

LIBRAS Report

2011 Interlending and Document Supply Conference: Resource Sharing in a Digital Age

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“Hi, what is your symbol? Are you a lender or a borrower?” Such was a standard greeting at the ILDS conference I attended this fall thanks to LIBRAS continuing education grant. As a new Access Services librarian I really valued a chance to spend three days taking in the culture of the ILL professionals from around the world.

The conference had a single track as so I attended [all the sessions on the program](#). The theme of the conference was Resource Sharing in a Digital Age. Instead of reviewing each session individually, I thought I would summarize what I took away from the conference using the title to organize my thoughts. Thus I will share about Resource, Digital, and finally what was truly the highlight Sharing.

Resource

The conference opened with a sketch of the history of interlibrary cooperation. I was surprised to learn that although some form of document sharing between libraries has been going on since antiquity, ILL as we now know it is less than 100 years old. Although there are still challenges to be surmounted it became clear at the conference that the existence of a global network of libraries willing to share their collections is a valuable and powerful resource. It was especially interesting to learn about foreign library networks. Librarians from Australia, China, Scandinavia, Germany, Canada, and Zimbabwe presented on the status of ILL in their countries and opportunities for increased international cooperation. Practically, it was helpful to learn of different avenues to request resources from China or Germany and some of the opportunities but also challenges in obtaining material from libraries in those countries.

Digital

As one would expect at a conference in 2011 there was a lot of discussion of digital information and how it is and will continue to change ILL. There was a hopeful presentation from the Univ. of Michigan on the Hathi Trust and the possibility of leveraging that collection for interlibrary loan. There were also discussions on ways to use digital technology to improve the delivery time of resources. CARLI presented on in state experiments in Patron Driven Acquisitions and there were discussions in a handful of sessions on ways to integrate ILL and acquisitions to more effectively and efficiently serve our patrons.

But much of the digital discussion focused on copyright issues and their ongoing impact on document sharing. There was a call for librarians and authors to come together to promote their mutual interests. One of my favorite sessions was by Whinston Tabb on library related discussions at the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO). He discussed the need to promote a robust and growing public domain that respects national laws but encourages creativity and scholarship. He also discussed

the need to move away from a one size fits all approach to intellectual property and start treating scholarly articles and Hollywood movies differently. Finally he reminded us that we need to advocate for users rights not against owner's rights and echoed the earlier call to find common ground with those who create content. This was but one of many sessions that dealt with copyright. Some talked about copyright in other parts of the world which was new and helpful information. There was also a call to use the rights we do have to share licensed information and to continue to be mindful of ILL when negotiating licenses. Finally, there was the dystopian suggestion that someday we may find that our credit card is our library card.

Sharing

The most challenging and encouraging theme to emerge from the conference was the need for even more sharing. The highlight for many of the attendees was James Neal's keynote presentation on Radical Collaboration and the Future of Academic Libraries. Mr. Neal reported on the integration of library staff and collections at Columbia and Cornell University. He reminded us that it is about education not libraries and challenged us to put all of our individual core responsibilities on the table and see what we could share with other institutions. Other presenters also talked about building mentorship into their state consortiums and doing a better job of connecting the talented staff distributed at different institutions to come together and build solutions that all can benefit from. Some of this collaboration needs to happen at a national (or international?) level and there was talk of last copy warehouses, improved print repositories to back up online databases, and a national digital library. But I also think that exploring deeper collaboration in regional networks such as LIBRAS holds potential benefits. For example, James Neal suggested that our biggest current challenge is web archives and online data management. He noted that we can't share what we don't collect and preserve. Perhaps this is an area where several of us can work together.

In conclusion, I came away from this conference with the exhilaration of a person who has glimpsed a world they were only vaguely aware previously. It gave me insight into the macro, international issues facing library cooperation and some ideas about tackling issues we face on the ground. I'm very thankful for LIBRAS helping me attend this conference. – Matt Ostercamp, ICZ, Lender.