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Resource Sharing for the Future: Building-blocks to Success A report of the 10th Interlending and Document Supply Conference, National Library Singapore, 29-31 October 2007 — [Source link](#) 

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Resource Sharing for the Future: Building Blocks to Success: a report of the 10th Interlending and Document Supply Conference, National Library Singapore, 29-31 October 2007.

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Abstract

Purpose: To report on the 10th ILDS conference held in Singapore

Approach – Descriptive

Findings – That the conference was very successful and that contrary to rumours interlending and document supply is alive and well throughout the world

Value – A report on the only international conference held on the subject of interlending and document supply

Keywords Subito, BLDSC, INIST, Rethinking resource sharing, NILDE

Paper type - review

It was both a privilege and a pleasure to attend this conference on behalf of the Forum for Interlending (FIL), and my thanks to FIL for affording me the opportunity. Engaged in ILDS in the higher education sector for a number of years, I have recently felt an increasing divergence between readers' expectations and delivery of service, so the opportunity to attend this conference was a gift.

Attended by approximately 300 delegates from 34 countries, I thought this conference impressive in both content and organization. While the programme was a full one, the spread was such to sustain interest across the three days. All papers were very impressively delivered in English, and a paper copy of the proceedings was made available to all delegates on registration. This undoubtedly assisted those for whom English was not their first language, but which I too valued, as it alleviated the need for copious note taking. The programme comprised a series of keynote papers, complemented by papers and case studies on the strands of Resource Sharing and Tools and Enablers, some of which were parallel sessions.

The first keynote paper was delivered by Mike McGrath, the editor of this journal. His was an insightful review of the rapid change that has occurred in document supply in recent years. Key agents of change were identified and their impact assessed in the context of changing demand for document supply, which although declining in volume in many countries, has stabilized in some

(USA), and is increasing in others (Denmark). In considering the complexities of the current environment, the inter relationship of the “Big Deal” model, the digitization of journal back files, e-books and mass digitization of books, open access publishing, copyright and digital rights with document supply were all examined. Challenges were also presented, and I particularly liked the definition of document supply services. Taking a generally accepted definition as “the process of obtaining material not readily accessible locally”, McGrath suggested that “local” now includes the reader who “could be at home in Singapore, accessing material held on a server in Holland via a link at their university, which itself can be anywhere in the world”. Similarly what is “readily accessible” is also debatable. Not everything is electronic, and material held physically by a library may not be “readily accessible” to readers, who rely more and more on desktop access. This paper certainly provided a catalyst on which to rethink current ILDS practice, and I agreed with the concluding argument of this paper that the ILDS practitioner should broaden the scope of the service and shift its focus from “fetching and carrying” to “searching and finding”.

As one whose ILDS unit depends largely on BLDSC services, the second keynote paper by Mat Pflieger, the British Library’s Head of Sales and Marketing, was of particular interest to me. In this he confirmed the gap analysis outlined in the first keynote paper, acknowledging too Mike McGrath’s contention in predicting future demand for document supply the British Library had underestimated the attraction of immediate access to material via Big Deals and other large e databases and easy browsing. Although BLDSC no longer publishes annual statistics, the decline in its document delivery services is well documented. His paper described a decrease of 11-15% per annum, resulting in a drop from 4 million transactions at year end March 2000, to 1.8 million transactions at year end March 2007. Although the decline has slowed, it has not yet bottomed out. Many ILDS practitioners, myself included, have speculated on BLDSC’s direction once the decline reaches a critical level and this paper provided some answers. In an attempt to maintain a leading role in information provision, BLDSC has adopted a three point strategy focusing on access and financial sustainability. Its aim is therefore to develop and enhance existing platforms with limited investment; to extend the service, operating multiple parts of the supply chain, and to develop partnerships, so that the British Library’s collections become more accessible to remote users.

I have always found the legalities surrounding document supply convoluted and opaque, but Dr. Harald Mueller’s paper on the legal problems of document supply by libraries was not only illuminating, but also exceptional, as his simple and direct style resulted in a clearly delivered exposition of the legal complications of document supply within and across national boundaries. The changed relationship between document supply services and publishers in the electronic environment was noted, and it was suggested that because there is no loss of quality in electronic reproduction, libraries’ document supply services can be viewed by publishers as competitors in the market, a dichotomy which has legal implications. Document supply is usually enshrined in a country’s copyright law, but has been brought before the courts in only two – Canada and Germany. The Canadian decree was that “fair dealing for the purpose of research or private study does not infringe copyright”, and unlike the European directive, research in this context includes commercial operations. Attempts by the Stichting STM (German Publishers Association and several international publishers) to prohibit Subito (the document supply service for research libraries in Germany, Austria and Switzerland) were unsuccessful. The

complexities of document supply in the electronic age are exacerbated by the fact that most licences are usually governed by the law of the country most favourable to the publisher rather than the law of the country in which the library is situated. Variation in copyright law also adds complexity as some acts fail to accommodate electronic document supply, primarily because legislators are unsure of its implications. Efforts to harmonise European copyright law have fallen short, and in the supply of material from one jurisdiction to another, the relationship of the European directive to national law may need clarification in the courts. . Dr. Muller's exhortation that ILDS personnel should be proactive in ensuring that the legal situation in other countries is known to one's own government, that it is also made available publicly and so used to lobby to uphold freedom of information, was something I had not previously considered.

The role of the library as an agent to connect users to resources was the theme of a paper from China. Citing the assertion that one of the biggest frustrations for researchers was not in the identification of relevant material, but in not having a full set of options to obtain a copy of the full text, the authors argued that ILDS services should be positioned to connect the users seamlessly to the resources at the point of need, and in the user's preferred manner. ILDS should therefore be embedded within the value chain of enquiry and resource discovery service, whether mediated or unmediated. As in previous papers, the extension of ILDS, beyond the boundaries of current practice is advocated.

The final keynote highlighted the need to re-engineer ILDS services. Concentrating on the U.S. based Rethinking Resource Sharing (RRS) Initiative, it was stressed that this is not just a reassessment of the current mediated interlibrary loan, but included all the ways libraries can work together to serve users. The initiative seeks to explore the user-centric possibilities of Web 2 technologies, thus taking into account the expectations of today's information consumer. I found the description of these expectations useful, and I think worthy of replication here. It was suggested that services must be:

- convenient – users expect to obtain an item as easily as they found it.
- self sufficient - the service must be available when needed.
- a seamless process – systems must work together, including libraries and publishers.

It is therefore advocated that services:

- focus on how to satisfy user needs rather than streamlining workflow for staff.
- are put on websites where users go rather than making users come to the library.
- adapt models from outside of libraries.
- that services from outside of libraries are offered if appropriate.

Interestingly and pertinent to those of us who utilize a single main supplier, it was also advocated that services should be vendor neutral, as effective services will require support from

many providers. Finally the necessity for an evaluation mechanism was emphasized. By resource sharing, and harnessing the conjunction of collections and expertise, it was argued that libraries can offer more than any single library or any commercial service, and the point that no library is too small to share or too large to gain was made. The need to minimize restrictions as far as possible is therefore vital.

The five keynote papers as outlined above were complemented by a wide range of papers and posters which focused on resource sharing in particular geographical domains, and aided by particular products and services and initiatives. I found it interesting to note that as is the case with BLDSC, partnership is the principal strategy proposed for the survival of document supply services internationally. The French service, INIST, has noted that a decrease in the volume of requests, has been matched by an increase in the number of serial publications requested, a point which corroborated work I had recently undertaken in my own ILDS unit. While INIST aims to acquire as many titles as possible, its holdings are supplemented through the development of resource-sharing and networking to obtain other documents. Likewise CISTI, the Canadian document supply service, in collaboration with an international vendor partner, is developing eBook loans, thus reducing costs, and enhancing the benefit to users. CISTI has also formal partnerships with Asian partner libraries and intermediaries; ISTIC (China), KISTI (Korea) Sunmedia (Japan) and STPE (Taiwan), and a case study of seamless collection sharing was one of the conference presentations. The need to shift to user centric services, borrowing from other consumer media service models such as iTunes, Netflix and Amazon, was argued by OCLC personnel.

That libraries must also consider alternative services to supplement or even replace traditional services was posited. I agreed with the argument that in some instances purchase rather than loan should be considered, and I was particularly impressed with the case study from the University of Virginia Library. This had a flexibility facilitated largely through the use of credit card payments. A case study from the University of California, Santa Barbara, demonstrated how technology was leveraged to improve ILL services, primarily through the use of SFX Citation Linker input forms.

The use of technology to improve document supply services was common to many papers. Coming as I do from the experience of the centralized model of document supply, I found it interesting that many of the technological initiatives were primarily aimed at improving ILDS processes, thus encouraging reciprocal exchange and networking among libraries. This was demonstrated in the implementation of VDX software to enable collaborative and innovative services between library consortia in Ontario, Canada (OCUL). The use of RAPID-ILL to route requests was exemplified through a case history from the University of Massachusetts, Amherst. Following a benchmarking study, Australian libraries have automated services, compliant with the ISO ILL protocol, thus improving efficiencies and maximizing performance. Italian libraries have also developed a platform called NILDE which facilitates ILDS processes, thereby also encouraging reciprocal exchange and networking among libraries. Collaboration by Danish libraries was represented by a paper on automated handling of end user requests in the Danish National Union Catalogue. Case studies of document supply in Indonesia, Shanghai, and India were also presented, and poster sessions covered activity in Micronesia, Nepal, Thailand, Tanzania, the Philippines, and Cambodia.

Systems suppliers were well represented in the Sponsors and Exhibitors' area including: RAPID ILL, CIVICA, RELAIS International, CISTI, OCLC PICA, PROQUEST, INNOVATIVE, ARGENTRA were all present. Visits to other libraries, were also included in a very full programme.

The social programme was both enjoyable and beneficial, as it allowed more informal communication, both with the speakers and with fellow delegates. Kicking off on the Saturday evening, a pre-conference dinner in Doc Cheng's in Raffles (after a visit to the museum there), allowed those who had already arrived in Singapore to meet socially. After registration on the opening evening, a very pleasant reception was hosted by the Lee Kong Chian Reference Library, the National Library of Singapore. Panoramic views of the city from its "Pod" on the sixteenth floor were breathtaking. Singapore's unique amphibious mode of transport, the "Singapore Duck" converted from an old Vietnam war landing craft, operated a combined city and harbour tour, which provided some hilarious moments. The conference dinner was held in the Malay Heritage Centre, and was preceded by traditional Malay entertainment. The National Library of Singapore was indeed generous in its hospitality.

Attendance at this conference was a worthwhile and very valuable experience. The variety and quality of the papers, augmented by poster sessions from across the globe, nevertheless, had a common theme; the necessity for those engaged in ILDS to broaden their horizons and to deliver services to readers as and when they need them and in a manner convenient to them. Because of the centralized model of ILDS services in the British Isles, the necessity to develop platforms from which services can be co-ordinated and delivered, has not been an issue. However, paradoxically it is this unparalleled service and resulting reliance on a single supplier (BLDSC), which has contributed to the fact that services and products have not developed independently. Without investment in its infrastructure ILDS services will fail to meet the requirements and expectations of their clientele. Advancement in resource discovery, should be matched by similar advances in resource delivery. This not only means leveraging technology to enhance products and services, but also engendering a commitment to resource sharing of which ILDS is a constituent, but not the whole. ILDS personnel need to be aware of all other collaborative processes. It is important that barriers to co-operation and resource sharing are kept to a minimum and that flexibility is central in any developments. This conference really brought it home that resource sharing can benefit all, as no library can satisfy all its readers' requirements, and there were presentations from both large and small organizations and libraries. Some services were born of necessity, but others are more altruistic in origin. It is an interesting phenomenon that ILDS volume has increased in the United States, where libraries seem to be more adequately funded than elsewhere. However, in this environment costs are kept to a minimum, and it is the exception rather than the rule for one state funded body to charge another for ILDS services.

The international ILDS perspective is invaluable in an increasingly globalised environment; so put 20th-22nd October 2009 into your diaries now! That is when the 11th Interlending and Document Supply Conference will take place, hosted by the German National Libraries (ZFB) in Hannover You can't afford to miss it!

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