

A Brief History of Interlibrary Loan with Special Reference to Indiana

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Resource sharing which is a salient feature in 20th century American libraries, has a relatively short history. In fact, the idea of an Interlibrary Loan (ILL) system did not begin until a little over a hundred years ago. It was Samuel S. Green, Librarian at the Worcester (Massachusetts) Free Public Library, who first called for such cooperation in 1876. "It would add greatly to the usefulness of our reference libraries," he wrote, "if an agreement should be made to lend books to each other for short periods of time."¹ Although a beginning had been made since then, it was not until 42 years later in 1917 that a national system came into existence with an approved code by the American Library Association (ALA). Over the years the service grew from lending an occasional book for research to sending most library materials, including microfilms, cassettes, records, and other materials, to nearly all who request the service.

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The Surgeon General's Library in Washington was the first library to have an ILL system. To borrow from that library, one had to sign an agreement that the item would be returned within two weeks after its receipt and that the borrowing library would pay for the charges both ways. The borrowing library would also be responsible for its safe return by private express, which meant that materials were shipped in steel safes and delivered and signed for by borrower and lender. It did not pay to borrow a single book, but rather to borrow ten to twelve volumes at a time.² Among the lending libraries at the time were Boston Athenaeum, Boston Public Library, Columbia College, Harvard College, University of California, and Yale University. In 1893, Bunford Samuel, from the Ridgway Library in Philadelphia, suggested that some libraries should informally form a union for interlibrary loans, thus indicating that borrowing material was an individual process and had not developed into a national system.³

In 1899 at the ALA's College and Reference Section Dr. George Flavel Danforth, the sixth librarian at Indiana University, reported on his survey of Indiana librarians' attitudes toward borrowing. Of all the responses he received, two were particularly interesting and worth quoting. Thus, one said, "We have a very fine library for our own use, and we permit others to look at it, that's all." Still another observed, "We have ample funds with which to furnish our own library and do not need to adopt the borrowing method." By far the most popular reaction among librarians was that if they loaned materials, they ought to borrow in return, and that the borrowing of library materials was an admission of their own inadequacies.⁴ However, during Danforth's administration, books did not freely circulate even among their own faculty and students. Popular books circulated for two weeks, and other material could be checked out only overnight and during holidays.⁵ Indiana University did not begin to participate in interlibrary loans until 1907 under the leadership of William Evans Jenkins.⁶ At Purdue University interlibrary loans were first mentioned in the annual report of 1911. It stated: "The practice of borrowing books from other libraries has largely increased during the last ten years and this year a total of 12 volumes have been borrowed from other libraries. . . Yale, Illinois, Indiana 2, Chicago 8. . . A number of other books requested could not be obtained. . . The library was also able to make the loan of one volume to the library of Rose Polytechnic Institute, Terre Haute, Indiana."⁷ In 1912 Purdue University attempted to borrow 37 seven times. The schools included: University of Chicago (18), United States Department of Agriculture (6), Indiana State Library (4), University of Illinois (3), Carnegie Library, Pittsburg (3), Lloyd Library, Cincinnati, University of Missouri, and the Library of Congress.⁸

With the growth of ILL came the recognition of the need to collect information on library holdings in other institutions. In 1899 William Coolidge Lane and Charles Knowles Bolten published *Special Collections in American Libraries* (Harvard University Bibliographic Contributions, No. 45). During a dedication address at the new Oberlin College Library William Lane, Harvard Librarian, further proposed the creation of a College Library Lending and Reference Bureau. The major purpose of this bureau should be to collect catalog cards, printed catalogs, and other listings of library holdings to aid in identifying the whereabouts of a particular volume.⁹ However, the general attitude towards interlibrary loans continued to be mixed, ranging from the restrictive to the liberal. In 1912 the ALA Committee on Coordination held a symposium on interlibrary loans at the ALA Conference in Ottawa, Canada. Three prominent librarians presented their views on the appropriate use of an ILL. These views seemed to represent the thinking of the time. Herbert Putnam, Librarian of Congress, reluctantly supported borrowing materials, which should be made only for the "unusual need of a serious investigator."¹⁰ There was a great deal of materials he wanted to keep out of circulation, including an ordinary book, a book borrowed for a trivial reason, or a book that could be obtained from a closer library. William Lane maintained a similar but slightly more liberal approach. For him, "The primary purpose of interlibrary loans is the promotion of scholarship by placing books not commonly accessible and not in use in one library temporarily at the service of a scholar who has access at some other library."¹¹

The most enthusiastic supporter of ILL was J.L. Gillis, Librarian at the University of California, who held a generous view on resource sharing. He maintained that books could be obtained more quickly through interlibrary loan than through the acquisition department, and that loans were more cost effective for both the borrowing and lending library. Since most library books were seldom used, borrowing a book would relieve the library from purchasing a little used item, while the lending library could justify its purchase by its additional use.¹² In that same year, Frederick Hicks, speaking to the Eastern College Librarians, attempted to encourage the borrowing method. He found that the libraries providing the most materials to other libraries were the Forbes Library in Northampton, Massachusetts (5,000 loans in one year), the Surgeon General's Office (2,000), and the Library of Congress, (1,617).¹³

ILL In Indiana

An article in *Library Occurrent* briefly described the picture of ILL in Indiana in 1912. There were four major resource libraries:

The Indiana State Library, a government depository; Indiana University, strong in scientific periodical literature; Indiana State Normal School Library, strong in pedagogical literature; and Purdue University, strong in scientific and technical works. Already beginning to feel the need for out-of-state materials, the article further suggested applying to the John Crerar Library in Chicago, which held that, "the reason for the loan must be something beside the convenience of the applicant," and the Library of Congress, whose lending policy insisted that their books must be for serious research and investigation calculated to advance the boundaries of knowledge. They were not lent for the purpose of private study and self cultivation. "The need must be a matter of public concern."¹⁴ Later that year, a three-member committee was selected at the Indiana Roundtable of College Reference Problems to develop a holdings list for Indiana libraries. The members of the committee were W.M. Hepburn of Purdue University, Anne Keating of the State Normal Library, and Florence Venn of the State Library.¹⁵ It was not until the mid twenties that such a list was published, which provided a subject approach to the holdings of colleges, universities, businesses, public libraries, and the Indiana State Library.¹⁶

As more ILL requests were being generated all over the country, the need for a national code became evident. The very first one was passed by the ALA in 1917 with the manifest purpose "to aid research calculated to advance the boundaries of knowledge," and "to augment the supply of the average book to the average reader."¹⁷ Lending materials for a scholarly purpose was always prevalent, but the second idea was revolutionary and opened the door for all kinds of loans. This 1917 document may, therefore, be characterized as liberal.

The 1930s saw a number of significant developments in the field of ILL. First, there was the requirement of a charge for ILL service in the libraries of the University of California, Stanford University, and the University of Nebraska. The cost could be quite high; for example, the University of Nebraska charged \$1 to their faculty to cover postage, transportation, and service. Materials sent to other locations would be charged 50 cents for the first volume and 25 cents for each additional volume.¹⁸

In March 1936, the Union Catalog of the Library of Congress began to provide location information to the 34 libraries of the Association of Research Libraries. Later that year the service was made available to all libraries. Eventually the catalog was printed in book form, giving complete bibliographic information with selected holdings information. Many libraries have copies. Besides the *National Union Catalog*, other union lists were later developed. They included

the *Union Lists of Serials* (1965), *New Serials Titles* (1973—) and regional lists and special bibliographies.

In the late 1930s, the volume of interlibrary loan requests increased only gradually at Indiana University. In 1937-1938, a total of 219 volumes were borrowed for faculty and students.¹⁹ Three years later in 1940-1941, 257 volumes were borrowed.²⁰ [Maps of Indiana which show the diffusion of loans in the state and in the entire country are available from the author.]

Nationwide ILL was growing fast, and was thus increasing pressure on the large research university libraries. Impetus was, therefore, given to the American College and University Libraries (ACRL) to formulate a stricter policy. An ACRL Interlibrary Loan Code Committee was set up for the task in 1940. According to the new code adopted by ALA in the same year, "The primary purpose [of ILL]. . . is to aid research calculated to advance the boundaries of knowledge by the loan of unusual books. . ." Some libraries find it desirable to lend material for other than research purposes to institutions within their own territory or toward which they may have some particular obligation. Such transactions should be considered as part of an extension service rather than as interlibrary loans.²¹

Perhaps somewhat dogmatically, the code further suggested that graduate students should choose topics of research for which their own college or university library could supply most of the materials, thus using only "an occasional interlibrary loan."²² This was a typical philosophy of the college and university librarians at the time, who wanted to reduce the volume of loans. This new code was ineffective, however. A study conducted in the 1950s found that only 20 percent of the libraries followed it to the letter, 62 percent followed the code with their own modifications, and 16 percent set their own rules.²³ With such an offhand attitude towards ILL among librarians, it was common to find that incorrect citations abounded in the requests the lending libraries received. In a study of the ILL requests received by the University of Illinois Library in 1946, Robert W. Kidder reported the average number of errors per citation as 2.65.²⁴ The problems of ILL were further compounded with the rising costs of the service in the forties. The University of Pennsylvania estimated their average cost at \$3.50 per request.²⁵ Columbia University came up with \$2.70 per volume.²⁶ Costs were a major concern because the number of interlibrary loans was constantly increasing. For example, in 1946-1947 Indiana University alone borrowed 886 volumes and loaned 985 volumes.²⁷ The cause of these rising costs was due partly to a lack of standard clerical procedures which created an overload in most ILL offices.

ILL In The Fifties

But the 1950s began to see marked improvements in the ILL process. The first major change was the requesting of materials by teletype (TWX). On July 25, 1950, TWX machines were installed in the Milwaukee Public Library and the Racine Public Library. Sending messages by TWX greatly reduced the time for completing transactions. Furthermore, the two Wisconsin libraries began a daily delivery system in order to provide one day service. The number of ILL transactions greatly increased as a result, and this revolutionary development received national publicity from newspapers and from periodicals such as *The American City* and *Popular Mechanics*. In 1951 The New Midwest Inter-library Center in Chicago (Center for Research Libraries) decided to use the TWX machine for requesting interlibrary loans. All member libraries installed TWX machines except three Indiana members, Indiana, Notre Dame, and Purdue universities; Indiana Bell did not approve installation for fear of low return.²⁸

As previously mentioned, prior to 1952 the clerical work in an ILL office was extremely cumbersome. Libraries requested interlibrary loans on postcards and form letters of different sizes and formats. There were no standard procedures or forms. Typically, the borrowing library would need to write or type each request several times. The library kept its own record for each request as well as a typed copy of the request letter, received notice, notice of arrival to patrons, renewal request, and returning notice. A similar process was repeated in the lending library which also needed to type each request several times, e.g., a record card for their own office, sending notice, labels, overdue notices, renewing notices, and acknowledge of return notices. The recommendation in July 1951 of the American College and Research Libraries ACRL-ILL Committee to accept the four part carbon standard ILL form at the ALA and ACRL Chicago meeting was a very important development for interlibrary loan. Originally developed and used by the University of California, the newly adopted form required that the information be typed only once, and provided the borrowing library with enough copies to complete each transaction. All pertinent information such as author, title, imprint, sending date, return date, as well as reimbursement for stamps could be sent at the same time. It was estimated that there was an 80 percent saving in clerical costs for the lending library and up to 50 percent for the borrowing library.²⁹

Because many libraries were neglecting the 1940 code, it became necessary to revise it just 12 years later. Its problems were reflected by the changes in the new and more generous document prepared by the ACRL-ILL Committee and approved by the ALA on

July 4, 1952. Thus, the purpose of ILL was no longer considered "to aid research calculated to advance the boundaries of knowledge by the loan of unusual books," but "to make available for research and serious study library materials not in a given library." Besides, interlibrary loan service was considered a courtesy and a privilege and not a right. Its appendices explained and encouraged libraries to standardize their procedures. Included were the new request forms, the new shipping labels, a standard list of abbreviations, sources of verification, a list of selected union holdings, and bibliographic centers.³⁰

In Indiana, lending activities between small public libraries became a regular feature by 1954. Two such examples were described in the 1956 issue of *Public Libraries*. The Thorntown Indiana Area Book Exchange allowed four small libraries in adjoining counties to exchange fiction, mysteries, and romances. In September 1955 the Evansville Willard Library began book service with the New Harmony Library.³¹

In 1957-1958, interlibrary loan statistics first appeared in the Indiana State University Library Annual Report. There was a total of 105 requests in this period.³²

LSCA and ILL

In May 1965, the Interlibrary Communications Project or (TWX network) was funded under Title I of the Library Services and Construction Act (LSCA), a federal program. In order to foster interlibrary loans within the state of Indiana, the Indiana State Library would furnish equipment, supplies, and additional monetary and advisory help. In return, 22 public libraries, the four state university libraries, and the Bureau of Public Discussion in Bloomington received TWX machines and were encouraged to be as liberal as possible in lending library materials. All libraries not designated as TWX centers were encouraged to become satellite libraries. These libraries could obtain access to other Indiana libraries by telephoning the nearest center. Whenever possible requests were to be filled locally; otherwise, they would be channeled to the State Library to be filled. If that also failed, they would be sent to the four state university libraries or other large public libraries in the state.

On June 27, 1968, the fourth ILL code was adopted by the Reference Services Division of ALA. It was specifically designed to give guidelines at the national level. "The purpose of Interlibrary Loan," it is stated, "is to make available, for *research*, materials not owned by a given library, in the belief that furtherance of knowledge is in the general interest."³³ Although research was underlined, in practice many libraries were requesting materials without questioning the purpose. Accompanying this national document was a model

code for special agreements among regional, state, local or special libraries. The provision of such a sample was necessary because there were a series of agreements being signed among special groups of libraries. A case in point is the four state universities inter-institutional program initiated in the fall of 1969. In the preceding year Indiana State University had proposed that Ball State University employ a person at Purdue University while it would do the same at Indiana University.^{3 4} In the final agreement, however, both Indiana State and Ball State paid a set amount to Indiana University and Purdue University. In return, the two larger institutions were to expedite interlibrary loan requests from Ball State and Indiana State. Also, for each photocopy request, the first 15 pages were free. This procedure was established to save billing process time. Soon the entire state benefited from the system in that the four state universities gave the first 15 pages free to any library within the state.

Several new approaches to an ILL were initiated in the 1970s. The Indiana State Library planned to divide the state into no more than 14 Area Library Services Authorities (ALSAs) or multicounty areas; with the new arrangement there were only nine ALSAs by 1981. The programs are funded primarily through LSCA funds to foster cooperation among local libraries. The primary service is the reference referral service which includes interlibrary loans. The Stone Hills Area Library Services Authority (SHALSA), which presently includes a ten-county area in west central Indiana, initiated a van for document delivery. This van has improved service for the participating libraries. The publication of the *Indiana Union List of Serials* in July 1973, and of its supplement in 1974 became a landmark in interlibrary cooperation in Indiana.

Sweeping changes are taking place everywhere in the field of ILL. Internationally, beginning in 1975 it became possible for members of the Center for Research Libraries which paid a special fee to obtain free of charge articles in the fields of technology, social science, and science through the British Lending Library. Photocopy requests are sent electronically to Boston Spa, England and returned by first class mail.

Meanwhile ILL began to feel the impact of on-line services. In 1976, some of the libraries began verifying and obtaining locations via the OCLC (Online Computer Library Center). By April 1979 the OCLC-ILL Subsystem was initiated through the Indiana Cooperative Library Services Authority (INCOLSA). This organization offered members payment for telecommunication costs, terminal maintenance, documentation pertaining to the system, and training. Many Indiana libraries participated immediately including Indiana University. Since it was a major lending library in the state, other libraries

were quickly forced into the new system, which made it easy for librarians to verify and to order on the computer terminal. But there are other advantages; for example, the system provides more locations than ever before, and these additional locations supply the borrowing library holdings from different types and different sized libraries, thus distributing the requests more evenly around the state and country. The computer terminal automatically prints the bibliographic information on the ILL workform, a process which greatly helps to eliminate typing errors. Participating members are allowed to order directly on the terminal from as many as five locations at a time. If the preceding library is unable to fill a request the subsystem will automatically transmit it to the next library. This option saves processing time. In the month of May 1981, 70,601 requests were made nationwide on the OCLC-ILL Subsystem. The number does not include requests sent by ALA, TWX, and other methods. Indiana alone had 2,825 transactions.^{3 5} Coupled with this urge of statistics, however, are the rising costs of this service. The comparison between 1979 and 1981 is instructive. Whereas in 1979, the cost per transaction averaged 92 cents; in 1981, it had risen to \$1.20. There was then an increase of 28 cents or 30 percent in less than three years.

In the 1970s computer literature searching became a new method for obtaining citations of primarily periodical articles. It has been estimated that when computer searching is fully operational, ILL can expect an increase of 50 percent of its present volume.^{3 6} By the late 1970s a new method of requesting materials became available through the vendors who offer computer literature searching. Although rarely used in Indiana libraries, Dialog offers a system DIALORDER where articles and reports can be ordered, through the various data base producers. The vendor, System Development Corporation (SDC), also offers the same service called Electronic Mail Drop. The advantages of the private sector are twofold. First, since many data base producers already have paid royalties to the publishers, a library can order as many articles as it needs without violating the copyright laws. Secondly, requests for articles and reports can be ordered more quickly. All that is usually needed is the accession number and a deposit account with the particular data base producer. Requests are made on a terminal to the particular producer, and according to advertisements, the requested materials will be sent within 24 hours.

Present ILL Practices

Little change, however, has occurred in the new ILL national code approved by the Adult Services Division of ALA on June 30,

1980 except to provide more details concerning the procedures used for verification. At that time, model code for regional, state, and local libraries was again included. However, two negative elements which emerged in the 1970s costs and copyright restrictions, have continued to plague the system. Although there were charges for loans during the 1930s, the practice became more widespread in the 1970s. Major research libraries across the country began charging for loans and increasing photocopy requests. At the state level, Indianapolis Public Library began charging \$5 per loan to libraries which were not members of the Central Indiana Area Library Services Authority (CIALSA). Notre Dame charged a minimum of \$2 for photocopies. Indiana University began charging \$2 for photocopies within the state except for the four state universities. Purdue University charges Indiana businesses \$3. Indiana University Medical School began charging \$4 per loan or per photocopy beginning July 1, 1981. Many public libraries charge postage.

The new copyright law (Title 17, U.S. Code) went into effect on January 1, 1978. This law, along with the CONTU (National Commission on New Technological Uses of Copyrighted Works) guidelines, placed restrictions on photocopying; these restrictions became particularly severe on materials published within the last five years. As libraries were required by law to keep records on all photocopy requests within the last five years, clerical work has increased.

Where does it all lead us after one hundred years of ILL despite the technological breakthroughs? A major problem which confronts ILL offices today is the increased workload. Largely because of the new technology, library administrators and library users now have a higher expectation for fast interlibrary loan service. This expectation has increased the pressure on interlibrary loan personnel. Since not all requests can be verified by OCLC, the careful attention of a librarian is still needed to solve some of the bibliographic problems. In most cases there has been no substantial change in the document delivery system. It still takes time to check the card catalog, locate and pull books from the stacks, photocopy requests, and prepare for sending. Also, there are more statistics to count. Since so many libraries charge, more and more time is needed for the billing process. Most interlibrary loan offices have not increased their staffs while others have actually reduced their personnel. Indeed, it is the yeoman efforts of many interlibrary loan staff members that have held the service together.

It seems that ILL and the ever increasing demand of the patrons are on a collision course. The liberalization of the national code, the Indiana State Library promotion of such projects as the publication of the *Indiana Union List of Serials*, the ALSAs, the improvements in

bibliographic access, and the increasing capabilities of technology, have continued to increase the volume of interlibrary loans. It takes only simple arithmetic to see that the bigger the volume of loans, the higher the handling costs will be. Inflation also has had its effect. Many institutions, operating under an immense burden, are passing the costs on to the library users. As the cost of borrowing materials increases, the attractiveness of the service decreases.

If costs become the primary criteria, ILL will be primarily available only to those who can afford it. However, the historical reason for interlibrary loans "to facilitate research" remains valid. There are other ways to continue the ILL system without increasing costs. First, more reciprocal agreements should be made among different types of libraries where sharing various resources can be mutually beneficial. Secondly, a coupon system could be initiated in the state as found in other networks throughout the country. Libraries which charge for loans and photocopies should be willing to supply noncharging libraries an equal number of free requests. For example, since Indianapolis Public Library charges \$5 a loan to noncharging libraries, certainly the Indianapolis Public Library should be willing to supply these libraries with one free loan for each free loan received. By using a coupon system, the financial bookkeeping between libraries would be eliminated. Thirdly, interlibrary loan positions funded by LSCA could possibly be relocated to maximize the service and minimize the costs. For example, if the large libraries cannot handle the volume of requests which are being promoted and encouraged by librarians in the field, perhaps one or more ALSA librarians could be relocated in the overburdened large library or a few large libraries. Of course, the remaining ALSA librarians would need to enlarge their present service areas. In order to continue the ILL service which has obviously been beneficial to many library users throughout the state as seen by the ever increasing number of loans, the system must be continually examined and readjusted to make the best service available to all.

Notes

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