

## Going Global: Examining Issues and Seeking Collaboration for International Interlending

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### Abstract:

International interlibrary loan remains a persistent and sometimes vexing topic in US libraries. Technology's advance allows libraries and library users to easily identify resources from all across the globe. This ease of discovery belies the difficulty of delivery. To contribute to the conversation, the ALA RUSA STARS International Interlibrary Loan Committee conducted a survey of US libraries regarding international interlibrary loan activity. The survey uncovered elements impacting ILL success and failure and identified opportunities for US academic libraries global ILL participation. Issues that concern the survey's participants included communications, copyright, customs, payment methods, shipping, and language barriers. This program discusses efforts to use the survey results to inform international ILL programs and best practices and contributes to the international dialog essential for interlending success.

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"Strategic Alliances and Partnerships Interlending and Document Supply," our ILDS conference theme, could not have arrived at a better time. Over the past several years, interlending librarians in the US formally incorporated international interlibrary loan into a newly organized national professional organization, called STARS. Within this group, librarians in the US formally and informally promote international interlending. As a critical part of these efforts, we seek strategic alliances and partnerships within and without the US.

STARS (Sharing and Transforming Access to Resources Section) is the part of the American Library Association's Reference and Adult Services division. Association members vested STARS with promoting and improving interlending and resource sharing. Within STARS, as with any professional organization, you will find a multitude of subcommittees, all dividing the work required to support a wide a varied mission. STARS projects include maintaining the *Interlibrary Loan Code for the United States*, training, and mentoring ILL practitioners, promoting activities and research in the field of resource sharing. When member librarians created STARS, we realized that international interlibrary lending warranted a critical place in the organization. This led to the creation of the International Interlibrary Loan Committee. I served as the committee's inaugural co-chair.

The committee's charge directs members to:

- Evaluate trends in international interlibrary loan and resource sharing
- Develop materials and resources for international interlibrary loan practitioners

- Sponsors and promotes international interlibrary loan and resource sharing efforts, research projects, training and professional development and liaison opportunities.<sup>1</sup>

The committee approaches the charge from two complimentary perspectives. First, facilitate US libraries access to international resources, making US libraries better international borrowers. Second, improve international libraries access to US resources, making US libraries better international lenders. The committee and our like-minded colleagues want improved connections with individuals, institutions, and organizations to enhance international cooperation.

First, the committee seeks to understand the current state of international interlending in the United States. While OCLC serves as the backbone of US interlending, both domestic and international, the network has limits. Foremost, many non-US institutions wishing to participate in interlending lack access to OCLC. In addition, while an OCLC network provides the technical infrastructure to perform interlending, it in itself lacks the political and personal partnerships, the human elements, required to make lasting connections. To participate in international interlending, US institutions employ a number of strategies involving more than OCLC interlibrary loan subsystems. These strategies include collections/area studies-based consortia, library-to-library cooperative relationships, and point of need interlending.

Collections and area studies-based consortia are characterized by institutions coming together to share collections and expertise, centered on common languages and academic program support. Local institutional demand for international, non-English language materials (e.g. Latin American studies, Slavic language studies) drives these endeavors, providing focus, support, and funding. Institutions make strategic connections with other like-minded institutions, bonding together to create and maintain partnerships. They also create requisite resource sharing linkages required share these collections across borders.

For example, the Center for Research Libraries (CRL), a consortium of North American research libraries, manages a variety of collection building and resource sharing projects. These efforts include area studies collections and the CRL's Global Resources Network (GRN). With this network, the CRL seeks to improve North America's access to international information resources. This includes both collection building and document delivery.<sup>2</sup> The GRN is comprised of several projects that connect internationally oriented libraries and their collections (e.g. German-North American Resources Partnership and the Collaborative Initiative for French and North American Libraries).

The North American Coordinating Council on Japanese Library Resources (NCC) provides another example of interlending through collections building and sharing. The NCC combines the interests and expertise of Japanese specialist librarians and resource sharing librarians. The NCC manages a project called Global ILL Framework (GIF). GIF facilitates interlending between participating research libraries in the US and Japan. GIF includes the discovery and delivery tools to support interlending beyond traditional OCLC interlending.<sup>3</sup> Tools include tutorials

on how to use GIF and links to catalogs and translators. These aid librarians and scholars in the discovery of both materials and holding libraries.

These cooperative collections based relationships benefit from breadth and depth of institutional support. Scholars, students, collections librarians and interlending librarians all have vested interests in cultivating and sustaining strategic connections in the US and overseas. This brings international interlending into the forefront of a library's service and collections mission. Positioned as such, these collaborations may garner greater opportunities for funding, resources, and support that libraries outside the group may not otherwise enjoy. There is power in the consortium.

While many US libraries are not active participants in these collections based networks, some enjoy a more direct connection overseas. Library-to-Library relationships are characterized by a US library entering into a formal cooperative service arrangement with one or more international libraries. Not limited to resource sharing, these relationships include librarian exchanges, professional development programming, digital library development, etc. Funding and support comes from a variety of sponsors including the government aid agencies, and non-governmental agency grants, and the participating institutions.

One example of a Library-to-Library collaboration is the University of Tennessee and Makerere University, Uganda cooperative exchange.<sup>4</sup> The UT-UM exchange, originally funded in part by a Carnegie Cooperation Grant to MU, supported librarian travel, professional development programming for MU librarians, digital collection building, and resource sharing. The resource sharing component centers on an electronic document delivery service (EDS). The EDS provides MU access to UT's collections. The EDS included training to MU librarians for discovery and ordering .pdf copies of articles, book chapters, and theses/dissertations. Since the project began in 2002, UT filled over 1140 orders via EDS.

North American medical libraries enjoy a history of innovative resource sharing and services, library-to-library. In 2005, the University of Utah medical library reported on their growing library-to-library network of service and resource sharing. Building on their success with document delivery with the a national medical library in Cyprus, University of Utah expanded their network to provide no-cost, electronic document delivery to medical libraries in Europe, Asia, and South America.<sup>5</sup>

These Library-to-Library connections may be created through informal networking, ad hoc projects, and even outright serendipity. My home institution was not shopping for an international cooperative agreement when MU made their initial overtures. MU colleagues in the United States knew MU was looking for a partner and knew my dean has a personal and professional interest in Africa. Specifically, her spouse is a UT art history professor who has studied extensively in both East and West Africa. Unsolicited, MU took a chance and contacted my library. We fortunately were in a position to join in the collaboration. University of Utah faculty working abroad spurred the expansion their institution's document delivery service. These people realized of the power of their home institution's interlending project and wanted the same connection with their respective international partner institutions.

These Library-to-Library cooperative arrangements can be quite fragile. Without regular financial and political support, they can devolve into “labors of love,” with little to no funding. These relationships may at times lack the investiture of a broad cadre collections and resource sharing librarians; a characteristic of the collections/subject area based activities. As such, they may operate with a deficit of support. If librarians weave international interlending into the fabric of their institution, it serves as a critical component of collection building, information access, and service to research and teaching constituencies. These strategic partnerships enjoy better a chance for success. Lacking resources and support, partnerships can wither on the vine.

Finally, there is point of need interlending; one library's interlending department contacting another for the express purpose of accessing a loan or copy. This perhaps is the most common type of connection. US librarians most often discuss interlending in terms of these situations. Here there are no formal collection development planning or subject area programs. In addition, there are no peer-to-peer personnel exchanges. OCLC provides a common network easily integrating international interlending into a US libraries workflow. Still, many libraries, as I will detail later, rely on email and other means of communicating with interlending partners.

Point of need interlending discussions often center on the mechanics of global resource sharing: Discovery, translation, communications, payment and delivery. Fortunately, experiences in domestic interlending coupled with those shared by librarians involved in formal international collaborations foster the programming ideas and the collegial connections required to address these global challenges.

These interlending relationships cross a broad spectrum from the large, institutionally vested, shared collections to one-off lending requests. Working in this varied environment, the committee needed direction from interlibrary loan practitioners. To determine direction, the committee surveyed of North American interlibrary lending librarians to assess the “...barriers and challenges to international ILL borrowing and lending with regard to bibliographic discovery, communication, invoicing and payment, and shipping and delivery methods.”<sup>6</sup> I base this survey discussion on my committee colleagues’ ‘in press’ article.

This was not the first time North American libraries used surveys to ascertain the current state of international interlending. The Research Libraries Group (RLG) performed similar surveys in the 1990s. The survey authors could then compare their 2007 survey results with those RLG surveys from the previous decades.

First, a big positive: The number of participants that actually lend and borrow internationally was 97% or 147 out of the over 150 libraries completing the survey. In addition, 66% of respondents are willing to lend internationally without charging fees beyond what they charge domestically.

Second, the survey illuminated logical interlending programming areas. For bibliographic discovery and citation verification, the next steps involve identifying

tools and freely available services that practitioners can use to verify citations and to locate potential lenders. Survey respondents suggested several freely available services that can assist with citation verification including the GIF mentioned earlier. Another service such service is GIVES.<sup>7</sup> Librarians from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign Global Studies Library and the Slavic Reference Services provide no-cost citation verification and interlending referrals. Using these services, a borrowing library can connect with international lenders to initiate an interlending transaction.

For request communications, a majority of respondents prefer either OCLC or direct email correspondence. IFLA forms and direct ISO messaging came in last. The committee sees promoting all avenues of communication as key. This includes addressing OCLC's strengths, weaknesses, and investigating email and online communication options. US libraries making initial forays into international interlending will do well to maximize OCLC's utility. Non-OCLC libraries can take heart in the fact that email remains as popular as OCLC among the US libraries completing the survey.

For payment methods, US libraries strongly prefer OCLC IFM (ILL Fee Management system), US bank checks, credit cards, IFLA vouchers, and reciprocal agreements. Since many potential interlending partners do not use OCLC and OCLC IFM, promoting alternatives will continue to be a priority. Back in 2002, Christine Robben and Cherie L. Weible published an article describing the six methods available for funding international transactions.<sup>8</sup> This article serves as an excellent primer on international payment methods. The committee may focus on promoting US libraries acceptance of credit card payments for lending services and creating more reciprocal lending agreements where the libraries need only pay for their part of the shipping.

While electronic delivery makes short work of interlending copy requests, shipping physical loans remains a persistent concern. The expense, the lack of experience with customs, and the time factor, loans taking weeks or months to reach destinations, all present problems for interlending. Promoting best practices is an important in addressing problems libraries experience with shipping loans. Some survey participants report success in lending and borrowing internationally. Librarians need to hear these success stories and know where they can go for guidance and expertise.

For the near term, the STARS International Interlibrary Loan Committee identified a number of projects as next steps. The committee received tentative acceptance of program for the 2010 American Library Association Annual Meeting in Washington DC currently titled "Everything You Always Wanted to Know about International ILL." Drawing upon lessons learned from the survey, the committee shall compile a panel of international interlending experts to educate and inspire colleagues to participate in global resource sharing.

Also, the committee will investigate and promote sustainable communications channels practitioners use to inform their interlending operations. One such channel may be a combination wiki / blog to collection and disseminate the collective wisdom

of interlending librarians. Options include building upon the long established interlibrary loan wiki *ShareILL* ([www.ShareILL.org](http://www.ShareILL.org)), using ALA supported blogs, or creating a new, stand-alone site.

Success or failure of such a project depends on the participation of librarians within and without the United States. Today's most active professional online venue for US librarians is a listserv, ILL-L. In a given month, subscribers may generate over 530 messages covering a wide range of interlibrary service topics, including international interlending. This one avenue can reach the many people; an audience self-selected as having interests in interlibrary loan.

However, to contribute to our global conversations, we have to look beyond this list. First, there is the sheer volume published on the list. Will international conversations be lost in a daily deluge of conversations? Second, while enjoying some level of international participation, US academics dominate the list's subscribers. In analyzing the list's subscribers, I determined the over 1860 individuals from at least 20 different countries subscribe to this list. Over 62% of the list subscribers hold .edu domain email addresses, 1170 US librarians and staff. After .edu subscribers come .gov and .us email holders. Finally and most obvious, the list is an English language list.

Along with this heavily trafficked list, what online networks can we create and sustain? How can we foster the discussions and connections required to make strategic partnerships? Perhaps this is the most critical question I can ask of this conference's participants. Active engagement with the international interlending community is an important strategy for the committee. Just as the committee's survey and subsequent discussion informs our future programming, our more global discussions will make for more successful and sustained international cooperation.

To promote and support international interlending, I see the need to move beyond our current methods of communicating and sharing. US librarians employ a number of strategies to participate in global resource sharing. These same librarians can provide their colleagues with guidance and support. Current global collaborations such as CRL, NCC, and library-to-library cooperatives serve as proving grounds for international interlending. These activities teach us what works and what does not. Within these partnerships, we will find the expertise needed to develop programming and projects that advance international cooperation.

While my fellow committee members and other US practitioners continue supporting global sharing, we need to, just as our conference theme directs, connect globally for strategic alliances and partnerships interlending and document supply. Creating and sustaining partnerships based on sharing interlending expertise is just as critical as the sharing of books and journal articles that initially brought us together.

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<sup>1</sup> International Interlibrary Loan Committee. American Library Association. Reference and User Services Association. Sharing and Transforming Access to Resources (STARS) Section. July 27, 2009.

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<<http://www.ala.org/ala/mgrps/divs/rusa/sections/stars/section/international/intill.cfm>>.

<sup>2</sup> Center for Research Libraries. Global Resources Network. July 10, 2009. <<http://www.crl.edu/content.asp?l1=3&l2=55>>.

<sup>3</sup> Global ILL Framework Project. ILL/DD Committee. North American Coordinating Council on Japanese Library Resources. July 10, 2009. <<http://www.fas.harvard.edu/~ncc/ildd/gifproject.html>>.

<sup>4</sup> Atkins, David P., Barbara Dewey, and Anthony Smith. "From the Great Smokies to the Mountains of the Moon: US and Ugandan Librarians Share Experiences and Expectations." Information Technology and Libraries. 24:4 (2005): 192-196.

<sup>5</sup> Arlitsch, Kenning, Nancy T Lombardo, and Joan M Gregory, "Another Kind of Diplomacy: International Resource Sharing." Resource Sharing & Information Networks 18, no. 1/2 (2005): 105 - 120.

<sup>6</sup> Baich, Tina and Tim Jiping Zou, Heather Weltin and Zhenh Ye Yang. "Lending and Borrowing across Borders: Issues and Challenges with International Resource Sharing." Reference and User Services Quarterly. In press.

<sup>7</sup> Condill, Kit and Lynne Rudasill. "GIVES: Interlending and Discovery for Non-English Resources." Interlending and Document Supply. 37, no. 1 (2009): 49 – 60. And G.I.V.E.S. - Global Interlending Verification Enquiry Service. University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. Global Studies Library. July 29, 2009  
< <http://www.library.illinois.edu/cgs/gives.html>>

<sup>8</sup> Robben, Christine, and Cherie L Weible, "International Payment: Methods to Consider." Journal of Interlibrary Loan, Document Delivery & Information Supply 12, no. 3 (2002): 29 -.