

Going international: A case study of a Polish academic library's interlibrary loan network

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Abstract:

Interlibrary loan services are a core function of the modern library. No library, or even local network of libraries, can hope to collect the vast amount of material that has been and continues to be published. This paper examines the interlibrary loan network of the Main Library of the Pedagogical University of Cracow (MLPU). It will focus on how cooperation with other Polish libraries manifests itself, as well as the means by which the library establishes international partnerships.

The paper will also assess the effectiveness of resource sharing initiatives at MLPU, as well as the performance of its' ILL services through the analysis of the results of surveys and by applying a Speed of Delivery indicator.

Keywords: interlibrary loan, resource sharing, academic libraries

Introduction

Each year in the USA new publications appear on the subject of library resource sharing and document delivery and new practices and technologies are frequently implemented and applied. This is not the case here in Poland, where interlibrary loans (ILL) have a comparatively low status and many sizeable libraries do not even possess a dedicated ILL department¹.

¹The Main Library of the Pedagogical University (MLPU) is a small academic library and does not have a dedicated ILL department. Managing ILL transactions at MLPU is an additional duty of a single librarian working in the Circulation Department.

A survey conducted at the end of 2014 amongst MLPU's 43 Partner libraries in Poland showed the majority of them did not have an appointed dedicated ILL manager (29), 9 had a single member of staff whose duties were given over entirely to ILL, and 5 had departments where there was more than one ILL specialist: (3 institutions engaged two people, and 3 people were employed in the remaining two). Unpublished data from the research for *The image of MLPU amongst its partners*. Research by Marzena Błach 2014.

A similar survey was conducted in 2016: 37 out of 50 respondents represented libraries without a dedicated ILL department (of the 13 that did have one, 5 institutions employed one person, 5 had two

The need for increased cooperation between Polish ILL staff and for a standardization of the ILL process in Poland has recently been expressed².

Still, an ILL manager in Poland can effectively establish and maintain resource sharing networks in a largely non-consortium ILL environment (NUKAT - The Union Catalog of Polish Research Library Collections³- which is a consortium for cataloguing, has commonly become useful to ILL librarians in Poland as a search-tool, but a move to incorporate into it an integrated ILL system has so far not met with success).

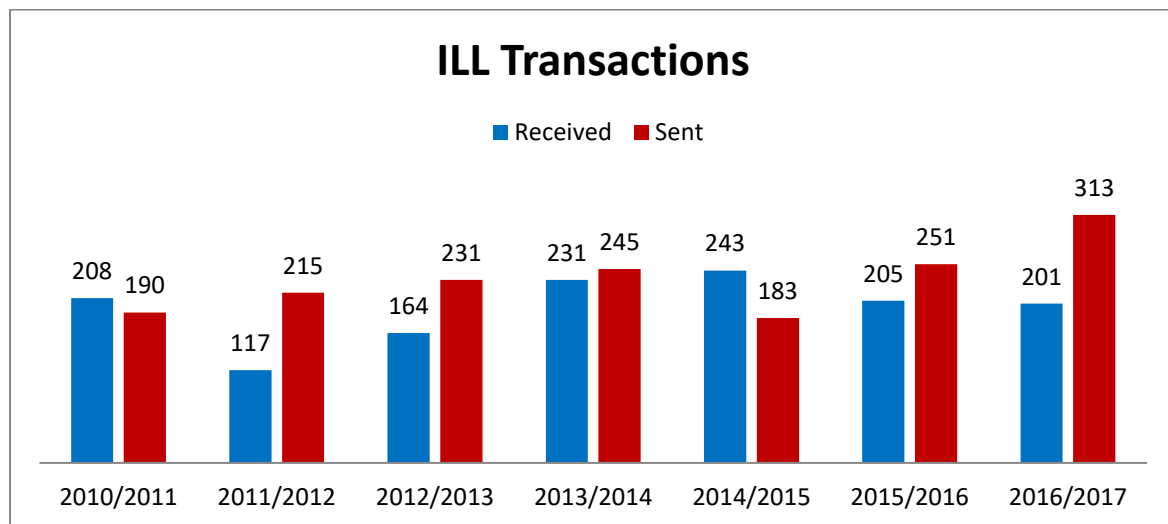
This paper will focus on how the Main Library of the Pedagogical University of Cracow (MLPU) maintains its' ILL network.

MLPU

The Pedagogical University of Cracow and its' library were founded in 1946. Until 1993 the library and archive were one department. Computers were introduced in 1993, and in 1996 electronic cataloguing began. Today the collection of the Pedagogical University library network is estimated at 663 215 volumes (347 025 located in the Main Library⁴).

During the academic year 2015/2016, the number of registered users in the Main Library was 6 274 and in the 11 branch libraries 13 849. Readers borrowed 183 455 books from the Main Library and 197 030 volumes from the institute libraries. During the academic year 2016/2017 the number of active readers at MLPU fell to 5 931 and they borrowed 118 165 items. In fact, the number of items borrowed from MLPU for the last academic year has fallen by 24% compared to 2010/2011, whilst the number of ILL transactions has increased by 29%.

Figure 1 Number of ILL transactions per academic year: received and sent



specialised ILL members of staff, and the remaining 3 employed three). Unpublished data. Research amongst the Partner Libraries of MLPU – ILL in Poland. Research by Marzena Błach 2016.

² Marzena Błach, Interlibrary Loans: *The Need to Integrate*, speech given during the conference entitled: Małopolskie Forum Bibliotek, Kraków, 25.10.2016.

³ <http://katalog.nukat.edu.pl/search/query?locale=EN&theme=nukat>, it is not utilized as a tool for developing ILL

⁴ Unless stated otherwise, data is given for the academic year 2016/2017.

Figure 2 displays the total number of ILL transactions made by MLPU for each of the last seven years. In most years MLPU sends more items than it receives from partner libraries. For example, Figure 1 shows that 313 items were sent to other libraries in the last academic year, and 201 were received. But the great majority of ILL transactions with international partners involve MLPU being in receipt of materials (152 occasions). There were only five instances over the last seven years when MLPU was asked to share its materials with institutions from abroad.

Figure 2 Number of ILL Transactions

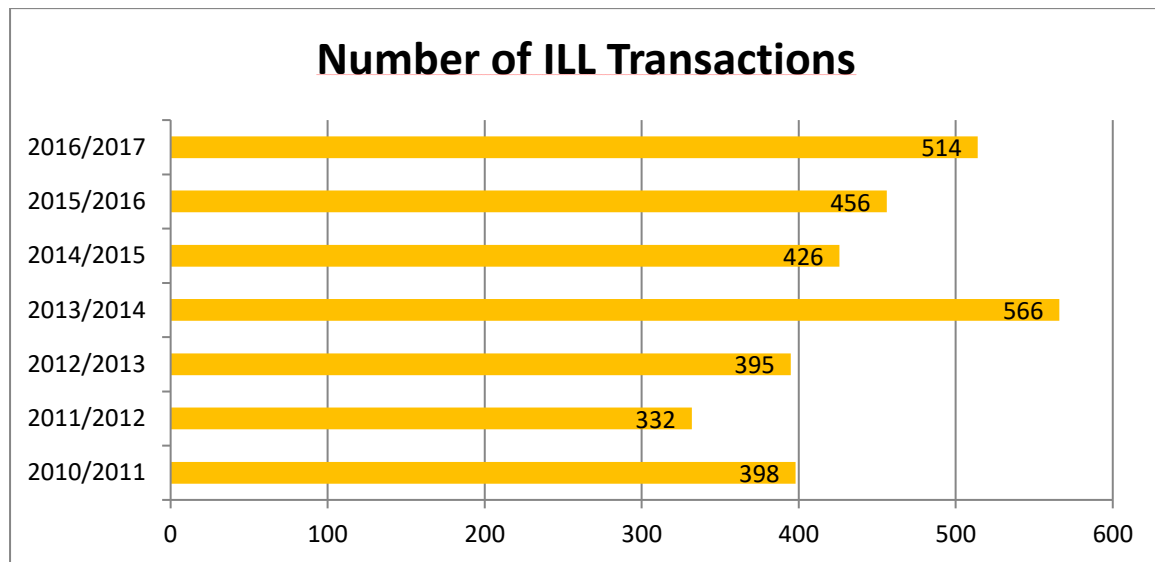


Table 1 contains data for ILL transactions at MLPU in the last 7 academic years split into four categories: sent and received (items), domestic and international.

Table 1 Number of domestic and international transactions at MLPU: 2010/2011-2016/2017

Academic year	Received		Sent		Total
	domestic	international	domestic	international	
2016/2017	148	53	313	0	514
2015/2016	171	34	247	4	456
2014/2015	221	22	183	0	426
2013/2014	309	12	245	0	566
2012/2013	152	12	231	0	395
2011/2012	111	6	214	1	332
2010/2011	195	13	190	0	398

Methodology

MLPU subscribes to the Virtua Library System. Different modules have been implemented - for cataloguing and circulation, for instance. The ILL module has not been activated. For the purposes of this research, data has been collected from manual logs in which the records of ILL transactions are kept.

Since MLPU, along with many of its' Polish ILL partners, does not operate an automated ILL system that would make it a simple matter to record the time when either a book request was made or when a refusal to supply it was given (and also since it is a common practice of many Polish librarians dealing with ILL not to acknowledge requests for the loan of a book, but to simply to dispatch it) it proved to be impossible to apply the Interlibrary Loan Speed Indicator in this study. A modified and less specific version of this tool was therefore used as an indicator to the speed of delivery of requested materials, to be used as an aid to improving service to the readers of MLPU.

In addition, a survey was conducted amongst readers to gauge the level of satisfaction with their experience of ILL services at MLPU, since meeting the needs of readers is the motivation behind all of an ILL librarian's work, and national and international ILL contacts are established solely to meet their demands.

Interlibrary Loan Network

Table 2 illustrates the number of domestic partners in MLPU's ILL network, as well as the number of overseas partners and they will be discussed separately in the following sections.

Table 2 Partner Libraries of MLPU 2010/2011- 2016/2017

Academic year	Number of Polish ILL Partners	Number of International ILL Partners	Total
2016/2017	102	17	119
2015/2016	103	19	122
2014/2015	92	15	107
2013/2014	97	6	103
2012/2013	87	9	96
2011/2012	76	6	82
2010/2011	106	11	117

National Partners

During the academic year 2016/2017 MLPU cooperated through ILL with 102 Polish libraries, resulting in 461 completed transactions (MLPU sent 313 documents to its partners and received 148). According to the results of a survey, conducted in May and June 2017, the majority of MLPU's readers - 17 out of 22 (77%) respondents - said that they were "very satisfied" with the speed of arrival of books ordered within the scheme. Two stated that they were "fairly satisfied". There were two respondents not satisfied with the speed of arrival of books from Polish libraries (one being "rather" unsatisfied, and the other wasn't satisfied at all). Table 3 displays the answers to the questions that appeared in the survey. The survey was sent to all 44 readers who had made an ILL request at MLPU from September 2016 until end of May 2017. Completed surveys were returned by 22 of them, four of whom were students and the remainder University faculty members.

Table 3 Reader satisfaction with the speed of ILL service. Results of a survey amongst ILL users at MLPU (2016/2017)

Are you satisfied with the speed of arrival of:	Yes, definitely	Rather yes	I don't know	Rather not	Definitely not	Never used this form of ILL
books from the Polish libraries within ILL service?	17	2	0	1	1	1
books from abroad within ILL service?	7	3	0	0	0	12
photocopies from Polish libraries within ILL service?	5	0	0	0	0	17
photocopies from abroad within ILL service?	2	0	0	0	0	20
scans supplied by e-mail within ILL service?	6	0	0	0	0	16
microfilms within ILL service?	4	0	0	0	0	18

Since the scope of this survey, as well as a similar one conducted in January 2016, was small (the previous survey was sent to 80 readers who had requested material within the ILL scheme between September 2014 and January 2016 – yielding 38 completed surveys) in order to compare readers opinions with the facts, an indicator of the speed of delivery was applied. Speed of Delivery (SD) is a loosely adapted version of the Interlibrary Loan Speed Indicator. SD was calculated by summing up the number of days from when the reader's request was received⁵ and when it was forwarded to the partner library with the number of days from then until the day the requested material arrived.

All 183 requests from readers from July 1 2016 to June 30 2017 which led to a successfully completed ILL transaction were analyzed. Manual records were kept of the 4 different kinds of document delivery – domestic e-mail, international e-mail, domestic postal delivery and international post.

Table 4 Speed of delivery

Documents delivered	Number of transactions completed within			
	0-7 days	8-14 days	15-21 days	after more than 21 days
by e-mail from Polish libraries	28	1	2	1
by mail from Polish libraries	57	34	7	1
by e-mail from foreign libraries	0	1	0	0
by mail from foreign libraries	25	24	3	0
Total:	110	60	12	2

⁵ Unless there are problems locating the ordered material or the librarian responsible for ILL is not in the Main Library, requests are forwarded to partner libraries on the day they are received, as was the case in 113 readers' requests out of 131 between July 1 2016 and May 30 2017, 16 being forwarded the next day and 2 two days after the reader sent their request.

Table 4 illustrates that most documents – 28 out of 32 - delivered in electronic format from Polish Partners of MLPU arrived and were sent on to the reader within one week. In fact, consulting the manual log of transactions, it can be ascertained that in 8 instances the reader received the material on the same day they had requested it, and in another 10 cases within 3 days. Two transactions were successfully completed with the cooperation of the National Library of Poland, which digitalized on demand two different titles (although, in one of those instances the process of digitalization and adding the requested book to a digital platform – *Academica* - took 43 days). *Academica* is an ‘Interlibrary loan system of scientific publications’ and allows registered libraries to offer access on dedicated terminals to 1 949 043 documents of the National Library of Poland, with many licensed and public domain being freely available to everyone over the internet. MLPU is not a registered member of *Academica*, but is expected to join the scheme next year (as of June 30 2017, 324 Polish libraries were subscribed to the service).

The National Library of Poland is not MLPU’s most frequent partner within ILL, supplying only 5 documents during 2016/2017 and borrowing one. Table 5 lists Polish libraries that had the most ILL transactions with MLPU during the academic year 2016/2017.

The John Paul II Catholic University of Lublin and the Scientific Information Center&Academic Library (CINiBA) in Katowice are the two institutions from whom MLPU borrowed the most materials for its’ readers in the last academic year (2016/2017). CINiBA was opened in 2012 as a united modern library serving two higher institutions in Katowice – the University of Silesia and the University of Economics. Krakow and Katowice are approximately only 50 miles apart, and selecting CINiBA as an ILL partner whenever possible is regarded as potentially beneficial to the reader. The libraries borrowing the most materials from MLPU in 2016/2017 were the city public library in Tczew, the library of the Higher Vocational State School in Tarnow and The Cracow University of Technology Library (CUT). Those libraries in Tczew and Tarnow have library ILL accounts with MLPU, meaning their librarians can order books directly from the online catalogue of MLPU. Requests are printed in the storage area and books are sent to the circulation department where the ILL manager packs and dispatches them after registering the transaction in a manual log and on the Virtua System. This form of account was instigated at MLPU on the recommendation of a librarian from an ILL partner library. By the end of the academic year 2016/2017 thirty Polish libraries had an active ILL account of this kind.

It is one of the basic rules of interlibrary loans in Poland that such transactions should occur when the desired materials are not available locally. But local libraries do establish library ILL accounts with MLPU and mutually beneficial collaborations between local libraries do occur, opening up access to collections to readers. For example, MLPU has a valued resource sharing commitment with CUT. In recent years, for instance, a professor from the chemistry department at the Pedagogical University of Cracow has been supplied by MLPU with electronic copies of articles sent to it by CUT, and this last academic year MLPU was able to reciprocate by sending CUT electronic copies of articles from sociological journals. Opening access to global collections begins close to home. In an atmosphere of openness, cooperativeness and connectedness the ILL librarian can serve their readers well, saving them much time and effort.

Table 5 Most frequent domestic ILL partners

Libraries from which MLPU received most material		
Number	Name of the library	Number of documents received
1.	Scientific Information Center&Academic Library, Katowice	14
	John Paul II Catholic University of Lublin Library, Lublin	
3.	The University of Warsaw Library, Warsaw	13
4.	Jagiellonian Library, Krakow	8
5.	Ossolineum, Wroclaw	7
6.	UMCS Main Library, Lublin	6
	Poznan University Library, Poznan	
	Wroclaw University Library, Wroclaw	
9.	German Institute Library, University of Warsaw, Warsaw	5
	National Library of Poland, Warsaw	
11.	The University of Bialystok Library, Bialystok	4
	The Library of the University of Lodz, Lodz	
	Faculty of Philology Library, University of Lodz, Lodz	
	Nicolaus Copernicus University Library, Torun	
Libraries to which MLPU sent most material		
Number	Name of the library	Number of sent documents
1.	City Public Library, Tczew	25
2.	Cracow University of Technology Library, Cracow	24
3.	Higher Vocational State School Library, Tarnow	22
4.	Czestochowa University of Technology Library, Czestochowa	16
5.	The Main Library of AGH University of Science and Technology, Cracow	15
6.	The Library of Rzeszow University, Rzeszow	13
7.	Library of Kazimierz Wielki University, Bydgoszcz	12
	The University of Dabrowa Gornicza Library, Dabrowa Gornicza	
	Scientific Information Center&Academic Library, Katowice	
10.	The University's Library of the Jan Kochanowski University in Kielce	10
	UMCS Main Library, Lublin	
	Pomeranian University in Slupsk Library, Slupsk	

To sustain a healthy resource sharing network, an ILL manager must keep the confidence of readers and partner libraries by ensuring a quick and consistent service. The ILL manager at MLPU has the task of not just maintaining and improving services, but of building a positive image of the library and the services it offers (see Library Mission Statement, in Conclusion). In 2015, as part of the process of monitoring the image clients have of the library and of the services it offers, a survey was conducted among Polish ILL partner libraries for the academic years 2013/14 and 2104/15 (the results of this survey have been published previously and referred to at conference, but we will examine how just two questions from the survey were answered).

The survey was sent to 117 libraries, and 43 completed surveys were returned. The responses given to the request to grade from 1 to 6 (with 1 being the lowest mark and 6 the highest) how quickly do you think MLPU supplies requested materials through ILL and how quickly do you think it returns borrowed items, are displayed in Table 6.

Table 6 Satisfaction of ILL service at MLPU among partner libraries 2013/14 – 2014/15

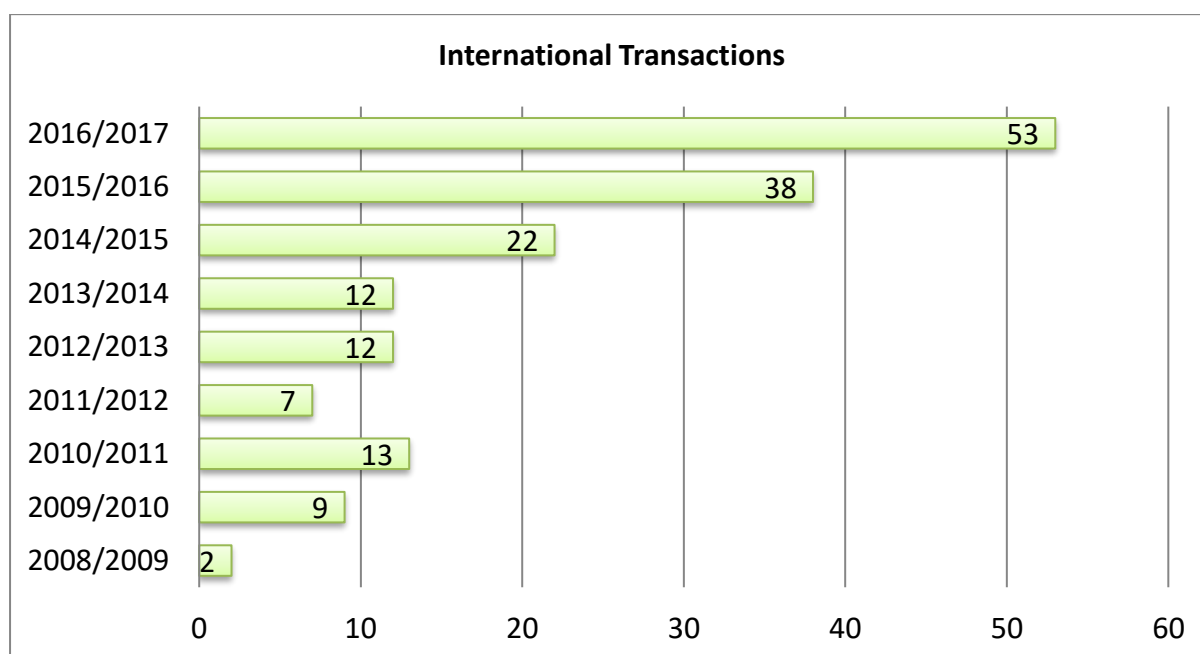
Points Awarded (1 – low, 6 –high)	Promptness of supplying materials		Promptness of returning materials	
	Count	Percentage	Count	Percentage
1	0	0%	0	0%
2	0	0%	0	0%
3	0	0%	0	0%
4	3	7%	3	7%
5	8	18,6%	9	20,9%
6	29	67,4%	26	60,5%
no answer	3	7%	5	11,6%

Table 6 evidences that most partner libraries are satisfied with the speed of ILL services at MLPU (86% awarded the highest or next highest mark for the speed of realization of requests and 81% of libraries gave one of the top two marks for returning books in time).

International Partners

The network of international ILL partners of MLPU is understandably not as big as the network of Polish ones. In the academic year 2016/2017, MLPU cooperated through ILL with 17 foreign libraries (compared to 102 individual Polish libraries – see Table 2) resulting in 53 completed transactions. On 8 occasions, there was no fee charged to MLPU for the loan of books (for instance, Technische Universität Berlin Library made the loan of 7 books at their own expense). Other transactions were paid for with a total of 35 full and 7 half IFLA vouchers. Figure 3 charts the number of successfully completed ILL operations with foreign institutions over last 9 years.

Figure 3 International ILL transactions at the Pedagogical University of Cracow



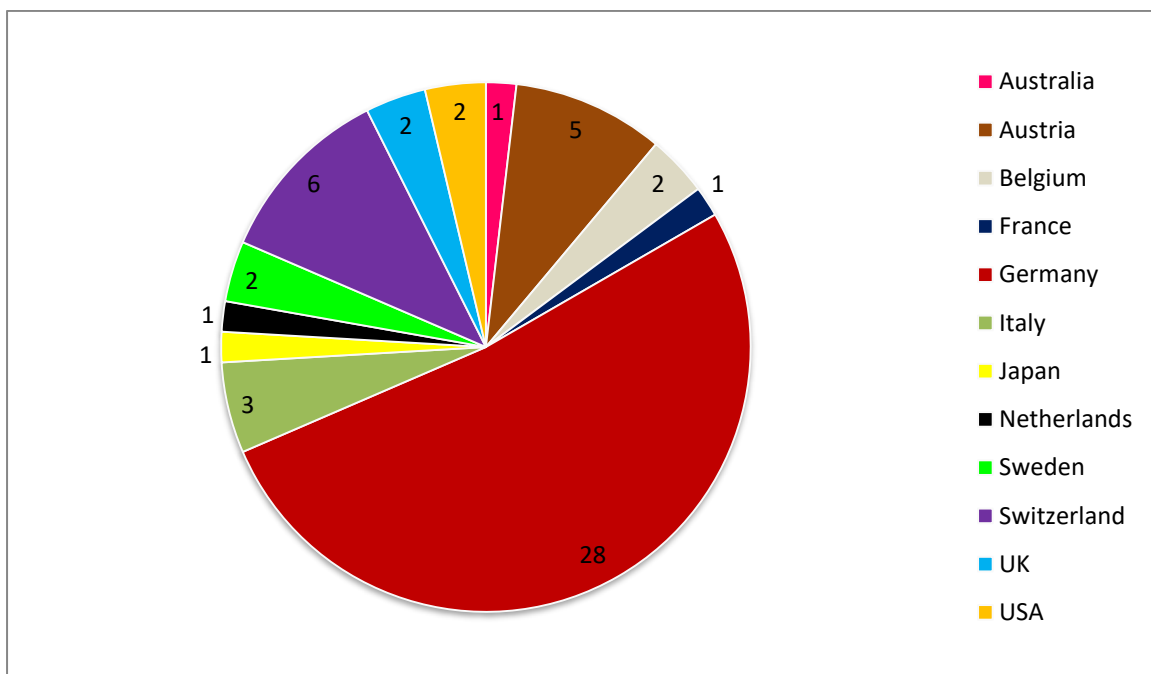
Looking at the data represented in Figure 3, we can see that during the academic year of 2009/2010 there was something of a breakthrough in international resource sharing at MLPU and the number of international ILL transactions has increased markedly ever since then. 2009/2010 is the period when IFLA vouchers were introduced at MLPU as payment for international interlibrary loans. MLPU joined the IFLA Voucher Programme when it became evident that it would be failing its readers if they were not allowed access to global collections due to problems arising from payment - specifically invoicing, bank charges and administration costs and calculating exchange rates. The ability to request materials only held in foreign collections has been advertised to MLPU readers, and the service is open to all the staff and students (including Erasmus students) of the Pedagogical University of Cracow, but it remains professors who use the service most regularly.

All of MLPU's readers who used its' ILL services to gain access to materials held in the collections of libraries abroad expressed themselves very satisfied or satisfied with the speed of delivery of their items – see Table 3.

Table 4 contains information on the SD of the 53 international ILL transactions at MLPU during the last academic year. We can see that 49 of 52 documents sent by mail were delivered from international partners within two weeks (25 documents of those within 7 days). The remaining 3 arrived within 3 weeks. The only electronic document sent was digitalized and delivered within 14 days.

International ILL partners of MLPU are found on four continents. Figure 4 illustrates the make-up of MLPU's foreign ILL network.

Figure 4 International Partners 2010/2011 - 2016/2017



Many international ILL transactions at MLPU are with German libraries who are members of The Gateway Bayern (the Union catalogue of the Bavarian Library Network), which (unlike NUKAT - the Union Catalog of Polish Research Library Collections) allows its members to not only conduct searches but to also directly order materials from its catalogues. MLPU

joined the Gateway Bayern in August 2015 and ILL services at MLPU have improved and the process is often quicker and easier for the ILL manager as a consequence.

Humboldt University and the University of Passau, both in Berlin along with its' Technical University, and the Bavarian State Library in Munich have lent many books to MLPU. Other international partners (occasional) include the National Library of France, the National Library of Australia, as well as the Bodleian Library in Oxford and the library of the University of Michigan in the USA. The very few non-Polish libraries that have asked MLPU to share resources with them are Olin Library (Cornell University, USA), Tokyo Metropolitan University Library (Japan), two Italian libraries – the library of the European University Institute in San Domenico di Fiesole and the library of Bergamo University, as well as the University of Southampton Library. Since MLPU is a relatively small institution – and most of its' holdings are obviously in the Polish language – it takes special satisfaction in these occasions it can add value to a truly global ILL network.

MLPU has received support from numerous foreign institutions which have loaned books and other materials free of charge, helping the students and faculty members of the Pedagogical University of Cracow to conduct their research. One such institution is the University of Vienna (Universitätsbibliothek Wien), the oldest academic library in Austria. The partnership with this institution was established by MLPU's ILL manager in 2014 during an Erasmus exchange (the week-long work placement was with Pädagogische Hochschule Wien, but the opportunity was taken to arrange meetings and visits at several other libraries in Vienna). The Erasmus programme enables those working in academic libraries to participate in training at libraries in other European countries and can provide an excellent opportunity to make connections with other libraries and ILL colleagues. The current ILL manager at MLPU has participated in this form of exchange on 5 occasions, in London (2011), Sevilla (2013), Vienna (2014), Liège (2015) and Florence (2017).

Conclusions

Connecting users and libraries around the World - this is the challenge, the responsibility, of librarians specializing in interlibrary loans today. It can be done. Even a library the size of MLPU can connect its' users to a global network of libraries and give them access to potentially almost limitless sources of information regardless of the lack of resources locally. It is a special and unique task - very often the person you will work with most closely is a librarian you will never meet working in a library you will never visit. And yet you build professional relationships on a bed-rock of trust. You trust another ILL librarian will treat your request for materials as though it were urgently needed – as it often is in an academic library like MLPU, or that they will respect your conditions for the use of materials you supply to them and they return them safely and speedily. At MLPU, the efficacy of its' ILL services and the image other libraries have of it are consistently monitored, so that its' trustworthiness as a resource sharing partner cannot be called into doubt. In fact, librarians at MLPU are instructed:

...the mission of the library is also answering to the expectations of academics, as well as to create and to promote a positive image of the Pedagogical University in the country and in the World.

A lack of funding shouldn't be seen as a hindrance to building a network of resource sharing partners, but more a reason to employ more innovative strategizing. The ILL manager at MLPU has built professional relationships through participation in training programs in other libraries (Erasmus), by taking part in the International Librarians' Network peer mentoring program and by presenting at conferences. It is true that there may be more obstacles to be

overcome in some parts of the World than others, but the situation can be improved through the efforts of ILL specialists. In Poland for example, the first conference dedicated to ILL for many years was staged there just last year, and a second edition of that conference will take place in September, the IFLA World Congress 2017 is being staged in Wroclaw - with a section on document delivery and resource sharing, and at MLPU itself the 12th edition of their open access journal ‘The Library and Education’ will be dedicated to ILL.

I will let Heather Weltin, a fellow ILL librarian from the USA have the final word:

In addition to directly helping library users to access needed information, perhaps the greatest reward of working in ILL services comes from the rich connections that are regularly made with ILL colleagues in other libraries, near and far. It is a disservice to resource sharing to fail to address the exemplary amount of effort and care that goes into cultivating the professional relationship that enables successful partnerships in interlibrary loan⁶.

Acknowledgments

Thank you to all my colleagues who have shared information about resource sharing. With special thanks to Beth Posner and Agnieszka Fiebig.

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