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### Introduction to Library Information and Resource Sharing

Beth Posner

*CUNY Graduate Center*

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## Chapter I

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# Introduction to Library Information and Resource Sharing

Beth Posner

In every one of the estimated 1 million libraries around the world, librarians share as much information as they can, in as many ways as they can, with members of their communities. It is, of course, also true that most libraries do not have vast resources to share, many library collection budgets are shrinking, and some libraries are even closing. Nonetheless, librarians successfully share information, as well as professional expertise, by building, maintaining, and preserving local collections in universities, schools, communities, and organizations. They license digital resources, provide reference and instruction services, catalog information, circulate material, and support reserve and special collections. They host makerspaces, group meetings, institutional repositories, and open-access publishing platforms. Most significantly, for the purpose of this book and for countless library users, they provide interlibrary loan (ILL) services, as well, in order to share information both with and beyond their local communities.

In a world of unavoidably limited resources and seemingly unlimited challenges, there is a mandate for all institutions to solve real-world problems, demonstrate real value and make a positive difference to individuals and society at an affordable cost. Library services and collections

have many costs, but by sharing information they also provide many educational, social, cultural, and economic benefits. It is primarily by sharing information and serving information needs that librarians contribute to learning, knowledge creation, and culture. Thus, a well-developed infrastructure and ethos for library information and resource sharing is both the foundation of ILL services and fundamental to the work of all librarians in all libraries. Whether we are considering traditional ILL, involving library-to-library lending and borrowing, innovative library resource sharing services, such as purchase-on-demand or the support of information sharing through open-access initiatives, facilitating access to information by sharing it is an essential aspect of what libraries and ILL services do.

Library users experience libraries most directly as the sum of the collections and services that librarians provide, ILL not least among them. Library information sharing, through ILL, is a practical, specific service, with ambitious, even idealistic, goals. It developed in the print world but today both traditional and enhanced ILL services enable librarians to provide access to more of the world of print and digital information, in a different way, than either the greatest research library collections or the entirety of the internet. ILL specialists provide locally unavailable information to library users by requesting and supplying (or lending and borrowing) loans and copies of print, and also digital information, between libraries. ILL borrowing is important because no library has access to all the information its users will need. ILL lending is equally important because it is what enables borrowing, and it also enables libraries to make use of the resources they have invested in and sometimes even recoup some costs by charging reasonable ILL processing fees. Far from becoming less relevant in an increasingly digital information landscape, traditional ILL services still deliver millions of filled requests for information every year. There is still a great deal of information available only in libraries, because digitization and hosting digital content has costs and copyright laws delay when information comes into the public domain and can be digitized for online delivery. There is also a great deal of newly published information available, but only for a price, unless librarians provide access to it.

ILL services and specialists can help all librarians, in all libraries, to help all library users, and equally important, encourage more people to become library users and supporters. As practical as ILL services are, ILL also strives to make possible a world in which there are no limits to what people can discover and understand. Information sharing, in general, and ILL, specifically, both literally and figuratively, opens up the world of information, empowering more people to learn, create, and succeed. By examining the place of library resource and information sharing in libraries and encouraging critical conversations in all libraries about supporting ILL and integrating it with other library functions, the hope

of ILL specialists is that the practical magic of ILL will become available to more and more information seekers.

The chapters that follow do more than provide ideas about best practices and techniques for ILL practitioners. As important as that is for collective efforts to serve information seekers, this collection will be considering more meta-problems, such as where ILL and libraries fit into the future of information sharing; how ILL practices may serve as models for other library services; and how rapid changes in the landscape of information sharing are prompting ILL departments to work more closely with each other, between institutions, as well as with other library functions within their own institutions. In addressing those questions, critical and sometimes difficult discussions of institutional priorities, organizational structures, professional skill development, and assessment must be started with librarians across functional areas as well as with representatives of the communities they serve.

There is great satisfaction in connecting people with information that they need but cannot easily access. Equally rewarding are the connections that ILL specialists enjoy with their counterparts in other libraries, near and far. In fact, they work so closely and regularly with other ILL staff, seeking their help and supporting their mutual work, that they may not have as much time or occasion to work with colleagues in their own libraries. This, however, can result in ILL services that remain peripheral rather than central to library services for local library users. This is also why all librarians, library administrators, and those they report to, whether in universities, schools, communities, or any other institution need to learn more about what ILL can do, and how they can work together with ILL specialists to serve information seekers and support and encourage more use of libraries.

## HOW ILL SUPPORTS AND TRANSFORMS LIBRARY SERVICES AND COLLECTIONS

ILL specialists in many libraries are doing more than ever to facilitate information access. ILL services represent personalized, local, customer-driven library efforts to meet specific user needs for specific information. In addition to requesting and supplying information, ILL staff also inform people when they are requesting information that is available in their own libraries or is freely accessible online. ILL data can be used for identifying collection gaps and making collection development and acquisitions decisions; ILL services at some libraries will now directly purchase information rather than borrowing it for only one-time use by one person. Yet, despite the potential of ILL, in too many libraries, there are librarians who are not fully aware of what ILL is all about, or just what it can do to help information seekers; unfortunately, in these libraries, ILL often

remains in a silo, too isolated and under-resourced to be of much help, if it is offered at all.

Since no library can afford to collect or provide access to all information, ILL services enable users of even the biggest research library collections to access locally unavailable information. And, again, helping people to access information that helps them learn, create, think, and dream is both the idea that libraries are founded on and the ideal that librarians strive for. As libraries have developed, progressed, and professionalized, so has ILL. It is by facilitating information sharing that ILL services can both support and transform libraries in service of meeting user needs for information. Sharing information through ILL is a natural extension of the work that all librarians do to share the information that they collect for and with members of their local communities. Indeed, one could say that ILL services help to foster an even larger information-sharing community by enabling the use of information already held in libraries, by people in distant libraries, while making the information collected by distant libraries available for local library users.

ILL services have always taken advantage of the latest technology, but it is the pace of change and the impact (both realized and potential) of innovation today that is exciting and promising for libraries and library users alike. In addition to filling traditional ILL requests more quickly than in the past, the technological advancements—such as digital information and automation—that have disrupted so much of the world today have also enabled ILL, and so many other library services, to transform how they do what they do.

Even though some of the more innovative ILL services offered today may look nothing like traditional ILL, as library information-sharing activities, they still appropriately fall under its purview. As you will read here, as ILL specialists respond to new opportunities, incorporate new technologies, and encourage new collaborations, they are not merely reacting to changes in libraries and the information world, they are also informing and even transforming other library services and library collections. ILL activities are shaping library collections by helping to identify material that librarians should acquire for local use and making use of the long tail of information that is otherwise just sitting unused in libraries. Information about what requests ILL receives can inform collection development while also enabling ILL specialists to purchase or license access to information directly, when it is more cost effective and efficient than borrowing it. They can advocate for open-access publishing and help develop institutional repositories because they see that academic authors want their work to be read and do not want either readers or librarians to have to pay exorbitant fees to do so. ILL specialists can also offer input on e-resource license terms and copyright reforms that protect library information sharing and they can provide support for making library

discovery systems, circulation, and ILL software more interoperable and useful for library users.

The authors contributing to this volume work in U.S. academic libraries; however, ILL services are also popular with, and of value to, people who use public and special libraries around the world. No matter the library size, type, or location, ILL can help library administrators who want to provide valuable, individualized service to their communities, reference librarians concerned with teaching people how to find information, e-resource managers and catalogers who want people to find and use the information they license or purchase, systems librarians who want to develop useful, interoperable, seamless library interfaces for information seekers, children's and young adult (YA) librarians who want to inspire and educate, and preservation specialists, special collections and archives librarians who want the information they hold and preserve to be used. It is when library administrators give ILL specialists the authority to suggest and implement policy changes and the budgets to support technology and staff and other costs, and when colleagues in other departments are willing and eager to collaborate with them that ILL can best help all librarians to help all library users.

## HOW LIBRARIES CAN SUPPORT AND TRANSFORM ILL SERVICES

As librarians do their daily work and innovate to better meet user needs, they also need to better tell their own story. Everyone has limited time and attention, so ILL librarians seeking to get the attention of administrators and other stakeholders must demonstrate that they are providing excellent service and/or that they could do so much more if they had adequate support. Like much of the infrastructure of society, libraries included, ILL may not be noticed or fixed unless or until it is completely broken. Even then, it can be easier to just forget it and not offer ILL services, relying on other local libraries or other access points. However, that is a disservice to readers, lifelong learners, students and scholars. Instead, in order to attract positive administrator and user attention, it helps to make it clear how ILL services can efficiently help information seekers at the point of need.

Even though many libraries, today, offer cost-effective, fast, efficient, cutting edge ILL services, there are a variety of reasons why it is still not a core service in every library. Certainly facilitating information access by sharing content among libraries fills a long-standing, timeless need, but there are many other worthwhile library services that also deserve to be funded, and ILL takes time, costs money, and requires training and expertise. Unfortunately, in some libraries, ILL services are small, underfunded, underutilized, slow, costly, inefficient silos; they are peripheral

departments that do not encourage or get many requests. The investment needed to support an ILL department and trained staff ILL is, thus, not deemed a priority. Nor, necessarily, is the investment made to support ILL technology and staff engagement with collaborative networks, both formal and informal, upon which more successful, more cost effective library information sharing depends.

Even in libraries where the value of ILL in meeting user needs for information is clear, there is often more that could be done, if there was more support. When a library's ILL department is not offering all of the services discussed in the chapters that follow, it is far more likely because they are understaffed and under-budgeted, than because they are unable or unwilling to do more. Perhaps, this is to some extent inevitable because libraries rarely, if ever, have enough budget and staff to support all services. Perhaps, it is even acceptable because some information seekers are better served by more immediate local access to information; although it must be noted that the delivery speed of ILL copies can be minutes today rather than weeks. So, librarians should never assume that ILL is too complicated, costly, or slow to be worth supporting. ILL may never be a top priority in all libraries but it is a service that should be available to all library users in all libraries.

The fundamental irony of ILL is that it offers an effective solution to the fact that no library has sufficient resources to collect all the information its users may require. Developments in library resource sharing in response to changes in the information world and in user needs are making it timely and essential that librarians take a fresh look at ILL and how it can help their users today. From a cost-benefit analysis, a properly supported ILL service may provide one of the best bangs for the buck; so it is unfortunate that when ILL can do so much, so many information seekers do not use it either because they do not know about it, because it is too underfunded to help them, or because it is not even offered. When ILL departments are understaffed, requests will take longer to process and borrowing may not even be encouraged. This leads to a vicious cycle where ILL is not quick or useful, so it is not used, and therefore does not get support, so ILL staff do not have the resources they need to make it more useful. What needs to be created, instead, is a virtuous cycle where library users are encouraged to use ILL, so it is supported and ILL departments can afford the technology and staff needed to process requests quickly; then ILL will be used because it is useful.

When confronting costs that can be prohibitive in some libraries, the benefits, worth, and efficiencies that can be achieved by providing ILL through resource sharing consortia or other local, regional, national, and international cooperative networks must be considered. Library funding is still primarily, if not entirely, local. Library networks are also essential

because cooperating with other libraries leads to cost efficiencies and savings. Even as librarians serve local users first, by also lending information to distant library users they can borrow more information locally. Whatever librarians do should be in service of user needs. Of course, current needs sometimes conflict with future needs, local needs can conflict with sharing information with distant library users, and the hard costs of providing services can conflict with maximizing user satisfaction and support. Nonetheless, it is important for library administrators to understand that budgeting for library services and collections is not a zero sum game; rather, investing resources in cross-functional solutions, such as those discussed in this book, allows library services and collections to complement and support each other and, by sharing and collaborating more, provide more information to library users.

Loyal ILL users regularly sing its praises, thanking ILL staff in person and in published acknowledgements for providing them with access to information that they could not have otherwise found, and sometimes even crediting it for sparking their imaginations, helping them to finish their projects, or answering their questions while saving them time and expense. Librarians who work in libraries that lend and/or borrow a lot of ILLs do so in direct response to user needs. Since the value of this work is generally clear in such libraries, ILL is well supported with enough of a budget and well-trained staff to provide access to information quickly and efficiently. In libraries where ILL is less active, however, library resource sharing often cannot provide quick turnaround times, and is often, quite understandably, deemed as less important to meeting user needs than are other services. This is why all librarians need to know more about all that ILL specialists can do to help library users, as well as what it takes to do so; and to understand that ILL is neither useless nor magic. It certainly does require support for staff and training, as well as a budget for technology, delivery, and processing or copyright fees, but this does not mean that it is prohibitively expensive.

As a result of the daily volume of work in successful ILL departments, the most experienced ILL specialists often do not have time to showcase their successes or advocate for their needs. However, unless ILL specialists do so, no one else can be expected to be excited about what they are doing or can do. It is certainly true that some ILL departments can resemble mailrooms, with stacks of packing material and people and workstations. ILL departments can become factory-like in their procedures, and processing ILL requests all day at a computer can be excessively repetitive, and seem downright dull. However, ILL work is also important and fulfilling; at every step of every transaction a real person with a real information need is being served and society as a whole is benefiting from systematic and efficient library information sharing.

## CHAPTER OVERVIEWS

This book is an attempt to outline what is possible through ILL. It is meant for people who work in ILL but may not be aware of all these possibilities, or who want to do more but need to convince their colleagues and administrators to support their efforts. However, since ILL is generally learned on the job and not taught in library school, the chapters here will be of interest not only to ILL specialists but also to library administrators with responsibility for ILL, library school students, new librarians considering jobs with ILL responsibilities and any librarian who wants to partner and coordinate with their ILL colleagues, learn more about ILL or develop their ILL services.

Each chapter approaches library functions and explores how ILL intersects with other library departments. Each also provides a fresh way to look at what ILL departments can do in coordination with other traditional library departments and functions. The shared premise of each chapter is that what is done in ILL matters and is worth supporting. It is not, however, that ILL alone can meet all information needs, even if properly supported. The point is that the perspective of those who work in ILL can help all librarians in all libraries to better meet user needs.

The value of this collection is in bringing together these ideas so that ILL can be considered as a whole and integrated into libraries as a whole. ILL specialists share a respect for the past, a profound working knowledge of the present, and a vision for the future of library information sharing that both includes and transcends what is known as traditional ILL. They are justifiably proud of every ILL transaction and want their colleagues to recognize that each one helps library users. Their awareness that traditional ILL is still needed and their gratitude for those who shaped it also makes them continue to strive and never become so content or complacent that they cannot get inspired or driven to do more transactions even faster and more cost effectively. ILL librarians also understand how the support of the entire ILL community helps them to get things done together; and, this is why they so strongly encourage and welcome local collegiality and cooperation, as well.

ILL provides its practitioners with a valuable and distinct vantage point from which to view library work. While some staff are experts only in ILL and have time only for ILL, they also see the connections between ILL and other library services and how, by working more closely with local colleagues, libraries could better serve library user needs for information. The goal of collecting these points of view together is to reduce functional silos by demonstrating the benefits to all library functions when they cooperate and integrate more with ILL. Each chapter looks at how ILL services are facilitating information access in a variety of ways, as well as at other library services and collections from the perspective of ILL.

By reading and discussing these chapters, librarians will see just how ILL staff members can usefully participate in the work of collection development, acquisitions, weeding, e-resource management, cataloging, collection maintenance and preservation, discovery systems, delivery systems, shared repositories and circulation systems, license negotiations, collecting and sharing data for the assessment of user needs, and the development of user driven policies. Each chapter is written with the purpose of initiating important conversations about such cooperation and integration, both within libraries and among the larger networks in which they participate. As such, following each chapter description are some suggested questions intended to get the conversation started. As a result of these conversations, we hope that more librarians will decide to better integrate ILL into the mission and work of all library functions, in all libraries, public, academic, special, large and small, in the United States and around the world.

Anne Beaubien in the “Foreword” notes that the success of ILL services stems from cooperating and collaborating both within and between libraries as well as from focusing on user needs and advocating for more information sharing. These themes are further explored throughout the book. Critical questions for further discussion include: How can library services keep pace with the instant gratification of the internet? How can librarians convince information seekers that faster information access is not always better than access to high quality information? How can the ILL experience of promoting cooperation between libraries help improve cooperation among departments within libraries? What can libraries do to promote greater information access given constraints currently imposed by copyright restrictions and license terms?

In “ILL Today,” Heather Weltin offers an overview of the many ways that ILL specialists are providing access to information and supporting the work of their colleagues in other library functions. These examples are then further explored in the following chapters. Questions to consider (and discuss with colleagues) include: How many of the highlighted practices does your library’s ILL department already do? Which practices seem most simple and/or most worthwhile to implement? Which seem less likely to work at your library and why? What collaborations and partnerships could save your library time and money, while better serving library users? Should the role(s) of ILL librarians within your library be reevaluated? How can ILL workflows be reengineered to provide value-added services to both library users and other library departments? How can assessment be used to highlight the strengths and weaknesses of ILL services?

Jessica McGivney in her chapter “From Discovery to Delivery: Providing Access to Library Collections” explains how search engines and library discovery tools are enabling more discovery and access to content.

As for library systems, she argues for the need to better integrate the requesting and delivery of information with discovery. Questions for further consideration include: How well are library discovery and ILL request tools integrated? Have user experiences of discovery, request and delivery been recently assessed in your library? What is the primary function of library search tools (e.g., discovering locally held materials, discovering materials available through traditional library resource sharing, or discovering materials requiring more innovative approaches to library information sharing)? How can ILL departments best collaborate with librarians in systems, public access, technical, and collections services to make the discovery and requesting experience of library users more seamless?

Seangill (Peter) Bae in his chapter “Thinking Locally and Sharing Globally: The Impact of Library Policies on Collection Sharing” focuses on library policies and practices, particularly in circulation, that facilitate or hinder the sharing of library resources, among library partners within local, regional, or national networks as well as internationally. Some questions to consider: When were your library’s circulation policies last reviewed for their compatibility with local needs as well as ILL lending? Who has the authority to make such decisions in your library? How can library circulation policies be revised to save staff time and improve turnaround time? Can ILL and circulation services be improved through interoperable systems? Under what circumstances can consortial resource sharing agreements improve ILL services and help users access information? How can international lending and borrowing be made more efficient and effective?

Kerri Goergen-Doll, Lars Leon, and Angela Rathmel in their chapter “Library Collection Building: The Interlocking Functions of ILL, Acquisitions and Collection Development” offer case studies of two academic libraries that have reorganized and integrated their ILL, acquisitions departments and collection development functions to more efficiently purchase as well as borrow information. Questions to consider here include: What percentage of collections budget would you feel comfortable devoting to purchase-on-demand acquisitions? If libraries build collections based on only current user needs, how can they ensure access to information that people did not request through ILL but may need in the future? What stakeholder groups should be involved in discussions of library reorganizations? What kinds of direct communication skill workshops can be offered to promote the customer-service mind-set of high quality ILL departments? In smaller libraries, can ILL and other library staff be cross-trained to support coordinated functions? Can efficiencies be identified through workflow analysis? What performance measures are the most significant indicators of an effective lending and borrowing

system? Who is responsible for consistently collecting and regularly analyzing user and collection data?

Tina Baich and Sherry Michaels in "Facilitating Information Sharing through Library Collection Maintenance and Preservation" consider the enduring importance of print collections for library information sharing. ILL specialists understand the value of the long tail of information and that the idiosyncratic nature of user information needs means that the maintenance and preservation of library collections remain crucial. They also understand that this takes a lot of resources and that if all libraries are maintaining and preserving the same collection holdings, the duplication of effort is wasteful. Some questions raised here include: Would your library consider participating in a shared collection or shared print repository? Should copyright laws be liberalized to allow more digitization? Are access and preservation necessarily in opposition? How does your institution balance current and future needs? What metrics (beyond number of volumes) should we be using to evaluate the relevance and impact of library collections? How can ILL data help inform collection maintenance decisions? What formal resource sharing partnerships or cooperatives should libraries consider joining in order to foster sustainable collections? What policies should be developed concerning sharing or digitization of special collections? Would shared print initiatives and/or collective collection development increase access and/or reduce costs?

J. Silvia Cho and LeEtta Schmidt in their chapter "Sharing Digital Collections and Content" focus on the complications and differences of sharing digital information (e.g., e-journal articles, e-books, digitized special collection) now that libraries provide access to so much information through these formats instead of, or along with, print and other physical formats. They review issues concerning the license terms that govern what librarians can share through ILL, as well as technical issues with sharing e-books and copyright guidelines and restrictions on library information sharing and digitization. Questions related to the sharing of library e-resources include: Which of your e-resource licenses permit ILL? How do you handle users' requests for e-books through ILL? How do libraries negotiate license contracts? Who should be involved? Which principles, if any, should be nonnegotiable? How can libraries ensure that their holdings records for electronic resources are up-to-date? How can libraries best support the variety of user interfaces available for e-books?

What concrete steps can librarians take to advocate for open access, reasonable license terms, and responsible and sustainable digital archiving? Collette Mak in "The Evolution of ILL" considers the development of ILL services, especially the many advancements and solutions that have come from within libraries and the ILL community. From its accomplished past, through its next steps, she makes it clear that the era of ILL

is not over yet and that the ambitions of all librarians in the twenty-first century remain to make information sharing better and to remove barriers that limit what people can learn and do. Discussion questions to be considered here include: How can solutions to future demands and challenges be crowd-sourced through library collaboration? How can libraries work with each other and with vendors to create affordable, practical, flexible, customizable, useful products?

The collection concludes with an Afterword in which I reiterate the importance of the ongoing role of librarians in information sharing. I also describe some possible ways that information may be shared in the future. I hope that questions about these and other possibilities will inspire ongoing discussions among readers of these chapters about what each of us sees as the future of libraries and of library information sharing.

## CONCLUSION

We live and work in interesting times. Libraries, along with everything and everyone else, are being disrupted by transformative developments in digital information, instant communication, automation, financial pressures, globalization, the emergence of the sharing economy, interest in locavorism, and issues regarding the privacy of information. There are commercial information providers and pirate and social/professional information sharing platforms. There is more information than ever and easier discovery at the same time as license terms and copyright laws are limiting library information sharing. There are decisions to be made about buying versus borrowing, and licensing versus buying that are shaping library collections.

Librarians are primarily responsible for serving all the stakeholders and individual information seekers in their communities. It is in order to do so efficiently that they regularly partner with other libraries outside their community, thus making them stakeholders as well. At the same time, they also serve society as a whole and recognize a responsibility to the past and to the future. Despite living in the age of information, with more free, immediate access to valuable information than ever, unreliable information and limited information access are also a reality. Time and money will always be limited and so we will always have to make hard choices, balancing competing goods, such as the imperatives of cost and access. So, ILL specialists are always looking for ways to make each instance of sharing (i.e., each ILL transaction) easier, quicker, and cheaper, and to further increase access at the lowest possible cost. ILL demonstrates a balance between practical efficiencies, embracing technology and automation, as well as idealistic striving for universal access to information. This idealistic goal is why – although libraries may be cautious institutions and continue to strive to be politically neutral – providing

equal access to information supports the goal of social justice and is arguably an inherently political part of the work of librarians. Certainly, it is more efficient from an aggregate cost perspective to share rather than requiring every institution to rely solely on its own resources. If we accept, normatively, that libraries have a social justice mission, then sharing between institutions is essential.

Just knowing that people have access to more than what is at their local library or even what is on the internet is important for cultivating creativity and encouraging vision, without artificial or unnecessary limits. The importance of supporting effective ILL departments goes beyond filling individual requests. It builds up the image of libraries, helping to brand them as gateways to the world, to meaningful answers, and to knowledge. The concept of library information sharing—like that of libraries and of librarians—is a packed signifier with deep significances and multiple meanings. Libraries are places of quiet, community, reflection and creation; they exist to promote learning, democracy, and community. Every day, librarians share information through traditional and innovative library services and collections, and by doing so, engage with the educational, professional, and personal successes and challenges of library users. In both physical and digital library spaces, people study and learn, read and write, think and work, compare and verify information, using shared library assets, all of which encompass sharing information.

ILL is just one valuable piece of the information access puzzle. Traditional, or even enhanced, ILL services are certainly not the only way that librarians connect people and information. ILL cannot do it all but with appropriate support and collaborations that integrate it with the work of other departments, all librarians can take advantage of the natural connections and synergies with ILL to more efficiently and effectively serve users. Even in the smallest public library, or poorly funded school library, ILL enables children and students and lifelong learners to dream big, learn about the world, and make a difference.

It is appropriate to be skeptical that ILL can do so much, when in many libraries it is not available at all; likewise, it is reductionist to claim that library information sharing will save the world; and, it is naïve to ignore the potential dangers of sharing personal or security information, although librarians are known for securing private information even as they freely share public information. Cooperation may be no more natural than competition, but ILL librarians do have a proven record of successfully working together. So, through this collection, we ask that all librarians take a fresh look at library information and resource sharing through ILL services.

We do so because as the author Neil Gaiman has said, “I remember the joy as a small child, I would have been about nine or ten years old, of the interlibrary loan ... the librarian explained to me they could do an

interlibrary loan, because there was a library in the system that had this book. And the amount of power was so exciting. And after that I started doing interlibrary loans all the time, because – it was like nothing could stop me” (Gaiman, 2010). ILL can, and does, transform lives. Of course, there are also those – generally nonlibrary users – who see libraries merely as museums for books and who may never visit a library or library website to learn about all the fascinating collections and useful services – including ILL – that librarians make available to help people pursue their educational, personal, and professional aspirations and interests. Still, that such places, services, and professionals exist and serve their neighbors and the world is generally acknowledged as a common good. As for library users, nonusers and even some librarians who consider interlibrary loan services to be merely a slow, expensive, peripheral extra that is not essential to sharing the information, resources, knowledge, skills, and stories that librarians want to share with information seekers – they should read this book.

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