

Current status and tasks of the national interlibrary loan system *Chaekbada*

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Abstract:

This paper discusses a national interlibrary loan system called Chaekbada which is targeted towards public libraries in Korea. Chaekbada is a nation-wide library material co-utilization service provided to users searching for materials that are not available in their local public libraries. Users in different areas can request and use materials owned by libraries in other regions through the service. This paper outlines the background for establishing Chaekbada, characteristics of the system and the current status of the service, and proposes ways to further promote the Chaekbada service.

Keywords: interlibrary loan, interlibrary cooperation, national interlibrary loan system

I. Introduction

Until the early 2000s, public libraries in Korea were lagging significantly in terms of the average number of collections owned or the number of collections per capita compared to libraries in the United States or Japan. Moreover, with the annual increase in the number of publications, the rise of book prices and the advent of various information media, Korean libraries were facing many difficulties such as increases in costs for managing and preserving materials and cuts in budgets for purchasing materials. In this situation, no single library could possibly own and provide all the materials requested by users with a limited budget and staff, and thus cooperation among libraries became vital.

In general, interlibrary loan refers to an exchange of materials between libraries in the form of lending or providing photocopies based on requests from users of libraries that are under a common agreement. Interlibrary loan is a typical means of interlibrary cooperation through which physical limitations and the lack of staff that libraries face can be solved, and users' satisfaction of obtaining information can be enhanced.

As Korea's representative library, the National Library of Korea (NLK) has developed a national interlibrary loan system called *Chaekbada* for the purpose of sharing and utilizing materials owned by libraries throughout the country. *Chaekbada* is a nation-wide library material co-utilization service provided to users searching for materials that are not available in their local public library. Users in different areas can request and use materials owned by libraries in other regions through the service. The establishment of such nation-wide loan service cooperation network is made possible through the participation of the NLK, public libraries across the country and several university libraries and professional libraries.

II. Progress status

In terms of the operation of most public libraries in Korea, users visit a public library in their residential area and check-out and return materials. A system for cooperation among libraries was not well established in the past, and thus users could only use libraries located in the city or province in which they resided. If users wanted to use any materials held in libraries in other regions, they were forced to make visits in person. The meager number of collections in individual libraries was also a reason why users could not find materials they needed in their local libraries. Therefore, establishing an interlibrary loan system became necessary in order to provide a solution for the inadequate amount of collections owned by individual libraries and to enhance user convenience.

In February 2006, the Ministry of Culture and Tourism of the Republic of Korea proposed the "Policy task for developing and improving library services" as part of a report to the President. Providing an interlibrary loan service was approved as one of the specific tasks under the proposal, and thus a national interlibrary loan system was established to provide "library services that the Korean people could directly feel to be useful."

In May 2007, the NLK began to develop an interlibrary loan system and also underwent research to provide interlibrary loan standards. Rules and regulations that could be agreed upon among libraries were necessary to successfully establish and operate an interlibrary loan system in which many public libraries of different scales, operational methods and regional characteristics could participate. Furthermore, a consultative body and operational measures were also required for continuously discussing and cooperating in terms of the overall management of the system.

A team of researchers, mostly comprising library and information science professors, was formed to design a developmental model of an interlibrary loan system as well as provide related rules and regulations. An advisory committee was also established to pursue case analyses and research on other organizations running interlibrary loan systems and to take into consideration various thoughts and opinions. Furthermore, a task force was formed in the NLK to develop the system, and a public hearing was held to converge the thoughts and opinions of library experts.

In November 2007, the NLK held a public naming contest to choose a name for the interlibrary loan system that is easy to understand and express. Among the more than 1,000 names received, *Chaekbada* was chosen. *Chaekbada* (literally, "book sea") has a symbolic meaning of forming a sea of books by gathering all the books in Korea as well as another meaning of receiving books from far away across the "sea of books" at a library nearby.

Starting in November 2007, when *Chaekbada* was ready to go, the system was test-operated primarily in 25 public libraries in the capital city of Seoul, and then from January 2008, in eight public libraries in metropolitan cities. After five months of test-operation, the national interlibrary loan service was officially launched in April 2008 in 295 public libraries across Korea.



<Figure 1> *Chaekbada* website (<http://www.nl.go.kr/nill>)

The NLK underwent a system upgrade project from May to December 2008 in order to expand the system to enable the participation of non-public libraries such as university libraries; as a result, in May 2009 about 100 university libraries were added to the list of participating libraries. As of December 2015, 879 libraries throughout Korea are participating. Also, the NLK is operating a *Chaekbada* Center to monitor the service overall and provide support for the operations of participating libraries.

III. Characteristics of *Chaekbada*

Chaekbada was developed to induce resource sharing in Korea by supporting interlibrary loan among domestic libraries. It was also designed to connect with external organizations' interlibrary loan systems.

The major characteristics of *Chaekbada* are as follows.

○ Use of the Korean Library Information System Network (KOLIS-NET)

The NLK established the Korean Library Information System Network (KOLIS-NET) through which libraries can comprehensively search materials owned by public libraries in Korea. KOLIS-NET is not only a union catalog database of materials held in the NLK and public libraries throughout the country, but also a national information distribution network for sharing information and promoting cooperation among libraries. KOLIS-NET was

developed in 2000 and was launched in June, 2001 with the objective of: improving the quality of information services through the establishment of a comprehensive information distribution network for national materials; and at the same time, establishing a standardized system for managing materials and developing catalog information in Korean public libraries. Since *Chaekbada* is operated on the basis of the KOLIS-NET database, patrons only have to search this database to check which library holds their desired material and request interlibrary loan.



<Figure 2> KOLIS-NET website

○ **Connection to the Korea Education and Research Information Service (KERIS) interlibrary loan system**

The Korea Education and Research Information Service (KERIS) under the Ministry of Education is operating an interlibrary loan system targeted towards university and professional libraries in Korea for the co-use of academic information. In order to provide a foundation for patrons to use university library materials not available in public libraries, the NLK signed an MOU with KERIS, thereby expanding the scope of *Chaekbada* to include university libraries since May 2009. Since *Chaekbada* and the interlibrary loan service of university libraries are linked, patrons can search and request materials from both public and university libraries through the *Chaekbada* website.

○ **Convenient interface and web-based system**

All functions of *Chaekbada* are web-based to enable the easy use thereof wherever an internet connection is available. Also, the service is streamlined in accordance with the workflow of staff in charge at participating libraries requesting and providing materials, and only menus that can be processed per stage are shown first on the screen so as to enhance processing accessibility and minimize mistakes and/or confusions.

○ **Support for communication functions such as SMS and email**

Chaekbada enhances patron convenience by providing SMS notifications to patrons for each step of the service from member registration to processing status. Patrons can easily check the status of their requests via the *Chaekbada* website and also receive SMS notifications on member registration approval, material request results, payment requests, and material arrival. Furthermore, notices from the *Chaekbada* Center to staff in charge at each participating library, Q&A exchanges between libraries and the Center, electronic messaging between libraries, emails from the Center to libraries and other forms of communication are possible within the system without having to use a separate communication tool.

○ **Support for interlibrary loan operations according to region or group**

Chaekbada is designed to manage groups and group policies to facilitate participation in interlibrary loan by region or group. For example, individual policies can be applied to a specific region or group in case a certain region or library establishes a separate service fee policy or uses a separate shipping means.

IV. Current status of *Chaekbada*

1. Introduction to the *Chaekbada* service

○ **Participating agents and their role**

The participating parties of *Chaekbada* are patrons, borrowing libraries, lending libraries and the *Chaekbada* Center.

In order to use the service, a patron must be registered as an external loan member at a participating library. A patron must also register as a *Chaekbada* member and receive approval for said *Chaekbada* registration from his/her library at which s/he is registered as an external loan member. A member must also pay a fee to receive requested materials.

A public library must submit an application to the Interlibrary Loan Council in order to participate in *Chaekbada*, and it is given the rights and obligations as a borrowing library as well as a lending library. A borrowing library is a library whose external loan members are registered as *Chaekbada* members. The library manages its members, approves requests, makes requested materials available to its members, and sends back returned materials to lending libraries. A lending library is a library lending materials to a borrowing library and has the role of determining whether to lend requested materials and sending materials to a borrowing library.

The NLK operates the *Chaekbada* Center and monitors all stages of the service. Also, it provides help and guidance to patrons and supports the operations of participating libraries.

○ **Borrowing and returning materials**

A patron can borrow and return requested materials at his/her library. Each patron can request up to three books, but for alternative materials for the disabled, specifically, part publications such as braille books and audio books, each patron is allowed to request up to six books. Materials available for interlibrary loan are those held by a participating library that can be borrowed from an external organization, and these include printed materials including books and alternative materials for the disabled (braille books, audio books, tactile books, videos with sign language subtitles, etc.).

A patron can search and request materials on the *Chaekbada* website and can choose whether to request materials from a public library or a university library. The loan period is 14 days from the day the materials arrive at a borrowing library, and the period can be extended once for seven days for public library materials only.

○ **Service fee**

Materials lent through *Chaekbada* are transferred between libraries via a shipping service, and the shipping cost is borne by patrons on the basis of the user-pays principle. The round trip shipping fee is 4,500 won (about 4 USD) for public library materials and 4,900 won (about 4.30 USD) for those of university libraries. Payment can be made by credit card, online bank transfer or smartphone. In order to minimize shipping charges, the NLK signed an MOU with Korea’s national postal service to provide flat rates regardless of region that are more affordable than those of commercial shipping companies.

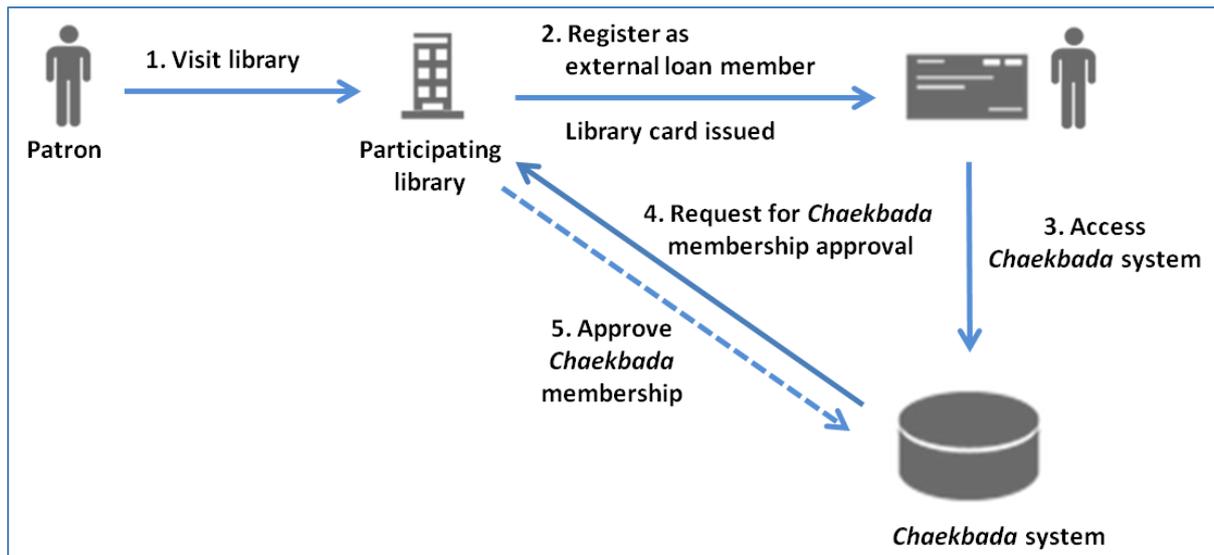
Chaekbada enables establishing a separate shipping fee policy for a certain group or region to send materials for free or at a discounted price. For example, disabled persons can use the service for free, all costs being fully covered by the government (specifically, by the National Library for the Disabled), and six local agencies and public libraries provide support for a portion of the costs to their members.

Supporting organization	Supported group or region	Shipping fee
National Library for the Disabled	Disabled persons	Free
Seoul Metropolitan City	Registered members of public libraries in Seoul	3,000 won (about 2.60 USD) support for round-trip fee
Gyeonggi Province	Registered members of public libraries in Gyeonggi Province	
Gwangju Metropolitan City	Registered members of public libraries in Gwangju	
Mokpo Public Library	Registered members of Mokpo Public Library	
Yeosu Municipal Library	Registered members of Yeosu Municipal Library	
Jeongeub Public Library	Registered members of Jeongeub Public Library	

<Graph 1> *Chaekbada* shipping fee policy per group or region

2. *Chaekbada* service procedure

In order to use the service, a patron must be registered as an external loan member at a participating library. As illustrated in Figure 3 below, a patron visits a nearby participating public library and registers as an external loan member, then registers as a *Chaekbada* member on the *Chaekbada* website and requests approval for said *Chaekbada* registration from his/her library. The staff in charge at the library determines whether the patron is indeed a member of the library and whether the patron is qualified to use interlibrary loan, then approves the registration request. After the approval is processed, the patron is given immediate access to the *Chaekbada* service.



<Figure 3> *Chaekbada* registration process

The overall procedure of the service is shown in Figure 4 below.

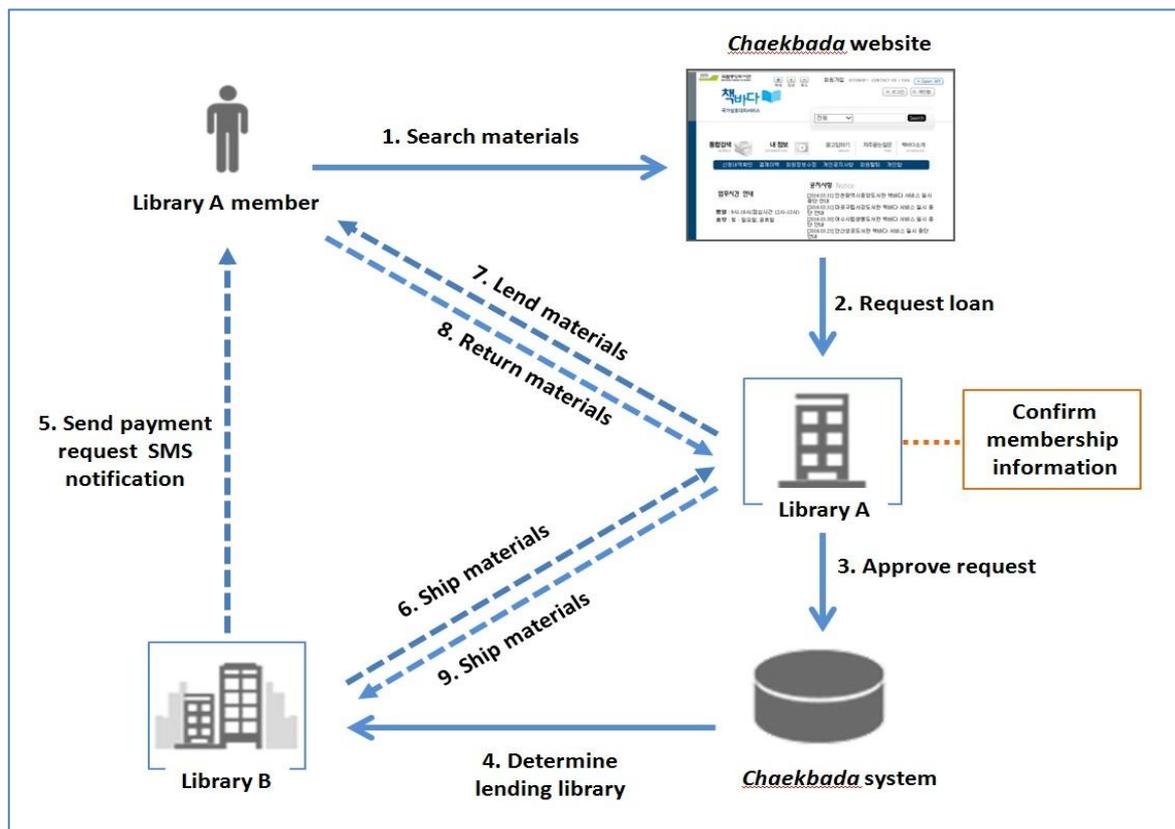
Assuming library A is a borrowing library and library B is a lending library, the service is processed as follows.

An external loan member of A searches materials on the *Chaekbada* website (<http://www.nl.go.kr/nill>). When the member requests desired materials, A determines whether the patron is indeed a member of the library and whether the patron is qualified to use interlibrary loan, then approves the request.

The request is transferred to B owning the materials, and B determines whether to lend them. The request is primarily transferred to a library within the same region (city and district) as A, and then sent to libraries in neighboring regions, from closest to farthest. Generally, a lending library is automatically selected by the system based on its proximity to the borrowing library, but a patron may also designate a specific library for convenience and to save on the service fee.

When B approves the loan request, an SMS notification is sent to the patron requesting payment of the service fee. When the patron pays the fee, B sends the materials to A. When the materials arrive at A, an SMS notification is sent to the patron, and the patron borrows the

materials from A. When the patron returns the materials to A, A sends back the materials to B, and the service is completed.



<Figure 4> Chaekbada procedure

3. Statistics on Chaekbada participation and use

As of December 2015, 879 libraries are participating in Chaekbada, and 715 of them are public libraries, amounting to 77% of all public libraries in Korea (930 as of 2014). 24% of all university libraries in Korea (430 as of 2014) are participating via KERIS's interlibrary loan service.

Type of library	NLK	Public library	University library	Professional library	School library	Small library
No. of participating libraries	3	715	103	53	3	2

<Graph 2> Chaekbada participating libraries

Since the launch of Chaekbada in 2008, the service is being increasingly used each year. Such increase is attributable to a rise in the number of participating libraries per year. The service is especially in high demand in regional public libraries that have poorer and less resources such as facilities, collections and staff compared to university or professional libraries.

Year	No. of participating libraries	No. of requests	No. of approved requests
2008	344	3,592	1,934
2009	483	5,070	2,673
2010	529	5,216	2,952
2011	582	5,767	3,239
2012	614	6,678	3,668
2013	672	6,466	3,690
2014	828	11,307	6,705
2015	879	15,352	8,947

<Graph 3> Use of *Chaekbada* service by year

V. Tasks for developing *Chaekbada*

More than 800 libraries across Korea that have different operational scales and sizes and regional characteristics are participating in *Chaekbada*. As a result, some problems arise from the fact that the quality of the *Chaekbada* service differs according to each library's different situation, including collection size and the number of staff.

Furthermore, borrowing and lending libraries are concentrated in the metropolitan area including Seoul and Gyonggi Province, and lending libraries are mostly those located in the Seoul area holding larger collections. Therefore, it is necessary to boost the use of *Chaekbada* in regions other than the above.

Another problem is that public libraries which lack staff members compared to university or professional libraries are facing difficulties in managing and providing interlibrary loans. Furthermore, staff members are frequently replaced or transferred to other departments, and such staff reshuffling may have a negative effect on maintaining the quality of *Chaekbada*.

Participating libraries must actively cooperate in order to increase the usage rate of the service. Staff members in charge of the service must show more will and effort to promote *Chaekbada* to their patrons through various methods and provide fast and accurate service.

To this end, the NLK is providing support through the *Chaekbada* Center which has a team of staff devoted to giving assistance by offering guidance and consultation to staff in charge at participating libraries, distributing posters and leaflets for promoting the service and making bags exclusively for the *Chaekbada* shipping service.

Also, incentives are given to select public libraries for their active participation, and a separate training program for staff in charge at participating libraries is provided four times each year, with two sessions per year being held in regional areas for the convenience of staff at regional libraries. Furthermore, the lending process is being simplified to enhance patron convenience, and the system is being improved so that library staff can process requests faster.

The NLK will continue to strengthen its cooperative relationship with participating libraries and provide support in order to improve the *Chaekbada* service both quantitatively and qualitatively.

References

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