Lean Manufacturing Problem Solving Approach to Journal Access Issues

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Problem:
Journal access problems are a high impact value stream causing user frustration, affecting satisfaction, and consuming significant library staff time.

Methods:
Staff were trained in Lean Management principles via readings and elearning courses. A logical process for tracking and troubleshooting journal access issues was created via the A3 process. Lean methods stress full involvement of front line staff, so a library technician led the investigation. Five access streams were identified. Following extensive process mapping, countermeasures were developed to address problem points.

Results:
After process mapping, three rapid experiments to track issues led to adoption of a central tracking system with staff assignments and reminders as well as integration with e-mail/task management software. Duplicate problem reports decreased, problem trends were identified, solution documentation increased, and some processes were successfully transitioned to technical staff.

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Conclusions:
Applying a Lean Approach to a complex system problem effectively uncovered root causes and assisted in both process mapping of the troubleshooting process and delineation of countermeasures. The A3 structure kept the investigation focused and ensured continued input and engagement of front line staff.