

GIL Express gives USG library patrons access to more than four million titles

The libraries of the institutions in the University System of Georgia (USG) have implemented an automated system that gives authorized users quick and easy access to more than four million titles.

Called GIL Express, the new system allows USG faculty, staff and students to make online or in-person requests for any of the items contained in the general collections of 35 libraries throughout the state.

According to GIL Express Steering Committee Chair W. Bede Mitchell, the system features an easy-to-use interface, immediate patron validation and automatic tracking of materials. Most requested materials are delivered within three days.

“GIL Express eliminates barriers to information access, making every book in the entire USG library system accessible to every library patron,” said Mitchell, who is the dean of the Zach Henderson Library at Georgia Southern University. “This is particularly relevant for distance learners and mobile library patrons who can pick up items from any library and return them to any library.”

GIL Express is the most recent evolution of GALILEO Interconnected Libraries (GIL), which is the second phase of the University System’s GALILEO initiative. GALILEO – which stands for Georgia Library Learning Online – is a World Wide Web-based virtual library that provides access to multiple information resources. The community of more than 2,000 GALILEO institutions includes the USG, K-12 schools, public libraries, adult technical institutes and colleges, and a group of private academic colleges and universities.

Implemented in September, GIL Express replaced the USG borrowing card that used to be required for faculty, staff and students who wanted materials from a USG library other than the one at their home institution.

Through GIL Express, patrons have access to the Universal Catalog, which combines the individual collections of the libraries at the 34 USG institutions and the Gwinnett University Center. The Universal Catalog contains over 4.3 million titles,

including 2.6 million titles that are held by only one library in the USG. All USG libraries have unique holdings that reflect differences in curriculum, faculty research interests and collecting policies.

“GIL Express and the universal catalog leverage unique resources by extending their use throughout the University System of Georgia,” Mitchell said. “This is very important at times when book budgets are slim.

“Contrary to the popular myths that everything is free and on the Internet and that people don’t read anymore, USG patrons had over 1.5 million circulation transactions in FY ’04.”

GIL Express is the result of the USG library faculty and staff’s dedication to “bricks and clicks” service. This means complementing the services available through the on-campus library locations with the Internet.

“In the past, our faculty and graduate students would often have to drive to other USG libraries to get access to the type of research collections they needed,” said Sherrida Crawford of Valdosta State University. “Now, with just a few mouse clicks, they have these books in their hands in only two or three days.”

Communication between all of the libraries in the USG played a crucial role in the implementation of GIL Express.

“GIL Express is the continuation of the long history of cooperation between USG libraries,” said Mary Jo Fayoyin of Savannah State University. “This spirit of cooperation will ensure that all students have equal access to information. We are fortunate to be a part of such an innovative University System.”

The USG serves approximately a quarter of a million students, all of whom have access to GIL Express.

“This is the product of years of hard work on the part of the USG libraries’ faculty and staff,” said the University of Georgia’s Claire Columbo, who is the chair of the GIL Express Task Force. “We’ve had a vision that our patrons would be able to quickly and easily borrow material from across the system’s libraries. GIL Express is the realization of that cooperative effort.”

For more information on GIL Express and the GIL Universal Catalog, visit <http://gil.usg.edu>.