

# The Dimension of Electronic Interlibrary Loan

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***Abstract:** With the latest progression of information communication technologies, the document delivery system is constantly changing its trait day by day. This paper discusses the current practice of interlibrary loan and document delivery service by some leading libraries and information centers in various parts of the world. Moreover, it explores into newly developed resource-sharing tools that are becoming viable in execution of ILL services. Furthermore, the paper carefully examines how professionals engaged in rendering interlibrary loan services are becoming expert searchers day by day in providing instant and most valuable reference service through modern information and communication technologies.*

## I. Introduction

There has been a great impact of electronic technology on traditional interlibrary services. In some libraries, Web-based ILL systems are replacing paper-based manual intensive systems (Connolly, 1999). As technology allows, it has become necessary to modernize traditional library resource-sharing mechanisms, and to experiment with new technologies to improve services. While the information explosion continues, libraries' buying power for journals and collection development is declining. Libraries have turned to resource-sharing networks to meet their patrons' information needs (Holbert et al., 2002). All web-enabled libraries are now in an ideal position to provide ILL services to their clientele through modern information communication technology (ICT). It is now absolutely possible on the part of information professionals to help users in retrieving valuable chunk of information from resources available beyond their own libraries or information centers. Information professionals explore simpler ways and direct the users to pertinent full text resources. They are confident that irrespective of types or sizes of libraries, ILL services can be rendered more efficiently these days. For evidence of this, one needs only to consider the characteristics of today's information seeking community, along with various learning principles that guide the selection of experts and technologies to support successful learning or advances in learning technologies. In order to fulfill the aforesaid objectives, information professionals are being

actively engaged with the varied emerging processes and strategies by which the electronic ILL services can be best rendered to the potential information seekers.

Scanned articles now can be sent over the Internet. Patrons can initiate a request that will go immediately to the library that owns the item, effectively bypassing the Interlibrary Loan Unit of the home library. Each of these changes has speeded up the process of request/delivery/receipt, the result being an increased productivity for library staff and ultimately quicker service for the patron. Even something as simple or mundane as a new integrated online catalog can have powerful results for an Interlibrary Loan Unit. Apparently, use of ILL is increasing, in many cases dramatically, probably because of cancelled journal subscriptions, the purchasing of fewer monographs, and the provision of citation databases that index materials not owned by the library. Improved service quality could also be a factor (Troll, 2001). In the interest of providing most effective electronic interlibrary loan services, information professionals engaged in the activities of document delivery services need to understand and embrace the current and promising technologies for better propagation of electronic ILL services. Therefore, this paper puts an insight into how successfully ILL is channelized in the electronic age.

## **II. Literature Review**

Literature pertaining to the shifting feature of interlibrary loan during the last decade was collected from the web and some specific databases. A brief review of selected literature is depicted below in the order of their chronological emergence.

Brown (1997) opined that, in times of budget constraints, how more control limited resources can be successfully achieved. Moreover, he addressed future concerns of university libraries in the electronic environment and recommended the adoption of resource-sharing, efficient delivery methods and clarification of legal issues.

Guthrie (1997) focused on copyright issues in ILL and asserted that the success of electronic document delivery is dependent on the enforcement of and compliance with copyright law.

Arkin (1998) stated that during 1995, Aalborg University Library had been buying and distributing ten core journals per department- a total of 180 journals. This arrangement was both labor intensive and expensive. Now the university offers document supply services via UnCover. With UnCover, individual users could access the contents of many more titles.

Fleck (2000) reported that Michigan State University (MSU) Libraries introduced a new integrated library system to its patrons on August 17, 1998. The new system used the Innovative Interfaces software. He remarked that the previous software used was NOTIS, which, alas, lacked any interlibrary loan functionality. He pointed out that, one feature of the new system was the integrated interlibrary loan module for borrowing, including the ability for patrons to place their own interlibrary loan requests using either the telnet or Web version of the online catalog.

Brigham (2001) described how Regents College Virtual Library (RCVL) provides library services, such as interlibrary loan and other core library services, through the college website. He added that students can request for hard copies of books and journal articles for home delivery and receive help on an individual basis via-email or telephone from a reference librarian.

Croft (2001) stated that a model license gives a library a template for negotiating a favorable contract point-by-point with a vendor. It protects the vendor by clearly defining what the library plans to do with the product and can also benefit both the parties by eliminating unenforceable clauses.

**Kidd** (2003) in his study on Glasgow University reported that arts faculties have used by far the largest proportion of interlibrary loans due to their heavy reliance on monograph resources. In contrast, biomedical faculties depend on interlibrary loans for less than 10 percent of what they need.

Deardorff and Nance (2009) vividly discussed how the implementation of WorldCat at the University of Washington influenced the interlibrary loan by ensuring better document supply to the users.

Musoke (2009) described the way in which Makerere University uses international collaboration to benefit the university community and the ways in which the university supports the information needs of the wider community in Uganda.

Desale et al. (2009) described the scale of the information need in India and evaluated the document supply service provided by 22 university libraries designated as document supply centres to 149 Indian universities with some suggestions for future development.

McGrath (2009) made an extensive review of recent literature and presented the impact of grey literature and open access on document supply. In this context, he surveyed five major document supply centres -- INIST, BLDS, TIB, CISTI and KISTI (South Korea) and found that although these centres satisfied about 2.45 million requests in 2008, this is only half of what they achieved ten years ago.

Benn (2009) reported that in 2008, the University of Western Australia (UWA) library implemented the OCLC's VDX (Virtual Document Exchange), an online end-user requesting system, which has improved and streamlined the ordering of materials and reduced the amount of manual data entry. He added that it is also easy for clients to request journal articles not held by library via SFX, ExLibris Open URL service, resulting in a substantial increase of document delivery by the library.

Kelsall and Onyszko (2010) revealed in their recent study that Library and Archives Canada lends published items in many formats, such as monographs, serials, microfilmed newspapers, theses on microfiche, reports, and official publications, as well as microfilmed archival records. Items that do not go out on loan fall within the usual interlibrary loan-restricted categories, such as rare books, reference titles, items restricted due to their physical condition or format (e.g., loose-leaf material), early publications or original newspapers, as well as items from the preservation collection. Moreover, providing access to an electronic version of requested documents is the preferred method of loaning materials. In many cases, such as for Canadian theses or older Canadian publications, Library and Archives Canada will verify whether the item is available electronically and will provide the URL address if it is in the public domain.

Moreno and Xu (2010) found that the National Library of Australia is the largest supplier of interlibrary loan in the country. They added that interlibrary loan/document delivery requests have fluctuated over the past 50 years. The demand for interlibrary loan requests was increased from 8,836 in 1960 to 144,764 in 1994/95. However, since the introduction of Internet and wider availability of electronic resources, the demand for interlibrary loan requests dropped to 42,142 in 2007/2008 and then was increased again in the past couple of years due to wider exposure of the library's holdings through OCLC's WorldCat and Google.

Recently, more constructive proposals are being recommended to deliver better services. And most vital suggestions are chalked out to ensure more adequate and efficient provision of the electronic Interlibrary Loan services so as to serve users better and faster.

### **III. Newly-Developed Resource-Sharing Tools**

Lately, technological maestros are combining Open URL protocols, APIs and backend knowledge bases to create new tools to track down books and identify electronic journal articles. Many of these tools are now available, and more are in the developing stage.

Book Burro is a Firefox extension that allows users to right click on an ISBN and search libraries, booksellers, and online communities all at once. It is particularly useful for users to find textbooks. Book Burro provides the prices from multiple sources.

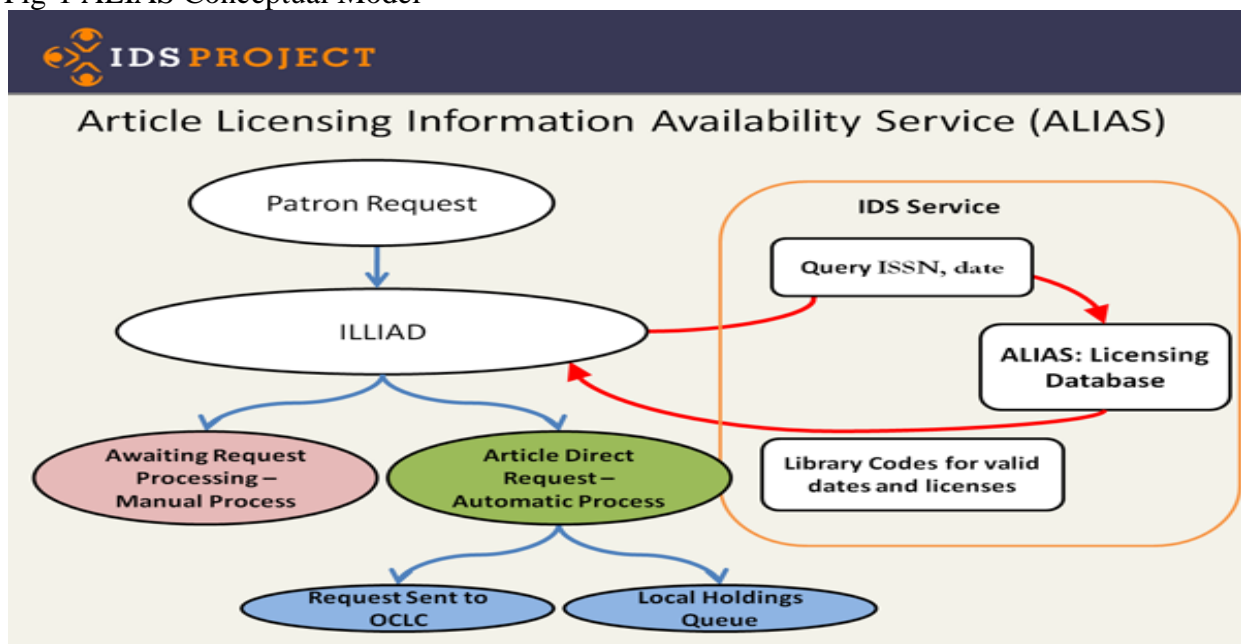
The Interlibrary Resource Sharing Initiative has come up with its own resolver, known as GoGetter! This Firefox plugin installs a GetIt! button that generates a list of sources from which one can purchase or borrow. The GetIt! plugin includes the length of circulation specific to the library that owns the title. There are also many programmers creating site-specific OpenURLs to assist users. This helpful assistance is integrating content in a way that sometimes it reduces Interlibrary Loan intervention, but frequently generates more interest from users about collections that cannot be accessed via Interlibrary Loan. Patrons are becoming more aware of archives and special collections, now that WorldCat is used commonly. The best practice is to provide information to patrons about how to access the electronic information comfortably, conveniently, and at a quick retrieval time. (Buchanan, 2009)

The Information Delivery Services (IDS) Project, a New York resource-sharing cooperative, has developed two new resolvers that will change the face of ILL. One of these new tools is ALIAS, “the Article Licensing Information Availability Service”, an innovative resolver still under development. This service works like OCLC’s direct request, but before building the lending string, a check is performed to confirm electronic availability. Another resolver that will prompt us to rethink our workflows is GIST, the “Getting It System Toolkit”. GIST brings purchase information, full text availability (including audio), and Amazon descriptions right into the Interlibrary Loan book request form. With more tools to identify full-text articles and books built right into the Interlibrary Loan requesting process, there will be more immediate fulfillment of requests and a very different workflow. Resolvers like GIST have the capacity to build in links to a

number of full text sources, including subscription services such as NetLibrary, Safari and some free web-based sources like Project Gutenberg, Google Books and Archive.org, which have been identified as the most useful tools of electronic interlibrary loan services.

To scholars and other information seekers, a main attraction of a library is its journal collection. However, the article rendering services often encounters with copyright issues. There are many ways to solve this type of problems, but a cost effective one is everyone’s wish. IDS’s Project of “Article Licensing Information Availability Service (ALIAS)” has developed a conceptual model in this regard.

Fig-1 ALIAS Conceptual Model



(Source: <http://idsproject.org/Tools/ALIAS.aspx>)

OCLC is working with IDS Project staff, creators of the Article Licensing Availability Service (ALIAS), and Atlas Systems staff, creators of ILLiad and Odyssey resource sharing management systems, to use holdings data and license management tools to develop an integrated resource-sharing solution for serials in any format. By combining data from WorldCat and querying OCLC and third-party knowledge bases and electronic rights management data to determine lenders, OCLC delivery services will offer an automated processing for fulfillment of non-returnable materials. This makes it possible to streamline resource sharing workflow for copy requests with a particular emphasis on requests for electronic resources. At the present time, this process is labor-intensive. (OCLC, 2009)

## IV. Conclusion

The role of the ILL staff has been a very difficult one for many years. New ways to obtain documents have recently prompted information professionals to reorganize the workflow of the traditional practice of ILL. Now library staff have options to obtain books or articles online directly from publishers or vendors at a lower cost. They can view book prices through open-source tools, such as Amazon's Price Grabber, to assist their purchase decisions. Traditional methods of interlibrary loan is getting replaced with that of electronic interlibrary loan, which provides new services, such as guiding users toward alternatives, including book-trading websites or open access digital collections. This dramatic shift, in turn, requires library staff or information professionals to continue refining or revamping their services in order to facilitate users to obtain what they need in the real-life situation.

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