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Giving Your Patrons the World: Barriers to, and the Value of, International Interlibrary Loan

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portal: Libraries and the Academy, Volume 18, Number 1, January 2018, pp. 17-34 (Article)

Published by Johns Hopkins University Press

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1353/pla.2018.0002>



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Giving Your Patrons the World: Barriers to, and the Value of, International Interlibrary Loan

Kurt Munson and Hilary H. Thompson

abstract: Using the 2011 and 2015 survey by the Reference and User Services Association Sharing and Transforming Access to Resources Section (RUSA STARS) of international interlibrary loans (ILL), the authors explore barriers to this method of meeting patrons' information needs. They evaluate international ILL in the context of developments in the information landscape, the United Nations Human Development Index, colonialism, and the current cultural, political, and economic climate. Strategies to improve future access to global information resources are also considered. Despite its challenges, this service meets a demonstrated information need, but further investigation is required to determine its exact value to researchers and where best to focus resources on improvement.

Introduction

This study explores the barriers to international interlibrary loan (ILL) to provide a better understanding of obstacles impeding greater use of this service and the value it provides to library patrons. The Reference and User Services Association Sharing and Transforming Access to Resources Section (RUSA STARS) International Interlibrary Loan Committee conducted three surveys of international ILL between 2007 and 2015.¹ The 2007 survey targeted only libraries in the United States, while the 2011 and 2015 surveys engaged libraries worldwide. The 2011 and 2015 surveys were sufficiently similar to garner comparable results and to indicate trends. The free-text responses to the 2015 survey reinforce the quantitative data and provide greater insight into the barriers that exist. Because the majority (77 percent) of the libraries reporting were academic, primarily at colleges and universities, the scope of this paper is limited to those, with occasional consideration given to national and research libraries. The latter may contain particularly unique or comprehensive holdings, and so they may be the sole source for borrowing certain materials.

portal: Libraries and the Academy, Vol. 18, No. 1 (2018), pp. 17–34.

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For the purposes of this article, *interlibrary loan* is defined as a service where an item not available in the local library is acquired from another library to meet a patron's demonstrated need. International ILL involves requesting an item when a copy is not attainable within the requestor's home country. ILL is only one of many mechanisms to acquire materials not available locally, and in some cases, it may not be the most effective way to acquire materials or provide the least restrictive use of them. For example, purchasing a paperback book from Amazon may be cheaper than paying a fee charged by the lending library plus international return shipping, and the patron could likely borrow the item for longer if it is locally owned.

ILL is a labor-intensive operation requiring an existing mechanism or mechanisms for placing a request, the transport of physical items, an agreement between the libraries

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as to which systems (ordering, shipping, ensuring compliance, and tracking) they will use, payment for the use of those systems, and possibly charges for the use of the item. Materials may also be digitized, but this fulfillment method requires workflows and equipment to digitize the original (if it is not already digital), a delivery method for the electronic file, the ability to render it in a usable way locally, and potentially, payment. International ILL relies upon a complicated infrastructure of legal, logistical, and procedural shared values. The

degree to which libraries share these values affects international ILL's ability to meet local researchers' needs, and international ILL can only occur if the infrastructure is sufficiently robust to support it.

The international ILL survey considered global borrowing and lending in a quantitative, transactional, process-driven way, asking such questions as: How many items do you borrow internationally per year? How were the requests sent? How was payment provided? To which countries do you lend most frequently? To which countries will you not lend? The results provide data about the volume of transactions, but those numbers cannot reveal the value a researcher places on an item. Guided by the notion of importance to the patron, this paper explores the barriers to international ILL as a means to meet researchers' information needs.

Patron Needs and the Information Landscape

The acquisition process begins only after a patron determines that a resource potentially meets his or her information need. Materials held by a library but lacking metadata do

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not exist for the purposes of international ILL. There is a relationship between the perceived value of the item and the effort required to acquire it; the effort expended in obtaining that item is directly tied to its value to the patron. In this context, the researcher's need, international

ILL must be evaluated as a tool and its use contextualized.



The 2011 and 2015 international ILL surveys both indicated that rare or older materials and local dissertations are the most challenging to acquire, with more than 50 percent of respondents in both surveys who borrow internationally reporting difficulty obtaining them.² Yet these items, particularly dissertations, are the materials most likely to be unique and for which no other method to acquire them exists, and their uniqueness likely increases their value for researchers. Audiovisual media were also identified as difficult to acquire via international ILL, with 45 percent reporting difficulty in 2011 and 39 percent in 2015.³ The different formats used to encode DVDs and VHS cassettes for sale

in specific regions further complicate use of these materials if they are lent abroad.

Several trends brought about by the Internet increase the availability of materials and thus directly affect the use of, and reduce the need for, international ILL. These trends include the proliferation of legally digitized works, the growth of open access initiatives for born-digital scholarship, and the illegal sharing of copyrighted materials via the World Wide Web. Legal online availability of works that have entered the public domain reduces the need to request older and thus likely rarer materials, while self-archiving of preprints and illegal file sharing provide alternate acquisition mechanisms for more current, copyright-protected materials.

The development of mass-digitization projects, scan-on-demand programs, and open access journals and repositories have reduced the need for international ILL because many sources can now be obtained legally from the Internet without transporting a physical item or involving ILL staff. The Google Books Library Project, which scans works in the collections of library partners and adds them to its digital inventory; national digital libraries (for example, Gallica, the digital library of the Bibliothèque nationale de France); and scan-on-demand services (for example, EThOS, the British Library's Electronic Theses Online Service)

now provide either free access or purchase options. In the past, ILL was the only way to acquire such resources. Moreover, nontraditional archives, such as the Queer Zine Archive Project (QZAP), provide access to previously unheard voices. Options for free legal access to current scholarship also have expanded, with more than 9,400 journals and 3,300 repositories currently listed in the Directory of Open Access Journals (DOAJ) and the Directory of Open Access Repositories (DOAR). For countries ranked lower on

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the United Nations (UN) Human Development Index—a composite of life expectancy, education, and per capita income—such programs as HINARI (originally an acronym for Health Inter-Network Access to Research Initiative, which provides access to research on health), AGORA (Access to Global Online Research in Agriculture), and OARE (Online Access to Research in the Environment) provide superior, more cost-effective access to materials than ILL and thereby reduce the need for it.

Despite these developments, many publications still lie behind a restrictive pay wall, and the need for easier access has driven the development and wide usage of several international and perhaps less-than-legal tools for acquiring journal articles and other materials. The growth of the website Sci-Hub and the Twitter hashtag #icanhazpdf provide examples of these services. They also speak to the difficulties of traditional international ILL as a tool and, at a more basic level, reflect the need for easier access to scholarly information regardless of location and affiliation.⁴ While many individual articles can be purchased online directly from publishers, the price may be too high for individual scholars to pay, or the 24-hour access model provided by some publishers may be too restrictive. Alternately, scholars may be unable to obtain a reproduction through ILL in the time frame required, or the process of requesting the article through the library may be too cumbersome. Again, the relationship between the value the researcher perceives the item to have and the ease of acquisition merits consideration. Newly developed tools, regardless of their legality, often provide access where access did not exist previously, and they do so quickly, easily, and freely. The efficacy of international ILL must be considered in terms of meeting the user's information needs within his or her limited time, energy, and resources.

Thus, the greatest need for international ILL and its strength as a tool lie in acquiring rare or unique resources that are still protected by copyright and not licensed for public display and distribution. For foreign dissertations and other single-source items, international ILL remains the most effective mechanism to meet the user's need.

Barriers to International ILL

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While the RUSA STARS surveys concentrated on ILL-specific topics, broader cultural, social, economic, and political issues affect international ILL too. By considering international ILL in this larger context, one can better understand its barriers. The ideas behind the UN Human Development Index (henceforth referred to as "the Index") provide a useful framework for exploring trends. The data from the 2015 survey suggest that the degree of human development, along with shared culture and infrastructure, have a greater effect on international ILL than any other factors.

The authors of this article posit that the greatest volume of international ILL should occur between nations ranked highest on the Index. Moreover, similar economic and legal systems should influence international ILL, as might a shared border. Political stability and economic cooperation further provide an environment conducive to shar-

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Table 1.

Response by country to questions about borrowing and lending internationally

United Nations Human Development Group	Number of countries with responses	Total number of countries	Percentage of countries represented
Very high	29	49	59%
High	10	56	18%
Medium	4	39	10%
Low	1	44	2%

ing. Such considerations as a shared language, previous colonial relationship, or current administrative and constitutional ties should also inform this notion of shared cultural heritage and norms, thus increasing volume. Therefore, a high number of international ILL transactions should occur between the United Kingdom, current members of the Commonwealth, and former British colonies, dominions, territories, and protectorates. Likewise, Spanish-speaking nations in South America should most often interact with one another and with Spain. Following this logic, the least advantaged countries on the Index should engage in the smallest number of international ILL transactions. Their capacity to engage in resource sharing is further reduced if they suffer from an epidemic, war, insurgency, or other unrest.

A review of the data provided by the most recent RUSA STARS survey is best done by the classes of access defined earlier, starting with the concept of relative advantage or disadvantage using the Index.⁵ Libraries in 44 countries responded to the yes or no questions asking whether they borrowed and lent internationally. As Table 1 shows, there is a positive correlation between human development (HD) group and survey participation, with the greatest representation of countries belonging to the very high HD group (59 percent) and the lowest within the low HD group (2 percent). The general lack of response from countries ranked low on the Index is telling; moreover, the lone respondent from the low HD group did not participate in international ILL at all. On the opposite end of the spectrum, the majority of respondents in very highly developed countries borrow (91 percent) or lend (87 percent) internationally (see Figure 1). Countries from the high or medium HD groups fall in the middle of these two extremes, with 49 to 60 percent of respondents participating in international ILL activity.⁶ When it comes to international ILL volume, the greatest cluster of activity, exceeding 100 requests per year, occurred between the ranks of 0.90 and 0.95 (see Figure 2). This range represents



the top 10 percent of the Index, supporting the authors' assertion that the highest volume of international ILL should occur between the highest-ranking nations. China, which had the most libraries reporting above average activity outside of this range, is a conspicuous outlier. Because China had the highest 2010–2014 average annual HDI growth rate of survey respondents in the high HD group (and the second highest among all respondents), one can infer that rapid growth in development, in addition to very high development, may lead to increased participation in international ILL.⁷

The European Union (EU) and the Schengen Area, which is comprised of 26 European countries that have abolished passport and other types of border control at their shared borders, serve as excellent examples of how similar culture, political stability, economic cooperation, and shared borders provide an environment conducive to sharing. Eighty-eight European respondents identified 30 countries from which they borrow

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abroad most frequently. Table 2 shows the top 10 countries, 90 percent of which are EU or Schengen member states or both. Of those frequent lenders, Germany was selected 67 times, nearly twice as often as its nearest competitors. Germany shares borders with nine countries, all of which participate in the Schengen agreement, whose open borders increase the speed with which goods, including

library materials, can travel.⁸ Of the 10 survey respondents from Germany's neighbors who borrow internationally, all listed Germany as one of their top five lenders. Proximity, open borders, and generally favorable lending policies seem to enhance Germany's popularity as an international lender,⁹ while its very high HDI rank (sixth in the world) aids its libraries in sustaining generous international ILL activity.

Because the survey was distributed in English (and had relatively few responses from Spanish-speaking countries), the former British Empire provides the best case study to explore how a shared cultural heritage resulting from colonialism might affect intercontinental ILL activity. Libraries from six former British colonies, dominions, territories, or protectorates (henceforth referred to simply as "former British colonies") and nine current members of the Commonwealth participated in the survey. According to the Central Intelligence Agency's *World Factbook*, English is either the primary spoken language or an official language with de jure status in 12 of those 15 countries, and it is commonly spoken in two more.¹⁰ Despite dispersion across five continents, a shared language and

A shared language and current or historical ties seem to support higher levels of international ILL activity.

current or historical ties seem to support higher levels of international ILL activity. Commonwealth members and former British colonies will more likely borrow and lend internationally than other respondents; this is true overall as well as within the very high and medium HD groups (see Table 3). Likewise, their 12-month international ILL volume compared to other respondents is equal or higher

across all categories. Their responses also indicate that Commonwealth members and former British colonies will likely borrow and lend more frequently to one another (58

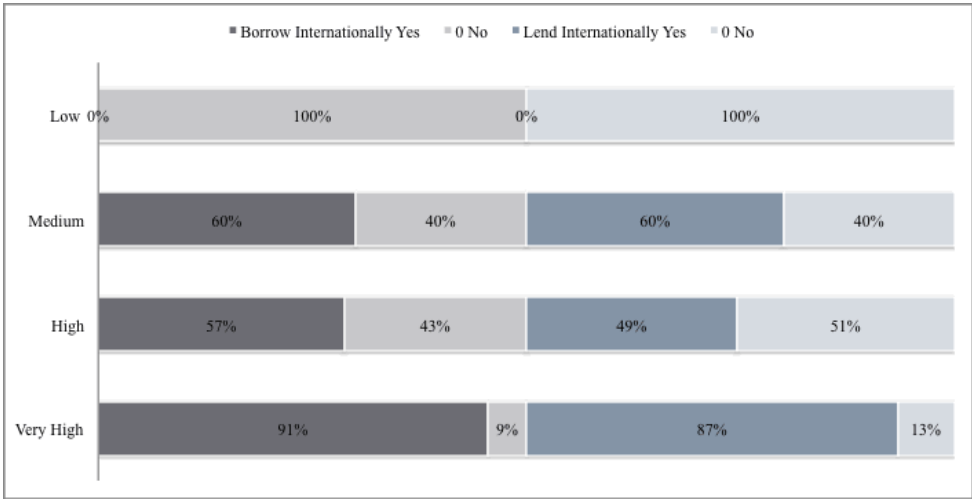


Figure 1. Participation in international interlibrary loan (ILL) by United Nations Human Development Group, according to the 2015 Reference and User Services Association Sharing and Transforming Access to Resources Section (RUSA STARS) survey

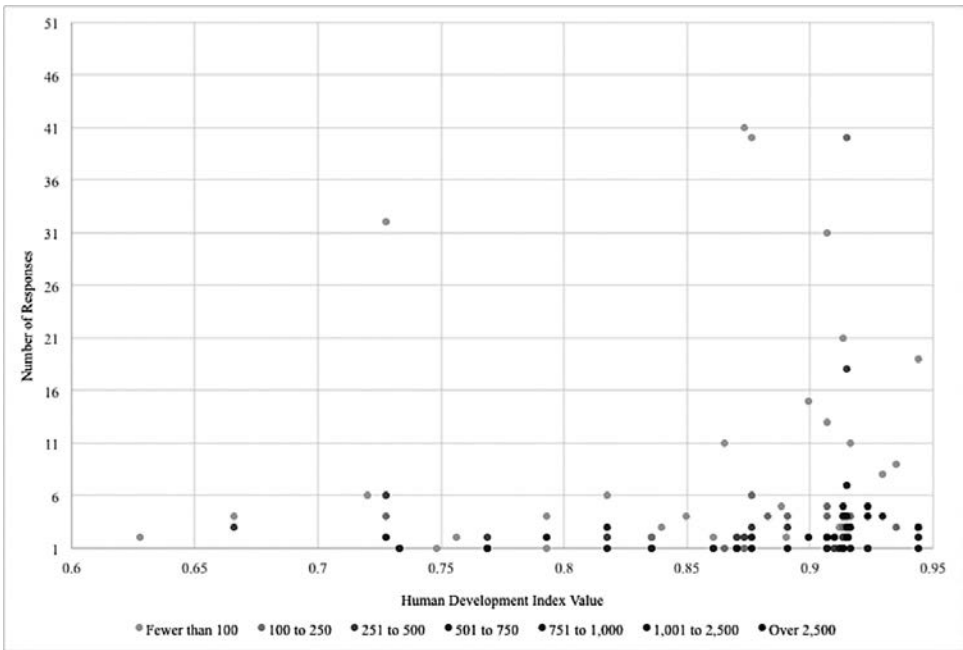


Figure 2. International interlibrary loan (ILL) volume by United Nations Human Development Index value, according to the 2015 Reference and User Services Association Sharing and Transforming Access to Resources Section (RUSA STARS) survey



Table 2.

Top 10 countries from which European libraries borrow most frequently

Country	Number of respondents	Percentage of respondents	European Union member	Schengen member	UN Human Development Index (HDI) value	UN HDI rank
Germany	67	76%	Yes	Yes	0.916	6
United Kingdom	36	41%	Yes	No	0.907	14
United States	36	41%	No	No	0.915	8
France	31	35%	Yes	Yes	0.888	22
Norway	21	24%	No	Yes	0.944	1
Sweden	20	23%	Yes	Yes	0.907	14
Denmark	18	20%	Yes	Yes	0.923	4
Italy	16	18%	Yes	Yes	0.873	27
Netherlands	11	13%	Yes	Yes	0.922	5
Spain	11	13%	Yes	Yes	0.876	26

percent and 56 percent, respectively) than to other countries (42 percent and 44 percent, respectively). Among these countries' top five most active borrowers and lenders abroad, all belong to the very high HD group, and four of the five (Australia, United Kingdom, Canada, and the United States) belong to this shared cultural network (see Table 4).

Why Libraries Do Not Engage in International ILL

Using the UN Human Development Index as a framework can inform an understanding of barriers to international ILL, but only to an extent. It does not, for instance, explain why libraries in countries with very high HD do not lend abroad. Libraries may have many reasons to not participate in international ILL. The authors will now consider possible reasons in four broad categories: cultural, political, economic, and policy. The authors' own observations inform these reasons, as do the open comments and responses to questions related to barriers in the 2011 and 2015 RUSA STARS surveys.

Cultural Reasons

Scholarship has a long, well-documented, global history of resource sharing, from the copying of medieval European manuscripts to the transmission of knowledge across the

Table 3.

Response to questions about borrowing and lending internationally: comparison of Commonwealth members and former British colonies to other respondents

UN Human Development group	Borrow internationally (yes)		Lend internationally (yes)	
	Commonwealth members and former British colonies	Other respondents	Commonwealth members and former British colonies	Other respondents
Very high	94%	88%	90%	83%
High	0%	57%	100%	49%
Medium	75%	0%	75%	0%
Low	0%	N/A	0%	N/A
Overall	92%	77%	90%	71%

Table 4.

Top five countries from which Commonwealth members and former British colonies borrow and to which they lend most frequently

Country	Borrow		UN Human Development Index (HDI) value	UN HDI rank
	Number of respondents	Percentage of respondents		
Germany	65	53%	0.916	Very high
United Kingdom	60	49%	0.907	Very high
Canada	57	47%	0.913	Very high
Australia	44	36%	0.935	Very high
United States	34	28%	0.915	Very high
Lend				
Canada	57	47%	0.913	Very high
United Kingdom	44	36%	0.907	Very high
Australia	43	35%	0.935	Very high
United States	35	29%	0.915	Very high
Denmark	31	25%	0.923	Very high



Arab world, which extended from Baghdad, now the capital of Iraq, to Seville, Spain, during the Middle Ages. The creation of new knowledge is predicated upon review and synthesis of existing knowledge. Thomas Aquinas could never have written the *Summa Theologica* without the preservation of Aristotle's thoughts in Arabic and the sharing of those manuscripts with the West.

Loans of materials also resulted in the theft of those materials, violating the trust that must underlie contemporary international ILL. In the past, materials deemed unsuitable were suppressed, destroyed, or hidden if they did not fit the prescribed or existing shared values. Perhaps they challenged the prevailing national sense of self, as nineteenth- and early twentieth-century racist materials do in the United States and Australia today. Given their age and the risk for theft or defacement, libraries may transfer historical items that cause discomfort from open stacks to special collections. This relocation, while ensuring preservation and allowing for presentation with curatorial interpretation, may limit access for remote researchers because materials in special collections are among the most difficult to acquire via ILL.

Censorship also creates barriers that may hamper international ILL. The Comstock Laws of the United States, which prohibited sending through the mail any material deemed "obscene, lewd, and/or lascivious," including information about birth control, provide an example. So do the extensive Internet regulations in China, commonly known as the Great Firewall of China, and North Korea's exclusion from the Internet. International ILL can only flourish where the free exchange of information and ideas is permitted.

Barriers to international ILL are not always overt; a culture of sharing may simply not exist, or it may exist only in a form not used elsewhere. For example, many Latin

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American countries lack the ILL coordination at the national level that is common in North America and Europe. Only two responses to the 2011 RUSA STARS survey came from Central or South America, which is not surprising given that the authors had no known contacts to whom to send the survey.¹¹ Although the 2015 survey garnered 13 responses from Latin American libraries thanks to improved distribution

efforts, the response rate from this region remained very low. Of the responses received, 31 percent did not participate in any national or international resource-sharing networks (the highest percentage of any continent). Where ILL does exist in Latin America, it is based upon interinstitutional agreements and personal connections,¹² and those relationships vouch for the safety of the materials. Resource sharing exists in Latin America, but it occurs through channels that are difficult for an uninitiated ILL practitioner at a North American library to discover and use. Additional research is needed to determine if other parts of the world (for example, Africa, the Middle East, or Central and Southeast Asia) employ similar methods to meet researchers' needs.

Political Reasons

International ILL requires a level of political stability to ensure an exchange infrastructure exists and to protect the safety of the item transported. The 2011 and 2015 RUSA STARS

surveys asked respondents to identify the top five countries to which they would not lend. The 2011 results, while restrictive toward the Middle East, are less so than those of 2015. The Arab Spring, a wave of protests and demonstrations in 2010 and 2011, and the civil war in Syria that began in 2011—with their resulting political instability—likely contributed to the increased reluctance to lend to those countries in 2015.¹³ Likewise, India’s weak transportation infrastructure may explain why three respondents in the 2015 survey identified it as a country to which others would not lend.

Shared notions of ownership and property rights enshrined in law also affect international ILL’s ability to serve researchers. Items must pass from one jurisdiction to another safely in transit to the requesting library’s patron. The intellectual property rights for digitized materials such as journal articles must be honored. China’s reputation for counterfeiting and weak enforcement of intellectual property rights may be responsible for its inclusion on the 2011 and 2015 lists of countries to which libraries will not lend.¹⁴

Even among politically and economically stable World Trade Organization (WTO) signatories ranked highest on the Index, barriers to international ILL exist. Thirty-two percent of the respondents in 2015 noted copyright law and licensing terms as the greatest barriers to international ILL.¹⁵ Germany’s legal restrictions upon electronic transmission were particularly noted in the open comments. While German law does not prohibit international ILL, it does increase the delivery time because a paper copy must be mailed or obsolescent technology such as fax machines used. Even MyBib eL®, a novel presentation platform that meets the legal requirements of Germany’s copyright law by allowing the borrowing library to print only a single copy of the file directly from the lending library’s server, causes delays because the file cannot be delivered directly to the patron. As a result, the library cannot meet the researcher’s need in as timely a fashion as it otherwise might (and as the researcher likely expects it to do).

Respondents to the 2015 survey indicated that shipping, at 20 percent, and customs, at 4 percent, were additional barriers to international ILL.¹⁶ While a nation has the responsibility to protect its residents and secure its borders, the comingling of ILL materials with other items shipped via international post or commercial delivery systems makes international ILL more challenging. Exemptions and codes for “used library materials, no monetary value” exist, but compliance with customs regulations and the associated paperwork slow the process by adding work for library staff. Moreover, the lending of books and other returnables across borders assumes international standards and agreements on the transport of materials, particularly trustworthy handoffs between national postal systems.

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Economic Reasons

All interlibrary loan is predicated upon trust and common expectations. The lending and borrowing libraries must trust each other and agree that the former will supply an information resource to the latter that, if a physical item, will be returned in a timely manner. The borrower accepts the costs to both libraries for processing and shipping or, if electronic delivery is possible, reimburses the lending library for the effort it expended.

Payment ranked as the highest barrier to international ILL, with 24 percent reporting this difficulty in 2015.¹⁷ Payment involves not only reimbursing the lender for the

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provision of the item but also identifying and agreeing upon which mechanism will be used to submit the payment. The International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA) supports a voucher system for ILL payment, but it is an antiquated process that requires the physical exchange of laminated plastic cards. Electronic payment systems, such as Interlibrary Loan Fee Management (IFM) provided by the Online Computer Library Center (OCLC) and DOCLINE's Electronic Fund Transfer System (EFTS),

do exist, but these are tied to requests made in specific closed systems that require membership. Their use for international ILL is limited because participation is either dominated by, or specifically limited to, libraries in North America. Libraries also use credit cards and invoices, but these methods incur extensive processing costs, as do bank drafts. An electronic, vendor-neutral clearinghouse for payments, often requested in the 2015 survey results, would greatly reduce the payment processing cost for international ILL. Implementation, however, would require the development of such a system, IFLA or another trusted entity to serve as guarantor, and agreement among libraries around the world to use it.

Policy Reasons

Finally, institutions may not engage in international ILL as a matter of policy, or they may choose to participate in ways that fall outside international norms or via alternative systems. National libraries frequently play the role of guardian and keeper of that country's cultural heritage. As depositories for the nation's published materials, they may be less likely to lend materials because they see their holdings as a unified whole from which parts cannot be separated. Likewise, some research libraries—for example, the Linda Hall Library in Kansas City, Missouri, or the Newberry Library in Chicago—house collections that are entirely noncirculating, so these institutions inherently do not lend materials via ILL (though they may provide scans and reproductions). The United States National Library of Medicine's historic nonparticipation in the OCLC interlibrary loan system represents another policy that impedes easy international or even national access. Its DOCLINE ILL system is a closed one designed to serve only medical libraries.



The National Library of Medicine's policy in many ways encapsulates cultural, political, and economic barriers. Culturally, it reinforces the specialness and high status historically accorded to doctors and medicine in the West. Politically, it asserts difference. Economically, it imposes high costs in the form of staff manually processing non-DOCLINE requests for both borrowing and lending. Ultimately, it demonstrates how larger external factors culminate in barriers to ILL.

Improving Access to Global Information Resources

In 2017, the National Library of Medicine began preparations to lend materials via the OCLC interlibrary loan system.¹⁸ Likewise, plans are underway to expand the partnership between the Center for Research Libraries, a consortium of university, college, and independent research libraries, and the Linda Hall Library, thereby increasing physical access to the latter's collections.¹⁹ These shifts in policy serve as encouraging reminders that barriers can come down and that change for the better is possible. Beyond creating more inclusive policies, there are numerous other ways that the library community can improve international ILL or otherwise expand access to global information resources. The possibility to effect change exists at all levels, from the institutional to international.

At the institutional level, academic libraries should conduct qualitative studies to determine the value of international ILL to their university community. This niche service provides otherwise unobtainable materials to library users, but to what end? Questions related to the benefits and impact of this service include: Does it help graduate students finish their dissertations in a timely fashion or support faculty in producing publications for promotion and tenure? Which disciplines, if any, rely on international ILL to meet their information needs? Understanding the value that this service provides to local researchers not only would help determine appropriate levels of funding and support but also could pinpoint where resources should be focused for best return on investment.

On the lending side, libraries should ensure that their policies and licensing agreements for e-resources do not prohibit or hamper international ILL. Greater collaboration between special collections and ILL departments could improve access to older and rare materials. Mechanisms such as Atlas Systems' ILLiad and Aeon Web platform integration, which allow for communication between an institution's interlibrary loan and special collections management systems, are needed to quickly and easily determine if special collections materials requested

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via ILL can be provided and, if so, how. Programs should be developed to lend original materials with curatorial approval and to provide on-demand digitization where condition and copyright permit, if such programs do not exist already.

At the consortial level, access to global information resources could be improved through coordinated data gathering to inform the building of collective collections for

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international materials. Reducing duplication in future purchasing should allow for libraries to collect more unique materials, and building more distinctive local collections would better support both consortial and national resource sharing. Special attention should be paid to collecting publications from countries for which our institutions have dedicated academic programs or research centers, such as those for Latin American or Middle Eastern studies, especially if those countries rank lower on the UN

Human Development Index or are difficult from which to borrow materials. A consortium might also consider using resource-sharing data to identify potential partnerships worth establishing abroad, whether with an institution, consortium, or resource-sharing network. Any such reciprocal agreements should be mutually beneficial and pursued with mindfulness of cultural differences and economic disparities and with sensitivity to histories of colonialism, exploitation, or unwanted foreign intervention.

At the national and international levels, coordinated advocacy and development are needed. Resource-sharing practitioners and the organizations that represent them should engage in conversations about, and actively support the development of, an ISO (International Organization for Standardization)-based open system for ILL request brokering that is vendor neutral.²⁰ Such interoperability could facilitate the building of transnational reciprocal partnerships by eliminating the need for libraries to adopt an additional system or to manually complete online forms to engage in resource sharing abroad. Likewise, the development of an electronic, vendor-neutral system for remuneration is essential to reducing barriers associated with payment. While acknowledging that the complexity of Dutch banking law poses challenges, national committees such as the RUSA STARS International Interlibrary Loan Committee should continue to lobby IFLA to support an electronic equivalent of IFLA vouchers. Finally, IFLA must persist in its advocacy efforts for copyright law exceptions for libraries and archives, in particular those that permit interlibrary loan and document delivery, and preferably without restrictions related to international or electronic delivery. IFLA has attended meetings of the World Intellectual Property Organization Standing Committee on Copyright and Related Rights since 2008 and should not abandon its efforts to elevate all signatory countries to a minimum standard for libraries.²¹

Many of the cultural, political, economic, or policy barriers to international ILL are entrenched, but this is increasingly less true for technological ones. While previous consortial or national shared catalog systems tended to be closed systems (often client-server integrated library systems), the movement toward cloud-based library service



platforms provides opportunities for cross-system communication. This new architecture could help increase international ILL by providing more efficient ways to exchange requests abroad. For example, if two countries have their national shared catalogs on the same Ex Libris Alma resource management server, it is much easier to place and track requests between libraries in those nations. All the necessary information is stored on the same server, and requesting between national systems can be automated. This model represents a marked improvement from the current process of exchanging e-mails and IFLA vouchers. Just as the introduction of Web-accessible catalogs transformed discovery, these new architectures coupled with new open standards have the potential to transform requesting and delivery.

The best way to improve future access to global information resources is to continue improving our understanding of the current barriers to the exchange of those resources. Increasing comprehension requires three things: expanded participation in international ILL surveys to increase the data available, coordination between surveying organizations to obtain comparable data sets, and improved analysis and distribution of those results to stakeholders. Improved coordination between different library associations should lead to wider survey distribution. To this end, the RUSA STARS International Interlibrary Loan Committee plans to coordinate production and distribution of its 2019 international ILL survey with IFLA, including translation into additional languages beyond English. This collaboration should provide a more holistic view of international ILL, in contrast to the previous surveys, in which the United States was overrepresented.

Conclusion

Implementing the ideas to improve access to global information resources outlined here should begin with countries ranked higher on the UN Human Development Index. These nations already have the societal and physical infrastructure required to exchange library materials across borders, and numerous academic libraries in countries with very high human development already engage in international ILL on a regular basis. This activity depends upon a safe environment for scholarly inquiry and discovery within institutions of higher education and reflects a mutual commitment to learning and the sharing of ideas. As the 2015 survey demonstrates, shared culture and open borders facilitate higher levels of international ILL between certain countries, and open architecture could further increase resource sharing in the future.

Other barriers beyond the technological pose difficulty for ILL practitioners seeking to borrow or lend materials abroad, and emerging alternatives (both legitimate and illicit) to international ILL have and will continue to develop. Clearly, international ILL exists in a complex socioeconomic, transnational landscape filled with many challenges. Academic library staff must navigate around them to provide the resources requested by their patrons. Nevertheless, for many institutions, this service remains a viable mechanism for meeting their patrons' information needs, as evidenced by the increase in international ILL over the past five years reported by most of the 2015 survey respondents.²² Investing in improvements to international ILL is warranted, and several methods to ameliorate the current service model exist, but where to focus our efforts and resources for best results has yet to be determined.



The RUSA STARS international ILL surveys have concentrated on numbers and tools, with barriers as only a secondary consideration. Numbers are easy to gather, but they

Cooperative initiatives, particularly a modern payment system to reduce the economic friction of international ILL, can make this service easier.

cannot establish the service's value to researchers, demonstrate the change in this value over time, or explain how this resource acquisition tool helps advance scholarship. Quantitative data do not provide qualitative results. Cooperative initiatives, particularly a modern payment system to reduce the economic friction of international ILL, can make this service easier, but additional study to demonstrate its value to the researcher is still needed. The RUSA STARS International Interlibrary Loan Committee and other interested resource-sharing professionals

should collaboratively pursue with IFLA, other professional organizations, and peer institutions abroad opportunities to enhance our understanding of how this international service supports local researchers. This knowledge, in turn, will help us to invest wisely in future improvements to international ILL.

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Notes

1. For more information about the 2007, 2011, and 2015 surveys, see Tina Baich, Tim Jiping Zou, Heather Weltin, and Zheng Ye Yang, "Lending and Borrowing across Borders: Issues and Challenges with International Resource Sharing," *Reference & User Services Quarterly* 49, 1 (2009): 55–64; Tina Baich and Heather Weltin, "Going Global: An International Survey of Lending and Borrowing across Borders," *Interlending & Document Supply* 40, 1 (2012): 37–42; and Kurt Munson, Hilary H. Thompson, Jason Cabaniss, Heidi Nance, and Poul Erlandsen, "The World Is Your Library, or the State of International Interlibrary Loan in 2015," *Interlending & Document Supply* 44, 2 (2016): 44–57.
2. Baich and Weltin, "Going Global," 39; Munson, Thompson, Cabaniss, Nance, and Erlandsen, "The World Is Your Library," 45.
3. Ibid.
4. John Bohannon, "Who's Downloading Pirated Papers? Everyone," *Science* 352, 6285 (2016), <http://www.sciencemag.org/news/2016/04/whos-downloading-pirated-papers-everyone>; Carolyn Gardner and Gabriel Gardner, "Bypassing Interlibrary Loan via Twitter: An Exploration of #icanhazpdf Requests," Association of College and Research Libraries (ACRL) conference, Portland, Oregon, March 25–28, 2015, <http://eprints.rclis.org/24847/>.
5. United Nations Development Programme, Human Development Reports, "2015 Human Development Index Statistical Annex Tables," accessed January 18, 2017, <http://hdr.undp.org/en/data#>.
6. While libraries in the high human development (HD) group are nearly as likely to borrow internationally as those in the medium HD group, they are noticeably less likely to lend. These data suggest that libraries in countries with high (but not very high) human development may experience an increased fear of loss of material compared to their peers in medium and very high HD groups.



7. Provided, of course, that the country already has developed enough to support international interlibrary loan (ILL). The highest human development index (HDI) growth rate among survey respondents was that of Zimbabwe, also the survey's only respondent from the low HD group. Despite extensive growth, the country's human development still appears insufficient to sustain international ILL activity.
8. Germany shares borders with Denmark, Poland, the Czech Republic, Austria, Switzerland, France, Belgium, Luxembourg, and the Netherlands. Switzerland does not belong to the European Union but participates in the Schengen Area; European Commission, Migration and Home Affairs, "Schengen Area," accessed March 20, 2017, http://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/what-we-do/policies/borders-and-visas/schengen_en.
9. One hundred percent of German survey respondents said they lend both returnables and nonreturnables and accept International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA) vouchers for payment. However, electronic delivery of nonreturnables is often restricted due to German copyright law, as discussed in the section "Political Reasons."
10. Central Intelligence Agency, *The World Factbook*, 2017, accessed March 20, 2017, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/>.
11. Tina Baich, Jennifer Block, Paul Drake, Lee Anne Hooley, Jennifer Jacobs, Karen L. Janke, and LeEtta M. Schmidt, 2011 ALA [American Library Association] RUSA STARS [Reference and User Services Association, Sharing and Transforming Access to Resources Section] *International Interlibrary Loan Survey: Executive Summary* (Chicago: RUSA, 2012), 2; LeEtta Schmidt, e-mail to the author.
12. Megan Gaffney, "Interlibrary Loan between the United States and Latin America: The Current Landscape," paper presented at the IFLA Document Delivery and Resource Sharing Satellite meeting, August 10–11, 2016, Washington, DC; LeEtta M. Schmidt, "Interlibrary Lending in Mexican, Caribbean, Central American, and South American Libraries," *Journal of Interlibrary Loan, Document Delivery, & Electronic Reserve* 24, 5 (2014): 117–32; Robert A. Seal, "Interlibrary Loan: Integral Component of Global Resource Sharing," paper presented at the IFLA/SEFLIN (Southeast Florida Library Information Network) International Summit on Library Cooperation in the Americas, Miami, FL, April 19, 2002.
13. In 2011, seven countries in the Middle East were identified a total of 14 times as countries to which libraries would not lend abroad; in 2015, 10 countries in the Middle East were selected 27 times, a 93 percent increase.
14. China was included three times in both the 2011 and 2015 surveys. In 2015, libraries in the United States, Canada, and Sweden reported refusing to lend to China. Munson, Thompson, Cabaniss, Nance, and Erlandsen, "The World Is Your Library," 51.
15. *Ibid.*
16. *Ibid.*
17. *Ibid.*
18. In 2017, the Online Computer Library Center (OCLC) symbol for the National Library of Medicine (NLM) was turned on as a supplier in the OCLC Policies Directory, but there is currently a broad deflection in place, preventing most, if not all, libraries from submitting requests through this system. The NLM's Access unit head confirmed their plan to begin lending to non-DOCLINE libraries via OCLC, though no start date has been determined. Mary Wassum, e-mail correspondence with the author, August 21, 2017.
19. The current partnership only allows for the scanning of articles from the Linda Hall Library in Kansas City, MO, which are requested and provided via RapidILL. Kevin Wilks, e-mail correspondence with the author, August 23, 2017.
20. OCLC is writing an ISO (International Organization for Standardization) 18626 module for implementation with its resource-sharing products, and this module may be made available under an open license for broader use. Likewise, Index Data is currently engaging in conversations with different communities about developing "a modular, component-oriented alternative to monolithic request brokering systems" using the FOLIO (Future of



Libraries Is Open) architecture. A white paper outlining a model for open resource-sharing brokerage should be forthcoming. ISO 18626 Newsletter #6, distributed via e-mail to subscribers, June 29, 2017; Sebastian Hammer, post to the FOLIO Discussions list, July 24, 2017.

21. International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA), "Statements made by IFLA at the WIPO [World Intellectual Property Organization] Standing Committee on Copyright and Related Matters (SCCR)," updated October 13, 2016, <https://www.ifla.org/publications/statements-made-by-ifla-at-the-wipo-standing-committee-on-copyright-and-related-matters>.
22. Forty-eight percent of survey respondents reported making more international ILL requests now than they did five years ago, while only 25 percent reported no change, and 27 percent reported making fewer requests; Munson, Thompson, Cabaniss, Nance, and Erlandsen, "The World Is Your Library," 45.