

# **A Scheme to Improve the International Inter-library Loan Service in the National Library of China**

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## **Abstract**

The international Inter-library Loan (ILL) service is an important one for the document delivery in the National Library of China (NLC). As the diverse change of user needs driven by the rapid development in the Information Technology, it is necessary to investigate how to prompt the international ILL service in the NLC.

Firstly, a brief introduction to the international ILL service in the NLC is given. The NLC is a centre for the international ILL in the whole China. It meets all the information needs of domestic and oversea users by combining traditional reference skills and advanced information and network technology.

Secondly, issues that concern the request communications, copyright, and payment methods are analyzed. The focuses of the issues are how to increase the requested communications to meet ever growingly diverse user needs, how to deal with the copyright well, and how to improve the payment methods.

Next, considering the international ILL practice in the NLC, a scheme to promote and improve the international ILL is proposed as a response to the aforementioned problems. There are reasonable ways to solve the problems: build up request communications, update the used interlibrary loan and document delivery system, create the Chinese interlibrary loan alliance, as well as make more reasonable copyright policy and payment policy.

Finally, a challenge to the international ILL is analyzed. The NLC needs make innovation to meet the challenge to promote the new development in the international ILL service.

## **1. Introduction**

With increased access to faraway databases and resources, more and more patrons are requesting materials that are found only in foreign libraries today [1]. The international Inter-library Loan (ILL) service has become the most common resource sharing activity within libraries around the world [2, 3]. The National Library of China (NLC) is the largest library in Asia. It holds the largest and among the richest worldwide collections of Chinese literature and historical documents. The international ILL has more than fifty years of history in the NLC. As a centre for the international ILL in the whole country, the NLC plays an important role on behalf China. The international ILL service is an important one for the document delivery in the NLC. It meets all the information needs of domestic and oversea users by combining traditional reference skills and advanced information and network technology. Up to now, the NLC has also formed partnerships with 557 libraries in 117 countries and regions for exchanges of publications.

The Document Delivery Centre (DDC) in the NLC is based on the huge collections and well-trained library staff to provide the international loan service to patrons. The international ILL is divided into two parts: one is incoming request from oversea users and the other is outgoing request from domestic users. Libraries around the world can request for loan while all users can

request for document delivery. Meanwhile, the DDC can offer inquiry service or forward inquiries to related department in the NLC. Loans will be sent via airmail and documents can be delivered via airmail, Ariel or email. Moreover, the domestic users can ask only for the documents which are not available from the resources of the libraries in the whole country. It is necessary to check it before the request to the international ILL in the union catalogue is entered. An order is then accepted on a special form in the printed or electronic form.

The Inter-library Loan and Documents Delivery System (ILDDS) has been put into use since 2009. This system is complied with the ISO 10160 [4] and 10161 [5], which are the Interlibrary Loan Application Service Definition and Application Protocol, respectively. The international lending and borrowing modules are integrated into this system so as to provide the international lending service<sup>1</sup>. The networked ILDDS has promoted the international ILL service in the NLC. Every international interlending application can usually be completed within 1-2 days. Meanwhile, the scope of international interlending with the NLC is expanded in the world. So far, the NLC has established the inter-library cooperation with the British Library, the OCLC, the National Diet Library, SUBITO, and Russian State Library, and so on. It has been one of members for the above mentioned libraries. We have more freedom to choose the documents providers, resulting in the decreased cost to the international ILL request. The data collected from the ILDDS can see the trend of the international ILL in the NLC, as shown in the Fig. 1. It is found that the incoming requests have been steadily increasing while there have been a great increase in the outgoing requests since the ILDDS was used in 2009. Generally speaking, the fulfilling rate of international ILL has kept a high level, about 85%, in recently years. It should be noted that outgoing requests has increased greatly since the NLC become a member of the OCLC in 2010 while the outgoing fulfilling requests decreased greatly in 2012 because the NLC began to re-fit up the main building and closed the lending service for some literatures at that time.

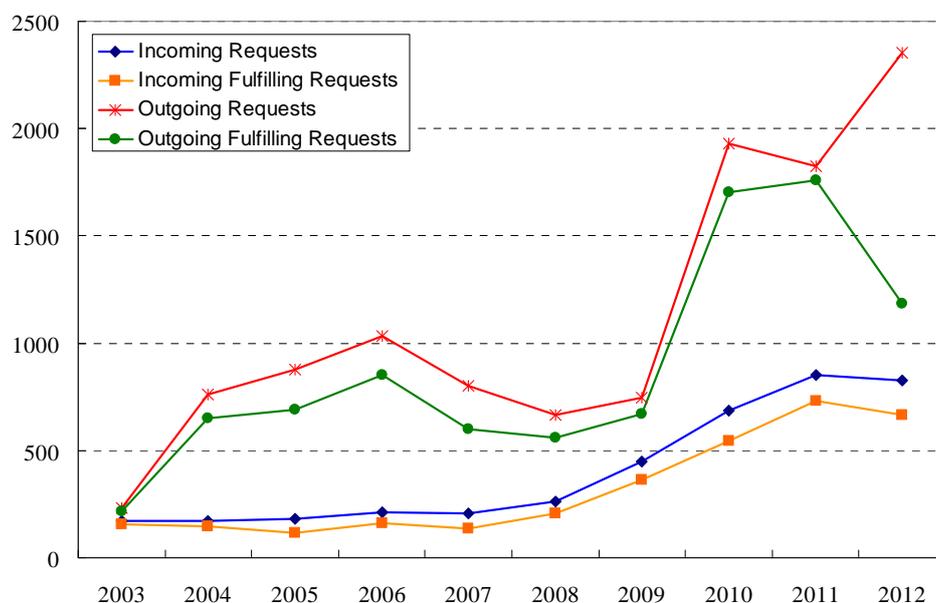


Fig. 1 The number of international ILL service in the NLC

<sup>1</sup> Note that the terms international lending and international ILL have been used interchangeably throughout this paper.

## **2. Issues for the international ILL in the NLC**

The international ILL has remained a persistent topic in the NLC. With the rapid development of the Information Technology, for example, the Internet of Things, Mobile Internet, Big Data, Cloud Computing, etc., libraries and library users can easily identify resources from all cross the world. This ease of discovery brings forth new issues to the international interlending. In order to promote and improve the internal ILL service in the NLC, issues that concern the request communications, copyright, and payment methods are analyzed.

### *1) Request communications*

Traditional methods like fax, phone, and mail are still used in the international interlending service, but a lower number of respondents choose these methods because of long delay for borrowers. Oversea patrons have employed OCLC, direct email or ILDDS to send international interlending requests since the NLC has joined the OCLC WorldCat Resource Sharing (WCRS), a global interlibrary loan platform. Meanwhile, the ILDDS is an important request communication avenue for some international users, e.g., non OCLC users or non-English users. Note that the ILDDS has not the inter-working and the interoperability with the inter-library loan systems for the international famous libraries, although the system is designed specifically to comply with the ISO 10160 and 10161. To make the international ILL more efficient, it will be a stringent issue how to promote and increase the request communications with more libraries across the world.

### *2) Copyright*

Copyright is a form of protection provided by the laws of a country to the authors of “original works of authorship” including all intellectual works [1]. This protection is available to both published and unpublished works. The NLC has given more and more emphasis on copyrights in recent years. The interlibrary loan regulation of the NLC presents that the copyright agreement must be signed before a request can be submitted by any institute or individual. The main contents of the copyright agreement are the responsibility and obligation between a requestor and a responder. In other words, the agreement is a declaration for the copyright protection. Compared with the copyright policy or copyright declaration used in the British Library or the OCLC, the contents of the agreement need to be more perfect. Therefore, the NLC should define more clear type and scope of the protected copyright so as to tackle the copyright very well.

### *3) About the Payment Methods*

In the NLC, there are some payment methods available to international interlibrary borrowing users: invoice, credit cards, IFLA vouchers, Postage, etc. Note that the oversea users have more payment methods than the domestic users. The oversea users can pay online via the PayPal, which is an easier and secure payment platform. In addition, they can use the Fee Management (IFM) feature of OCLC WorldShare Interlibrary Loan to pay for materials from the NLC. However, the domestic users have fewer choices to pay resource sharing charges. They can use cashes, invoice, credit cards, Postage, etc. It is an important problem to keep a flexible and simple mechanism to pay for the charge in the international ILL.

## **3. Proposed Scheme**

It is an important task to develop the international ILL service to the best so as to meet the diverse and personal user needs. Consider the international interlending practice in the NLC, a scheme to improve the international ILL service is proposed as a response to the issues in Section 2.

### *1) Build up Request Communications*

The NLC should seek to build up request communications. The key to the issue exists in both

the interlibrary loan system and cooperative collections. In the current information society, an automatic and comprehensive interlibrary loan and document delivery system can increase the request channels of international interlending and improve the fulfillment rate. The cooperative collections based on the alliance for Chinese libraries help to improve the requests for Chinese information resources from all over the world.

- *Update the Interlibrary Loan and Documents Delivery System*

It is obvious that a total ILL system can provide all of the functionality that the international interlending departments and library users expect to have in the current networked space. The NLC should update the current international interlending system. First of all, online components that allow almost all interactions between staffs and users should be added to the ILDDS, since it currently provides the essential functions to manage the international ILL. Considering the rapid development of the Mobile Internet, the online components must be able to support the interactions between staffs and mobile users. Additionally, the ILDDS should be seamlessly blended in the NLC's website where it will supply all of the international interlending features users wish to have, for example, automatic acquisition of electronic documents, online payment. It should be noted that the ILDDS should increase the interface to interconnect with systems used by other libraries in China and famous libraries in the world. The interconnectivity and interoperability with those libraries can promote the avenues of request communications. The new requests from all over the world can be deposited directly into the database for processing by staffs, also, unmediated forwarding of new requests to other libraries can be provided if desired. Furthermore, new technology on the information security and image processing should be employed to develop an improved document delivery module to support a controllable file output.

- *Create Chinese Interlibrary Loan Alliance*

Considering the practice in the interlending and document delivery in China, it is very necessary to create an alliance on the interlibrary loan for Chinese documents. The online catalog for Chinese collections and holdings of libraries in the whole country is also created based on the alliance. The alliance will build up the request communications and improve breadth and depth of institutional support. It is certain that the international interlending activity will benefit from library-to-library cooperative relations in this alliance.

## 2) *Copyright Policy*

The NLC has been committed to respect the needs of authors and copyright owners to obtain a fair economic return on their intellectual property. It supports the effective enforcement of copyright and plays a crucial role in controlling as well as facilitating access to the increasing number of domestic and oversea information resources. The key to make a perfect copyright policy is that it can not only give strong and effective protection for the interests of rights holders but also provide a reasonable access to the information resources. Foremost, the NLC should foster library users to enhance the awareness of copyright protection. It is very necessary to make a series of systematic regulation on the copyright, including the agreement, declaration, and copyright form, and payments, so that the types and scopes of the protected copyright can be defined more clearly. In fact, the NLC has been learning from the advanced practice in famous libraries in the world, for example, the British Library, the OCLC, etc. At the same time, it should be noted that the IFLA guidelines relating to copyright and international resource sharing [6, 7] must be abided by the NLC. In addition, the advanced information technology should be employed in the international ILL system to provide a controllable and secure file output so that

the copyright of electronic information resources can be protected very well.

### 3) *Payment Policy*

The NLC has made an endeavor to keep a reasonable and simple mechanism for charging and payment. Some payment methods are available to the requested libraries, as mentioned in Section 2. Note that the list of international interlending charge is given on the NLC website. Since quite a few potential interlending partners do not use OCLC and OCLC IFM, the NLC has been promoting alternatives to pay interlending charges. The requested libraries may choose payment methods according with their willingness if the methods can be accepted by the NLC. Meanwhile, the NLC has been focus on creating more reciprocal interlending agreements with oversea famous or professional libraries where the libraries need only pay for their part of the shipping. In addition, it is a trend to pay interlending fees via the used interlibrary interlending system. This requires the system must be able to provide an interface with online charging system.

### **4. Challenges and Innovation**

In the current information age, libraries of all types have been greatly expanded by the rapid development of computer, communication, networking, and other information technologies. They are undergoing drastic changes. Users can access to the library resources at anytime and anywhere via the use of diverse devices, such as computers, smart phones, and other handheld mobile devices. As a result, the requests from international interlending users have been ever growingly diverse and personal. They cover a wide spectrum from the library collections to the all types of resource obtained in the network cyber space [2, 3, 8, 9]. They include but not limited with books, serials, digital resource, grey literature and other resource that can be searched via the Internet. The library, as a conduit for information, should play a critical role in meeting a wide spectrum of information seekers [10]. The international interlending needs make innovation to meet the challenge. A comprehensive platform integrated into the mobile access and search, is very necessary. The platform will combine micro blog, instant messaging program, with website to request/response to patrons. The architecture of document delivery under the mobile Internet is proposed in [11].

Furthermore, the new role of libraries in the information explosion era is to be a learning and knowledge center. As a learning organization, the most important mission of a library is to expand the access of knowledge for their users [10]. The international interlending requests are changing from the traditional document delivery to the knowledge delivery. The NLC must face this new challenges to satisfy the wide and diverse requests. It is very necessary to make a vitally important innovation in the NLC. This may be not only a change in the provided the interlending service itself, but also a redesign in the information resource, regulations, and so on. All this will be a long-term but vitally meaningful task for every librarian in the NLC.

### **5. Conclusion**

This paper gives a brief introduction to the international interlending service in the NLC, and some issues to hinder the development of the international interlibrary loan service are analyzed. Considering the international ILL practice in the NLC, a scheme to improve the international interlending service is proposed. Finally, a challenge to the international ILL, driven by the development of the information technology, is analyzed. The NLC needs to make innovation to meet the challenge. This is a long-term but vitally meaningful task for all librarians.

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