12 for 2020

1. Generation Z: The first digital natives

2. Interlibrary loan is part of a bigger story.

3. Yes, you can cut costs.

4. Resource sharing data highlights value.

5. E-resource sharing rights are up for negotiation.

6. Integrated open access search enriches resource sharing.

7. Emerging trends will change old policies.

8. Awesome, advanced technologies are on the way.

9. Navigating complex copyright issues is critical.

10. Space, time, and money can be saved in library groups.

11. Staff skills are a critical success factor.

12. Every interlibrary loan department is unique!

Interlibrary Loan Librarian? Here are 12 Insights for 2020

Mike Richins, Director of Product Management at RapidILL

When I was in college, I basically stumbled into interlibrary loan. At the time, I was researching artists and went hunting for some referenced articles that piqued my interest. When the journal or a specific issue I wanted were unavailable at my local library, I wondered: How am I going to get them? It was then that I learned about interlibrary loan services, which I didn't know existed at the time. Well, needless to say, I started placing requests like mad.

For me, it was like magic - items located at distant libraries were being scanned and sent straight to me.

Since then, a lot has changed, but interlibrary loan is just as magical as when I was in college. Over the last several years, I have had the pleasure of working with many resource sharing professionals and they are still excited about getting requested material to a library on the other side of the world or just across town. This informational cross-pollination contributes to increased knowledge in academia, libraries, the research community, and eventually wider audiences. We may be enriching someone's study of a topic that interests them, providing information needed in a professional context, or playing a critical role in groundbreaking research that can change the world.

Even as the channels, tools and workflows of resource sharing change, that aspect of our amazing profession never will.

Looking ahead to 2020, here are 12 insights that can help focus your efforts as an interlibrary loan librarian and improve the resource sharing environment.

1

Generation Z: What do they expect?

Gen Zers (loosely defined as people born from 1995 to 2010) are the first digital natives - growing up with the internet, spending upwards of 70% of their time online, using mobile phones of ever-increasing sophistication, active on social media, and accessing on-demand knowledge and entertainment. As a result, they look at online and offline experiences as a single continuum and value access over ownership. Moreover, they have been trained to expect rapid, personalized responses and fast delivery times (think Amazon Prime, Uber, tailored YouTube feeds, etc.). In short, they expect to get what they want, when they want it, and via the most convenient channel. So, when you integrate local document delivery and interlibrary loan processes on the back end, the user experience is seamless and fast – exactly as it should be.

2

Interlibrary loan is part of a bigger story

Resource sharing can no longer be a siloed activity. It should be an integral part of the entire library ecosystem, connected to both discovery and acquisitions. There should be close coordination between the collection management and resource sharing staffs, with information on requests, availability, purchases, and actual asset usage shared regularly. With common software, for example, they can establish automated routing rules for an efficient interdepartmental workflow and access needed data instantly.

3

Yes, you can cut costs

Budgets are low, staff time is limited. That's true. But effective resource sharing can be accomplished and maintained even with limited resources. One way is to adopt technological solutions that automate a lot of the routine, data entry-type activities in ILL workflows. Another is participating in consortia and other academic networks that cut down on, or eliminate, transaction charges and invoicing costs. Data on your holdings and loaning policies needs to be kept automatically up to date and remotely available, so that borrowing libraries know what titles you can lend, what formats you use for digital and electronic data, and what time or licensing restrictions they need to take into account. With this kind of clarity, you're contributing to resource sharing in the most efficient manner, and you won't need to spend time processing dead-end requests.

4

Resource sharing data highlights value

Robust lending is a mark of good collections. Smart and cost-effective borrowing, on the other hand, indicates how well a library is meeting patron and lecturer demands for articles. With hard data on how many patron requests are met, from what disciplines and which institutions, as well as how quickly borrowed materials are delivered to the end user, your library can clearly demonstrate its cost-effectiveness and how it contributes to building the university's reputation. Even before adopting the latest ILL solution, it is important to "market" it to the university or library management, showing how success can be clearly measured and presenting use cases that indicate projected cost savings and value added.

5

E-resource sharing rights are up for negotiation

While the shift in libraries to an electronic-first acquisition model is clearly underway, the rights to provide these materials via resource sharing are still very limited and not always well negotiated – if at all. Libraries should start demanding the right to share ebooks and articles from electronic journals with other libraries. Some countries even prohibit direct cross-border loans, while others (in Europe) allow hard copies of a resource to be shared with a foreign library, but not digital versions. Such restrictions interfere with meaningful resource sharing between libraries, making it difficult to leverage the benefits of an interconnected international academic community. The solution may come from the ground up, with more self-confident negotiating on the part of academic libraries.

6

Integrated open access search enriches resource sharing

Patrons are not always aware of what resources are available via open access. Your library's resource sharing system should include, integrated in the same interface and workflows, the capability to place open access material in the hands of your patrons. InstantILL, for example, is a browser add-on that operates on the back end, automating queries to open access databases and downloading requested items to the library for delivery to the patron.

7

Emerging trends will change old policies

Many policies and approaches related to resource sharing have been around for a long time - long enough that they need to be revisited and revised. For example, many libraries still do not lend or request electronic resources, so there has been a push of late to make sure library staff are advocating for e-resource sharing, maintaining licenses, and the like. Other examples, more dependent on mutual agreements and engagement among libraries, include extending loan periods to 16 weeks (the length of an academic semester), setting turnaround SLAs, coordinating licensing for e-journals and other resources, and "last copy" arrangements.

8

Awesome, advanced technologies are on the way

The most cutting-edge, interactive technologies, including virtual reality, augmented reality, and artificial intelligence, are making their way into the resource sharing space. If they are not fully available in 2020, rest assured they will be sooner than you think. A recent example is a new inter-library loan program established at Texas Tech University and University of Houston for 3D printing of objects, including a planned online discoverable database. Another revolutionary idea currently being explored is to leverage AI and machine learning for predictive interlibrary loan, which means big data analysis of trends over time as to which resources are requested most, by whom, and when. With these metrics, a library could predict when a particular resource will be needed by a local patron and initiate an acquisition even before the patron knows they need it. With these kinds of developments just around the corner, we would do well to rethink current limitations of the software we use.

9

Navigating complex copyright issues is critical

Staying on top of copyright issues within the context of modern resource sharing is a growing challenge. There are rapidly changing ideas of intellectual property driven by technological developments, differences in global, national and local copyright guidelines, multiple resource formats and delivery channels, and more. Yet, managing copyright is critical to effective resource sharing, including usage tracking and borrower decision-making. Approaches to enhancing peace of mind regarding copyright include incorporating more automation, obtaining resources from services that include copyright management, and closer collaboration between libraries.

RAPID ILL   ExLibris
A ProQuest Company

10
Space, time, and money can be saved in library groups

Libraries have seen a push of late to use physical space in more dynamic ways (teaching, class work, audiovisual labs, maker spaces, etc.), at the expense of area for bookshelves. To meet these demands, a lot of print material is being moved out of libraries to closed stacks, storage or shared depositories. Resource sharing increases these options, especially (though not exclusively) among consortia members. Groups of libraries can agree on shared collections, joint off-site storage facilities, last-copy-owned ILL arrangements, and the like. To make that possible, partner libraries have to be able to "play nicely together," which means taking advantage of available technology to make resource sharing as seamless and effective as possible. This includes leveraging capabilities such as routing based on geographical distance, tracking, load leveling, etc., as well as maintaining a dialogue with partners to ensure everyone is on the same page.

11
Staff skills are a critical success factor

With all of the focus on automation and streamlining, we must never forget that great library staff members are critical to providing great ILL services. They need to be constantly developing professionally, sharing ideas with colleagues, and engaged in the wider community. Veteran ILL professionals need to be prepared to learn from their younger colleagues, as well, as those just coming into the field often bring a fresh perspective on old problems and can shake things up a bit. And you need to promote ILL in your academic community. Some people may not even know it's possible to get resources from other libraries; however, once they learn about it, they'll want to quickly get requests filled as an integral part of their research processes.

12
And finally: Every interlibrary loan department is unique!

Each library has its own particular staffing issues, hierarchy, student employees, hardware, software, policies, level of engagement with colleagues at other institutions, time constraints, and philosophical approach. Therefore, your ILL solution should be flexible enough to meet your specific needs, as well as create powerful and productive workflows.

We can all learn from our colleagues and the variety of experiences we have had in our respective institutions. In fact, being a part of the resource sharing community means we are always learning and sharing, in order to bring value to the world's libraries and the patrons we serve.

About the Writer

Mike Richins has nearly 20 years of experience in resource sharing. He began his career in the Interlibrary Loan department at Colorado State University Libraries, initially managing borrowing requests and eventually becoming the lending supervisor. He joined the RapidILL team in 2010 to manage support and implementation of new Rapid members. Mike was appointed the team manager in 2016 and is now the Director of Product Management for RapidILL at Ex Libris. He lives in Fort Collins, CO with his wife Amanda, and two children, Emerson and Vivian. Mike is also an artist and exhibits his oil paintings in solo and group shows. Contact mike at Mike.Richins@exlibrisgroup.com
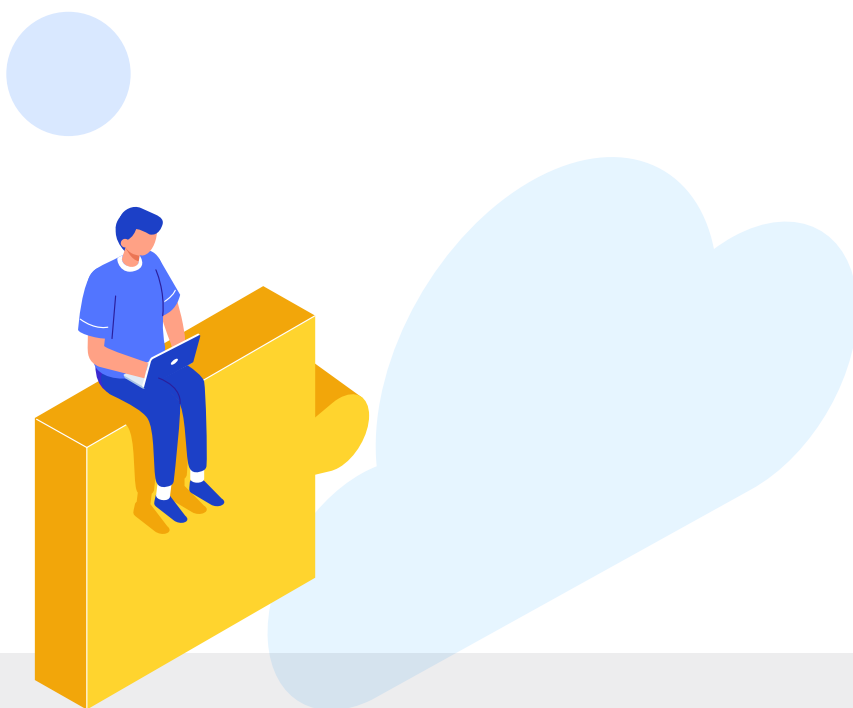
About Ex Libris

Ex Libris, a ProQuest company, is a leading global provider of cloud-based solutions for higher education. Offering SaaS solutions for the management and discovery of the full spectrum of library and scholarly materials, as well as mobile campus solutions driving student engagement and success, Ex Libris serves thousands of customers in 90 countries. For more information about Ex Libris, see our website, and join us on Twitter, Facebook, YouTube, and LinkedIn.

About RapidILL

RapidILL is a dynamic community-oriented resource sharing system designed for quick and efficient interlibrary loan transactions. It has an outstanding request fulfillment rate of 95% and an average delivery time of less than 12 hours for digital assets.

The innovative tools, workflows and technology of RapidILL, now part of the Ex Libris family of solutions, make those transactions seamless, transparent and cost-effective for all participating libraries.

For more info please visit https://www.exlibrisgroup.com/products/rapidill-interlibrary-loan-resource-sharing/