Interlibrary loan and document delivery in the larger academic library
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An Interlibrary Loan Department has the potential of turning a library into a very large one indeed – provided it runs efficiently. In constructing the best practice for any Interlibrary Loan (ILL) department, it is imperative that those responsible for laying down and implementing the policy in terms of which it is run, should be aware of the possible solutions that exist in ILL departments. A comparative approach, quite simply, saves one from re-inventing the wheel and ensures that the latest developments e.g. regarding electronic requesting elsewhere can immediately be implemented in one’s own environment. Lee Hilyer is enormously experienced in ILL operations and he shares his expertise in this book, which he offers as “a desk reference/practical handbook for library staff new to Interlibrary Loans”, although he adds “veteran users may also benefit from some of the suggestions and examples provided” (Preface: xv).

The author has presented a book that has a clear, logical structure and which can be used in different ways.

The first four chapters of the book give an overview of what ILL is all about. In these chapters the author not only provides formal definitions and descriptions, but also sets out – in two short and very accessible chapters (3 and 4) - what a typical day in an ILL department is like. Chapter 5 provides an invaluable sketch of ILL operations from the perspective of the patron. Chapters 6–10 are detailed “how to” chapters. Here the author introduces the reader, with the aid of a host of examples, to the policies and procedures necessary to sustain a properly functioning ILL department. Chapter 6 sets out both the necessity for having a borrowing policy for patrons and the elements that it might conceivably contain. Chapter 7, again, describes the general policies and codes in the USA that govern libraries more generally. This chapter might not be the one most relevant to South African librarians, but, on the other hand, it is certainly not completely irrelevant, since it is necessary to know which policy guidelines inform the practices of the libraries that South African librarians come up against when dealing with libraries in the USA. Chapter 8 contains a concise and clear discussion of copyright law in the USA. South African copyright law is of course not the same as that of the USA, but the two systems have much in common. Any librarian will benefit from having an idea of the US copyright laws, while a perusal of this chapter also drives home certain basic principles surrounding copyright issues that have universal significance. Chapters 9 and 10 describe possible procedures and workflow regarding borrowing and lending respectively. Chapter 11 deals with the crucial question of evaluating the effectiveness of one’s work. This is followed by a host of really useful appendices: Appendix A is entitled “Assorted Tips and Tricks”, while Appendices E and F provide examples of both borrowing and lending workflows, which any manager of an ILL department could profitably use as templates when he or she draws up (or perhaps refines) a blueprint for the operation of their own ILL department.

Who should read this book? Anyone starting out in an ILL Department would immediately be orientated to the world of information-sharing by reading the first four chapters, and experienced librarians would be stimulated to reflect on the nature of their tasks and their approach to ILL generally. The rest of the book is a superb desk manual. Of course, certain sections would not be relevant or even helpful in one’s own library, but all working in the field of ILL would benefit from reading this exposition of how some other libraries go about the specific aspects of the very demanding process required for an effective sharing of resources. No academic library should be without this book.