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International Interlibrary Loan in a Changing Environment: Results from the 2019 RUSA STARS International ILL Survey

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Abstract:

In 2019 the American Library Association (ALA) Reference & User Services Association's Sharing and Transforming Access to Resources Section (RUSA STARS) International Interlibrary Loan Committee conducted its fourth survey of international interlibrary loan policies and practices. This survey was widely distributed to libraries worldwide, in coordination with IFLA's Document Delivery & Resource Sharing Section, including for the first time translations in six of the seven official IFLA languages. While reusing questions from prior survey instruments allowed for longitudinal analysis of quantitative data, the 2019 survey also included new open response questions that delve deeper into how the global library community can build upon its success in sharing resources across borders in order to improve this service for future users. On behalf of the committee, the authors will present select survey results, focusing on the evolving role of international ILL in an increasingly complex resource discovery and delivery ecosystem. Data-informed strategies to overcome challenges currently facing this service and to optimize global delivery solutions will be shared.

Keywords:

International, Interlibrary loan, Interlending, Resource sharing, Surveys

Introduction

The International Interlibrary Loan (ILL) Committee belongs to the Sharing and Transforming Access to Resources Section (STARS) of the Reference and User Services Association (RUSA), which is one of the eleven divisions of the American Library Association (ALA). A key part of

the committee's charge is to evaluate trends in international interlibrary loan and resource sharing, and to this end, the committee has conducted four surveys since 2007 inquiring about libraries' international borrowing and lending practices.¹ The 2019 survey is the third iteration to target a global audience and the first one to offer multiple translations of the survey instrument in the hope of increasing the diversity of respondents. The survey was widely distributed to libraries worldwide in coordination with IFLA's Document Delivery & Resource Sharing Section, and translations in six of the seven official IFLA languages (Arabic, English, French, German, Russian, and Spanish) were provided.

The 2019 survey builds upon the 2015 and 2011 instruments, reusing most of the questions (either verbatim or with minor modifications), which allows for longitudinal analysis of quantitative data over the past decade. Notable changes include rephrasing questions to improve translations, reducing Anglophone-centric response options,² and eliminating questions that had not yielded interesting or actionable data in prior iterations of the survey. Additionally, committee members added three new open response questions that delve deeper into how the global library community can build upon its success in sharing resources across borders in order to improve this service for future users. This paper presents select survey results, focusing on the evolving role of international ILL in an increasingly complex resource discovery and delivery ecosystem. Data-informed strategies to overcome challenges currently facing this service and to optimize global delivery solutions will also be shared.

Methodology

As in 2015, the survey instrument was created and responses collected using Qualtrics, but this time it was hosted by Northwestern University. The survey was comprised of 40 questions, only two of which were required (selecting your library's continent and country). Questions were divided into four sections: about your library, borrowing activity, lending activity, and broader open response questions related to international ILL. In addition to 33 multiple choice or multiple answer questions (12 of which included a free text option choice to solicit additional detail), seven open response questions were included in the survey to gather more nuanced qualitative data. Survey logic was used to display only the most relevant questions based on prior responses. For the full list of questions, please refer to the Appendix.

Qualtrics has a Translate Survey feature that enabled the committee to provide multiple versions of the survey instrument to a global audience. After finalizing the English version of the survey instrument, translations were first generated using the Auto-Translate option powered by Google Translate. These translations were then exported into Word documents and shared with bilingual volunteers who reviewed them and supplied corrections (which were minor for French, German, and Spanish, but extensive for Arabic and Russian). After corrections were manually entered in

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 Several multiple choice or select all that apply responses related to resource sharing networks exclusive to or dominant within the United States, United Kingdom, and Australia were removed and replaced with more generic or fill-in-the blank options.

Qualtrics, a survey preview link was shared with the bilingual experts for a final verification. Ultimately a single instrument was distributed to ILL practitioners, but respondents had the option to choose their preferred language from a drop-down menu. This mechanism allowed for seamless comparison of responses using the English questions and pre-defined answers regardless of the version used by the respondents.

The survey was open from March 5 to April 16, 2019. To prepare for distribution, committee members revisited and expanded upon the distribution list used in 2015. More than 370 emails were sent to resource sharing listservs, networks, and professional contacts across 106 countries. In addition to emails sent by committee members, members of IFLA’s Document Delivery & Resource Sharing Section and the IFLA Regional Office managers also shared the survey with their professional networks and distribution channels. For the first time the committee actively employed social media as part of its distribution strategy, promoting the survey through the “ILLers” Facebook group as well as the RUSA STARS and IFLA Document Delivery & Resource Sharing Section’s Facebook groups and Twitter accounts. Wherever possible, these communications highlighted the language options by providing direct links to each language version in its native language and characters.

Demographic Overview

Altogether 394 survey responses with one or more answers were received, 317 of which were completed. Table 1 shows the breakdown by continent. In all 65 countries were represented, which is the highest number for a RUSA STARS international ILL survey to date. The 2019 survey also exceeded the 2015 survey in terms of number of responses received, but fell short of the 2011 survey, which had 632 responses (404 of which were completed). Overall and on most continents, academic libraries dominated. The exceptions were Africa and Australia and Oceania; on those continents, academic libraries were still the largest groups (at 45% and 44%, respectively), but not the majority of respondents. There was a wide range in ILL volume among respondents, but the majority borrow and lend fewer than 1,000 returnables and 1,000 non-returnables per year (between 53-59% for all four categories).

Table 1. Responses by continent, 2019

| <i>Continent</i> | <i>Number</i> | <i>Percentage</i> |
|---------------------------------|---------------|-------------------|
| <i>North America</i> | 131 | 33% |
| <i>Central or South America</i> | 22 | 6% |
| <i>Europe</i> | 154 | 39% |
| <i>Africa</i> | 29 | 7% |
| <i>Asia</i> | 42 | 11% |
| <i>Australia and Oceania</i> | 16 | 4% |

While an overwhelming majority of respondents (80%) used the English version of the survey, the data suggest that providing translations did increase the respondents’ geographic diversity. Each translation was used at least twice, with Spanish being used the most (see Table 2), and all translations but the German one resulted in a new country responding for the first time. Respondents from 24 of 65 countries (37%) used languages other than English, and for 12 countries (18%) the participants only used languages other than English. Most notably, eight countries that had not been featured in one or both of the 2011 and 2015 surveys answered the survey using one of the translations: Argentina (Spanish), Belarus (Russian), Chile (Spanish),

Costa Rica (Spanish), Côte d’Ivoire (French), Russia (Russian), Saudi Arabia (Arabic), and Senegal (French). Finally, the committee received increased responses from eight countries for which a translation in one of their official languages was provided.

Table 2. Usage of survey translations, 2019

| <i>Language</i> | <i>Times Used</i> |
|-----------------|-------------------|
| <i>Arabic</i> | 2 |
| <i>German</i> | 18 |
| <i>French</i> | 17 |
| <i>Spanish</i> | 39 |
| <i>Russian</i> | 4 |

International Borrowing Overview

Of the 372 responses to the question “Do you borrow internationally?”, 78% of respondents replied yes, and of those, the vast majority (83%) borrow both returnable and non-returnable materials from other countries. Participation in international borrowing varies by continent, with European respondents being the most likely to participate at 89% and African respondents the least likely at 34% (see Table 3). Among those who do not borrow from libraries abroad the most common reasons were no demand (32%), lack of infrastructure (22%), and cost (22%). Overall the volume of international borrowing remains low, with the majority of respondents reporting less than 100 items per year for both returnables (63%) and non-returnables (63%). Unlike in 2015 (when volume appeared to be on the rise),³ the 2019 survey reveals no clear trend in change in international borrowing volume in recent years, with 35% of respondents reporting an increase⁴ as compared to five years ago, 37% reporting a decrease, and 28% reporting no change. Among those reporting an increase in volume, change in users discovering international materials and change in the availability of international lenders were the most common reasons at 31% and 24%, respectively (except among Asian respondents, where change in local policies was the highest factor at 30%). Among those reporting a decrease in volume, alternatives to resource sharing, such as Sci-Hub, #icanhazPDF, etc., was the most common reason at 24% (except among African and Central and South American respondents, where change in local collection budgets dominated at 50% and 42%).

Table 3. Participation in international ILL by continent, 2019

| <i>Continent</i> | <i>International Borrowing</i> | <i>International Lending</i> |
|---------------------------------|--------------------------------|------------------------------|
| <i>North America</i> | 83% | 84% |
| <i>Central or South America</i> | 55% | 57% |
| <i>Europe</i> | 89% | 87% |
| <i>Africa</i> | 34% | 29% |
| <i>Asia</i> | 63% | 64% |
| <i>Australia and Oceania</i> | 81% | 80% |

When asked “From which countries does your library borrow most heavily?”, 257 respondents identified 57 countries as frequent lenders. Germany (57%), United States of America (42%),

³ Munson et al, 45.

United Kingdom (40%), France (26%), Australia (23%), and Canada (21%) were the most frequently selected countries, as seen in the 2015 survey.⁴ The 2019 survey asked for the first time, “Why does your library borrow from these countries?”, seeking to confirm whether high development, geographic proximity, open borders, and shared language and culture contribute to more frequent borrowing from particular countries, as previously suggested.⁵ While clear patterns in proximity or language between the borrower and their most frequent lenders exist for nearly all continents (see Table 4), proximity (7%) and common language (3%) were less commonly mentioned as reasons for borrowing from specific countries than availability of materials (48%); ease of identifying, requesting, and paying for material (26%); and reliability of service (15%). These additional factors explain why Germany is one of the most popular countries from which to borrow on nearly all continents; numerous open responses attest both to the richness of their libraries’ collections and the high quality of their resource sharing services, which appear to outweigh any potential barriers of distance or language.

Table 4. Countries from which libraries most frequently borrow by continent, 2019

| <i>Continent</i> | <i>#1 Country</i> | <i>#2 Country</i> | <i>#3 Country</i> | <i>#4 Country</i> | <i>#5 Country</i> |
|---------------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|-----------------------|------------------------|
| <i>North America</i> | United Kingdom (16%) | Germany (16%) | Canada (15%) | Australia (14%) | United States (10%) |
| <i>Central or South America</i> | United States (21%) | Spain (19%) | Mexico (11%) | Argentina (8%) | Colombia (5%) |
| <i>Europe</i> | Germany (20%) | France (13%) | United Kingdom (9%) | United States (9%) | Spain (8%) |
| <i>Africa</i> | United States (22%) | Germany (19%) | Australia (9%) | France (9%) | Canada (9%) |
| <i>Asia</i> | United States (30%) | United Kingdom (15%) | Germany (10%) | Australia (8%) | France (7%) |
| <i>Australia and Oceania</i> | United States (27%) | Germany (24%) | United Kingdom (16%) | New Zealand (16%) | Australia (5%) |

No matter where in the world one might be, certain types of materials remain more difficult than others to acquire from foreign collections. The most difficult are copies of rare or older material, with 47% of respondents who borrow internationally reporting difficulty, followed by electronic books (39.5%) and theses and dissertations (38.8%). Copies of rare or older material were most commonly reported as the most difficult among respondents on most continents, excluding Europe, where electronic books led at 54%, and Central and South America, where books led at 70%. According to 36% of respondents, sound recordings, videos, and serials are also challenging to acquire. Overall, books and musical scores remain the easiest formats to borrow from abroad, with only 14% and 17% of respondents reporting difficulty, respectively.

International Lending Overview

Of the 339 responses to the question “Do you lend internationally?”, 77% of respondents replied yes, and of those, the vast majority (83%) lend both returnable and non-returnable materials to other countries. As with borrowing, participation in international lending varies by continent,

⁴ Munson et al, 45. The 2015 and 2019 surveys yielded the same top six countries, but the order of those countries shifted slightly, with the United States edging out the United Kingdom and France and Australia passing Canada.

⁵ Kurt Munson and Hilary H. Thompson, “Giving Your Patrons the World: Barriers to, and the Value of, International Interlibrary Loan,” *portal: Libraries and the Academy* 18, 1 (2018), 20-24.

with European respondents being the most likely to participate at 87% and African respondents the least likely at 29% (see Table 3 above). Among those who do not lend to libraries abroad the most common reasons were no demand (33%), lack of infrastructure (27%), cost (25%), and local policy (25%). Overall the volume of international lending remains low, with the majority of respondents reporting less than 100 items per year for both returnables (74%) and non-returnables (66%). The 2019 survey reveals no clear trend in change in international lending volume in recent years, with 34% of respondents reporting an increase in requests filled as compared to five years ago, 23% reporting a decrease, and 43% reporting no change. Among those reporting an increase in requests filled, change in availability of holdings information was the most common reason at 41%, followed by change in local policies at 19%. Among those reporting a decrease in requests filled, change in availability of holdings information was also the most common reason at 27%, followed by change in licensing terms at 17%. These responses illustrate the critical role discovery plays in both facilitating or impeding resource sharing.

The ability to effectively lend non-returnables to other countries depends on electronic delivery methods, copyright law, and (in the case of electronic resources) licensing terms. Of the respondents that lend non-returnables abroad, 84% deliver those materials electronically. Respondents mentioned at least ten different file sharing methods, with the most common being email (61%), Article Exchange (42%), and Odyssey (22%). Based on responses received, libraries in Africa (100%), Australia and Oceania (100%), Central and South America (100%), and North America (97%) are the most likely to lend non-returnables electronically. Those that do not provide electronic delivery are primarily located in Asia and Europe (in particular Italy, Germany, and Japan). Despite the wide popularity of electronic delivery, both copyright law (40%) and licensing restrictions (55%) remain significant barriers to lending non-returnables internationally, affecting approximately half of the respondents' ability to lend copies abroad. Copyright was reported as a barrier to international lending by a majority of respondents in Asia (76%), Africa (63%), and Europe (53%), while licensing terms restricted international lending for the majority of respondents in Australia and Oceania (82%), Asia (76%), Africa (75%), and Europe (62%).

The 2019 survey also asked respondents about the request, shipping, and payment methods that they employ or accept for international ILL transactions. Email remains the dominant form of accepting international requests at 80%, followed by resource sharing systems or networks at 52%. Email is the most commonly accepted method among respondents in Central and South America, Europe, Asia, and Australia and Oceania, while resource sharing systems and networks were more common among respondents in North America and Africa. Expedited postal service is still the most common method of shipping returnables abroad (38%), closely followed by regular postal service (33%) and courier (23%). Courier shipping is most common in Australia and Oceania and North America, perhaps due to frequent transoceanic shipping. When it comes to payment, IFLA vouchers are the most widely accepted method for international transactions (73%), followed by three electronic payment methods: OCLC IFM (47%), credit cards (24%), and bank transfers (18%). While IFLA vouchers are common across all continents, there is wide variance in acceptance of other payment methods by region. OCLC IFM is dominant among respondents in Africa (86%), North America (80%), and Australia and Oceania (64%); credit cards are frequently accepted in Australia and Oceania (55%) and North America (43%); and bank transfers are more common in Europe (28%) than other continents.

When asked to identify up to five countries to which their library most frequently lends, 224 respondents identified 74 countries as frequent borrowers. The United States of America (38%),

Australia (28%), Canada (28%), United Kingdom (27%), and Spain (21%) were the most frequently selected countries overall, but there is noticeable variance by continent (see Table 5). The same patterns of proximity and language seen in borrowing are also seen in lending, with most (but not all) international borrowing occurring within the same continent or between countries with a shared language. The exceptions (Denmark borrowing from North America, Australia borrowing from Central and South America, and Germany borrowing from Asia and Australia and Oceania) may indicate uncommon collections and/or ease of service driving this transoceanic activity. The survey also asked respondents to identify up to five countries to which they will not lend returnables and those to which they will not lend non-returnables. For returnables, 61 countries were selected by 38 respondents, with Afghanistan and the United States of America appearing most frequently (n=9). For non-returnables, 24 countries were selected by a mere 12 respondents, with the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and Germany appearing most frequently (n=3). The reasons cited for why some libraries would not lend to specific countries include distance, cost, customs, policy, political instability, sanctions, travel advisories, and a history of unreliable returns. However, based on the relatively low response rate to these questions (between 3-10%) and answers to the subsequent open response questions inquiring why (the most common of which was a variant of no restrictions), it appears that most libraries participating in international ILL are willing to lend to any country that makes a request and follows their conditions for lending.

Table 5. Countries from which libraries most frequently lend by continent, 2019

| <i>Continent</i> | <i>#1 Country</i> | <i>#2 Country</i> | <i>#3 Country</i> | <i>#4 Country</i> | <i>#5 Country</i> |
|---------------------------------|---------------------|----------------------|----------------------|---------------------|---------------------------|
| <i>North America</i> | Canada (17%) | Australia (16%) | United Kingdom (13%) | United States (10%) | Denmark (10%) |
| <i>Central or South America</i> | United States (11%) | Spain (11%) | Colombia (7%) | Chile (7%) | Australia (7%) |
| <i>Europe</i> | Spain (12%) | France (10%) | United States (9%) | Germany (8%) | Italy (8%) |
| <i>Africa</i> | Canada (16%) | United States (12%) | New Zealand (8%) | France (8%) | British Indian Ocean (8%) |
| <i>Asia</i> | United States (30%) | United Kingdom (15%) | Germany (10%) | Australia (8%) | France (7%) |
| <i>Australia and Oceania</i> | United States (27%) | Germany (24%) | United Kingdom (17%) | New Zealand (17%) | Australia (10%) |

Notable Changes and Trends, 2011-2019

The similarities between the 2011, 2015, and 2019 survey instruments allow for longitudinal comparison of the three data sets. Overall, participation in international ILL (along with characteristics and methods employed) have remained relatively constant over the past decade. Most changes are minor, likely reflecting a gradual evolution in services and operations, while fluctuations may be attributed to different survey respondents and varying representation of different countries or regions. What the authors highlight here are notable changes in 2019 and clear trends as evidenced by a sustained pattern of increase or decrease across all three surveys. Such patterns were most clearly seen with the lending data, which will be the focus of this section.

In terms of request methods accepted by lenders, locally hosted webforms are on the rise, up from 17% of respondents in 2011 to 23% in 2019. On the other hand, fax has experienced a sharp decrease, down from 33% of respondents in 2011 to 8% in 2019, as has postal service, down from 31% in 2011 to 20% in 2019 (see Figure 1). For payment methods, acceptance of IFLA

vouchers increased from 50% of respondents in 2011 to 73% in 2019, as did bank transfers (also known as electronic funds transfer or EFTS) to a lesser degree. During the same period of time, acceptance of both local and foreign checks decreased significantly (see Figure 2). While most electronic methods of payment (e.g., OCLC IFM, bank transfers, and credit cards) have increased between 2011 and 2019, non-electronic methods have decreased, with the notable exception of IFLA vouchers.

Figure 1. Request methods used by international lenders, 2011-2019

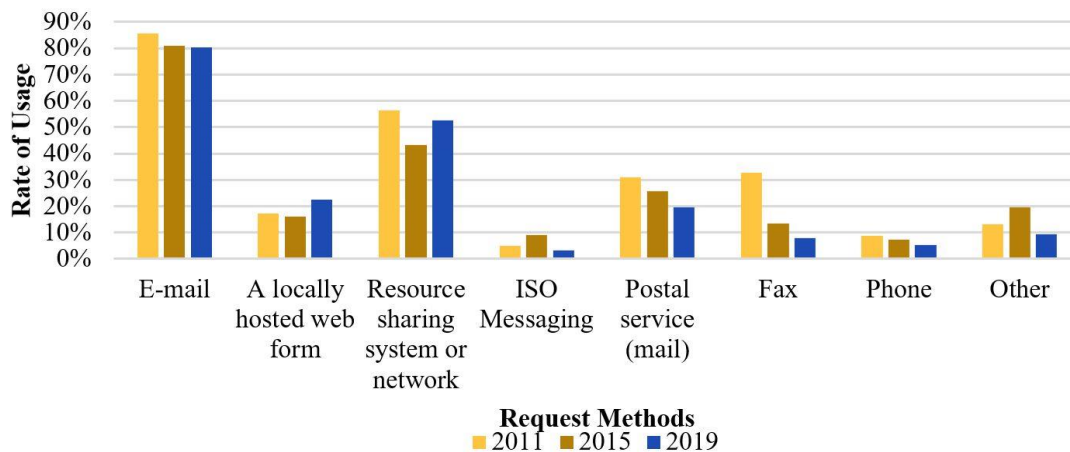
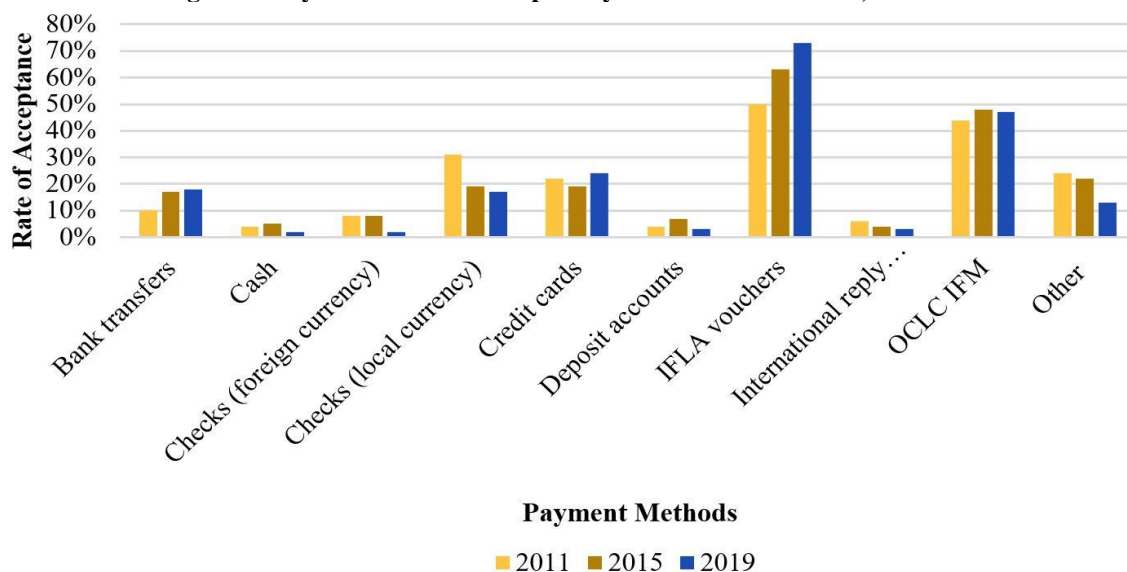
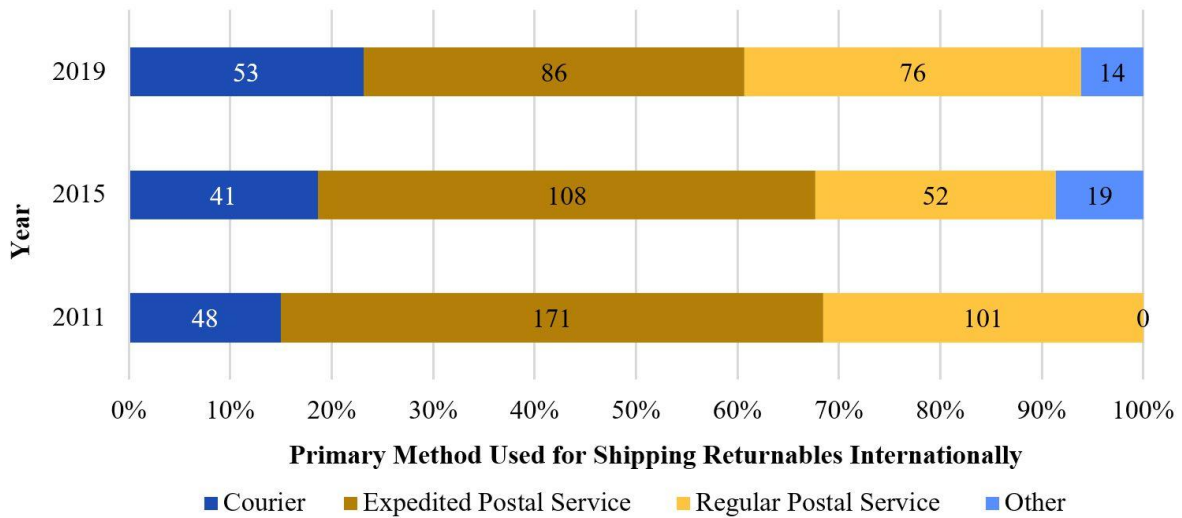


Figure 2. Payment methods accepted by international lenders, 2011-2019



For delivery of returnable materials abroad, the surveys demonstrate sustained growth in the use of courier shipping (DHL, FedEx, UPS, etc.), which increased from 15% in 2011 to 20% in 2015 and 23% in 2019 (see Figure 3). While expedited postal service remains the most common shipping method at 38%, it is no longer employed by the majority of respondents as it was in 2011 (53%) and 2015 (54%). Electronic delivery of non-returnables peaked at 84% in 2019 following a dip between 2011 (80%) and 2015 (73%).

Figure 3. International returnable delivery methods used by international lenders, 2011-2019



While electronic delivery, request, and payment methods grow in popularity among lenders, licensing terms of electronic resources also appear to be an increasing barrier to international ILL. The 2019 survey was the first to separate licensing from copyright when asking about potential barriers impeding the supplying of non-returnables to foreign libraries. When licensing was coupled with copyright, 42% (2011) and 46% (2015) of respondents replied that either or both prevented them from supplying copies to libraries abroad. When specifically asked about licensing restrictions in 2019, that percentage rose to 55% (see Figures 4-7). Similarly, in the 2019 survey electronic books rose to second place among the hardest materials to obtain from foreign libraries, surpassing theses and dissertations for the first time.

Figure 4. Copyright or licensing restrictions as barrier to international ILL, 2011

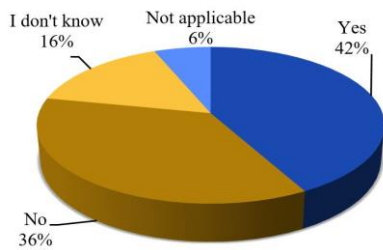


Figure 5. Copyright or licensing restrictions as barrier to international ILL, 2015

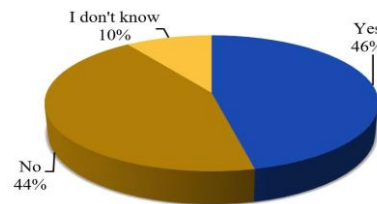


Figure 6. Copyright restrictions as barrier to international ILL, 2019

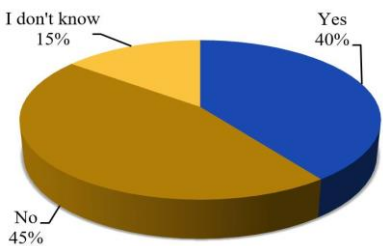
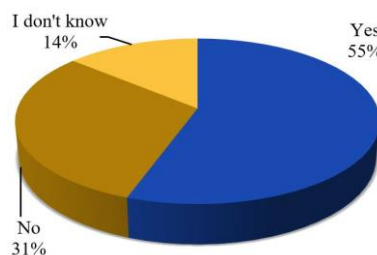


Figure 7. Licensing restrictions as barrier to international ILL, 2019



Finally, there has been an increase since 2011 in responses related to not lending to a particular country (see Table 6), but it is unclear if this is due to the increasing diversity of survey respondents or increasing selectivity on the part of lenders. The number of selections increased from 66 in 2011 to 111 in 2015 and 117 (returnables) and 34 (non-returnables) in 2019. Similarly, the percentage of overall respondents who selected at least one country to which they do not lend rose from 7% in 2011 to 17% in 2015 and 14% in 2019. Fortunately, these selections remained low overall, as did the percentage of respondents who lend internationally but selected one of the most banned countries (1-6% between 2011 and 2019). Afghanistan, the United States of America, and South Africa were the only countries that appeared in the top do not lend lists in all three surveys. Reasons expressed in 2019 include concerns about war and instability (Afghanistan); difficulties with customs and high shipping costs (United States); and previous loss of materials (South Africa).

Table 6. Countries to which your library will not lend, 2019

| | <i>2011</i> | <i>2015</i> | <i>2019</i> | |
|----------------------------------|--|--|--------------------|------------------------|
| | Returnables and Non-returnables | Returnables and Non-returnables | Returnables | Non-returnables |
| <i>Percentage of Respondents</i> | 7% | 17% | 14% | 4% |
| <i>Total Selections</i> | 66 | 111 | 117 | 34 |
| <i>1+ Countries Selected</i> | 35 | 49 | 61 | 24 |
| <i>3+ Countries Selected</i> | 8 | 13 | 11 | 2 |
| <i>5 Countries Selected</i> | 1 | 5 | 5 | 0 |

Challenges and Strategies to Overcome Them

Identifying which libraries own an item is the first challenge in placing an ILL request whether domestic or international, but international requests are often more difficult because they require searching individual library catalogs or national catalogs. The proliferation of additional topical databases, such as those for dissertations (e.g., the British Library’s EThOS) or large-scale digitization projects (e.g., the Digital Public Library of America), have created even more places for ILL staff members to search, yet makes delivery of content to users much easier once the resource is found. Given the complexity of the discovery landscape, it comes as no surprise that numerous respondents expressed the desire for a shared global catalog when asked “What would make international interlibrary loan easier for your library?”. OCLC’s Worldcat was frequently cited as a tool that eases international ILL, but despite being the world’s largest shared index, it is not comprehensive. While multiple respondents wished that more libraries outside of North America would contribute holdings to WorldCat, universal adoption is unlikely. A search engine that allowed searching across linked national databases or individual library catalogs would provide the best solution to international discovery for ILL, but the ability to expose the content of catalogs to Google and other search engines would also vastly improve discovery for all. The ability of Google to display the contents of the PubMed database of medical journal articles is an example of this type of exposure of an otherwise closed system.

Once an owning library is identified, the next challenge is determining how to place a request for the item. OCLC’s WorldShare ILL system was mentioned frequently by respondents from multiple countries as a tool that facilitates international ILL because it combines discovery, requesting, and some level of tracking. According to the answers received to the question “In general, why does your library borrow from these countries?”, it also influences the regions from

which items are borrowed. Email, as noted above, is the most common method for placing ILL requests where there is no shared resource sharing system. This popularity is likely due to email's ubiquity. One respondent suggested a "new hosted requesting system" as a mechanism to improve this part of the overall ILL process. Perhaps rather than a single system, fuller adoption and vendor implementations of international standards, such as the new ISO 18626 ILL standard, would better serve the international ILL community. This would allow different systems to communicate with each other and allow requests and responses to pass from one system to another. Project Reshare (<https://projectreshare.org>) is developing an open-source ILL platform to demonstrate this type of interoperability and the functionality ISO 18626 includes.

When it comes to improving fulfillment of international requests, a number of challenges to lending abroad exist. Many of these obstacles are not unique to international ILL, but may be exacerbated by the distance involved or lack of local alternatives. As previously mentioned, some formats remain more difficult to borrow than others, and rethinking policies and service models could expand global access to these materials. For example, in order to reduce the risk of loss and damage involved with lending older or rare materials (which were reported as the most difficult items to borrow from abroad), digitization on demand for older materials in the public domain and controlled digital lending for rare materials that are still copyright-protected are potential solutions worth pursuing.⁶ When asked about methods undertaken to improve international ILL, three respondents shared the success that they had in using scanning to overcome lending restrictions for rare books and theses and dissertations. The authors encourage ILL practitioners to engage in conversations with special collections curators and other library stakeholders about possible local solutions to expand global access to uncommon or unique materials within their collections.

Speed is also a concern for respondents when filling both returnable and non-returnable requests, one that is exacerbated by the distance that may be involved with international lending and may prohibit libraries from acquiring materials within the timeframe needed by their users. Where there are no legal impediments, electronic delivery is an effective solution for expediting fulfillment of non-returnables requests: 18 respondents cited electronic delivery as a reason that their international lending volume had increased over the past five years, and it is a factor in determining the countries from which a library chooses to borrow. It is clear from the 61 open responses addressing shipping difficulties that a faster, more reliable, yet still cost-effective shipping method would improve sharing returnables abroad. Seven libraries reported success in improving or expanding international ILL when they switched to using a courier service (e.g., DHL, FedEx, or UPS) for international shipping or reviewed and revised their international shipping procedures. Nineteen respondents also expressed the need for consistent procedures for clearing or bypassing customs, including the intriguing suggestion of developing "an internationally known and accepted symbol, note, or sticker that declares parcels containing library books." The development of such a standard may be an idea that the IFLA Document Delivery & Resource Sharing Section should consider pursuing.

⁶ A consortium of university libraries in the United States formally expressed a preference for digitizing requested rare materials in lieu of a physical loan as a means of expanding access while preserving the originals. Big Ten Academic Alliance. *Principles and Protocols for Interlibrary Loan of Special Collections Materials*, <https://www.btaa.org/library/reciprocal-borrowing/special-collections>, p.2 The concept of controlled digital lending within the context of U.S. copyright law is explored by David R. Hansen and Kyle K. Courtney in their *A White Paper on Controlled Digital Lending of Library Books*, <https://controldigitallending.org/whitepaper>.

Fulfillment could also be improved by education and advocacy related to copyright and e-resource licensing. Survey responses indicate varying interpretations of copyright law within individual countries, with respondents from 18 countries supplying inconsistent responses to the question “Do copyright restrictions prevent your library from supplying non-returnables to international borrowers?” Similarly, numerous respondents expressed uncertainty as to whether copyright law (14%) and licensing (15%) prevented them from supplying non-returnables abroad. Better understanding of both copyright law and licensing terms could help reduce denials stemming from uncertainty; alternately, it may provide a path for advocacy and negotiating with vendors if learning about licenses reveals that they prohibit sharing outside the library’s country. As copyright law varies by country, national libraries and national library associations should be well suited to advance copyright education for their constituents; library consortia, on the other hand, may be better positioned to negotiate favorable licensing terms for their members.

Since only 7% of respondents who lend materials abroad claimed to not charge for this service, an easy method of providing and accepting payment is essential to effective international ILL. One of the most frequently mentioned efforts cited in response to the question “Has your interlibrary loan office undertaken efforts to improve or expand international borrowing or lending in the past five years?” was making changes related to payment (n=17), including accepting or using IFLA vouchers (n=4) and accepting multiple payment methods (n=2). Likewise, payment emerged as the most frequent response to the question, “What would make international interlibrary loan easier for your library?”, with 40% of those who answered this question making related suggestions, including electronic IFLA vouchers (n=18), an easier payment method (n=10), wider use of OCLC IFM (n=9), and uniform procedures (n=7). The desire for electronic IFLA vouchers appeared in the 2015 open responses too, which prompted the committee to add a question to the 2019 instrument asking libraries if they would accept electronic IFLA vouchers in order to gauge the popularity of this idea. Seventy percent of respondents confirmed that they would use electronic IFLA vouchers if they were an option. Most (60%) already use IFLA vouchers, while 10% would start using IFLA vouchers if an electronic version existed (see Table 7). Having an electronic, vendor-neutral payment option while retaining the plastic vouchers would give flexibility to both borrowing and lending libraries and might boost international ILL, especially transoceanic lending. The greatest interest in electronic vouchers came from Central or South America (88%) and Australia and Oceania (82%), followed by North America (74%), Africa (71%), and Europe (68%). Given the wide support for this proposal, the authors recommend that the IFLA Document Delivery & Resource Sharing Section continue exploring the development of electronic IFLA vouchers.

Table 7. Potential Usage of Electronic IFLA Vouchers, 2019

| <i>Respondents</i> | <i>Number</i> | <i>Percentage</i> |
|---|----------------------|--------------------------|
| <i>Libraries that currently use IFLA vouchers and would use electronic ones</i> | 142 | 60% |
| <i>Libraries that currently use IFLA vouchers but would not use electronic ones</i> | 26 | 11% |
| <i>Libraries that do not use IFLA vouchers but would use electronic ones</i> | 25 | 10% |
| <i>Libraries that do not use IFLA vouchers and would not use electronic ones</i> | 45 | 19% |

Conclusion

It is clear from the survey results that international ILL continues to play a small, yet vital role in meeting academic library users’ information needs within an increasingly complex discovery and delivery ecosystem. Discovery of global information resources continues to present challenges,

both old (e.g., the lack of a universal catalog) and new (e.g., the growing number of non-traditional databases and digital repositories). Delivery, on the other hand, appears to be moving away from stand-alone, siloed systems that only support sharing within a particular network towards systems capable of communicating with each other and thus can accept and track requests across multiple networks. The potential to connect diverse interlibrary loan networks from around the world is an exciting one, and ILL practitioners must actively participate in shaping this evolving landscape to ensure that future systems support more robust international collaboration and continued improvement of resource sharing services.

Many of the changes in 2019 from what the prior RUSA STARS surveys reported are promising. In particular, the increasing usage of electronic methods for requesting, payment, and delivery and wider acceptance of IFLA vouchers as payment for international transactions over the past decade should make international ILL easier for both borrowing and lending libraries. ILL practitioners and the organizations to which they belong and participate must continue to build upon these successes by seeking ways to reduce or eliminate the remaining barriers to sharing resources across borders. Licensing terms governing e-books and other electronic resources, especially those that restrict lending abroad, must be renegotiated to provide both greater access to information as well as the freedom to send copies electronically. Likewise, creative solutions for lending older and rare materials should be developed in collaboration with those responsible for their access and preservation. Potential projects for the IFLA Document Delivery & Resource Sharing Section to explore in partnership with its members include electronic IFLA vouchers to ease payment and a widely accepted “library books—no commercial value” sticker to expedite customs clearance for returnable materials. Solutions to these shared challenges can be pursued at various levels, including the local, consortial, national, and international. In short, we must continue to partner and to advocate at all levels for the means necessary to better perform our jobs and thus better serve our patrons.

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Appendix: 2019 International ILL Survey Instrument

Start of Block: STARS International ILL Survey 2019: Introduction

Intended to research issues related to international interlibrary loan, this survey is sponsored by the American Library Association (ALA) Reference & User Services Association's (RUSA) Sharing & Transforming Access to Resources Section (STARS). All responses will be kept confidential and will only be seen by members of the ALA RUSA STARS International Interlibrary Loan Committee. Data gathered from the survey will be summarized, without reference to individual responses, and shared globally with interlibrary loan practitioners.

Instructions for participants:

- Allocate 20-30 minutes to complete up to 40 questions (not all are required or applicable).
- Submit only one response per interlibrary loan office within each library.
- Several questions ask for statistics about your interlibrary loan activity. You may preview the survey in order to gather this data in advance.
- Direct questions about the survey to the committee chair Hilary Thompson at hthomps1@umd.edu.

Thank you for your help with this important project.

End of Block: STARS International ILL Survey 2019: Introduction

15

Start of Block: About Your Library

Your library is located on which continent?

- North America
 - Central or South America
 - Europe
 - Africa
 - Asia
 - Australia and Oceania
-

Your library is located in which country?

▼ Afghanistan ... Zimbabwe

What is your library type? (select one)

- University
- Public (open/free)
- School (Primary & Secondary)
- State or Provincial
- National

- Medical/Health
- Law
- Special
- Other (please specify) _____

End of Block: About Your Library

Start of Block: Definitions

In the following questions the term **returnable** refers to materials that must be returned to the lending library at the end of the loan period, e.g., a book.

The term **non-returnable** refers to materials that the requesting institution or local user can keep, e.g., a scan of an article.

End of Block: Definitions

Start of Block: About Your Borrowing Activity

Borrowing

This section focuses on your borrowing activity, where your library requests materials from other libraries for your local patrons.

What is your library's total (domestic and international) 12-month borrowing volume?

| | Fewer than 1,000 | 1,000 to 5,000 | 5,001 to 10,000 | 10,001 to 20,000 | 20,001 to 40,000 | More than 40,000 |
|-----------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| Returnables | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Non-returnables | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

What does your library charge local users for interlibrary loan requests?

| | No fees or charges | Standard fee or flat rate | All costs incurred | Shipping costs only | Only costs above our regular limit | Only for some users |
|---------------|--------------------------|---------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|------------------------------------|--------------------------|
| Domestic | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| International | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

Does your library borrow internationally?

- Yes
- No (please explain why not) _____

What type of materials does your library borrow internationally?

- Returnables
- Non-returnables
- Both returnables and non-returnables

What is your library's 12-month international borrowing volume?

| | None | Fewer than 100 | 100 to 250 | 251 to 500 | 501 to 750 | 751 to 1,000 | 1,001 to 2,500 | More than 2,500 |
|-----------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| Returnables | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Non-returnables | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

Does your library borrow more or fewer international interlibrary loan requests now than five years ago? What has the change been?

| | +30% or more | +20% | +10% | No change | -10% | -20% | -30% or more |
|------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| Select one | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

Why do you think the number of international interlibrary loan requests has changed? (Select all that apply.)

- No change
- Change in local policies
- Change in shipping costs
- Change in availability of international lenders
- Change in users discovering international materials
- Change in local collection budgets
- Alternatives to resource sharing (Sci-Hub, #icanhazPDF, etc.)
- Other (please specify) _____

From which countries does your library borrow most heavily? (Select up to 5 responses.)

- ▼ Afghanistan ... Zimbabwe
- ▼ Afghanistan ... Zimbabwe
- ▼ Afghanistan ... Zimbabwe

- ▼ Afghanistan ... Zimbabwe
- ▼ Afghanistan ... Zimbabwe

In general, why does your library borrow from these countries?

Which, if any, types of materials are especially hard to obtain from international collections?
(Select all that apply.)

- CD/Audio media
- Books
- Copies of rare or older material
- Theses and dissertations
- Microforms
- Serials (bound volumes/issues)
- Video/film media
- Music scores
- Electronic books
- Other (please specify) _____

End of Block: About Your Borrowing Activity

Start of Block: About Your Lending Activity

Lending

This section focuses on your lending activity, where your library supplies materials (returnables and non-returnables) to other libraries.

What is your library's total (domestic and international) 12-month lending volume?

| | Fewer than 1,000 | 1,000 to 5,000 | 5,001 to 10,000 | 10,001 to 20,000 | 20,001 to 40,000 | More than 40,000 |
|-----------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| Returnables | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Non-returnables | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

Does your library lend internationally?

- Yes
- No (please explain why not) _____

What type of requests will your library supply internationally?

- Returnables only
- Non-returnables only
- Both returnables and non-returnables

What is your library's 12-month international lending volume?

| | None | Fewer than 100 | 100 to 250 | 251 to 500 | 501 to 750 | 751 to 1,000 | 1,001 to 2,500 | More than 2,500 |
|-----------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| Returnables | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Non-returnables | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

Does your library receive/fill more or fewer international interlibrary loan requests now than five years ago? What has the change been?

| | +30% or more | +20% | +10% | No change | -10% | -20% | -30% or more |
|---------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| Receive | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Fill | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

Why do you think the number of international interlibrary loan requests has changed? (Select all that apply.)

- No change
- Change in local policies
- Change in shipping costs
- Change in availability of holdings information
- Change in copyright terms
- Change in licensing terms
- Other (please specify) _____

Identify up to 5 countries to which your library most frequently lends (returnables and non-returnables).

| |
|----------------------------|
| ▼ Afghanistan ... Zimbabwe |
| ▼ Afghanistan ... Zimbabwe |
| ▼ Afghanistan ... Zimbabwe |
| ▼ Afghanistan ... Zimbabwe |
| ▼ Afghanistan ... Zimbabwe |

Identify up to 5 countries to which your library will not lend returnables.

| |
|----------------------------|
| ▼ Afghanistan ... Zimbabwe |
| ▼ Afghanistan ... Zimbabwe |
| ▼ Afghanistan ... Zimbabwe |

- ▼ Afghanistan ... Zimbabwe
- ▼ Afghanistan ... Zimbabwe

In general, why does your library not lend to these countries?

Identify up to 5 countries to which your library will not lend non-returnables.

- ▼ Afghanistan ... Zimbabwe
- ▼ Afghanistan ... Zimbabwe
- ▼ Afghanistan ... Zimbabwe
- ▼ Afghanistan ... Zimbabwe
- ▼ Afghanistan ... Zimbabwe

In general, why does your library not lend to these countries?

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Does your library deliver non-returnables electronically to international libraries?

- Yes (please list methods used) _____
- No

Do copyright restrictions prevent your library from supplying non-returnables to international borrowers?

- Yes
- No
- I don't know

Do licensing restrictions prevent your library from supplying non-returnables to international borrowers?

- Yes

- No
 - I don't know
-

What is your library's primary method for shipping returnables internationally?

- Courier (DHL, FedEx, UPS, etc.)
 - Expedited Postal Service (air mail, priority, express, first class, etc.)
 - Regular Postal Service (ground, surface, second class, etc.)
 - Other (please specify) _____
-

Does your library charge borrowing libraries additional fees for your international lending services?

- No, not higher than domestic fees
 - Yes, higher for both returnables and non-returnables
 - Yes, higher for returnables only
 - Yes, higher for non-returnables only
-

Why, if at all, does your library charge additional fees for international lending services?

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Which of the following methods does your library accept as payment for lending materials to international libraries? (Select all that apply.)

- IFLA vouchers
 - Bank transfers
 - Credit cards
 - OCLC IFM
 - Checks issued in local currency
 - Checks issued in foreign currency
 - Cash
 - International reply coupons
 - Deposit accounts
 - Other (please specify) _____
-

Would your library use electronic IFLA vouchers to facilitate international interlibrary loan?

- Yes
 - No
-

How does your library receive international lending requests? (Select all that apply.)

- E-mail
 - A locally hosted web form
 - Resource sharing system or network (OCLC, Alma, etc.)
 - ISO Messaging
 - Postal service (mail)
 - Fax
 - Phone
 - Other (please specify) _____
-

Are your library's international interlibrary lending policies posted on your library's web site?

- Yes
 - No
 - I don't know
-

As a lender, does your library routinely try to refer international borrowing requests to other lenders when you cannot supply?

- Yes (please explain how) _____
- No

End of Block: About Your Lending Activity

Start of Block: Additional Comments

Why do you participate in international interlibrary loan?

What would make international interlibrary loan easier for your library?

Has your interlibrary loan office undertaken efforts to improve or expand international borrowing/lending in the past five years?

- Yes (please explain what you did and whether it was successful)

- No

Is there anything else about your library's international interlibrary loan activity that you would like to tell us?

End of Block: Additional Comments