MYTH BUSTING:
Using iPads to Scan Articles for ILL

Wendi Ackerman
ackermaw@upstate.edu

UPSTATE MEDICAL UNIVERSITY

Introduction

The iPad scanning project was envisioned as a means of streamlining workflow for scanning articles from our print collection by reducing the number steps and providing flexibility of scanning location.

Environment

The Upstate Health Sciences Library (HSL) Document Delivery Department has three full-time staff available regular business hours who are supported evenings and weekends by library student assistants. Together they provide over 8,500 articles annually from our print journal collection.

Traditional Process: Photocopier/Scanner

Currently bound journals are brought from the basement to the first floor where the articles are scanned to a USB memory device using a Canon photocopier/scanner that combines multiple pages into a single, full-color PDF. The PDFs are retrieved from the USB device on a staff PC, where they are reviewed for quality and imported into ILLiad. Articles are rescanned if the image quality is found to be poor. Student workers reshelve the bound journals in the evening.

The photocopier/scanner exclusive features include:
- Elimination of glare
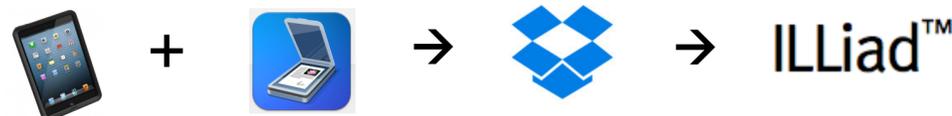- Holding the journal open to maximize the area to be scanned

The photocopier/scanner shares the following features with iPad apps:

Scans in Color	Quality of Scan	Batch Mode	Avg File Size	Per Page Scan Time
✓	Very good	✓	.92 mb	.25 sec

Experimental Process: iPad

Develop Workflow
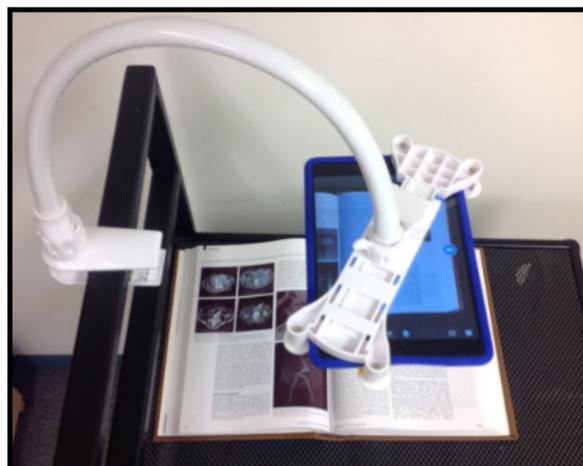The anticipated workflow utilized an iPad app and Dropbox to make PDFs available for ILLiad.

Choose an App
ScannerPro was chosen based on the following criteria:

Scanning Method	Price	Scans in Color	Quality of Scan	Batch Mode	Sends to Dropbox	Avg. File Size	Avg. Per Page Scan Time	Works w/ Tablet Holder	Auto-detect Borders
ScannerPro	$6.99	✓	Good	✓	✓	2.1 mb	.3 sec	✓	✓
GeniusScan+	$6.99	✓	Good	✓	✓	3.4 mb	3.4 sec		
JetScanner	$2.99	✓	Fair	✓	✓	5.4 mb	1.0 sec	✓	
TinyScan	$4.99	✓	Poor	✓	✓	(unknown)	(unknown)	✓	
Evernote (Document Scanner)	Free	✓	Good	✓		6 mb	.5 sec	✓	
GoogleDrive (Photo Upload)	Free	✓	Fair			7.4 mb	1.4 sec	✓	

Create a Scanning Environment
A re-purposed media cart was outfitted for mobile scanning.

Mobile cart:
- Allows scanning in the most convenient location (e.g., in the stacks or at the front desk)
- Moves to location with the best lighting

Dark surface:
- Improves accuracy of automatic border detection

Tablet holder:
- Connects to cart with custom bracket for additional height
- Flexes to hold iPad in scanning position
- Adjusts for any size tablet or iPad
- Allows hands-free operation
- Holds iPad steady at a consistent distance from articles being scanned

Results

We tested six apps and while all claimed to "scan" in color, they are actually capturing a photo. An app can scan an article in black & white or take a color photo; the two modes cannot be used together to create a PDF with color graphics. They also frequently crash when scanning either type of document greater than than10 pages long.

The quality of the PDFs produced by an iPad camera and apps ranged from fair to good. None came close to matching the excellent quality produced by the photocopier, which recognizes and optimizes the both text and color illustrations within a single PDF file.

The combination of customized carts and iPads provided the mobility and convenience that we were seeking. We also appreciated the ability to re-scan pages on the fly as needed, avoiding the need to re-scan an entire document. These advantages, however, do not add enough value to warrant the trade-off of high quality PDFs.

The Bottom Line

The iPad is effective for the scanning of a limited number of documents for personal use or in a very small ILL Department, but does not scale to meet the needs of a busy Document Delivery Department. Even when physical and environmental challenges are overcome (tablet holder, holding books open, glare, etc.), iPad apps are inadequate for the job, crashing frequently and lacking the ability to produce a high-quality color scan.

Traditional scanning methods continue to offer the most effective tools for the bulk scanning of articles in print journals.

BUSTED

Acknowledgements