marked as “in process” in the OPAC for reasons such as staff forgetting to update the status during the cataloging or the binding process.⁶ CALM management prefers that a staff member or researcher order an item, even though it has an “in process” status and receive a NOS rather than be stopped from ordering the item when it might be on the shelf.

CALM has been following this policy since the implementation of the ILS in 1998. CALM management believes customers are provided the best service in this way, because in some cases, items marked as “in process” may be on the shelf and available for retrieval. Short of completing an inventory of the collections, a successful request of an item incorrectly marked as “in process” is the only way to identify that it is available. However, the majority of “in process” items are undergoing cataloging and not available; resulting in a higher actual NOS rate from a researcher’s perspective than the 7.9 percent shown in Table 1.

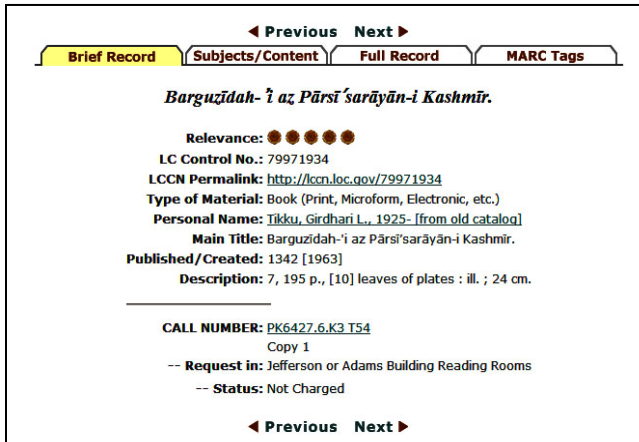
We did not evaluate the merits of CALM’s approach; however, we excluded “in process” items from our sample. Neither CALM nor the Integrated Library System Program Office is

⁵ The NOS rate we determined for this follow-up review does not take “in process” items into consideration because we excluded them from our sample.

⁶As a control to eliminate this problem with newly acquired materials, CALM established the New Acquisitions Program to make sure the OPAC status is correct before shelving the item.

able to determine the percentage of “in process” items requested that cannot be delivered.

2. *Foreign Language Materials
May Be More Difficult to Locate*



Picture 1: Example of transliterated record.

Almost 69 percent of the 16 sample items not found through CALM’s standard search procedures (11 out of 16 items) represent foreign language materials. That percentage is significantly higher than the portion of foreign language materials included in our total sample (43.8 percent - 89 out of 203 items). The significantly higher portion may indicate that CALM personnel have greater difficulty finding foreign language materials. We note that subsequent searches conducted by CALM after the status conference located 11 of the 16 missing items. Similar to our sample findings, 5 of the 11 were located in the Asian Division or the African and Middle Eastern Division rather than the general collections.

CALM acknowledged that fulfilling requests for materials in the custody of the Area Studies divisions (African and Middle Eastern, Asian, European, and Hispanic) is particularly challenging since the titles in the OPAC system are not in the original script (e.g., Chinese or Japanese), or translated, but are transliterated (e.g., phonetically similar roman characters are substituted for the original) into English. The original language is difficult to determine based solely on the transliteration (see picture 1). Additionally, for much of the collection acquired prior to 2000 which is in the custody of the Area Studies divisions, the OPAC shows that the items should be requested through the general reading rooms rather than through the specific Area Studies reading room which has custody of that specific collection.⁷ As a result, deck attendants will be unable to locate the item in the general collections.

CALM assured us that it would continue to train its staff to recognize when it might be possible that a specific title is in an

⁷ This is due primarily to coding errors in the MARC (Machine Readable Cataloging) holding or item records loaded into the ILS OPAC. The ILS Office cannot determine the exact number of records with this error. For materials acquired since 2000, the OPAC correctly indicates the proper custodial reading room.

Area Studies reading room, as opposed to the general collections.

3. *Decks Cluttered With Books on the Floor*

We observed that some of the decks in the Jefferson and Adams Buildings were cluttered with books on the floor and books double shelved. Our test procedures did not include determining whether the missing sample items were stored in the “cluttered” shelving areas. Nevertheless, we believe the added clutter and books on the floor may contribute to “mis-shelvings” and further difficulty in finding requested items. The Library, via the Architect of the Capitol, has requested funding for additional high-density storage modules to help accommodate the continuing growth of the collections. The request has not yet been approved. We recommend that CALM track whether there is a correlation between NOS items and “cluttered” deck shelving. This may aide in justifying further the need for additional storage modules and training.

4. *Errors on the Call Number Label or Catalog Record May Affect the NOS Rate*

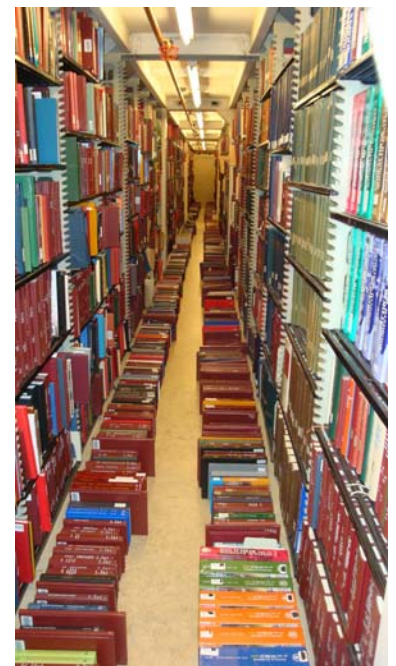
We searched for and found one of the five items that CALM personnel could not find for the researcher who filed the complaint with us. Moreover, we noticed that the call number of the item in the ILS database was different than the call number on the book. That difference may explain why CALM could not find the item. We note that CALM’s Baseline Inventory Program is in the process of ensuring that call numbers of items in the ILS database agree with the call numbers on the items’ labels. A matching call number will greatly increase the chance that an item will be correctly found.

5. *Copies of Items Stored Offsite May Cause Some Confusion to Readers*

Requests for an item that has multiple copies, one or more of which are stored offsite, may cause some confusion for the reader if the local copy is NOS. This is because the ILS system is not set up to automatically route the offsite copy if the local copy is NOS. Instead of automatically routing the offsite copy,



Picture 2: Books Double Shelved



Picture 3: Books on the Floor

readers are alerted by the ILS system that an offsite copy will be delivered the following day only if requested.⁸

Recommendations

We recommend that CALM:

1. Correct items, such as foreign materials, shown with incorrect locations, and
2. Track whether there is a correlation between NOS items and “cluttered” deck shelving.

Management Response

Management concurred with our recommendations. However, management noted that “[s]ince foreign materials in area studies divisions are not in the custody of CALM, the changes in locations on the bibliographic record need to be made by the custodial division.” To accomplish this, CALM will call to the attention of area studies custodial divisions identified errors in online records so they can be corrected.

III. Timeliness and Quality of CALM’s Retrieval Service

CALM personnel generally retrieve requested items promptly and, when necessary, perform additional searches to locate elusive items within reasonable lengths of time. If CALM personnel determine that an item is in NOS status through a first search attempt, the CALM Quality Assurance Team conducts a second search on the day following the initial search.⁹ If the item is found through the additional search, the Team informs the patron that the item (or a substitute) was located and asks whether the requester would still like the item to be sent to the pick-up station (CALM also notifies the requestor if the item is not located).

⁸ The OPAC includes an information screen titled “Guide for Requesting Materials in the Library’s Online Catalog.” In this Guide is a detailed explanation of ordering material stored offsite including how long it will take to obtain it once ordered.

⁹ The Quality Assurance Team search is on a priority basis with first priority given to requests from Congressional staff, Kluge Center, Congressional Research Service, other government agencies, and Study Facility patrons. As workload permits, the second search is performed for requests from Reading Room patrons, Interlibrary Loan requests, and all other Library staff.

For our 203 sample items, CALM advised our anonymous staff researcher through email messages of the status of each item after searching for it. Specifically, CALM let us know that the item was located and in-transit; not located on the shelf; a rare book; not assigned a call number, etc. We found the CALM emails timely and informative.

►► CONCLUSION

One of the Library's four critical values in achieving its mission and goals is "Service." To achieve this, the Library analyzes the needs of the Congress and its other customers and strives to meet them. Fulfilling researchers' requests for collection items is a core service. We concluded that CALM is striving to provide effective search and retrieval service to the Library's researchers.

The "Not-on-Shelf" (NOS) rate appears to be declining. CALM is attempting to reduce further the NOS through extensive training for deck attendants and establishing a permanent quality assurance team to perform quality control checks on not-on-shelf reports.

We recognize that a portion of the NOS is attributable to errors in the legacy holding and item records migrated in 1998 into the Library's Integrated Library System Online Public Access Catalog. CALM's Baseline Inventory Program is helping to address this problem.

At the Library of Congress, the general collections is the bedrock on which the institution is based. Researchers from around the world come to the Library to use these collections. Ensuring access to the items in these collections is fundamental to the Library's mission. Given the significant importance, we will use our current baseline sample to continue to monitor periodically CALM's efforts to reduce the NOS rate.

Major Contributors to This Report:

Nicholas Christopher, Assistant Inspector General for Audits
Patrick Cunningham, Lead Auditor
Lynnea Schurkamp, Investigator

▶▶ APPENDIX: MANAGEMENT RESPONSE**UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT
MEMORANDUM****Library of Congress
Library Services****Date:** April 29, 2011

TO: Karl Schornagel
Inspector General

FROM: Deanna Marcum *DM*
Associate Librarian for Library Services

SUBJECT: Follow-up of Survey of Collections, Access, Loan, and
Management Division, Audit Report No. 2007-PA-101

Thank you for the very good report submitted to Library Services on March 24, 2011, by Patrick Cunningham. I apologize for my lengthy delay in responding. The CALM Division staff completed their review in the 15-day period you allowed, but they raised a number of issues I felt I had to explore further. Thus, I ask you to blame me, not them, for tardiness.

We have worked hard on making process and organizational changes to lower the NOS responses for our users. It is gratifying to see that the efforts have been moderately successful. Your report makes clear the need to continue aggressively the Baseline Inventory project to synchronize the holdings records of the online catalog with volumes on the shelf.

Our responses to the findings and recommendations are:

Recommendation: We recommend that CALM track the NOS rate by desk attendance and utilize this information in managing staff performance.

Library Services concurs with the recommendation, although we prefer to a more nuanced statement:

We recommend that CLAM supervisors and quality assurance staff follow up on NOS reports, and where the NOS status reported by the Retrieval Technicians are in error, that supervisors utilize their findings in managing staff performance.

Rationale: CALM supervisors note that staff in lesser-used, less crowded areas of the stacks may have a significantly lower NOS rate, which may reflect the condition of specific stack areas more than actual staff performance.

Recommendation: We recommend that CALM:

1. Correct items such as foreign materials, shown with incorrect locations, and
2. Track whether there is a correlation between NOS items and “cluttered” deck shelving.

Library Services concurs with the recommendation, with a small modification. Since foreign materials in area studies divisions are not in the custody of CALM, the changes in locations on the bibliographic record need to be made by the custodial division. Our recommended rewording of #1: CALM should call to the attention of Area Studies custodial divisions identified errors in online records so that they can be corrected.

We appreciate the care with which this work was done, and thank you for the opportunity to comment.