

# White Paper: International Interlibrary Loan

**Anne K. Beaubien, Director of Library Document Delivery  
and Grants Officer, University of Michigan Library**

**Marlayna Christensen, Outreach & Digital Projects Librarian,  
University of California, San Diego Libraries**

**Jennifer Kuehn, Head, Interlibrary Services,  
Ohio State University Libraries**

**David K. Larsen, Head of Access Services and Assessment,  
University of Chicago Library**

**Mary Lehane, Manager, Resource Sharing Department,  
York University Libraries**

## Introduction

**R**esearch libraries have an important and longstanding role in facilitating the growth of knowledge and the sharing of information. These libraries provide resources to faculty, researchers, students, and members of the public to engage in research, education, and learning and to advance knowledge. Increasingly, collaboration among these communities of users is interdisciplinary and global. As a result, the sharing of resources occurs within the universities' campuses and centers in the US and abroad, in formal relationships between research institutions at home and abroad such as joint or shared academic degree programs, and in agreements between libraries in the US and abroad. This white paper focuses on resource sharing activities by US research libraries.

## Background and Current Environment

One way that research libraries strive to meet the needs of patrons is through interlibrary loan (ILL). The mission of ILL is to provide access to materials for local patrons and to lend materials to other institutions. ILL services supplement libraries' collections by providing access to materials needed for research,

scholarship, and private study that are not available at a user's home institution.<sup>1</sup> ILL is a research library activity that occurs between two different institutions. Research and academic libraries place ILL requests on behalf of faculty, staff, and students for returnable items (e.g. books, audiovisual materials, microfilm) and non-returnable items (e.g. copies of journal articles, conference papers), usually to obtain material that is out of scope for the home collection or to support the specialized research interest of one of their users.

ILL offices supply materials from a variety of countries to other countries. The requesting process is transparent, and requests are automatically forwarded to the next possible supplying library in the system when a request cannot be filled. Much interlibrary lending is of materials that are old, out of print, and not available online; a broad spectrum of resources are requested.

As discoverability of published material has become easier due to technological advances, library patrons see more information resources that they want. This knowledge has created an increased demand for both in-print and out-of-print books. In addition, more information resources are now published outside the US, and library patrons do not generally look at the publisher's country of origin—they look only at an item that they need. Finally, OCLC has loaded significantly more foreign library records. As a result, it is far easier to know who has what and acquire and/or request those materials; thus the "walls" between countries become permeable.

It is standard ILL practice to look within the home country first and then search internationally (as other countries come to the US when material is not available locally). This practice is consistent with the well-considered International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA) best practices, which have a long history dating back to 1954.<sup>2</sup> US research libraries work within this tradition. As we borrow more internationally we build relationships with libraries in other countries, develop reciprocity, and supply the materials that they require. If US research libraries are unable to lend materials to international libraries, it would jeopardize our ability to borrow resources from other countries that are needed locally and thus would impair scholarship.

All non-returnables are delivered using a standard suite of options, including Ariel,<sup>3</sup> Relais,<sup>4</sup> Odyssey,<sup>5</sup> fax, e-mail, courier service, and postal service. Delivery from library to library is normally electronic, but there are different approaches for delivery to the patron. Some research libraries deliver paper copies, while

other academic libraries provide requested documents to their users electronically (usually in the form of a non-searchable, image-only PDF). In this scenario, when a requested article arrives it is posted to a secure web server and the user is given a URL with which to access the article. Access to the article is limited via password or other means of authentication to the user who requested it, and the user has a limited time frame and a limited number of views before the article is automatically deleted. Most academic and research libraries do not send articles via e-mail because it is not secure, e-mail boxes may not be large enough, and articles could easily be forwarded.

Generally within the US, research and academic libraries set up reciprocal arrangements with very specific and limited numbers of partner libraries. There may also be formal relationships between institutions. It is worth mentioning that standard practice is to serve users through local document delivery, which provides materials to a library's own institutional affiliates (whether at home or abroad). Some institutions have campuses abroad. Document delivery for such campuses, which occur on an international level, is still internal to the institution. An affiliate is part of a licensing agreement.

ARL institutions are expanding their global presence through the establishment of overseas campuses and centers, through joint degree programs with other universities, and through formal academic partnerships. This growth in international relations is also expanding implications for ARL libraries with the expectation that collection access, including ILL and document delivery, can appropriately be part of the arrangements.

## **International ILL**

International ILL requests are on the rise due to a number of factors. The worldwide increase of access to the Internet and the ease with which information is discovered facilitate the growth of requests. OCLC and DOCLINE have facilitated locating materials from around the world by aggressively loading participating libraries' local holdings records. As of 2010, 57.5% of OCLC records are non-English, and this percentage of non-English records is growing. Though OCLC headquarters may reside in Ohio, the organization is global in scale and is continually increasing the number of foreign members. Along with membership, those libraries are loading their holdings and expanding what is discoverable. Once a user has discovered the information, the next step is simply to request the item(s). Libraries transmit requests to one another using OCLC, DOCLINE,

or one of a number of library networks, like RapidILL. If a library does not participate in an organized network, an IFLA form or a simple e-mail message will suffice in getting the request started.

In most cases, journals published outside of the US are available in US research library collections where discovery, requesting, and payment for ILL transactions are facilitated by resource-sharing services. Lending of returnables presents a number of challenges. Libraries are generally unable to lend originals internationally because international mail service may be unreliable, because shipments usually cannot be tracked, and because of difficulties passing material through customs. Finally, even when libraries are willing to lend originals across borders, costs for shipping are frequently prohibitive for both the requesting and the supplying libraries.

Interlibrary loan services are becoming more seamless for both the libraries and the user. The requesting process has become almost invisible to both the user and the borrowing library. In fact, the borrowing library staff may not even be involved in the request, other than learning that the request has been made and fulfilled (delivered electronically). In the automated environment, the user requests a desired title. The system identifies holding libraries based on pre-set profiles that locate the item and create a request. The request routinely progresses until a library indicates that they are able to fulfill it. Any transaction fees are automatically levied and delivered based on the lending and borrowing libraries' profiles. Outside of networks, payments are becoming increasingly simpler. More libraries are able to handle transaction fees using credit cards and electronic fund transfers (EFT), which eliminate the challenges of exchange rates.

As the world continues to discover the explosion of information available, there comes the realization that not all of it is available at our doorstep. Like good global neighbors, research libraries must continue to provide as well as receive. There are many other ways that research libraries acquire materials in addition to ILL. For example, research libraries pay publishers for the rights to provide selected materials to users, whether through acquiring copyrighted works or through licensing agreements. These libraries measure and pay copyright fees as expected, according to the established guidelines and laws. There is also a growing trend for libraries to purchase on demand. Libraries check domestic suppliers before going to international locations. Many publishers have the electronic documents available almost immediately upon payment.

## Impacts on Research and Libraries if International ILL Practices Are Modified

The Interlibrary Loan Code for the US states, “Interlibrary loan transactions with libraries outside of the United States are governed by the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions’ International Lending: Principles and Guidelines for Procedure.”<sup>6</sup> The IFLA guidelines state that “each country has a special responsibility to supply its own national imprints to libraries in other countries” in order to promote “universal availability of published material.”<sup>7</sup> The guidelines stipulate that “all reasonable efforts should be made to satisfy international requests,” but also affirm the importance of respect for copyright, indicating that “each supplying library should be aware of, and work within, the copyright laws of its own country” and that “the requesting library should pay due regard to the copyright laws of the supplying library’s country.”<sup>8</sup>

Current practice allows research libraries to fulfill their “special responsibility” to promote “universal availability of published material.” Changes to these practices in the US could limit scholarship while imposing new costs on libraries and their institutions. Changes that would require US research libraries to provide special handling for international requests would have a negative impact on ILL operations, are unnecessary, and would not be cost-effective.

Although mechanisms do not exist for supplying libraries to track international lending requests, requesting libraries throughout the world have tools through which they can pay rights holders for copies. For example, the Copyright Clearance Center (CCC) collects approximately US\$39.4 million in rights payments annually from international sources.<sup>9</sup>

Libraries already devote considerable effort and expense to ensuring compliance with copyright laws. If additional requirements for fulfilling international ILL requests were imposed, it would place new burdens on research libraries with regards to workflow and costs. Although guidelines issued by the Commission on New Technological Uses of Copyrighted Works (CONTU) do not have the full force of law, these guidelines have become the de facto practice for US libraries. These guidelines place the burden for paying copyright fees on the requesting libraries, and it would be both undesirable and impractical to transfer responsibility for ensuring compliance to supplying libraries for only international requests.

Libraries not only respect and voluntarily pay copyright fees when appropriate, but they also constitute the bulk of the market for the content

produced by academic rights holders. In 2007–2008, the 123 libraries comprising the Association of Research Libraries alone spent approximately US\$870 million on current serial subscriptions.<sup>10</sup> Libraries expend ever-larger portions of their increasingly stretched budgets on materials, especially scientific, technical, and medical serials, the costs of which have increased at staggering rates in the past decades. Rather than attempting to avoid paying rights holders, libraries are the chief source of revenue for academic publications.

Libraries work with publishers to establish license agreements that allow interlibrary lending, which is factored into the price of the agreement. Overall, ILL offices work very hard to conform to agreements, laws, and guidelines in their practices, often erring on the side of not providing licensed content when lending rights are silent or unknown. As print subscriptions diminish, lending from licensed content will take on increasing importance to interlibrary lending. If there are more restrictions on lending of licensed content there will be a larger gap between the material available to local patrons and what can be shared through ILL. That distinction is new, as licensed content becomes the preferred format in collections.

Library lending internationally is an important activity of research libraries. If limits are placed in the US on lending internationally, research libraries may find it more challenging to obtain materials from foreign countries to meet the research needs of their own users. Ultimately, this would serve to stifle research and limit creativity.

## Conclusion

As noted previously, IFLA's guidelines state that "each country has a special responsibility to supply its own national imprints to libraries in other countries" in order to promote "universal availability of published material," and "that all reasonable efforts should be made to satisfy international requests."<sup>11</sup> These guidelines succinctly describe the mission and responsibilities of libraries in support of access to knowledge. Challenges to current international ILL practices could significantly undermine this carefully crafted and balanced set of important resource-sharing activities.

Second, research and education is increasingly a global enterprise. As a result, there is an increased demand for international research resources and this demand blurs national borders. By engaging with our international partners, research libraries build relationships with libraries and institutions

in other countries, develop reciprocity, and supply the materials that they and we require. These activities support and promote scholarship. If US research libraries were unable to lend materials to international libraries, it would jeopardize our ability to borrow resources from other countries that are needed locally.

Third, research libraries provide access to information resources through multiple channels, including acquisition of copyrighted works, licensing agreements, ILL, purchase on demand, and more. These libraries devote considerable effort and expense to ensuring compliance with copyright laws and licensing terms and conditions. Libraries voluntarily pay copyright fees when appropriate, and they constitute the bulk of the market for the content produced by academic rights holders. New restrictions on current international lending by US research libraries would lead to higher costs for libraries and would limit access to knowledge, nationally and internationally.

In closing, the IFLA guidelines for international lending summarize the situation well: "Just as no library can be self-sufficient in meeting all the information needs of its users, so no country can be self-sufficient. The supply of loans and copies between libraries in different countries is a valuable and necessary part of the interlibrary loan process."<sup>12</sup>

<sup>1</sup> "The purpose of interlibrary loan...is to obtain, upon request of a library user, material not available in the user's local library...Interlibrary loan (ILL) is intended to complement local collections and is not a substitute for good library collections intended to meet the routine needs of users. ILL is based on a tradition of sharing resources between various types and sizes of libraries and rests on the belief that no library, no matter how large or well supported, is self-sufficient in today's world." American Library Association (ALA), "Interlibrary Loan Code for the United States," prepared by the Interlibrary Loan Committee, Reference and User Services Association (RUSA), 1994, revised 2001, revised 2008 by the Sharing and Transforming Access to Resources Section (STARS), <http://www.ala.org/ala/mgrps/divs/rusa/resources/guidelines/interlibrary.cfm>; "Interlibrary Loan Code for the United States Explanatory Supplement," for use with the Interlibrary Loan Code for the United States, 2008, <http://www.ala.org/ala/mgrps/divs/rusa/resources/guidelines/interlibraryloancode.cfm>.

<sup>2</sup> IFLA, "International Resource Sharing and Document Delivery: Principles and Guidelines for Procedure," first agreed by IFLA 1954, major revision 1978, modified 1987, major revision 2001, revision February 2009, <http://www.ifla.org/files/docdel/documents/international-lending-en.pdf>.

<sup>3</sup> Ariel, Relais, and Odyssey are software programs that allow the transmission of articles electronically. "Ariel allows users to send electronic images to other Ariel workstations anywhere in the world, using either FTP or email, and converts them to PDF files for easy patron delivery," Infotrieve website, accessed March 10, 2011, <http://www.publist.com/ariel/>.

<sup>4</sup> Relais software enables sending scanned documents via FTP to Ariel, and Odyssey, fax, e-mail attachment, post to web, or print, per Clare MacKeigan, Chief Operating Officer, Relais International, March 15, 2011.

<sup>5</sup> "The Odyssey software allows sites to send and receive electronic documents to other Odyssey sites, OCLC ILLiad sites, and other vendor's software that supports the Odyssey protocol," Odyssey website, accessed March 10, 2011, <http://www.atlas-sys.com/odyssey/>.

<sup>6</sup> ALA, 2008.

<sup>7</sup> IFLA, 2009.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> Copyright Clearance Center, *2009 Annual Report*, accessed March 7, 2011, <http://www.copyright.com/media/pdfs/FY09-Annual-Report-2page.pdf>.

<sup>10</sup> Martha Kyrillidou and Les Bland, comps. and eds., *ARL Statistics, 2007–2008* (Washington, DC: ARL, 2009), 46, <http://www.arl.org/bm~doc/arlstat08.pdf>.

<sup>11</sup> IFLA, 2009.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

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David K. Larsen, Mary Lehane



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**To cite this article:** Anne K. Beaubien, Marlayna Christensen, Jennifer Kuehn, David K. Larsen, and Mary Lehane. "White Paper: International Interlibrary Loan." *Research Library Issues: A Quarterly Report from ARL, CNI, and SPARC*, no. 275 (June 2011): 7–14. <http://publications.arl.org/rli275/>.