

# You're Only as Good as Your Custom Holdings: Optimizing Interlibrary Loan Borrowing

Bryne Norton, University of Maryland  
Cherié Weible, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign

## Introduction

Faster shipping, lower fees, and longer loan periods are the important goals for an effective and efficient interlibrary borrowing operations. How do you effectively gather data to identify lending libraries that meet your library's needs?

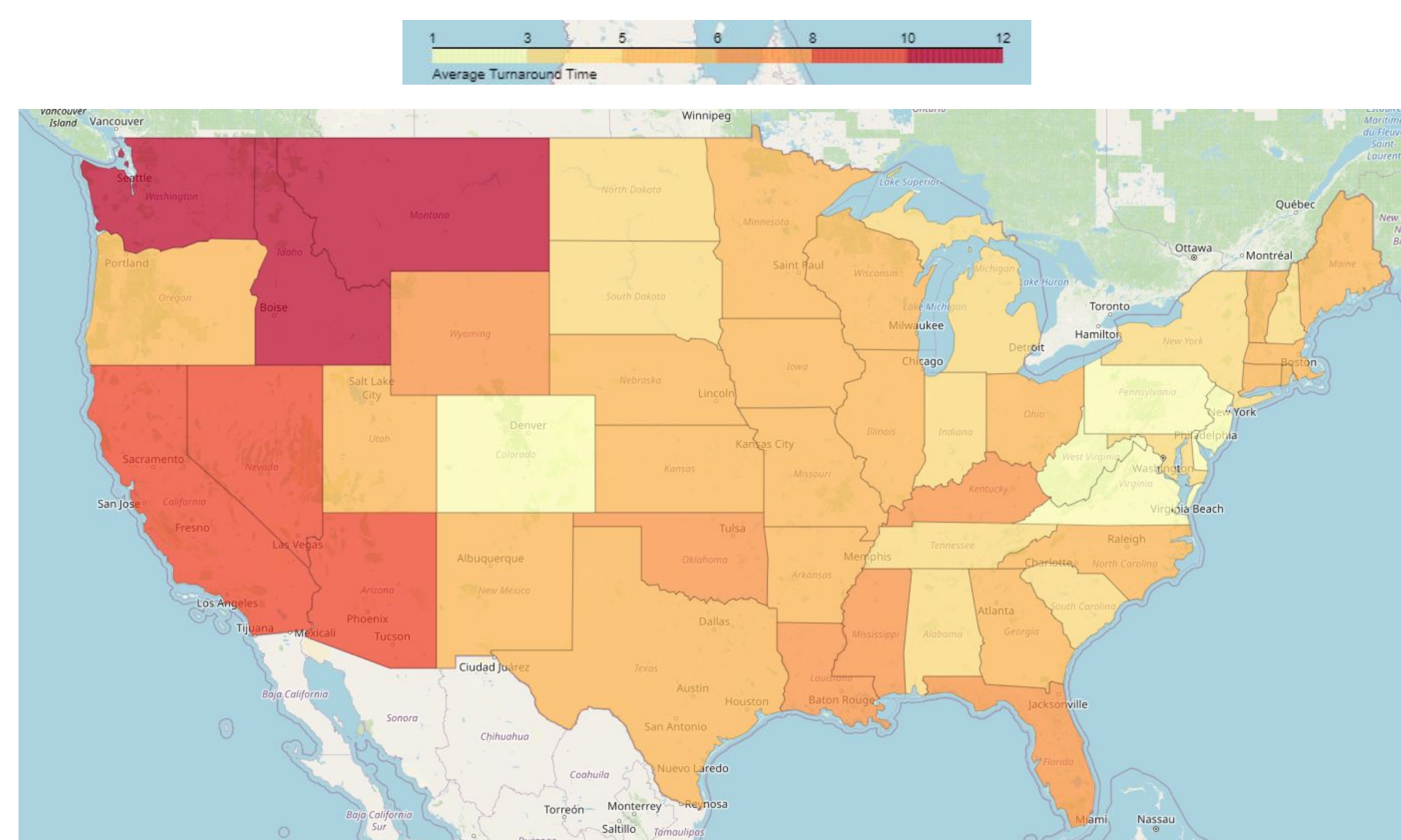
We propose that one way to answer this question is to utilize customizations and automations in WorldShare ILL to leverage smart lender strings in combination with custom holdings groups or libraries.

Determining which libraries meet your needs and can be included in your groups is challenging. Regular review of actual data is important to form groups from accurate information.

Policy directory allow libraries to **say** what they do, reviewing actual data allows us to **see** what they do.

- Libraries may change their fee structures or group membership and forget to update it.
- Libraries may need to set days to respond for exceptions rather than the rule meaning that they are faster than what they say.

**UMD's Heatmap for Turnaround Time for Loans**  
This visualization demonstrates outliers when taking shipping time into account



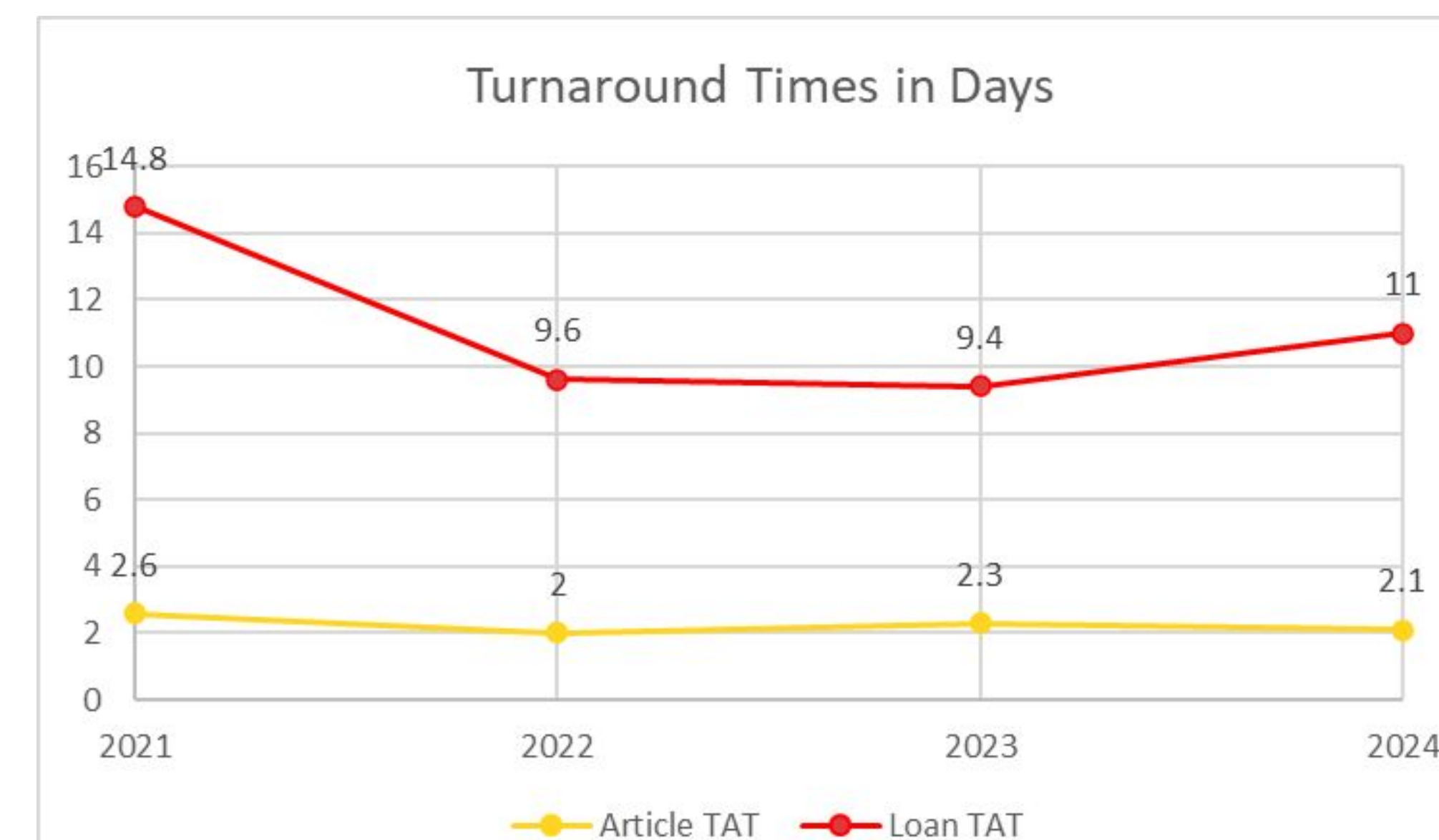
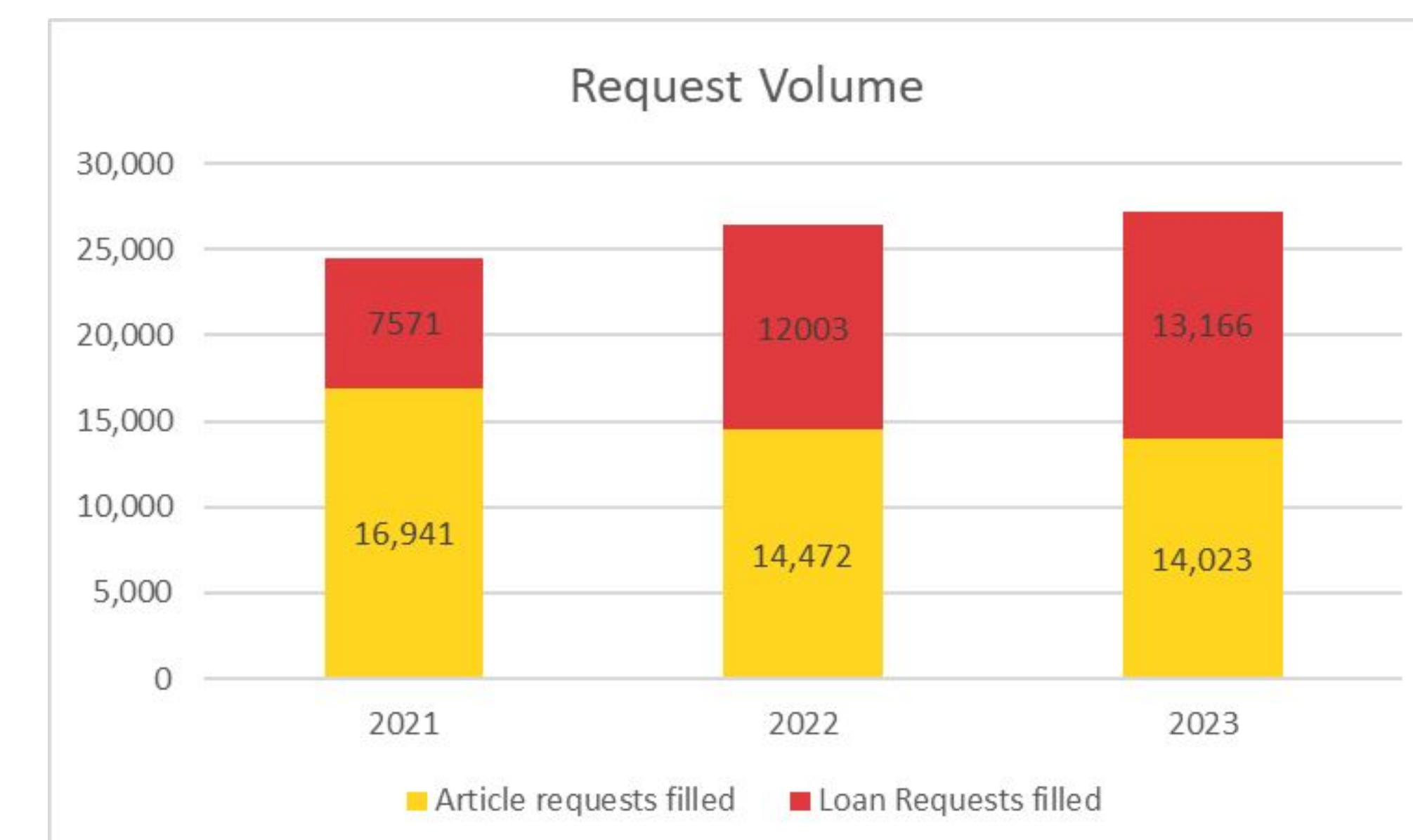
## University of Maryland, College Park

High volume borrowing, medium lending institution participating in the Big Ten Academic Alliance (BTAA), ARL, and SHARES consortia. Participates in RapidILL and manages OCLC Worldshare requests with ILLiad.

### Background:

Maryland is a net borrower. The only way that we can handle the volume of patron requests we receive in a timely manner is by heavily relying on automation. We have maximized the use of this automation by focusing in on our custom holdings groups to locate partners that fit our needs.

Pictured below are graphs of our volume and turnaround times for Borrowing to demonstrate the volume as compared to the speed.



### Methodology:

- One year's worth of monthly OCLC Borrowing Resource Sharing Stats Reports were combined.
- Data was cleaned in the following manner:
  - Sort and remove the following:
    - Requests without a lender symbol (unfilled)
    - Request Before This Month (Column AE) with a value of 1 (requests from the previous month). This avoids duplication.
    - Borrower Filled Date (AK) with no value were removed as these never arrived.
  - Separate requests based on Photocopy Flag (AD) as 1 = article and 0 = loans
  - Remove extraneous columns
- We queried the data in Access to determine:
  - \*Queries written by Austin Smith.
  - Average loan periods granted by a lender
  - Average turnaround time
  - Average cost
  - IFM vs. alternative payments

Breakpoints were created to create the following custom holding groups that were ordered into custom holding paths utilized in OCLC Automated Request Manager (ARM)

### Loans

- BTAC Enhanced Big Ten Academic Alliance Resource Sharing for Groups
- Fast, Free, 16 week loan
- Fast, Cheap, 16 week loan
- Fast, Free, 8 week loan
- Fast, Cheap, 8 week loan
- Mediocre

16 week loans is equivalent to a semester. 8 week loans can get to the 16 week loans with one renewal

Fast and free vary based on the data. For example, fast had a very different meaning when analyzing data the year following COVID-19.

### Articles

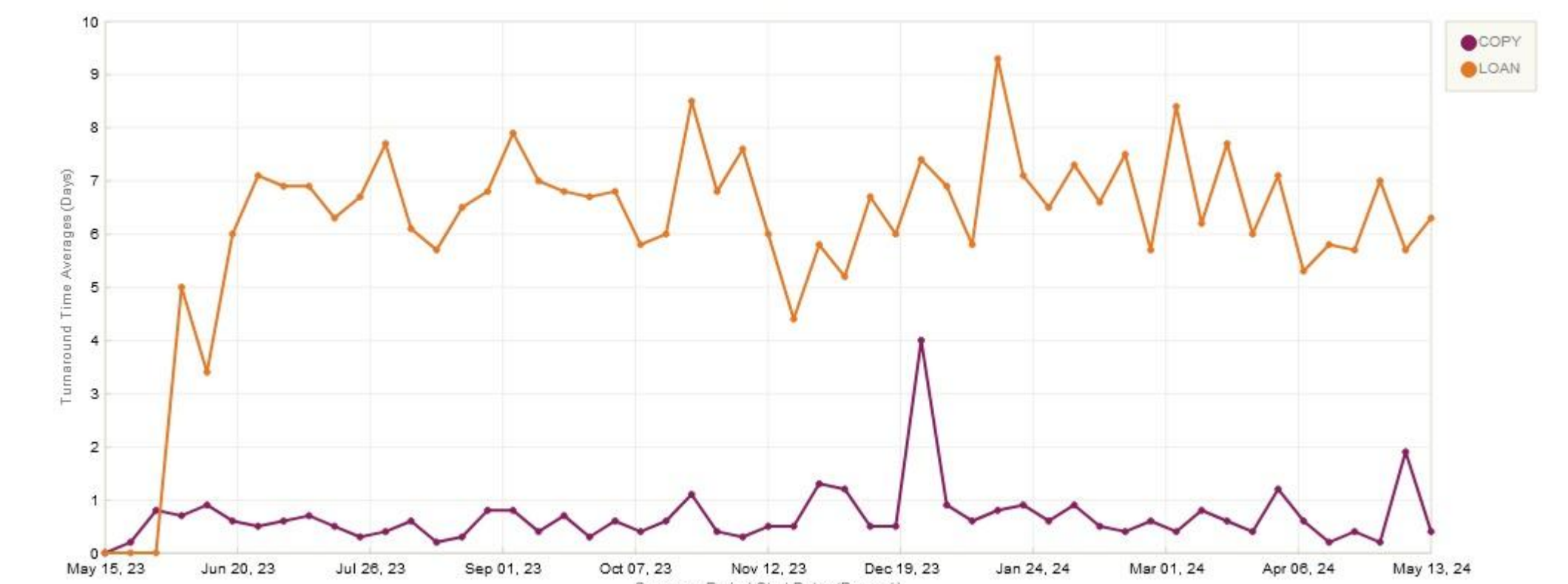
- Fast (<2 days), Free
- Fast (<2 days), IFM billing
- Quick (2-7 days), Free
- Quick (2-7 days), IFM billing

## University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign

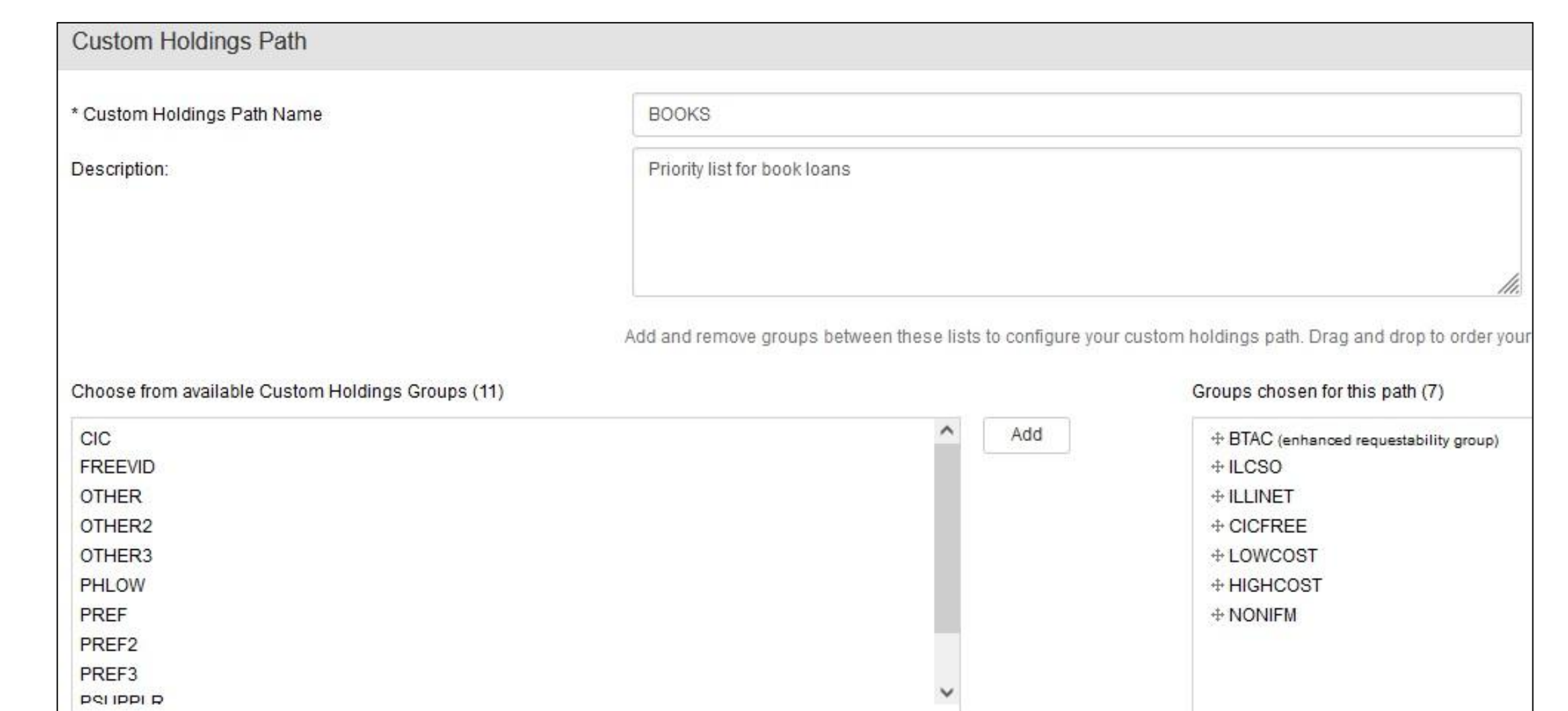
High volume, top-ten lender, medium volume borrowing institution participating in the Big Ten Academic Alliance (BTAA) and I-Share state of Illinois consortia. Manages OCLC Worldshare ILL requests with ILLiad.

**Methodology:** In FY23, although 6,379 loans were filled through the state I-Share system, another 4,390 loans were filled through OCLC Worldshare ILL with 37% coming from the BTAA consortium.

**Key factors in identifying custom holdings:** *Fast, Free, Long Lending Check Out* before renewal request is needed so we rely heavily on BTAA after I-Share and before additional lenders are identified to fill a request.



UIU Annual Borrowing Turnaround Time Graph for copies (non-returnables) and loans (returnables). Winter Break Closures, disruptions due to weather, and staff shortages are easily identified.



UIU Custom Holdings Path with ARM to optimize long lender strings and less touches per request from staff saving time for more difficult requests as less time is spent on requests that are unfilled.

## Acknowledgements

Maryland would like to acknowledge that this custom holding procedure was originally created by Austin Smith and Hilary Thompson. Many thanks to Alex Angulo-Valentin for creating the heat map.

## Conclusions

Reviewing data periodically helps to identify misconceptions around which libraries meet the criteria of providing faster shipping, lower fees, and longer loan periods. Additional benefits of reviewing and adjusting Custom Holdings insures that the most optimal lenders are filling requests in order to save staff time and effort with processing requests and renewals.



UNIVERSITY  
LIBRARIES

UNIVERSITY LIBRARY  
UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS AT URBANA CHAMPAIGN

