

## 2011 ALA RUSA STARS INTERNATIONAL INTERLIBRARY LOAN SURVEY

### Executive Summary

#### BACKGROUND AND INTRODUCTION

The charge of the STARS International Interlibrary Loan Committee is to evaluate trends in international interlibrary loan (ILL) and resource sharing, to develop materials and resources for international ILL practitioners, and to promote international ILL resource sharing efforts. The Committee recognized the need for information about international ILL activities as the first step towards fulfilling this charge.

In 2007, the International Interlibrary Loan Committee conducted a survey of U.S. libraries regarding their international ILL activities in order to gather information about the current environment and identify strategies for improving international ILL. The survey results revealed a number of real and perceived barriers to participation in international ILL. The Committee prepared an Executive Summary of the 2007 survey, which is posted on the STARS website.<sup>i</sup> An analysis of the survey results was also published in the *Reference and User Services Quarterly*.<sup>ii</sup> Both documents were intended to widely distribute the information gathered throughout the U.S. ILL community.

In 2011, the STARS International Interlibrary Loan Committee wanted to assess international ILL from a more international perspective. A survey was created in SurveyMonkey, an online survey tool, and distributed to both U.S. and non-U.S. libraries via various electronic discussion lists and direct contacts with international libraries. 632 respondents began the survey, while 404 (63.9%) fully completed the survey. Only the first question requesting acknowledgement of consent and voluntary participation was required, so the number of respondents varies from question to question.

The Committee's goal was to uncover similarities and differences between U.S. and non-U.S. libraries' international ILL activities. The Committee was particularly interested in whether the barriers to international ILL identified by U.S. libraries were shared by non-U.S. libraries. The STARS International Interlibrary Loan Committee plans to use the insight gained from the 2011 survey to identify and initiate strategies to improve international resource sharing.

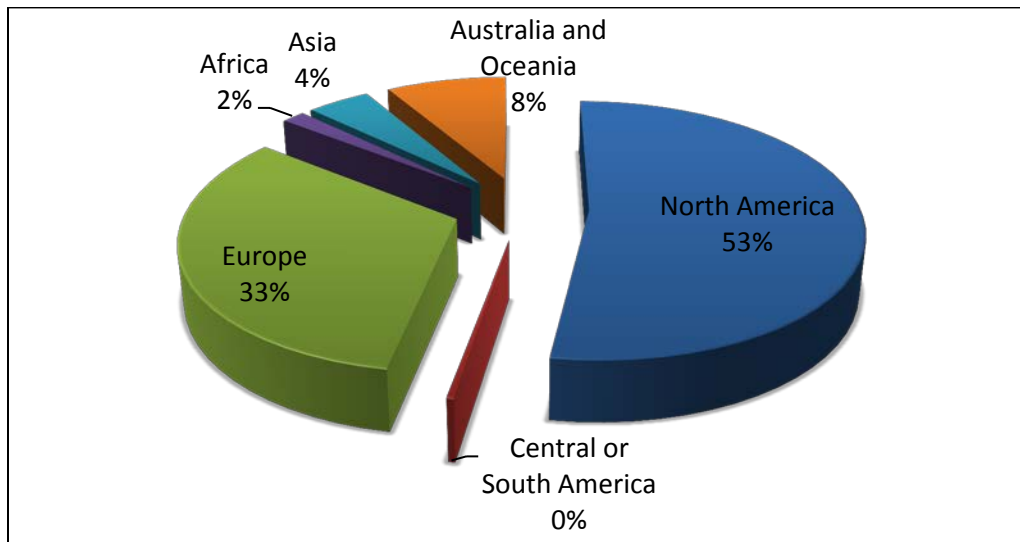
In recent years, resource discovery has become easier for users through enhancements in technology. The internet allows users to discover materials held by international libraries that were previously unknown to them. As a result, international ILL has become an increasingly important component of resource sharing. The lack of coherent procedures and communication methods among other potential barriers makes it essential for ILL practitioners to gain a better understanding of international ILL activities and to use that knowledge to improve international cooperation. The International ILL Committee hopes that its efforts will improve ILL services for library users around the world.

#### SURVEY RESPONSES

##### Demographics

North American libraries accounted for more than half of respondents with 298 responses (53%). Of these 82% were from the United States with the remaining percentage from Canada. Europe was the next best represented continent at 33% of respondents. The European countries most heavily represented were Sweden (36), Italy (29), Norway (27), Denmark (22), and Germany (15). Remaining

respondents were from Australia and Oceania (47), Asia (25), Africa (9), and Central or South America (2). Overall, 60 countries from six continents were represented by 557 respondents.



**Figure 1: Respondents by Continent**

Of 565 respondents to the question of library type, 377 (66.7%) identified themselves as university or college libraries at 326 and 51 respectively. The next most highly represented library type was national libraries with 38 (6.7%), more than half of which came from European libraries. National libraries were closely followed by medical/health libraries at 37 (6.5%) Of those 37, Canadian libraries made up 40% of the total. The remaining library types included public, other, special, state or provincial, law and school libraries. The libraries within each of these categories hailed from a variety of locations, excluding law libraries, which were wholly located in the United States.

489 survey respondents indicated whether they participate in any national or international resource sharing networks. Of these, only 80 libraries said that they do not. Libraries not participating in resource sharing networks were mostly from Europe (60, 75%) followed by North America (10, 12%), and Asia (7, 9%). OCLC was the most heavily used network with 360 respondents in 31 countries. Next was DOCLINE with 93 respondents in 10 countries, and Libraries Australia with 44 respondents in 5 countries. Only 4 libraries indicated participation in the Unity UK network. 150 libraries provided names of other resource sharing networks. The most common entries were LIBRIS (16), Subito (16), RapidILL (14), the British Library (12), BIBSYS (11), DANBIB (8), NILDE (8), and Te Puna (7).

General ILL Activities

Nearly half of respondents (200) represented libraries with borrowing activity of fewer than 1,000 transactions of returnables per year. 41.8% reported between 1,000 and 10,000 borrowing returnables, and only 12% borrow more than 10,000 returnable items annually. Reports of non-returnable borrowing activity were similar. 46.4% handle fewer than 1,000 transactions, 12.4% borrow more than 10,000 non-returnables, and the remainder represents libraries with a range of 1,000 to 10,000 annual borrowing requests for non-returnables.

On the lending side, 195 (44.6%) respondents reported total annual lending transactions of less than 1,000 for returnables. 162 (37.1%) indicated a range of 1,000 and 10,000 transactions; and 80 (18.3%) lent over 10,000 returnable items. For non-returnables, 202 (49.5%) respondents reported total annual

lending transactions of less than 1,000; 138 (33.8%) indicated a range of 1,000 and 10,000 annual non-returnable deliveries; and 68 (16.7%) delivered more than 10,000 nonreturnables.

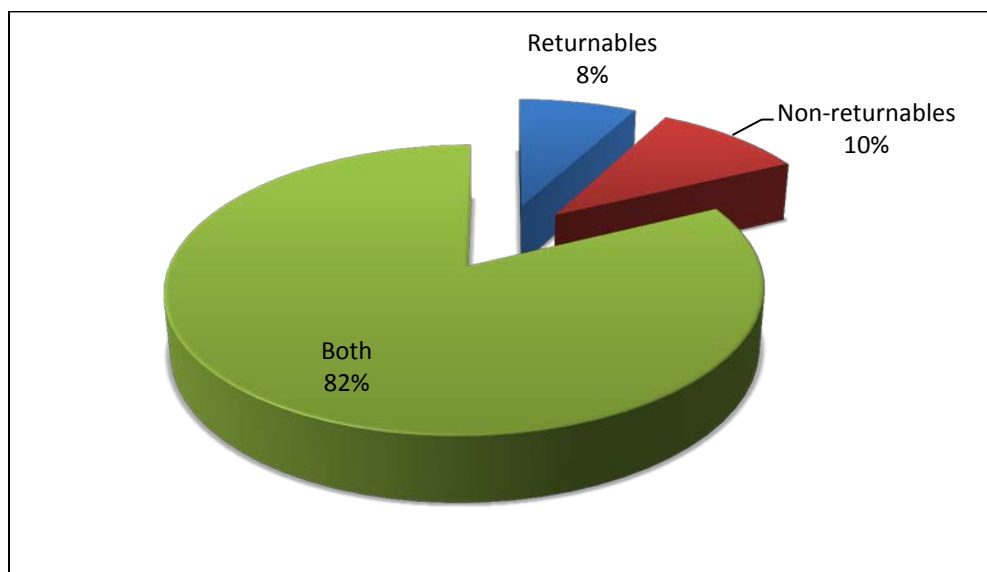
As a borrowing library, more than two-thirds of respondents report an average turnaround time (receipt of request to receipt of item) of less than one week on domestic ILL requests, while 37.1% reported one to three days. 17.5% reported an average of seven to nine days and only 9.6% indicated an average turnaround time of 10 or more days.

There is a noticeable difference in charges to local users as to domestic versus international ILL transactions. 281 (63.1%) respondents do not charge fees for domestic ILL requests, while 204 (48.8%) report no fees or charges for international ILL requests. 111 (24.9%) respondents assess a standard fee or flat fee for domestic requests, while 125 (30%) of respondents assess a standard fee or flat rate for international ILL requests. Lower percentages of respondents, 4.0% and 9.4% respectively, report that their libraries charge all costs to users. "Shipping costs only" are reported charged by even fewer respondents, with nine (2.0%) respondents charging shipping for domestic ILL and 24 (5.8%) for international ILL. 31 (7.0%) respondents charge only costs above regular limits for domestic ILL and 28 (6.7%) for international ILL. 46 (10.3%) report charging for domestic ILL to only some of their users while 36 (8.7%) report charging for international ILL to only some of their users.

#### Borrowing Overview

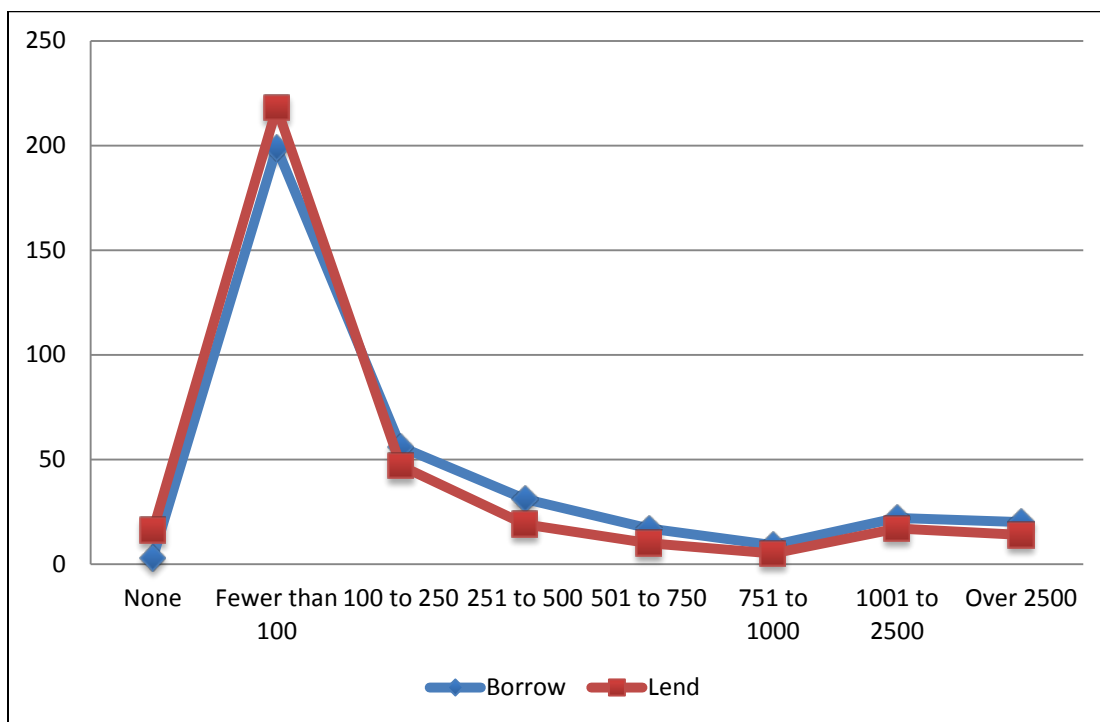
Of 481 respondents, 420 (87.3%) reported that their library borrows internationally. The survey posed an additional ten questions regarding borrowing habits to these respondents. This section will cover the responses to those questions.

Survey participants were asked if they borrowed returnables, non-returnables, or both. 371 participants answered the question. The majority of respondents (82.2%) borrow both kinds of requests. Of those libraries that will only borrow either returnables or non-returnables, a higher percentage (10%) will borrow non-returnables but not returnables.



**Figure 2: Material Types Borrowed from International Libraries**

Respondents were asked to provide an estimate of their annual international borrowing requests. Over half of respondents (55%) indicated that they process less than 100 international borrowing requests per year. 19.1% of respondents reported more than 500 international borrowing requests. The results show that, as in the 2007 U.S. survey, international borrowing makes up a small portion of total borrowing requests. This is reinforced by responses to the next questions, which asked whether participants place more or fewer international ILL requests now than five years ago. Over half of respondents (52.6%) reported no to little increase (0-10%) in the number of international requests. However, fewer respondents overall (19.4%) reported a decrease in international borrowing.



**Figure 3: Volume of International Requests**

The committee sought to learn what influenced respondents' perceptions about changes in international volume and received a wide array of answers. The most frequent responses seem to relate to increases in international borrowing. Two themes emerged: increased discoverability of international materials and more international lenders. Responses related to a decrease in international borrowing included expensive shipping costs, increased availability of e-resources, and the ability to purchase items at a lower cost than borrowing. Many reasons given are not easily attributable to either an increase or decrease in international borrowing such as change in patron demand and need.

More than 300 participants shared their average turnaround time on international ILL requests. The majority (67%) indicated it takes 10 days or longer to receive returnable items from international lenders. Not surprisingly, this far exceeds the turnaround time most libraries reported for domestic ILL requests. The inverse is true for receiving non-returnables from international lenders with 69.5% reporting a turnaround time of 6 days or less.

When asked which countries they borrow from most heavily, the respondents indicated that Europe (751) was the continent most heavily used with North America (257) and Australia & Oceania (148) distant second and third. This makes sense as a slim majority indicated that they resided in North

America. While there were results from more than forty countries to this question, most of the results for individual countries are statistically insignificant due to their low response rate.

Libraries in the United States reported the most varied responses with the top choices being Canada (107), Australia (86), Germany (82), United Kingdom (66), Denmark (38), and Japan (26). The United Kingdom, England, and Great Britain were listed as separate categories although Great Britain, England, and Scotland are part of the United Kingdom. Combining their results leads to a combined total of 116 which would replace Canada in first place. It is not surprising that these are the top choices. Most US libraries use OCLC WorldCat to place ILL requests; there are OCLC suppliers in each of these top choices. The countries with the lowest response rate (Austria, Chile, Czech Republic, etc.) may include their holdings in WorldCat, but most of their libraries do not participate in OCLC's WorldCat Resource Sharing. To place an interlibrary loan request to a non-supplier requires additional work in identifying an appropriate email or other address in addition to verifying holdings and availability often in a different language.

Many non-US libraries named more than one country from which they borrow heavily, but the summary below shows the number of individual countries named.

- Swedish libraries reported 9 countries with the top choices being Germany (20), Norway (18), Denmark (16), United Kingdom (10), and the United States (10).
- Australian libraries reported 12 countries with the top choices being the United States (18), United Kingdom (16), Germany (15), and New Zealand (15).
- Canadian libraries reported 13 countries with the top choices being the United States (32), United Kingdom (11), and Australia (10).
- Danish libraries reported 9 countries with the top choices being Germany (12), Sweden (12), Norway (11), and the United States (11).
- Norwegian libraries reported 11 countries with the top choices being Denmark (13), Sweden (13), and Germany (12).
- Italian libraries reported 13 countries with the top choices being Germany (12), France (10), and Spain (8).
- U.K. libraries reported 9 countries with no choice receiving 10 or more responses. Their top choices were the United States (9) and Australia (5), Canada (4), and Germany (4).

A broader view can be seen by looking at the continent data:

- North American libraries tend to borrow the most from each other with the remaining top choices being United Kingdom/Great Britain/England/Scotland (130), Australia (94), Germany (84), Denmark (37), Japan (27), France (20), China (18), and Spain (15).
- Most European libraries' borrowing partners are also within Europe with the United States a distant third at 52 responses. The other top choices were Germany (86), United Kingdom/Great Britain/England (60), Norway (42), Denmark (39), and Sweden (34).
- Most of the responses from Australia and Oceania came from Australian libraries. All New Zealand responses indicated that their top borrowing partners are in Australia. Australian libraries tend to borrow the most from libraries in the United States (22), the United Kingdom/Great Britain/England (19), and Germany (18).
- There were fewer responses from Asian libraries with the United States being the country that received the most requests.
- There were only eleven responses from Africa with highest number of responses, at 3, going to the United States and Australia.

- The results from South America are statistically insignificant.

Participants were asked if they routinely attempt to verify the citation and holdings before requesting an item from an international library. Of those responding to the question regarding citation verification, 90.5% indicate that they do routinely attempt to verify the citation. An even greater percentage of respondents (91.9%) indicated that they routinely attempt to verify the holdings of the international library before requesting an item. This is positive in that availability is determined before a request is sent hopefully saving the time of staff at the owning library. While this can be time consuming for borrowing staff, it is expected that the item will be received more quickly than if the request was sent blindly without verifying holdings.

When asked what tools are used to locate international holdings, most of the responses came from US libraries with OCLC as the overwhelming favorite. The responses also showed OCLC receiving the most responses from Australia, New Zealand, Germany, Canada, Japan, and South Africa. Other popular choices selected by libraries outside of North American were local catalog and union catalog. The survey did not define local catalog so it is impossible to determine how the respondents interpreted this. The survey also provided an option to list other tools that did not appear on the list. The most popular results were Karlsruhe Virtual Catalog (and the specific catalogs it searches), Subito (Germany), and Google. It is not surprising that fewer libraries responded with Docline as one must be a subscriber to access the database; only 37 respondents were affiliated with medical/health libraries. There were only 20 responses for Gateway Service Center of Chinese Academic Journal Publications and 33 for 33 responses for Global ILL Framework (Japan). This may speak to a lack of awareness of those who responded.

The most popular choices for types of materials that are difficult to obtain from international collections are not a surprise. When compared to US responses to the Committee's 2007 survey, the material types identified are largely the same. Materials difficult to obtain from international lenders are also similar to those US libraries have difficulty borrowing domestically. Those types with responses greater than 100 of covered below.

1. Copies of rare or older materials (182 responses): There are several possible reasons that it is difficult to obtain copies of rare or older materials. The first is copyright laws, which vary from country to country. While materials published in the US are in the public domain prior to 1924, this is not true elsewhere in the world. Erring on the conservative side, staff at many libraries may decline to provide complete copies of these non-circulating materials. Second, rare or older materials may be too fragile to scan or copy for lending purposes. Finally, some libraries offer reprographic services for items in this category, but these services may not have a quick enough turnaround time to meet users' needs and may also be cost prohibitive.
2. Local dissertations (164 responses): Many libraries are unwilling to lend copies of their institution's dissertations. Since dissertations are protected by copyright, lending libraries are typically unable to provide copies of non-circulating dissertations. Digitization efforts, especially in the US, Canada, and UK, have improved full-text access to dissertations. However, not all institutions participate in these projects, notably Oxford and Cambridge Universities. Though ProQuest's theses and dissertations database is a major source for US dissertations, it does not contain many full-text non-US dissertations.

3. CD/Audio media (147 responses) and Video/Film media (141): These are very difficult formats to borrow either domestically or internationally as so many libraries either only lend locally or restrict to library-use-only. Videos presented an added layer of difficulty since DVDs are generally region-specific and thus may be impossible to play outside of the issuing region.
4. Electronic books (146 responses): The issues here are license agreements and the mechanics of the loan. There are electronic packages that permit libraries to “lend” electronic books to their own patrons. However, these are mostly limited either by IP access in academia or by patron authentication in public libraries. While there are some electronic book packages that provide PDF’s, downloading files is usually by chapter. So, even if the license agreement would permit providing a copy, downloading, combining, and saving individual files is very time consuming. With other packages, there exists no method of actually supplying the material. Since the completion of the data collection portion of this survey there have been some improvements in this area. First, OCLC has partnered with Ingram to supply short-term loans of selected titles via the MyiLibrary service. Also, Amazon is permitting libraries to lend Kindle titles, although that is only to local patrons. This is becoming a more pressing issue as there are some titles that are only being released as electronic books while the print holdings for others are minimal.
5. Serials (bound volumes/issues) (114 responses): Many libraries restrict lending these materials to their own patrons so are not inclined to supply to patrons at other libraries.

Figure 4 shows all responses for hard to obtain materials.

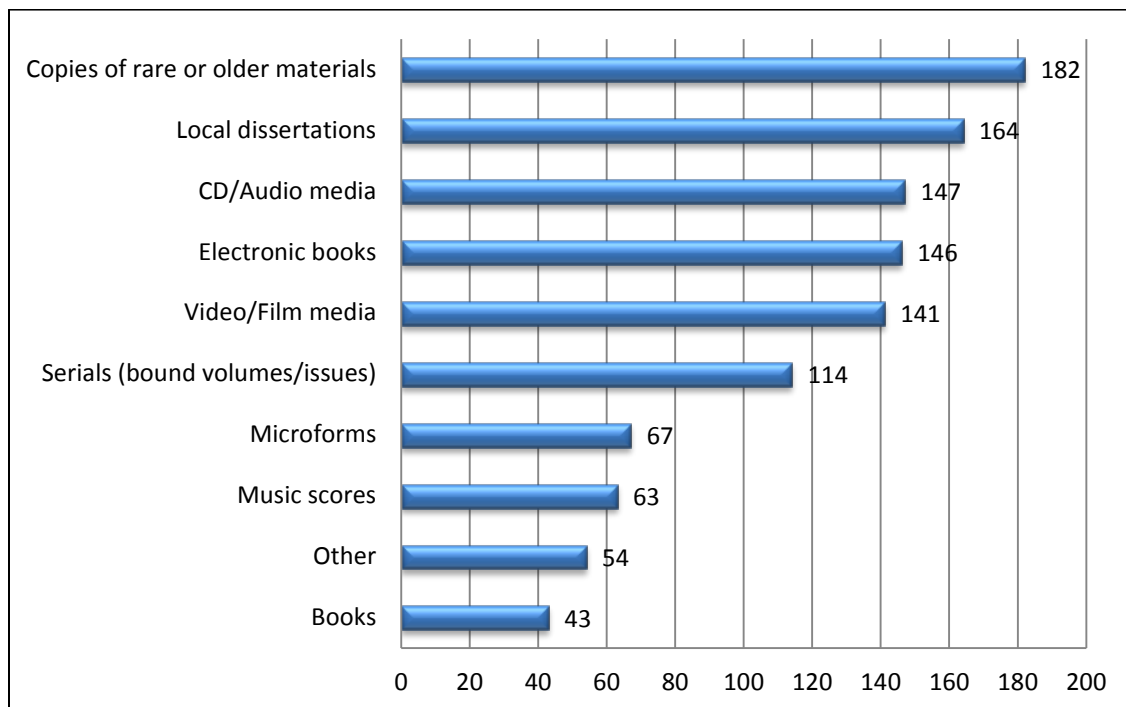


Figure 4: Hard to Obtain Materials

#### Lending Overview

Of the 444 respondents to the question “Do you lend internationally?,” 86.9% replied yes. While some libraries lend only returnables (3.7% of respondents) or non-returnables (11.4%), the majority (84.9%)

lend both. The percentage of libraries lending both returnables and non-returnables is comparable to the number of borrowing libraries (87.3%).

The committee wanted to know whether libraries felt the volume of international lending requests received and filled had increased, decreased or stayed the same. The perceptions of requests received and requests filled were almost identical. Approximately 51% of 345 respondents believe international ILL requests received and filled have increased by at least ten percent. Thirty-nine percent think there has been no change, and fewer than 10% perceive a decrease of ten percent or more in international ILL.

When asked “Why do you think the number of filled requests has changed?,” the top reason was the addition of holdings to WorldCat (25%). It is safe to assume this response corresponds to an increase in international ILL. This question allowed respondents to select as many options as appropriate. Many libraries selected “Other” in addition to one of the other response options and entered free form comments. Most of these comments provided reasons for an increase in filled international ILL requests. Prominent themes that emerged supporting an increase were visibility of holdings through online tools, new membership in various resource sharing networks, and the ease and speed of electronic delivery.

Of those libraries that reported a decrease in the number of requests filled, most North American libraries cite cost-prohibitive shipping costs as the reason while European libraries most frequently attribute the decrease to copyright restrictions. Amongst all libraries reporting a decrease, 26% percent commented that a greater availability of online resources has reduced demand for international ILL. Other reasons given for a decrease in the number of requests filled included licensing issues and payment options.

Respondents were asked to identify up to five countries they lend to most frequently as well as those to which they will not lend. 333 of 386 international lenders identified one or more countries to which they lend. The 70 countries identified are distributed across six of the seven continents with Europe (52%) and North America (23%) receiving the greatest representation. As in borrowing, the high percentage of US and European responding libraries accounts for the large number of libraries lending to European countries. The top five countries mentioned were Canada (138 respondents), Australia (112), England/Great Britain/Scotland/United Kingdom (107), United States (98), and Denmark (91). Figure 6 shows countries mentioned ten or more times.



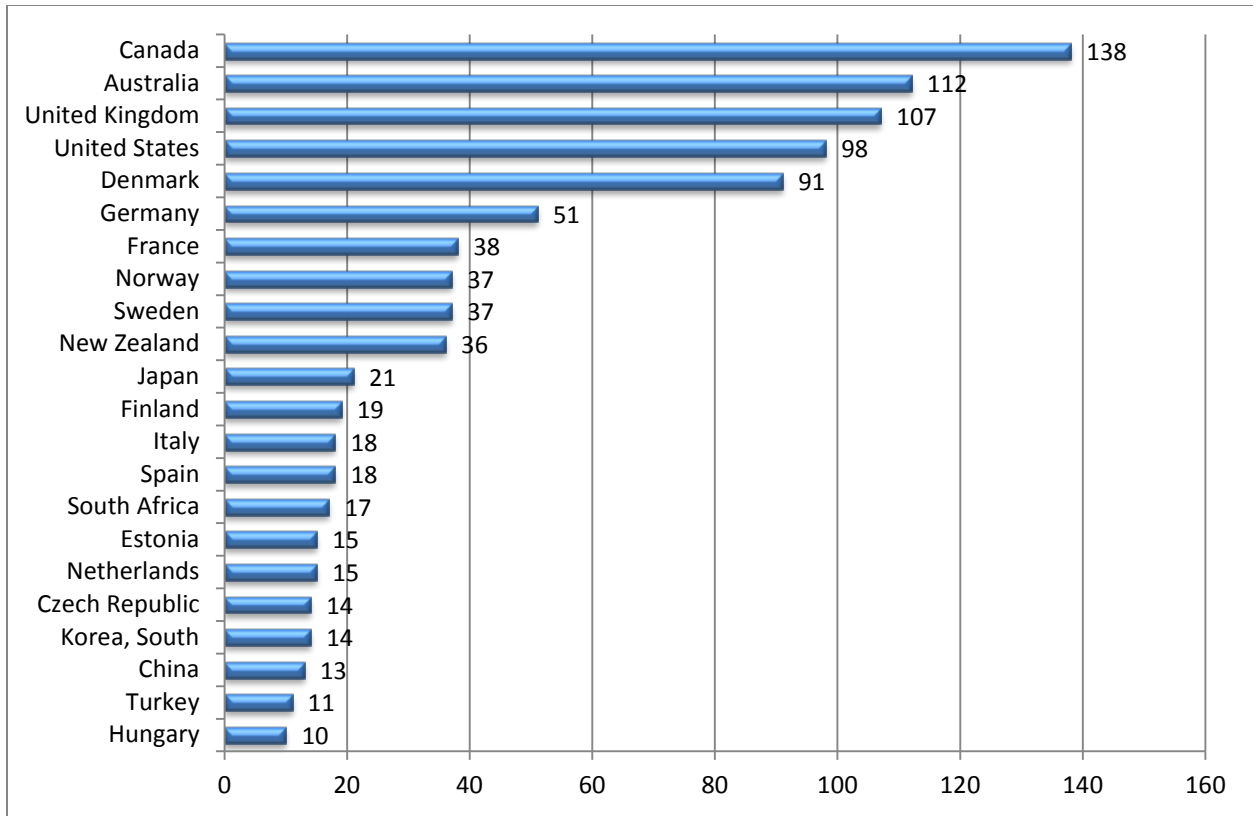
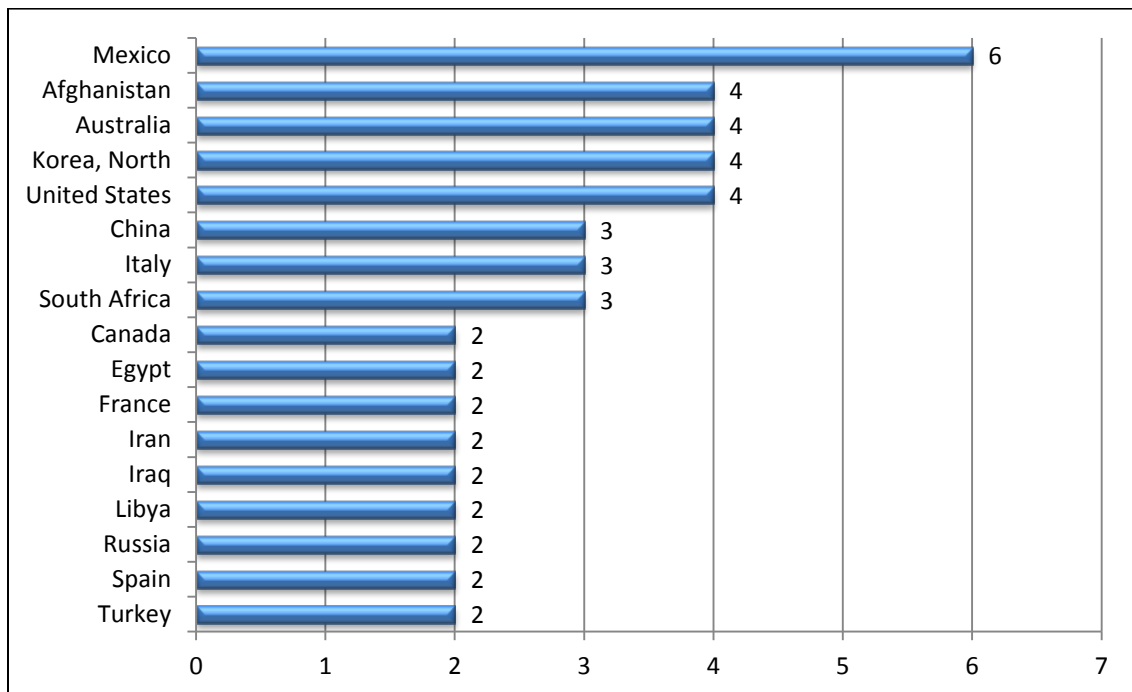


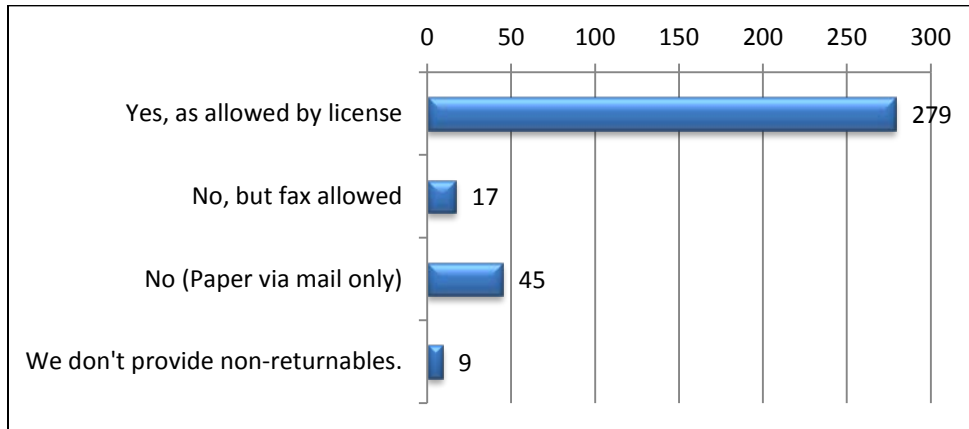
Figure 5: Countries to Which Libraries Will Lend

Far fewer respondents reported one or more countries to which they will not lend. Of the 35 countries identified, Asian (33%) and European (24%) countries were most frequently mentioned. The graph below shows countries identified two or more times.

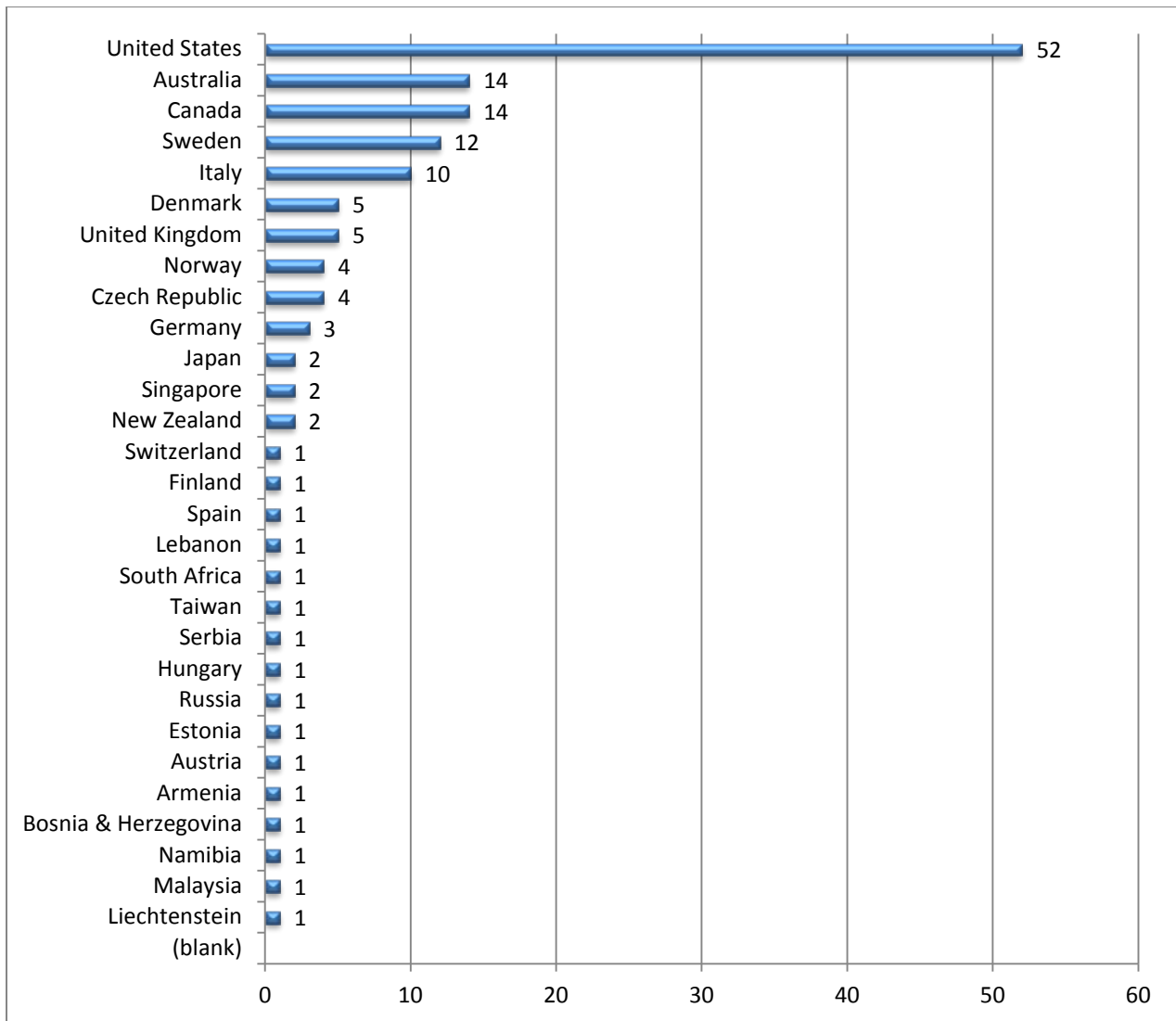


**Figure 6: Countries to Which Libraries Will Not Lend**

In regards to the supply of non-returnables, respondents were asked about electronic delivery and copyright restrictions. 79.7% indicated that they did deliver non-returnables electronically as allowed by license. An additional 17.8% do not deliver electronically but can fax or mail paper copies. When asked if copyright restrictions keep them from supplying any non-returnables to international borrowers, 42.3% said yes.



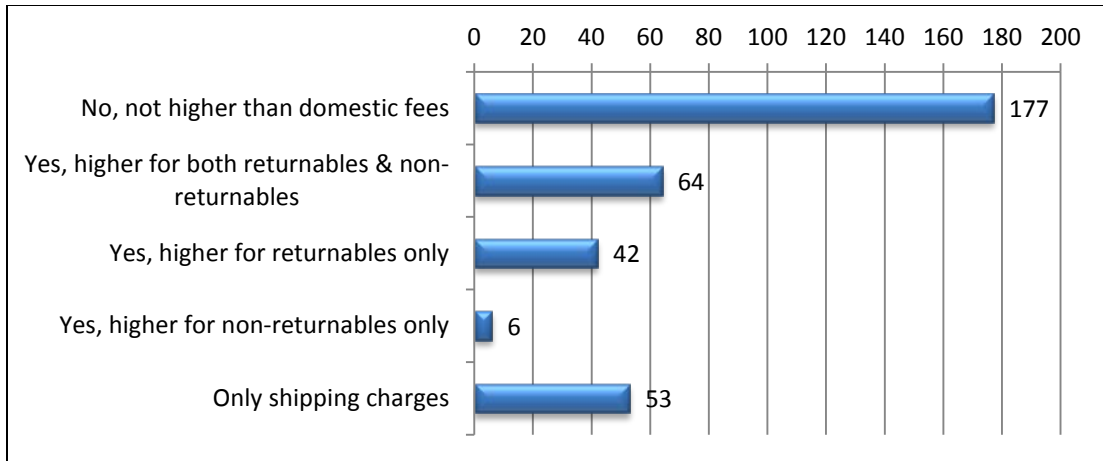
**Figure 7: Do you deliver non-returnables electronically to international libraries?**



**Figure 8: Countries of Respondents that Say Copyright Restrictions Prevent International Lending of Non-Returnables**

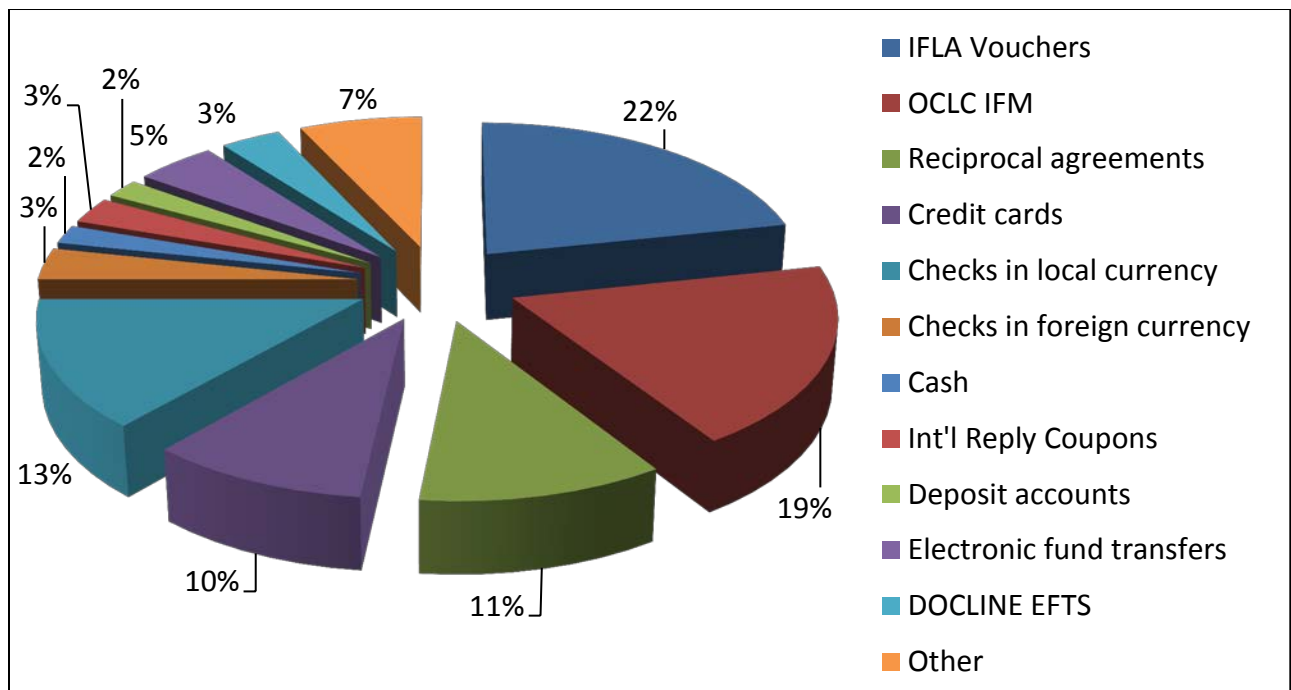
The survey also asked about the shipment of returnable items. The majority of respondents (53.4%) indicated using an expedited postal service of some kind such as air mail or priority mail. 31.7% primarily use regular postal service (i.e. ground, second class), while only 14.9% of respondents use a courier (i.e. Fed Ex, UPS) as their primary international shipping method.

Respondents were asked if and why they charge borrowing libraries additional fees for international lending services. 177 (51.8%) respondents do not charge higher fees than those for domestic requests. The remaining respondents were relatively split between charging higher fees for all international requests (18.7%), for only returnables (12.3%), and charging only shipping fees (15.5%). A small fraction of respondents reported charging higher fees for only non-returnables. The top reason for charging additional fees was to pay for delivery charges (41.9%) followed by local administrative policies and “others,” each with 11.4%. However, most of the other responses were comments relating to not charging at all or recouping only shipping fees because of the high cost.



**Figure 9: Do you charge borrowing libraries additional fees for your international lending services?**

Participants were asked to indicate which payment methods they accept from international libraries. The top three were IFLA vouchers (59.1%), OCLC IFM (52.2%), and check issued in local currency (36.9%). Reciprocal agreements and credit cards were not far behind with 29.7% and 26.6% respectively. The graph below shows the percentage accepting each payment method. Some other payment methods mentioned included other national or institutional payment systems, international money orders, and PayPal.



**Figure 10: Percentage of Respondents Accepting Each Payment Method**

The most popular methods for receiving international lending requests were e-mail (86.1%), OCLC (56.4%), fax (32.9%), and mail (31.4%). The fact that electronic communication methods are most popular is a positive indicator for international ILL because it allows for more rapid responses to requests. On the other hand, only 35.7% of respondents have their lending policies posted on their library's website. This would be a relatively simple way to improve communication regarding

international ILL requests. Having lending policies readily available eliminates the need for blind requests and would speed the process of obtaining materials. Improved online information would also reduce the need for referral services, which the majority of respondents (58.8%) do not routinely provide.

## **CONCLUSION**

The 2011 data shows little change from the 2007 survey of US libraries. Many of the same barriers were identified, including difficult to obtain formats, shipping, and payment methods. The 2011 survey found that libraries still turn most frequently to European, North American, and Australian libraries for their international ILL requests. The 2007 survey shows that 94% of US respondents both borrowed and lent internationally with only 5% engaged in only lending. The 2011 survey shows that 87.3% of US and non-US respondents borrow and 86.9% lend internationally.

Most interesting is that more than half of the 2011 respondents reported an increase in international ILL activity of at least 10%. It would appear that this is due in large part to the increased visibility of collections through internet search tools such as online catalogs. The increase in activity further highlights the need for improved methods and standards for international ILL. One of the simplest ways to make international ILL easier and more effective is for all libraries to post their lending policies online whether on the library's website, a national directory, or the OCLC ILL Policies Directory. Despite the benefit of posted lending policies, only 35.7% of survey respondents reported having current policies available online.

Though the goal of the 2011 survey was to gain a more international perspective on international ILL practices, US libraries accounted for a significant portion (39%) of respondents. To truly compare the US and non-US perspectives, the International ILL Committee plans to separate and analyze the data from US and non-US libraries. The Committee hopes this will more clearly highlight the similarities and differences in US versus non-US ILL practices. This analysis combined with what the Committee has already learned will inform and guide future efforts to improve methods of and increase participation in international ILL.

### **Respectfully submitted by:**

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*Approved by STARS Executive Committee 12/10/2012*

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<sup>i</sup> Atkins, David, Tina Baich, Marlayna Christensen, Heather Weltin, Zheng Y. Yang, and Tim Zou on behalf of STARS International Interlibrary Loan Committee. 2008. "RUSA STARS International Interlibrary Loan Survey: Executive Summary." ALA RUSA STARS International Interlibrary Loan Committee, <http://www.ala.org/rusa/files/sections/stars/section/international/ILLReportExcSummary.pdf>

<sup>ii</sup> Baich, Tina, Tim Jiping Zou, Heather Weltin, and Zheng Ye Yang on behalf of Sharing and Transforming Access to Resources Section (STARS) International Interlibrary Loan Committee. 2009. "Lending and Borrowing across Borders: Issues and Challenges with International Resource Sharing." *Reference & User Services Quarterly* 49, no. 1: 55-64