

Resource Sharing in the U.S. Academic Libraries: Trends and Future

SEANGILL PETER BAE
Princeton University (USA)

ABSTRACT

Il servizio di prestito interbibliotecario nelle biblioteche universitarie americane è uno dei servizi più apprezzati e il numero di richieste cresce rapidamente. Nonostante, ed allo stesso tempo, a causa delle informazioni disponibili online, esigenze di informazione degli utenti diventano sempre più internazionali e diversificate. Inoltre, a causa della immediata disponibilità di molti prodotti on-line, le aspettative degli utenti sono di un rapido accesso al full text. Per soddisfare queste esigenze ed aspettative, i bibliotecari americani hanno sviluppato diversi strumenti per ottimizzare i flussi di lavoro che comprendono, a più livelli, la condivisione delle risorse: ne sono esempi ILLiad e il software Odyssey, Direct Request feature, Purchase on Demand and Standalone Scanning Workstation, etc. Il futuro dell'ILL deve però tener conto di importanti realtà, come il diritto d'autore e le licenze per la gestione delle risorse elettroniche. Tuttavia, se le biblioteche potranno prendere l'iniziativa ed intervenire sulle modifiche tecniche future, si potrà creare un ambiente più favorevole ai bibliotecari ed agli utenti e consentirci di compiere al meglio la nostra missione.

Interlibrary Loan service in the U.S. academic libraries is one of the most demanded services and its demand grow up rapidly in recent decades. Despite, and at the same time, because of the information available online, patrons'

information needs become more international and diverse. In addition, due to the instant nature of many online products, patrons' expectations for fast fulfillment of their request grow up rapidly. To satisfy the needs and expectations, U.S. ILL librarians implement various tools and workflows which include, multi-tiered resource sharing network, ILLiad and Odyssey software, Direct Request feature, Purchase on Demand and Standalone Scanning Workstation, etc. The future of ILL is not without serious challenges such as copyrights and electronic resources license. However, if libraries can take the initiative on technical changes and its future direction, we can create an environment more favorable for us to fulfill our mission.

KEYWORDS

Prestito interbibliotecario, collaborazione, Document Delivery, biblioteche accademiche, condivisione delle risorse.

Interlibrary Loan, Interlending, Document Delivery, Academic Libraries, Resource Sharing .

1. INTRODUCTION

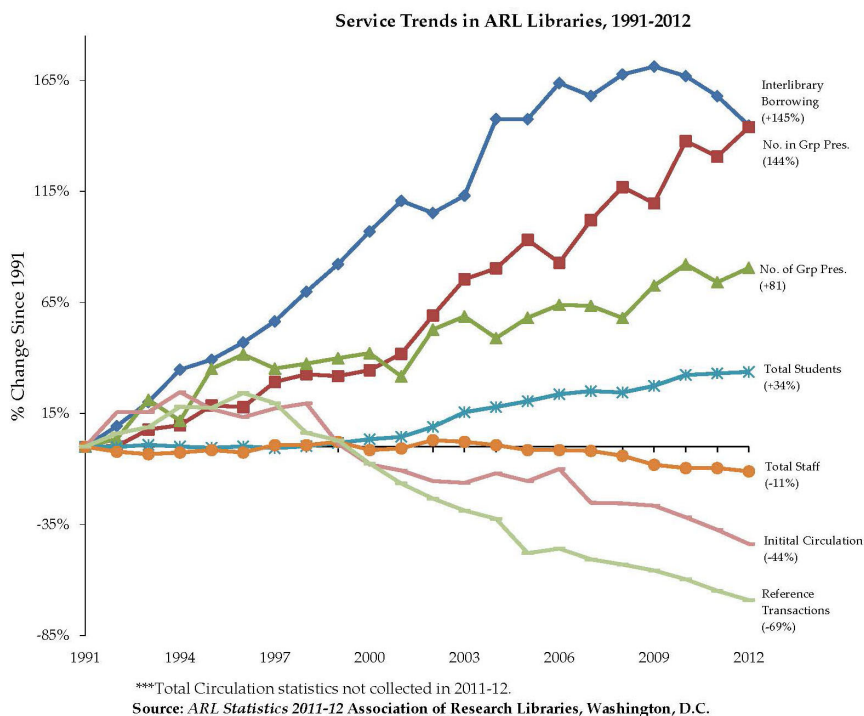
The Interlibrary Loan (ILL) Service¹ is typically defined as a service in which a library borrows the materials that are not available in the home library from other libraries. Since it is virtually impossible for a library to collect all the materials needed by their patrons, ILL is one of the most important services a library can offer to their patrons. Especially in the academic libraries where the users' information needs become more diverse, international and multi-disciplinary, ILL service is a crucial element for scholars to continue their researches. This is evidenced by numerous acknowledgements one can find from many academic monographs.

In this short paper, I wish to present the current trends of the Interlibrary Loan services in the U.S. academic libraries and to provide some insights on the work procedures and various tools which libraries utilize to process the ILL requests more efficiently. In addition, I wish to remind colleagues on the challenges we are facing in the future and what we, as interlibrary loan librarians can do for the services we provide to our patrons.

¹ In some libraries, the service is also divided into Interlending or Interlibrary Loan and Document Delivery service, differentiating the type of requests by returnable and non-returnable. In this article, I will be using Interlibrary Loan as a term that includes both types of requests without distinction.

2. CURRENT TRENDS

During the last decade, the Interlibrary Loan service in the U.S. academic libraries became one of the most demanded services. According to the 2012 statistics from the ARL (Associations of Research Libraries), the Interlibrary Loan service grew up more rapidly than any other library services since 1991. Although there were some decreases in recent years, libraries had have 143% more ILL requests in 2012 than 1991. It is even more significant when one compares the numbers with the circulation and reference services statistics which, traditionally, were considered the core of the library services. Their numbers were decreased since 2000 while ILL were increased.



When libraries started to purchase online full text database packages, a conventional assumption was that the number of ILL request would decrease. But the numbers increased instead. Due to the Internet and other information finding tools, our patrons are now finding more information and related citations than before. However, since not everything is online and freely available, the role of ILL became more important than before.

The number of ILL transactions processed in the U.S. academic libraries could be seen very impressive. As below table shows, the number of items processed by

top 10 ILL departments are almost equal to or greater than a small public library's annual circulations.

Lending	Borrowing
U. Minnesota (151,945)	U. Wisconsin (83,161)
Ohio State U. (136,576)	Ohio State U. (80,155)
U. Wisconsin (104,282)	U. Oregon (72,941)
U. Illinois, Urbana (95,132)	Washington U. (72,941)
Colorado State U. (81,315)	U. Illinois, Urbana (72,259)
U. Illinois, Chicago (72,753)	U. Connecticut (70,096)
U. Colorado (70,307)	U. Pennsylvania (67,389)
Michigan State U. (68,430)	George Washington (67,030)
U. Oregon (65,292)	U. Texas A & M (66,587)
Oklahoma (62,307)	Columbia U. (61,099)

The items requested through ILL service do not include only books and articles. There are requests for many different types of materials such as Dissertations, Proceedings, Patents, Newspapers microfilms, microfiches, micro-cards, A/V materials (CD, DVD, LP, Cassette Tapes, Laser Disks), Ephemeras, Papers, Reports, Archival Materials, Software, Dataset, Data Base, Pictures and Sculptures. Obviously not everything is available through ILL but as an ILL librarian, we are trying to satisfy our patrons need as much as we can.

Although the numbers of requests we receive are recently decreased, we receive more difficult requests which take more time for ILL staff to process and to get. For example, our patrons request items such as a German incunabula published in 16th century, the monographs cited multiple times but not yet published, or an article in organic chemistry published in a Chinese academic journal. So the questions remain, how can we manage the demands?

3. TOOLS AND WORK PROCEDURES

Handling such a great number of ILL transactions with limited resources gives us a unique challenge. And in the sections following, I wish to present some tools and procedures which the U.S. academic libraries implemented to process the ILL requests more efficiently.

3.1. MULTI-TIERED RESOURCE SHARING NETWORKS

In general, the ILL departments in the U.S. academic libraries are members of multi-tiered resource sharing networks. First, there are Regional Resource

Sharing Networks in which the libraries share their resources with the libraries in close proximity. When requested item is not available within the regional network, then the request can be moved to nationwide network such as OCLC which also includes some international partners. After that, the requests can be sent out to other libraries in the world that are not in OCLC network.

There are many regional resource sharing networks and *Borrow Direct* is an example formed between the libraries in Ivy League schools and some other libraries with similar collections.² One of the most important elements of this type of network is that the request is initiated by patrons and the transactions are sent out to holding libraries by the system without any staff involvement. So the turnaround time is significantly reduced because as soon as patron submits the request, it is sent to the lending library. In addition, the *Borrow Direct* discovery system can check the circulation status of each item in real time so the system will not send the request to the library of which the requested item is currently unavailable.

The screenshot below shows a record in *Borrow Direct* system. It shows the item's current circulation status from four holding libraries and patrons can chose their pick up location and leave additional notes regarding their requests. Once the request is submitted from this screen, the next steps for borrowing library staff are receiving the book from the lending library, processing it and make it ready for the patron.

La coscienza di Zeno, Italo Svevo

Author: Svevo, Italo
 Title: La coscienza di Zeno
 Publication: Giunti, Firenze, 1994
 Edition: 1. ed. 1a ed
 ISBN (s): 880920526X
 Physical Description: Book
 #W4 480 p - 23 cm
 #W4 480 p - 232 cm

Select a pickup location and click the Request button to order this item through Borrow Direct.

Select a Pickup Location: Chose Pick Up location
 Volume(s) Needed:

Library	Location	Call Number	Borrow Direct Availability
PENN	Van Pelt Library	PQ4841.C482 C6 1994	Requestable
YALE	SML, Stacks, LC Classification	PQ4841 C36 C6 1994	Requestable
COLUMBIA	Butler Stacks (Enter at the Butler Circulation Desk)	PQ484.C482 C613 1994g	2014-06-02 23:00:00
DARTMOUTH	Baker Berry	PQ4841.C482 C6 1994	Requestable

2 Brown, Columbia, Cornell, Dartmouth, Harvard, Johns Hopkins University, Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), Princeton, University of Chicago, University of Pennsylvania, and Yale are the members of the Borrow Direct Service

Since the *Borrow Direct* system is connected to the local library management system, when an item from other institutions comes, the *Borrow Direct* system creates a temporary record in catalog and put a hold on the item for requester so that the item can be circulated as if it is a local item. This rather complicated process is done with simple clicks in *Borrow Direct* system so the processing time can be reduced significantly.

While many regional resource sharing networks handle only returnable items, there are other resource sharing networks for handling non-returnable items (i.e. articles). RapidILL³ and Docline⁴ are two examples of such networks and the most important aspect of these networks is their fast turn-around time. Using electronic delivery as main delivery tool and combining it with the direct request feature, the delivery times are typically less than 24 hours.

3.2. SOFTWARE TOOLS; ILLIAD, ODYSSEY AND DIRECT REQUEST.

There are several software tools the U.S. academic libraries' ILL departments use. Yet, as a main management tool for ILL service, more than 1,100 libraries in the U.S. are using a system called *ILLiad* (*InterLibrary Loan internet accessible database*) which is developed by former ILL librarians at the Atlas Systems in 1996 and now provided through the OCLC.⁵

On the borrowing side of ILL works, the software is consisted of a web interface through which patrons can submit their requests and retrieve articles delivered electronically, and a staff application in which ILL staff can receive the requests from patrons, search OCLC network and send request to other libraries, either in the OCLC network or outside of it. On the lending side, staff can receive request from various resource sharing networks through *ILLiad*, search local catalog, update the request status appropriately and print necessary shipping labels and other paper works.

The *ILLiad* software also includes an electronic delivery tool called *Odyssey* through which a borrowing library can receive articles from the lending libraries and a lending library can scan and send articles electronically to the borrowing library. In addition, when a lending library is assigned as "trusted sender" in *Odyssey*, the materials coming from the trusted senders can be delivered to patrons' account directly. As soon as the article is received to borrowing libraries receiving server, an automatic email will be sent out to the requesting patron and the patron can log on to their *ILLiad* web account and retrieve the article.

Although the *ILLiad* web request form is the main gateway where patrons submit their ILL requests, increasing number of the requests are submitted

³ <http://rapidill.org/>

⁴ <https://docline.gov/docline/index.cfm>

⁵ <http://www.atlas-sys.com/illiad/>

directly from various online databases and other internet sources such as Google Scholar through the *OpenURL* link resolver. When an ILL request is submitted using *OpenURL* link resolver, the bibliographic information of the item will be already populated in *ILLiad* online request form so what user need is just clicking “submit” button. Thus it is not rare that a patron submit hundreds of ILL requests within short amount of time (1-2 hours) because he/she does not need to type each request manually.

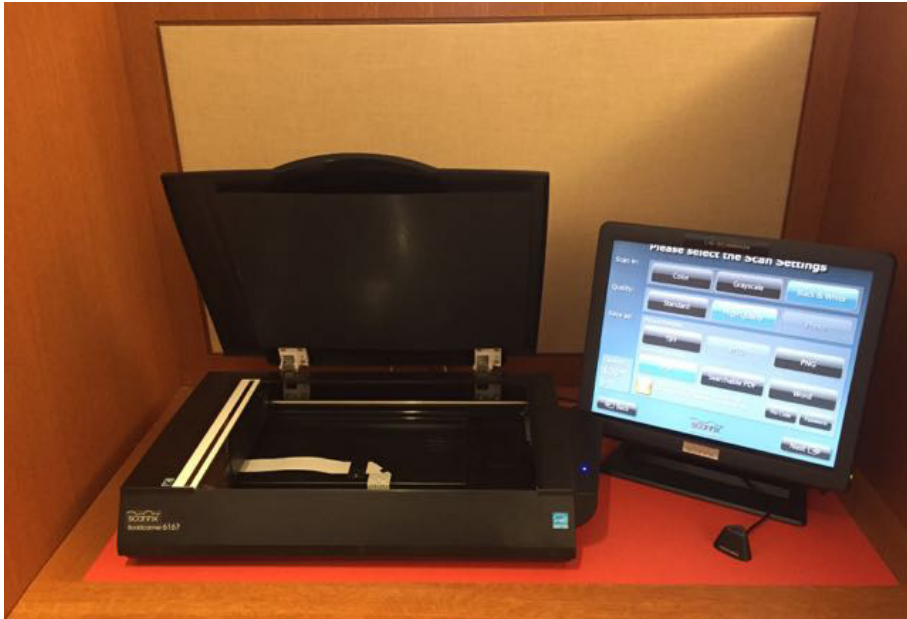
Since most of those requests coming from *OpenURL* link resolver include standard numbers such as ISBN, ISSN or OCLC number, they can be sent out to possible lenders directly without staff involvement using *Direct Request* feature which is available in OCLC Worldshare and RapidILL service. Traditionally when an ILL request is submitted, staff needs to search the union catalog to find holding libraries and then send the request to possible lenders. However, with the *Direct Request* feature, the request with standard number can be sent out automatically because the resource sharing system will automatically find the holding libraries using the standard numbers in the request and holding information from the union catalog. Thus, in such a case, only time when borrowing institutions realize an ILL request has been made is when they receive the item.

Furthermore, if the request is an article request and the providing library is a “trusted sender”, there is no chance in which the staff at the borrowing institution can see the request during the normal process. From the request submission to the delivery of item can be done by the system without any staff involvement. And this reduces the turn-around time significantly.

3.3. HARDWARE TOOLS AND PURCHASE ON DEMAND PROCESS

Hardware is also an important element to meet increasing patron requests efficiently. For example, standalone scanning workstation such as *ScannX* system has been increasingly used by ILL departments. Combining it with existing software such as *ILLiad* and *Odyssey* makes the scanning process extremely easy. Currently almost all types of scanning workstations designed for the library use have capability to connect *ILLiad* software so a staff can easily scan items through the scanning workstation without using full computer workstation with complete scanning software set. Then, scanned files can be saved in designated folder from which the *Odyssey* software can retrieve and send it out automatically. Thus the scanning task becomes less complicated and can be easily delegated to other departments or the student workers who may not have knowledge on ILL system.

Another trend one can find often in the U.S. academic libraries is *Purchase On Demand(POD)* process. Since ILL is a service which requires financial resources from the library (i.e. shipping and handling cost, lending fees or copyright royalty), when requested item is available in the market with the price cheaper than average ILL cost, it might be easier and more economical to buy the item



instead of borrowing it from other libraries. Starting from this idea, different libraries use different procedures for performing the POD tasks. Normally libraries set certain criteria⁶ and when a request meets the criteria, they buy the book instead of borrow it. In some institutions, the subject bibliographer and acquisition librarians are also involved to make it more constructive and efficient.

3.4. RESOURCE SHARING STARTS FROM INFORMATION SHARING

Given the speed and amount of changes and developments in our field, it is very daunting for a librarian to follow up all of them while performing the daily task. So the U.S. librarians use e-mail listserv and other online tools to share the information and these efforts continues to many regional and national interlibrary loan related conferences throughout the year.

ILL-L⁷ is by far the biggest listserv in which ILL librarians from all different types of libraries gather and share their experiences and thoughts. It is also used as a resource sharing network for the materials which are not suitable for existing system so often borrowing requests appear among the emails and they are being filled very quickly.

⁶ Price, publication date, language, readily availability are the commonly used criteria for purchasing the item instead of borrowing

⁷ <http://listserv.oclc.org/archives/ill-l.html>

ShareILL⁸ is a wiki platform which has been created and maintained by Interlibrary Loan librarians as group. It is a gateway to the resources related to interlibrary loan and document delivery. Visitors can find, for example, information on national libraries and archives in the world, citation verification tools, ILL codes and guidelines, training tools and ILL related conferences, etc. Since it is designed to be comprehensive and international, it is very useful training tool for new comers to the field and a good reference tool for veterans who need to refresh and update their knowledge.

In addition to annual ALA conference and midwinter meeting, ILL librarians organize their own conferences which are held throughout the year. Some of the big ILL conferences are Annual Colorado Interlibrary Loan Conference, Great Lakes Resource Sharing Conference, IDS Project Conference, ILLiad International Conference and Northwest Interlibrary Loan and Resource Sharing Conference, etc. Like many other conferences, these conferences have paper presentation sessions and poster sessions but more importantly, these are the best opportunities for ILL librarians to meet each other in face-to-face and talk about the common interests and share their experiences and knowledge. Sharing the information makes the sharing the resources more smooth and easier.

4. CHALLENGES IN THE FUTURE AND CONCLUSION

With new ILL technologies and various tools, many of ILL tasks became smooth and easy processes which were almost unthinkable in the past. New changes in academia and the libraries, however, brought new types of challenges as well. One of unexpected side effects of such a good and fast ILL service is patrons' expectations. Not only because current day patrons are accustomed to see the instant result from online search but also because of the fast and almost effortless-looking ILL service, our patrons' expectations grow higher and higher. Once our patrons were very satisfied when they received an article in two weeks but now if they do not get the article in two days or sometimes even two hours, they start asking the status of their requests. In a sense this ever-growing patrons' expectation is due to ILL librarians' successful performances so to satisfy those expectations, ILL librarians have to struggle against themselves, against their past successes.

The issue related to the copyright is another challenge ILL librarians are facing now. Due to several highly publicized copyright disputes and increased awareness of possible copyright infringement, once legitimate and fully acceptable ILL process become more and more the target of copyright scrutiny. Publisher and full text database aggregators tend to discourage ILL activities in various ways. Especially international ILL activities were challenged several times by publishers who claimed the international libraries are not bound to the U.S.

⁸ <http://www.shareill.org/>

copyright law so the U.S. libraries should not provide materials to the libraries overseas. Given the fact that more patrons want to see materials published in overseas and there are not many holding libraries in the U.S., it is crucial that the libraries cooperate internationally and this work should be reciprocal. Hence the international copyright issue is one that ILL libraries should overcome to have better way of sharing our resources.

Various types of e-resources are also another area that becomes more challenging. E-journal was one area in which U.S. librarians have struggled to get the ILL rights and now most E-journals a library purchases can be shared with other libraries. Yet, E-book is an issue still to be solved. Although there are some positive developments on the issues, many libraries are still having difficulties to get publisher's agreement on lending E-books to their own patrons. Thus interlibrary loan of E-book seems almost an impossible task to achieve.

To tackle this issue, the Texas Tech University, the University of Hawaii at Manoa and the Greater Western Library Alliance have worked together to develop the *Occam's Reader*⁹, a "software program that allows interlibrary loan of electronic books." Currently, libraries within the Greater Western Library Alliance are using the software to share e-books from one particular publisher, Springer who agreed on joining the project. The project shows very encouraging signs for the future development of such tool.

Despite all the new challenges facing us, there are certain facts which have never been changed and never will be. We have patrons who need information to conduct their studies and researches and by the nature of our profession, librarians are eager to help patrons and satisfy their information needs. In addition, there is no library which can hold everything their patrons need thus libraries need to share their resources at certain point to fulfill the libraries' mission. Then, what librarians need to do is actively advocating their role as information professional and reaching out to the world to make the society more favorable for the libraries to perform their mission.

To demonstrate the importance of librarians' active outreach to the world outside the library, the *Occam's Reader* is an important example. Due to the speed of changes in the e-book technology, no one is certain on the future development. And I believe that is one reason which makes all involved parties extremely conservative on any changes and new projects. If we can use this uncertainty as our advantage and take the initiative on the changes and its direction, we can create an environment more favorable to the library and its mission fulfillment. It is true that this is not an easy task but it is something achievable because unlike commercially driven entities, libraries and librarians act not for themselves but for the patrons they serve and the society they have to answer to.

Web site control: 09/01/2015

⁹ <http://occamsreader.org/>