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ILL Protocol Standard: Interlibrary Loan in an Open Networked Environment

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The Application of the ILL Protocol to Existing ILL Systems

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Introduction

To facilitate a more detailed understanding of the applicability of the ISO Interlibrary Loan Protocol to the wide variety of interlibrary loan (ILL) systems, schemes, and services available internationally, this paper develops two ILL models and further defines several variations within each. These models describe the variety of methods in which interlibrary loan requesting is accomplished and includes examples of countries in which they are used.   The models are based on a discussion document initially developed in 1993 by Joe Zeeman for a joint meeting of the Z39.50 Implementors Group (ZIG) and the North American Interlibrary Loan and Document Delivery Project's Developers/Implementors Group (DIG). The models also reflect comments from a mid-1997 informal survey of members of the IFLA Standing Committee on Document Delivery and Interlending.

Each model summarizes the unique features and the variety of communication options by which ILL requests and messages are sent. Both models, including their variations, can be supported by the ISO ILL Protocol, and a brief description of the applicability of the Protocol is included. Examples of countries in which the models are found complete each section; countries may be listed multiple times because they support multiple models.

This document serves as a background document for the informal discussion at the program session co-sponsored by the UDT Core Programme's Section on Information Technology and the Collection and Services Division's Section on Document Delivery and Interlending. Discussion at the session will further detail the specific applicability of the ISO ILL Protocol, the roles of participating libraries (requester, responder, or intermediary), the types of transactions (simple, chained, or partitioned), and the variety of messages supported (shipped, renewal requested, renewal granted, etc.).

ILL Models: Two Major Alternatives

Two major schemes reflect the way in which ILL transactions are handled Q requests are either handled by the library on behalf of the patron, or directly by the patron. The following summaries are limited to the requesting and tracking portions of the ILL transaction; the summaries do not specifically address the physical delivery phase of the transaction. Each model is subdivided into additional models, all summarized below.

Model One: Library Mediated

The most traditional, and perhaps still the most common, model of interlibrary loan is library-mediated. This model implies a central role for libraries, and their ILL departments. The library mediated model requires a patron to submit a request to his or her local library. The library uses a variety of methods to order and obtain the item. The library informs the patron that the item has arrived and the patron picks up the item at the library. This model is explicitly supported by the current IFLA International Lending Code.

Four variations of the library mediated ILL requesting exist:

        A) Point-to-Point or Decentralized
        B) Hierarchical or Type-of-Library
        C) Centralized
        D) Mixed

1A. Library mediated: Point-to-Point or Decentralized

SUMMARY: This models supports the process by which the borrowing library identifies one or more potential lending libraries and transmits ILL requests to them, usually sequentially. If the lending library cannot fill the request, the lending library returns the request to the borrowing library and the borrowing library sends the request to the next potential lender. Depending on policies or systems used the forwarding of the request may be automatic. The process is repeated until the request is filled or canceled.

      COMMUNICATION METHODS:

           mail, fax, electronic mail, online ILL messaging systems,
           lenders' proprietary requesting systems

      ILL PROTOCOL:

           Library roles: Requester, responder
           Types of transactions: simple

Messages: all required and optional

USED IN:

Canada, Japan, Netherlands, Norway, Southern Africa,
Sweden, United States

1B. Library mediated: Hierarchical or Type-of-Library

SUMMARY: This model supports a tiered approach to requesting. The first example describes a scenario in which the borrowing library is one branch of a public library system. The borrowing library submits a request to the central public library. If the central branch cannot fill the request, ILL staff forward it to the regional library which may in turn forward it to the state/province library. If still unfilled the request is forwarded by the provincial library to a library in another region. Finally, the request is forwarded to the national library before it is forwarded to a library in another country.

This model also supports same-type-of-library requesting. As a second example, a local hospital library sends a request to a nearby university medical library, which in turn forwards the request to a regional medical library. The national medical library receives the request only after all other medical libraries are tried. If the national medical library is unable to fill the request, the borrowing library may then send the request to a public, special, academic, or another non-medical library.

In both examples, local or national policies determine whether the initial borrowing library or the library to which the request was sent forwards the request to the next potential lender.

COMMUNICATION METHODS:

mail, fax, electronic mail, online ILL messaging systems,
lenders' proprietary requesting systems

ILL PROTOCOL:

Library roles: Requester, responder, intermediary
Types of transactions: simple, chained, partitioned
Messages: all required and optional

USED IN:

Canada, Germany, Japan, Norway, Southern Africa,
United States

1C. Library mediated: Centralized

SUMMARY: In this model, the borrowing library sends all ILL requests to a single library, perhaps a national library. The borrowing library can submit a request to another library only after the library of first resort reports that the request cannot be filled.

COMMUNICATION METHODS:

mail, fax, electronic mail, online ILL messaging systems,

lenders' proprietary requesting systems

ILL PROTOCOL:

Library roles: Requester, responder

Types of transactions: simple

Messages: all required and optional

USED IN:

Germany, Southern Africa, United Kingdom

1D. Library mediated: Mixed Model

SUMMARY: Many countries support and even encourage elements of each of the above models, resulting in a mixed model. Libraries may use the hierarchical model to send requests to libraries within a state/province or region, but then use the point-to-point model to send requests out of the local geographic region or to a different type of library.

COMMUNICATION METHODS:

mail, fax, electronic mail, online ILL messaging systems,

lenders' proprietary requesting systems

ILL PROTOCOL:

Library roles: Requester, responder, intermediary

Types of transactions: simple, chained, partitioned

Messages: all required and optional

USED IN:

Canada, Germany, Japan, Norway, Southern Africa, Sweden,
United States

Model Two: Patron-Initiated/Reciprocal Borrowing

The second major model for interlibrary loan requesting assumes that the patron has a large role in the initiation of the request. The patron finds potential lenders or suppliers by searching specific library catalogs, union library catalogs, or catalogs of document suppliers. The patron uses a variety of methods to order the item. The material is delivered directly to the patron, to the patron's local library. Or, the patron may check out the material directly from the lending (owning) library. This general model emerged in the mid 1990s as a cost-effective alternative to library-mediated interlibrary loan. This model is also referred to reciprocal borrowing, direct patron borrowing, patron sharing, or unmediated document delivery.

It is assumed that the communication method for each of the following models is electronic mail, OPAC-generated messages, bibliographic utility's ILL messaging systems, or document supplier's proprietary requesting system. In some cases the patron may carry the ILL request form to the owning library, but generally, mail or fax are not used to transmit these types of requests.

Four variations of the patron-initiated model exist:
    A) Requesting directly from owning library
    B) Requesting via patron's local library
    C) Shared patron information sharing
    D) Requesting from commercial document suppliers

2A. Requesting directly from Owning Library

SUMMARY: The patron searches a variety of print or online sources to discover one or more libraries that own the needed item. The patron initiates the request using a variety of online or proprietary messaging systems and sends the request directly to the owning library. The library checks out the item and ships the item to the patron.

ILL PROTOCOL:
    Library roles: Requester, responder
    Types of transactions: simple
    Messages: a subset

2B. Requesting via Patron's Local Library

SUMMARY: The patron searches a variety of print or online sources to identify the needed item. The patron initiates an ILL request which is sent to the patron's local library, not directly to the potential supplier. If the request conforms to locally-defined, electronically stored criteria, the request is forwarded automatically to the potential supplier. If not, the request is reviewed by ILL staff who then forward the request to the potential supplier. The supplier ships the item to the patron.

> ILL PROTOCOL:
> > Library roles: Requester, responder
> > Types of transactions: simple
> > Messages: a subset

2C. Shared Patron Information

Implemented most often in systems that share a common patron database, this model enables patrons to charge out a book, like a circulation transaction, at the owning library. The owning library's system validates the status of the patron and proceeds with the "circulation" transaction. When the patron returns the material, it is discharged either at the owning library or at the patron's local library.

> ILL PROTOCOL:
> > Library roles: not-supported
> > Types of transactions: simple
> > Messages: a subset

2D. Requesting from Commercial Document Suppliers

This model is a variation on 2A, requesting directly from the owning library, except that the patron sends the ILL request directly to a commercial document supplier.

> ILL PROTOCOL:
> > Library roles: Requester, responder
> > Types of transactions: simple
> > Messages: a subset

Conclusion

These models provide librarians with a framework against which to map their existing ILL activities. Discussion at the program session will identify how the ISO ILL Protocol can support existing ILL schemes in a variety of countries.

NOTES:

(1) "Information and Documentation - Open Systems Interconnection - Inter-Library Loan Application Service Definition" (ISO 10160) & "Information and Documentation - Open Systems Interconnection - Inter-Library Loan Protocol Specification" (ISO 10161). 1993. Unofficial text for version 2, 1997 is at:http://www.nlc-bnc.ca/ifla/documents/libraries/resource-sharing/illprotocol/10160ed2.doc or .pdf.

(2) Zeeman, J.C. "Interlending in the Emerging Networked Environment: Implications for the ILL Protocol Standard." UDT Series on Data Communication Technologies and Standards for Libraries, Report #8, 1995.