Academic Services Faculty and Staff Publications   Tampa Library

2014

Interlibrary Lending in Mexican, Caribbean, Central American, and South American Libraries

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Abstract: This article reports on a survey to Mexican, Caribbean, Central and South American libraries about interlibrary loan services and activities. It builds on previous studies and reports in an attempt to address a void in current interlibrary lending literature concerning Latin American libraries' interlibrary lending services.

Keywords: Interlibrary loan, ILL, interpréstamo, Empréstimo entre bibliotecas (EEB) and prestamo interbibliotecario

Introduction:

Studies on researcher's information needs and library resource sharing are few and far between in Latin America and the Caribbean (González, 2004). The International Interlibrary Loan committee under the Sharing and Transforming Access to Resources Section (STARS) of the Association of American Libraries (ALA) Reference and User Services division (RUSA) received only two responses from Latin American libraries when they sent out a worldwide survey to gather information on international interlibrary loan (STARS, 2012). *Global Resource Sharing* by Linda Frederiksen, Margaret Bean and Heidi Nancy, reviewed that, though the membership of Latin American libraries in OCLC has been growing considerably, the majority of those that self identify as lenders are located in Mexico and as such do not represent the wide diversity of Latin American libraries (2012). These small insights could not supply an idea why resource sharing communication between North, Central, and South American libraries was not more common place, or how it could become so. The first step to improving a process is to gather some background. In order to do this, a survey was sent to a cultivated list of contact emails from libraries and interlibrary loan departments in Mexico, the Caribbean, Central and South America in an attempt to get a better answer to the question, what are you guys doing over there?

Literature review:

The familiar saying, history always repeats itself, is no less true in the development of library services. After World War II North American libraries were slow to develop interlibrary loan services. Interlibrary loan was observed as "a sort of stepchild to American librarianship, unwanted in practice no matter how much esteemed

in principle" (Colson, 1962 p260). Libraries imposed arbitrary restrictions on interlibrary loan, if they would participate at all. Though European libraries depended heavily on the practice in order to provide access to books whose home libraries had been destroyed in the war, their requests did not get much answer from U.S. libraries (Colson, 1962).

This unwillingness to interlibrary lend slowly changed. In 1998, a Research Libraries Group study found that non U.S. libraries borrowed from the U.S. more than the reverse (STARS, 2009).   As late as 2007, forty eight years after the ALA's ratification of the *International Interlibrary Loan Procedure for United States Libraries,* and although participation in international interlibrary loan had increased among U.S. libraries, many libraries were still reticent to participate in international interlibrary loan because of perceived dangers to materials and obstacles of cost and copyright (STARS, 2009). U.S. borrowers reported similar problems with decentralized catalogues among other countries that European libraries had pointed out in U.S. libraries decades earlier. Perhaps the STARS International Interlibrary Loan committee's conclusion that "the ILL community still lacks formalized efficient methods for conducting international transactions" (STARS, 2009 p54) will always be relevant as long as libraries worldwide are at different stages of development.

It has been noted by Graham Cornish that "regional studies of ILL are not always the best way to approach the subject...The mere fact that a number of countries are in proximity does not guarantee any uniformity of approach or identification of need" (2001 p126). Truly, study does not always present solution, but it does help us fully understand the environment within which any solution must be compatible. The

greatest value of any study happens when small studies can be added together to create a larger picture. Cornish's own study of Caribbean libraries in 1989 found many of the same barriers to interlibrary lending as had been found in U.S. libraries before: fear of material damage, language, politics, legal issues and demand. Additionally a 1995 study of Columbia, Costa Rica, Mexico and Venezuela libraries found the greatest obstacles to international interlibrary loan were a lack of staffing, copyright, inefficient postal services and costs (Guerrero). Cuban libraries also pointed to slow and undependable post, costs, and difficulties with currency conversion (Núñez Fina et al, 1994). All of these findings were echoed in the Research Libraries Issues (RLI) white paper on international interlibrary loan that found loans across borders were difficult due to cost and time in shipping and possibility of loss (Beaubien et al, 2001).

In his article, "Guía para el servicio de préstamo interbibliotecario en América Latina," Guerrero also found that the majority of library respondents did not charge for their interlibrary loan services (1995). This is an intriguing idea for keeping the costs of international interlibrary loan at bay. Cornish has also mentioned that "cumbersome financial systems only lead to more expense for both the requesting and the supplying library" (1989 p38). The RLI white paper asserted that the success of international interlibrary loan in the U.S. is due to it being handled, and billed, in the same way as national interlibrary loan; changes to the recommended structure of international interlibrary loan that treat it differently from local requests would hamper scholarship worldwide (Beaubien et al, 2001).

Cornish stressed that the first step for improved resource sharing in the Caribbean was shared holdings listings, since there could be no demand with no idea of

what was available. Demand is integral to a viable interlibrary lending system along with

worthwhile total stock, communications, methods for locating materials and

mechanisms for agreement (Cornish, 1989). The effects of demand on interlibrary loan

have been noted by many. The Research Libraries Issues (RLI) International

Interlibrary loan white paper pointed out that increases in the visibility of resources

online and OCLC's inclusion of many international libraries has made the "'walls'

between countries become permeable" (Beaubien et all, 2001 p8). Ten years later, in

the most recent STARS international ILL survey, many libraries had reported that

increases in visibility of material online are increasing interlibrary loan request traffic for

difficult to find international materials, and this demand required better methods and

standards for handling these requests (STARS, 2012). The walls may not necessarily

have become permeable as they have become see through. Copyright is one of the

often reported barriers to international interlibrary loan from libraries of all countries.

The Berne Convention and other international copyright agreements do not specifically

address interlibrary loan, leaving this to individual nations. As a result laws governing

interlibrary lending of copyrighted material vary greatly worldwide (Butler et al, 2001).

Lack of cooperative structure among libraries has created a worldwide interlibrary

lending community that sometimes requests from countries across the seas instead of

those next door. Cuban libraries rely heavily on French and British libraries' document

supply to compensate for a lacking interlibrary loan structure among closer libraries in

Latin America and the Caribbean (Núñez Fina et al, 1994). The 1999 Latin American

seminar by the Universal Availability of Publications (UAP) under the International

Federation of Library Associations (IFLA) in Buenos Aires found that the state of ILL in

Latin American countries varied greatly and, even among the more developed interlibrary loan systems of Chile, Brazil and Mexico, most of the agreements and activity were among academic institutions (Cornish, 2001).   Guerrero found that the interlibrary loan activity of the Columbia, Costa Rica, Mexico and Venezuela libraries surveyed in 1995 was based on inter-institutional agreements instead of IFLA code and limited mostly to national boundaries.

This lack of cooperative structure among libraries is tied to a lack of commitment to sharing within libraries. Robert Seal lists seven primary obstacles for international interlibrary loan that he perceived during his development of a test project between Mexico and the United states. Five of these obstacles are created by the libraries themselves: policies that restrict resource sharing, negativity and lack of trust, lack of sharing tradition, reluctance caused by bad experiences and apathy or lack of interest (1998). Seal spends some time considering the different demands on libraries of differently developed areas, pointing out that the more developed ILL systems grow from information needs that surround education and research whereas, less developed systems sit on the sidelines of communities whose information needs are more basic and locally centered. More recent surveys of researcher behavior in Latin American higher education indicate that this landscape is changing. A study of social science researchers from the National University Autonoma de Mexico revealed that the library was the primary place researchers went to for their information needs (González, 2004). International and national studies alike point to international interlibrary lending as a way to meet needs of researchers in a world of increased publications and publication prices (Núñez Fina et al, 1994; Beaubien et al, 2001). Cooperation and resource sharing is

also a way to understand neighboring cultures and countries, to improve relationships, and ultimately, improve end user services (Seal, 1998). Additionally, this cooperation must be supported by national governments, national and international library organizations and, most likely, led by institutions of higher learning (Seal, 1998; González, 2004).

The problems are not new ones, and though they may have been overcome by other libraries in the past they are no less relevant. If decentralized international ILL services killed the possibility of expanded international ILL, most U.S. international interlibrary lending wouldn't exist. Similarly, if cost and currency conversion couldn't be mitigated, there would be no transatlantic library sharing at all. It only takes one person, one library, one pilot program to start solving the problem. Since Robert Seal's trip to Mexico, from the University of Texas at El Paso in 1988, to lay the groundwork for a new U.S./Mexico cooperative library project (Morales Campos, 1994), library alliances have been steadily cobbled together among Latin American libraries. Estela Morales Campos' survey of project participant libraries and additional Mexican libraries with international interlibrary loan services shows that, by 1993, the National Autonomous University Mexico group was requesting eight times more materials from the U.S. than vice versa. This echoes the findings of the 1998 RLG study that U.S. libraries were international net lenders. Morales Campos points to richness of U.S. library collections compared to Mexican library collections (1994), though discoverability might play a part as well. The library system of the National Autonomous University Mexico also developed a system of serially releasing the union catalog and serials collection (Sistema Bibliotecario y de Información de la Universidad Nacional Autónoma de

México aka SERIUNAM) on CD-ROM, mainly used by Latin American libraries, as a method to locate materials available (Guerrero, 1995). SERIUNAM is now fully online and joined by TESIUNAM (tesis sustentadas en la Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México), which is a full text search of materials available to all member library patrons. By 2012 two more "interlibrary loan transnational initiatives between Mexico and the United States of note [were] Grupo Amigos and the Transborder Library Forum" (Frederiksen, Bean, Nance, 2012).

Among Columbia, Costa Rica, Mexico and Venezuela libraries a decentralized system of large universities are primarily responsible for any available union catalog and cooperative services, in contrast with the IFLA recommended national center (Guerrero, 1995). National programs are also laying the groundwork for more robust interlibrary lending communities. The Agreement of University Libraries Cordoba (ABUC) in Argentina developed by library administrators in 2001 and fueled by a lack of economic resources, challenged frontline librarians to create a cooperative network by 2010. This network had to include a union catalog, methods for sharing resources and services, a patron requesting system, shared thesis collection, open access repository and shared staff training. The success of the network hinged on the administrative support it received from the beginning and also on constant communication between members. The result has proven that cooperation is possible among the most diverse of libraries (Martín & Angelozzi, 2010). Cuba has worked hard to support national research in light of poor lending networks in the Caribbean, developing a robust document delivery service by reaching out to British and French libraries (Núñez Fina et al, 1994). Private organizations are also being developed to support teaching and research. Alerta al

Conocimiento in Chile centrally manages a host of decentralized services like sharing serial holdings, negotiating shared electronic resources, providing document delivery and a cooperative acquisitions program. Services are available to all Chilean institutions that meet negotiation conditions since 1996 (Arenas, Morel, Jasmén, 2000).

Survey methodology:

The new study was written with the goal of getting an updated view on international interlibrary lending trends among Latin American libraries in light of such a poor response from Latin American libraries to the STARS International ILL Committee's survey (2012). Characteristics of the 2012 STARS survey that may have affected individual's willingness to participate were paid special attention. Firstly, the survey was sent to a large number of countries, but offered English as the only language option. Though countries with English instruction required in primary school or as an official second language would not have trouble with this, it may have contributed to the poor response from Latin American libraries. The survey also asked very detailed statistics information from participants. If, as Elda-Monica Guerrero pointed out in 1995, many libraries of Latin America lacked any standardized method of keeping statistics, this could confuse and frustrate participants. Finally, the STARS survey was sent primarily via electronic discussion lists and a few direct contacts. This requires the discussion lists used for the survey to also have been used by Latin American libraries to get any adequate response.

Preparation for the survey began with collecting email addresses from the publicly accessible websites of libraries located throughout Mexico, Caribbean, Central and South America.   The preferred contact was the librarian or library staff member in

charge of interlibrary loan at the institution. If no one was designated, then a contact was sought in public services, administration, and finally general library contact emails were saved when there was no named contact for the library at all. 168 emails from 151 institutions in 28 states and countries were collected.

Survey questions that asked about volume of requests allowed the respondent to select a bracket instead of give an exact number. Similarly, questions about increase and decrease of demand for services only asked about the general trend and did not require statistics. The survey was anonymous unless the respondents chose to provide contact information. Most importantly, the email announcing the survey gave respondents a choice of two links: one to take the survey in English and one for a Spanish language version of the survey. It was hoped that the 20 Brazilian contacts would find one of the two survey languages acceptable.

Survey Responses

Demographics

Twenty three percent of the collected contacts supplied a response to the survey. Of these forty responses all but two were delivered via the Spanish language version of the survey. Brazil accounted for 35% of the responses, as seen in figure 1, followed by Columbia with 13%, Chile with 10%, and Mexico, El Salvador and Argentina all with 8%. Representatives from Bermuda, Cuba, Ecuador, Peru, Puerto Rico, Uruguay, Venezuela and the Dominican Republic also contributed their voices and information to the study. No responses were gathered from the contacts of Antigua, Aruba, Bahamas, Barbados, Bolivia, Costa Rica, Guadeloupe, Guyana, Haiti, Jamaica, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, or Sint Maarten.

<figure 1>

76% of the responses collected were delivered from respondents in academic libraries (figure 2). This is in keeping with the STARS International Interlibrary loan survey that also saw a majority, 66.7%, of responses from academic libraries (2012). Special, Health and national libraries were also represented as were institutions that straddled public and university clientele.

<figure 2>

Library collections ranged from 35 to four million titles with an average collection size of 422,817 titles. Just over half of the respondents had collections over 50,000 and 32% had collections with over 100,000 titles (figure 3). The largest and smallest collections both were held by university libraries. Special, public and health library collections all fell within the middle ranges of the sample.

<figure 3>

Library and Interlibrary loan services

When asked whether circulation at their library had increased, decreased, or stayed the same, the respondent libraries were equally spread in their answer regardless of library type and collection sizes. This is different from the noticed trends in the U.S. where most academic circulation counts have plummeted in recent years, even as public library circulation counts rose (Kurt, 2012; Hoffert, 2013).

Only five of the thirty nine respondents who answered whether they participate in ILL said that they do not. Among their reasons were the cost, remote location and lack of demand for the service. Respondents who answered that they did not offer interlibrary loan were taken to the end of the survey. Consequently, the remaining responses do not reflect activities in Venezuela or Bermuda.

The material most often sent through interlibrary loan, as reported by the survey responses, included books and electronically delivered articles. Figure 4 illustrates that theses/dissertations were not far behind and, though less common, audio visual materials were also loaned by almost 13% of libraries, comprised mainly of special and university libraries.

<figure 4>

The majority, 67% of the respondents, interlibrary loaned less than 500 requests in the previous year, either borrowing or lending. This is similar to the STARS finding where about half respondents had 1000 or less borrowing/lending traffic per year (2012). The 30% of libraries that reported a decrease in interlibrary loan traffic over the last five years were also among those that interlibrary loaned less than 500 requests in the previous year. 43% of respondents reported no change in traffic and 27% reported an increase over the last five years. Those that reported an increase were spread evenly among library types and collection sizes.

61% of respondents charge library patrons for ILL services, 25% did not charge either their patron or borrowing libraries, and the remaining either transferred the

lending library bill and/or cost of postage to the patron or charged only borrowing libraries.

60% of the responding libraries do not interlibrary loan internationally, this differs drastically to the STARS international interlibrary loan respondents of which 87.3% participated in international interlibrary loan (2012). The reasons given for not participating included difficulty establishing a secure shipping method, costs, copyright issues, little demand, inconsistency of the currency, and no established local policy. Of the twelve respondents that do interlibrary loan internationally, nine report that international requests consist of less than 10% of their business, two reported between 10 and 50% of interlibrary loan traffic was international, and only one reported that over 50% of their interlibrary loan activity was in international transactions.

<figure 5>

When asked what issues most affected interlibrary loan, copyright was the most selected response, followed by postal difficulties and electronic books (figure 5). Respondents who chose 'other' were asked to give input. Added issues affecting interlibrary loan were reported as: marketing of the service, the time invested in the transaction, and restrictions on possible lenders.

On the other hand, when asked what was the greatest obstacles to international interlibrary lending, costs, time spent and danger of loss were most often selected, followed by copyright, language and lack of access. This aligns very closely with the findings of previous surveys, where difficult to obtain formats, shipping, and payment methods had the greatest effect on international interlibrary lending (STARS, 2012).

Systems

<table 1>

The STARS International interlibrary loan survey reported that OCLC was most heavily used network (2012) among respondents followed by DOCLINE. In contrast, only four respondents to this survey used OCLC for interlibrary loan requesting: two universities in Brazil, one university in Mexico and one university in Puerto Rico.

Seven respondents use Celsius, which is a resource sharing software developed by PrEBi (proyecto de Enlace de Bibliotecas or project link library) of the University of La Plata as part of the Library Linkage initiative of ISTEC. Celsius is used by libraries in the United States, Brazil, Venezuela, Colombia, Ecuador, Panama and Spain. Local instances of Celsius allow library staff to send a request of materials to other libraries, track and share statistics and automated request creation (Celsius, 2007).

As shown in table 1, the majority of respondents selected 'other.' Among their answers, five used home grown applications, six relied primarily on email and library web forms, and three used the COMUT system, or Programa de Comutação Bibliográfica (Bibliographic Commutation Program). Part of the Instituto Brasileiro de Informação em Ciência e Tecnologia, COMUT provides a method for participant libraries to request and send technical and scientific documents, theses and dissertations, proceedings, and other requests within copyright law. End users can contact a library to act as her intermediary, or create an account where she makes direct requests for content. All payment is handled within the system. COMUT currently has 394 base supplier libraries, 2304 requestor libraries, and 54058 individual users (Programa de Comutação Bibliográfica- Comut, 2012).

Of the remaining libraries that selected other, two respondents process their requests manually and use traditional mail, and two rely primarily on the British library. One library reported using Prospero, which is an open source, web based document delivery system created in 1999 by the staff of the Prior Health Sciences Library at Ohio State University (Morgan & Hersey, 2003). Another library was a user of SCAD: Servicio cooperativo de acceso al documento. SCAD was created with the support of the Centro Latino-Americano e do Caribe de Informação em Ciências da Saúde (BIREME), for BIREME members (Biblioteca Medica National, 2003).

Additionally, one respondent library used the Integrated library system of the University of São Paulo Empréstimo Entre Bibliotecas (EEB=ILL) system (SISWEEB) that allows users of University of São Paulo libraries to directly request materials from any other library in the system (Empréstimo Entre Bibliotecas, 2013).

Consortiums

Respondents were also asked to list any consortia or cooperatives to which their libraries belonged. The following consortia/cooperatives were mentioned.

Sistema Integrado de Biblioteca da USP (SIBi/USP) or the Integrated library system of the University of São Paulo offers interlibrary loan requesting to its users through SISWEEB ("Empréstimo Entre Bibliotecas", 2013).

USP (la Unidad de Servicios al Público) organizes, and manages the development of public services at university libraries of the Pontificia Universidad Católica, including

campuses in Chile, Peru, and Rio de Janeiro. ("Institucional: Unidad de Servicios al Público - USP", 2007)

BIREME (Centro Latino-Americano e do Caribe de Informação em Ciências da Saúde) Centro Latino American and Caribbean Center on Health Sciences is coordinated by the Pan American Health Organization and includes health sciences libraries and document centers ("Sistema Latino Americano e do Caribe", n.d.).

ReBAP (Rede Brasileira de Bibliotecas da Área de Psicologia) Brazilian Network of Libraries of the Area of Psychology was originally developed by the Federal Council of Psychology and the Office of Library and Documentation of the Institute of Psychology at the University of São Paulo to support undergraduate and graduate programs in psychology. ("O que é a REBAP", 2013)

IBICT (Instituto Brasileiro de Informação em Ciência e Tecnologia) the Brazilian Institute of Information in Science and Technology includes automatic collection, registration, and dissemination of theses and dissertations, publishing electronic journals, and repositories of digital documents   It established the 1st program in information science and a postdoctoral fellow in information science in partnership with the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro ("About IBICT", 2012)

ISTEC (ibero-American Science & Technology Education Consortium) was established in the 1990s to support collaborations in science and technology among institutions of Latin America ("History", 2013). ISTEC created the Digital Library Linkage

Initiative (Liblink) which allows libraries to transfer electronic documents and share

digital materials. ("LibLink Library Linkages", 2013).

AUPRIDES (La Asociación de Universidades Privadas de El Salvador), the

Association of Private Universities of El Salvador, established in 1993, includes 14

private universities in El Salvador ("Bienvenidos A AUPRIDES", n.d.).

G8 Bibliotecas de Medellin was formed in 2005 of eight institutions of higher

education in the city of Medellín and its Metropolitan area. The G8 libraries provide

access to collections and services to any patron of a participating institution ("Prestamo

Interbibliotecario", n.d.).

CBIES - Compartilhamento entre Bibliotecas do Rio de Janeiro is a program of

sharing among institutions of higher education in Rio de Janeiro ("Histórico", 2011).

Asociación Cubana de Bibliotecas (ASCUBI), Cuban Association of Librarians, was

established in 1948 by Dr. Maria Teresa Freyre de Andrade, as an umbrella institution

for librarians in the country. It has approximately 3163 members ("Asociación Cubana

de Bibliotecarios (ASCUBI)", 2014).

        Other networks reported by respondents were the Universidad Estadual de

Campinas (UNICAMP) and Universidad Estadual Paulista (UNESP) among universities,

CFP (Conselho Federal de Psicologia/Federal Council of Psychology) and Red

Nacional de Bibliotecas Médicas de Cuba among health organizations, local

consortiums, and governmental affiliations. Some respondents were also members of

international groups like IFLA (International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions), British Library, LVIS, SoLINE, and SOLINET.

One final question to respondents asked ideas for improvement on library to library communication and interlibrary loan requesting. The answers were not surprising or new.   Respondents suggested libraries be clearer on available services. In 2005 Leslie Morris observed that "many (most, almost all) libraries do not have a written, formal interlibrary loan policy covering all contingencies" (pg. 1). The OCLC Policies Directory helps libraries communicate their services to other OCLC users; what about non users? Most interlibrary loan service web pages address local patron services, not services to other libraries.

Survey respondents also suggested improving the methods of scanning and electronic sending of materials, a goal of many interlibrary lending units worldwide. Additionally, respondents requested libraries accept IFLA vouchers, something that just over half of libraries polled by the STARS international interlibrary loan committee do now (2012). Clarity and publicity of services and policies, improved scanning methods, and IFLA vouchers are all included in the ALA RUSA STARS Rethinking Resource Sharing STAR Checklist. The checklist, designed to challenge ILL departments to improve and think critically about their services, is already used by many as a list of goals and best practices (Rethinking Resource Sharing Star Checklist, n.d.).

Conclusion

Institutions of higher learning in Latin America and the Caribbean are leading the way to better systems of interlibrary loan, as called for by Seal (1998) and González (2004). However the drive to develop and improve interlibrary loan services locally or

internationally seems to be primarily based on demand over any other force or obstacle.

It was the libraries who reported decrease in demand for ILL that interlibrary loaned the

least materials, and those libraries who refrained from international interlibrary loan

reported a lack of demand as one of the reasons for doing so.

Seal (1998) and González (2004) may call for national support and the

leadership of higher education, but the support and leadership will only come in

response to demand. Elda-Monica Guerrero's IFLA and UNAM sponsored study of

1995 recommended that each country should "create a national centre for

establishing… interlending norms and procedures" (p 17), develop understanding for

new technologies and copyright laws as well as standardized policies and uniform

statistics. Yet creating this infrastructure would be a waste of effort if there was no

demand that would make use of it. While libraries create and curate collections for

present and future users, interlibrary loan is all about the user in the moment and their

need for access to material. Demand is central to international interlibrary lending in

every country.

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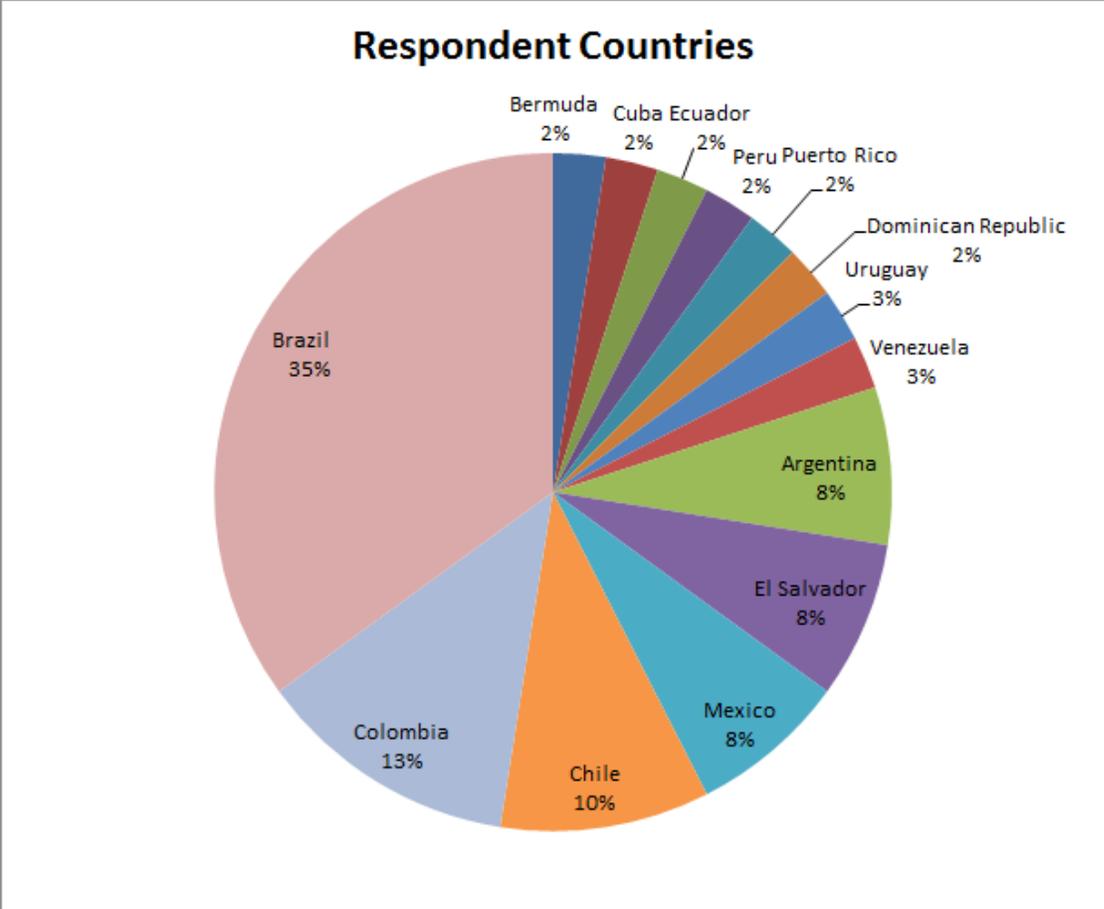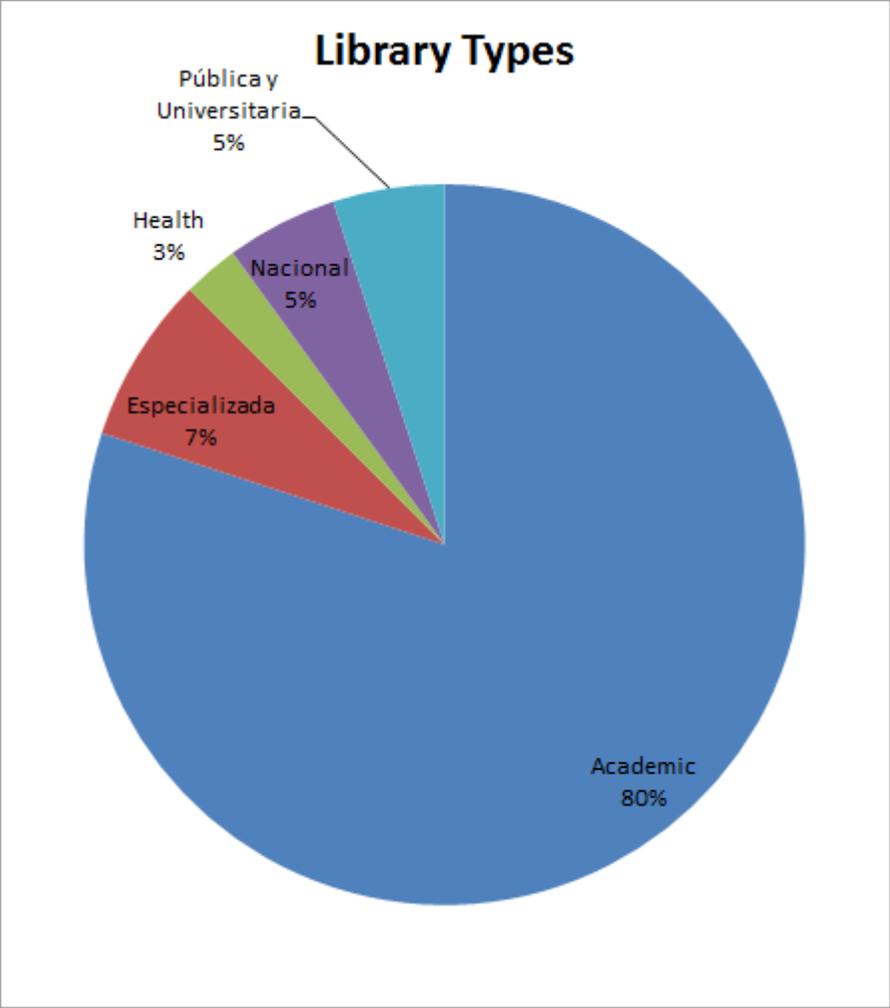
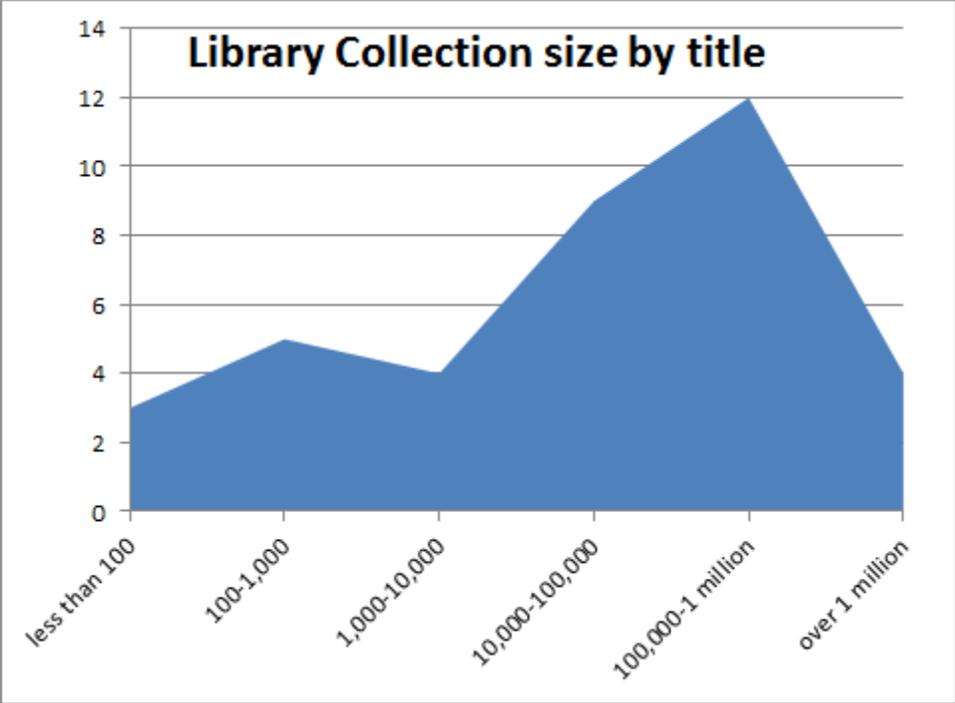Figure 1: Respondent Countries

Figure 2: Respondent Library Types

Figure 3: Library Collection size by title count

Figure 4: Materials available to interlibrary loan
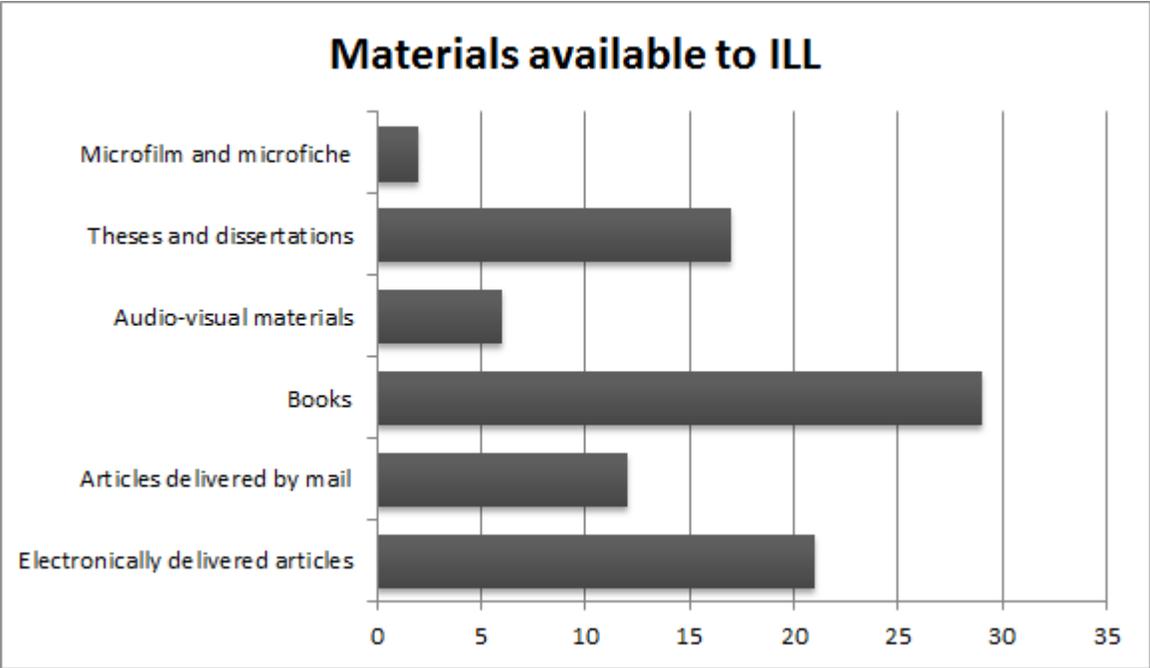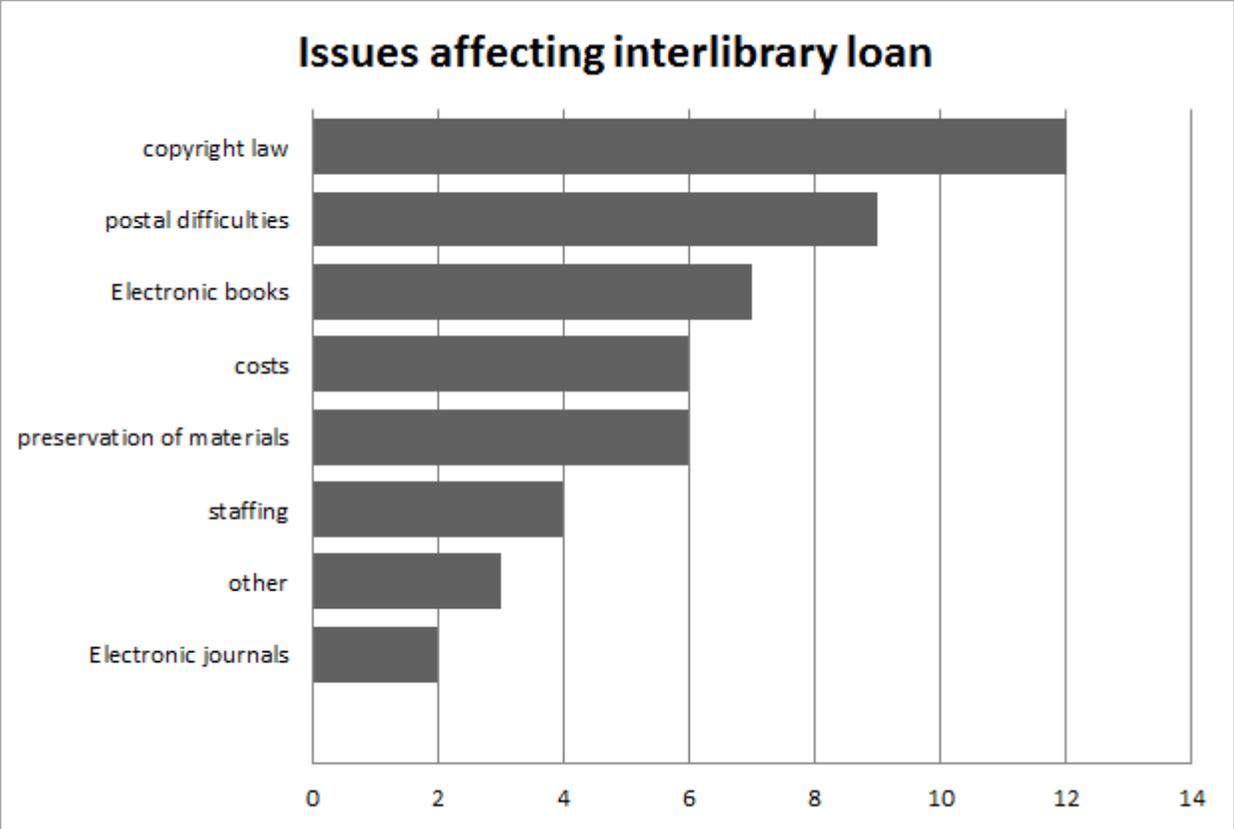
Figure 5: Issues affecting interlibrary loan

OCLC	Celsius	Ariel	Other
4	7	5	22

Table 1: Systems Used by Respondent Libraries