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**A Report to CURL and the British  
Library Cooperation and Partnership  
Programme on:**

**Monograph Interlending for the Higher  
Education Research Community**

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*Final Report: May 2003*

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## Executive Summary

- 1 This report was commissioned by CURL (the Consortium of University Research Libraries) with the support of the British Library Cooperation and Partnership Programme in order to recommend the best UK wide monograph interlending infrastructure and associated business model for the higher education research community for the next ten years. The report does not consider the interlending needs of other sectors (for example, public libraries), but its recommendations are unlikely to have adverse implications for them.
- 2 The report estimates that for 2001-2002 the overall total of interlending requests initiated by the UK higher education sector was approximately 325,000. Of these some 90% (295,000) were estimated to have been successfully completed, of which approximately 79% were supplied by the British Library Document Supply Centre (BLDSC), which holds the most dominant position in the UK monograph interlending system. In addition to the BLDSC there are a number of other providers to whom higher education libraries typically turn if the BLDSC cannot supply an item, but the overall volume of such loans is low.
- 3 The current monograph interlending system based on the BLDSC has several important strengths: first and most importantly, it works, and has done so successfully for many years. The system is well understood by researchers, is valued by them, and as our own data demonstrates has the support of all CURL libraries. The overall performance of the BLDSC is high in terms of speed of delivery and other operational benchmarks, and also represents good value for money for the sector as a whole. Studies undertaken for the Research Support Libraries Group (RSLG) estimated the savings achieved through all forms of central document supply to be between £45 and £50 million. In relation to individual loan charges an email survey of CURL libraries suggested that although those responding welcomed the cheaper options provided by some other providers, the charges of the BLDSC were accepted as being at least satisfactory.
- 4 The current system has no major weaknesses, however significant concerns exist about whether it can be sustained in the future without change. The current interlending system is likely to come under increasing strain because of: declining investment in loan stock unless more collaborative approaches to acquisition take place; an increase in the diversity of lending provision as libraries struggle to meet the needs of their own researchers in the context of a declining central fill rate; and specific difficulties concerning the loan of items from special collections. These concerns are part of the broader issue of the future of library resources which is addressed in the RSLG report.
- 5 If such developments were allowed to occur, they would lead to the loss of many of the advantages of centralisation that now exist, and involve interlending librarians spending much more time trying to source material. Rather we see the opposite as desirable: obtaining maximum benefit through a suitably run single source of supply, with as much requesting and distribution as possible done electronically. The RSLG has made it clear that a gradual deterioration in resource availability for research use should not be accepted, and our conclusion is that the same principle should apply to document supply and loans.

- 6 The report considers nine wide-ranging options for revising the current interlending system, and seeks to build upon existing strengths. Each option is tested against six key criteria:
- It should enable the current fill rate in higher education libraries of approximately 90% to be maintained, and if possible improved.
  - It should operate to performance standards not lower than those currently achieved by the BLDSC.
  - It should maximise value for money in relation to collection development, procurement, and in other related areas.
  - It should aim to maximise operational efficiency in all parts of the interlending process, including within requesting libraries.
  - It should not harm by oversight other aspects of the national interlending system, for example public libraries etc.
  - Where the other criteria can be satisfied an option should seek to be consistent with the approach of the RSLG Report.
- 7 The approach recommended we call BLDSC Plus, and it involves the British Library forming a consortium with a range of partner libraries who would agree to provide monograph interlending services to defined service standards and charges. Based on the BLDSC, the consortium would have its own management board, whose membership and role would be agreed at funding body levels. The consortium could invite into membership any library it wished (including CURL members), but the focus should be on participation by those which house British Library special collections and others with unique research collections.
- 8 A number of key characteristics should guide the development and subsequent operation of this option:
- It should be explicitly customer oriented.
  - As soon as is practicable there should be a single online routing for all ILL requests via the BLDSC (other forms of requesting would be permitted but not encouraged).
  - A common pricing system should be developed based upon a realistic cost structure.
  - Using a comprehensive online catalogue available (probably the proposed UKNUC), the ordering process should - if practicable - encourage direct end user requesting.
  - Although the operation of the new system would be based upon present BLDSC systems, its management would represent a genuine partnership whereby the British Library was only a member of the management board - albeit an important one.

- 9 A significant advantage of these arrangements is that we can see no negative consequences for the national interlending system outside higher education - indeed it may be that the increased efficiencies obtained by the BLDSC will have some carry over to other sectors.
- 10 The report identifies some of the key business processes which will be needed to implement BLDSC Plus, including: funding; the organisational and management structure; the main operational processes (which will be based on current BLDSC arrangements); system requirements and standardisation; and risk assessment. However, it is impossible to identify all business processes in detail at this stage, as some will be determined by the set-up discussions between the key partners, and others will depend upon progress in the establishment of the proposed Research Libraries Network (RLN). Within this new structure, the most important organisational issue will be ensuring effective working between the management board (in respect of the new arrangements for higher education), and the British Library in relation to the overall operation of document supply. Ensuring that a clear basis exists from the outset to ensure effective collaboration will be one of the most important parts of the initial negotiations between the partner bodies (see below).
- 11 The report also proposes two pilot schemes to enhance further the potential efficiency of the proposed new structure: a study of direct end user requesting of loans via an online catalogue (probably UKNUC), and a related study to be undertaken at the same time to test the feasibility of home delivery of loans.
- 12 The scheme has the potential to make significant savings in two areas which will enable reinvestment in library services: first, the gradual elimination over time of the duplication costs of the British Library in providing additional stock for the BLDSC of at least £500,000 pa; and second, significant savings within all HEIs of the time of interlending librarians. This is difficult to calculate, but at a minimum might be between £1.5 and £3 million pa (equivalent to a saving of an average of between a half and one full time staff post per HEI). Over the ten year period that we were asked to review, we would therefore expect that savings in the region of between £20 and £35 million should be achieved for reallocation to priority areas of library activity.
- 13 The report sets out an implementation process for the option, but the full costs of our proposals cannot be known until a preparation phase which will see detailed plans produced by the management board; however, costs should be relatively modest. Additional costs are of three kinds: software, which needs to be calculated by the British Library in terms of adaptations to existing systems when the UKNUC specification is known (these include the cost of the pilots of end user requesting and home delivery); an extension of the RSLP access principle designed to acknowledge the increased costs of participating libraries which will require approximately £250,000 pa; and modest organisational set up costs. It is proposed that funding be provided as part of the establishment of the RLN.
- 14 In Chapter 9 the report makes seven recommendations. These are entirely consistent with the thrust of the RSLG report, and therefore it is recommended that implementation should be considered in parallel with the proposed RLN, although not necessarily to the same timescale.

# 1 Introduction and Terms of Reference

## The Background Context

- 1.1 As part of the overall system of national document supply, inter-library loans (ILL) have been an important element in UK library provision for many years. The creation in 1973 of the British Library Document Supply Centre (BLDSC) at Boston Spa in Yorkshire, has meant that a relatively centralised system of ILL has been accepted by researchers in higher education as an established part of the library landscape. Indeed the recent report of the Research Support Libraries Group (RSLG)<sup>1</sup> notes that it is this national system of document supply that has largely meant that UK research libraries have been able to compete with the larger collections held by the major research universities in the USA.
- 1.2 However, in the past few years considerable pressures for change have occurred, and the ability of the national ILL system to supply the needs of researchers has been under strain. Indeed, it has been suggested that unplanned decentralisation is now happening as new providers of ILL services have grown up. It is, therefore, timely to review the provision of ILL and to identify whether new models of provision can further enhance a service that is recognised in the RSLG report to be "deeply entrenched and effective" (para 69). Although our study concentrates on the position concerning UK research libraries, the need for a review of national provision has been made in a number of settings, for example a domain wide conference on ILL hosted by the British Library in June 2000 noted the need for "a national ILL strategy"<sup>2</sup>. We hope that the recommendations in made Chapter 9 will contribute to this.
- 1.3 This report considers a number of important trends which are influencing current practice in ILL. These include:
- The growth in electronic discovery tools which are starting to enable both end users (including researchers and students) and institutional intermediaries (ILL librarians) to have a much more comprehensive picture of what resources are available across the research library sector as a whole. Currently, this is available through the CURL OPAC (COPAC), and may soon be available sector wide through the proposed UK National Union Catalogue (UKNUC) - a development regarded as essential by the RSLG.
  - The increase in the availability of electronic materials which is likely to have a major impact on document delivery (especially serials), and therefore on the economics of delivering hard copy items.
  - Because of financial pressures in recent years many research libraries have shifted funding to protect the purchase of serials, particularly at the expense of non-scientific monographs. When taken with other developments this means in the view of the RSLG report that "the aggregated efforts of all UK research libraries are failing to secure a

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<sup>1</sup> *Research Support Libraries Group, Final Report, 2003, available at [www.rslg.ac.uk](http://www.rslg.ac.uk)*

<sup>2</sup> *Making the Links: Improving the UK ILL System, Conference Proceedings 2000, [www.bl.uk/concord/mtlmins.html](http://www.bl.uk/concord/mtlmins.html)*

national collection in keeping with researchers' current and emerging needs and demands" (para 74).

- Equivalent resource pressures on the British Library and BLDSC which over time are likely to reduce their ability to achieve an acceptable 'fill rate' (that is the number of ILL requests that can be successfully supplied).
- Changes in the charging arrangements of the BLDSC which have led to various collaborative ILL systems growing up with lower charges, notably CURL-SHARES in the higher education research library community, the Circle of Officers of National and Regional Library Systems (CONARLS) within the public library sector, and the Scottish ILL Rate scheme (SILLR). (See Chapter 4 for a discussion of these and others systems, and also an analysis of the costs of ILL.)
- So far as research universities are concerned, the modest growth in the international nature of interlending, for example items supplied through the RLG-SHARES scheme (also see Chapter 4).

1.4 Although the BLDSC remains by far the largest supplier of ILL to UK research universities (see Chapter 3 for details of the volume and nature of interlending), these developments have led to a position where its role in ILL provision can usefully be reviewed. From the BLDSC perspective it is important that its interlending role to support higher education is consistent with the overall demands placed upon it, and therefore important questions of collection development strategy are raised. Nonetheless although its monopoly position as the primary ILL supplier has been criticised by some (see Chapter 8), its position remains central to any future system of ILL. In this context the RSLG report emphasises both the need for the retention and strengthening of the comprehensive national document supply system, and the importance of the British Library working closely with other research libraries in helping to develop coordinated national provision of loan and reference materials (paras 129-132).

1.5 It is in this context that CURL (the Consortium of University Research Libraries) with the support of the British Library Cooperation and Partnership Programme funded this study in order to "recommend the best UK wide monograph interlending infrastructure and business models for the next ten years or so".

### **Terms of Reference**

1.6 The terms of reference for the study as drawn up by CURL were detailed, but within the overall aim cited in paragraph 1.5 they can be summarised as follows:

- a) To assess the current position concerning ILL including:
  - Identifying the current monograph interlending services and their key operational characteristics.
  - Assessing the size and nature of the monograph interlending market.

- Evaluating the financial and organisational sustainability of the BLDSC and CURL-SHARES services.
- b) To assess the advantages, drawbacks and sustainability of different models of interlending.
- c) To assess available software solutions to support interlending and their interoperability.

### **The Study Team and Methodology**

1.7 The study was undertaken by a partnership involving the Higher Education Consultancy Group and CHEMS Consulting, with the team being:

- Allan Schofield, Head of the Higher Education Consultancy Group who acted as project director.
- John Fielden, Director of CHEMS Consulting.
- Professor Colin Harris, Librarian of Manchester Metropolitan University.

The three had previously been involved with a number of related studies, and were therefore able to link the specific issues concerning future ILL provision with a broader policy environment.

1.8 The study took place within a tightly constrained time frame, starting in mid-January 2003 and reporting at the end of March 2003. The tender produced by CURL was quite specific concerning methodology, and the programme of work that has been undertaken has met the contractual requirements. The main activities were:

- A review of current issues in ILL including relevant international developments.
- Discussions with a range of stakeholders including CURL, the British Library, and the RSLG secretariat.
- Visits to eight CURL libraries to review ILL issues: Bristol, Cambridge, Glasgow, Kings, Oxford, Manchester, National Library of Scotland, and Sheffield.
- An email survey of all other CURL libraries, with responses received from 23 of the 26 relevant institutions.
- Discussions with one large public library and another specialist research library outside the higher education sector.
- A pre-report submission workshop run for the steering group and other invited individuals which provided a useful opportunity to test conclusions and recommendations.

### **What is Not Considered in This Report**

1.9 From the outset (and with the agreement of the project steering group) we were very much aware that the methodology required to be adopted within a very constrained amount of time meant that various interests were explicitly not considered as part of this report. These include:

- We were only asked to consider inter-library loans (ie returnable items) and not the whole of document supply (mainly photocopies of articles from journals and other serials). This was because the nature of article supply is changing rapidly as the availability of electronic journals increases, and the future models for journal supply are likely to be very different from those involving hard copy monographs. However, in practice this distinction is not always easy to make as many research libraries do not record ILL and photocopy requests separately, and therefore data - particularly trend data - is often weak.
- Our focus was primarily CURL libraries and not on collecting data covering the whole higher education library sector. However, we have been mindful of the needs of the latter in considering options for change in Chapter 8.
- Higher education is only one part of the customer base for the BLDSC (although based on BLDSC data it is the largest sector overall with 55% of all BLDSC loans for 2001-2002). Thus we have been concerned to ensure that the recommendations we make should be considered within the broader role of the BLDSC, and should not have any unintended consequences for other users of the services of Boston Spa.
- It cannot be assumed that the needs of the higher education libraries are compatible with those of the rest of the library sector. For example, one reason why the British Library Conference in 2000 on 'Improving the ILL System' recommended the need for a review of national interlending was "to respond effectively to government agendas on social inclusion, lifelong learning and equitable access to the nation's resources"<sup>3</sup>. In general (and despite pressure to widen participation) these do not appear to be the concerns of all CURL libraries, and some retain restrictive policies concerning public access although this is slowly changing.

1.10 Therefore in Chapter 9 we have been careful to present our recommendations as needing wide consultation with all interested parties. Certainly we have no wish to encourage proposals which would have a negative impact on UK library provision overall.

### **The Structure of the Report**

- 1.11 In this context the report sets out to chart the key factors involving ILL and the options available for changing the current system of interlending. First, in Chapter 2 the current system is reviewed, its development summarised, and a note provided on relevant international comparisons.
- 1.12 Chapter 3 then sets out our estimate of the volume and pattern of ILL for the higher education sector. No comprehensive data is available, but it is possible to provide reasonable estimates.
- 1.13 Chapter 4 then considers the main providers of ILL. There are substantial sections on two schemes (the BLDSC and CURL-SHARES), and shorter summaries on other providers.

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<sup>3</sup> *Ibid*

- 1.14 This is followed in Chapter 5 by an analysis of current ILL activity within higher education institutions (HEIs), particularly those research libraries surveyed. The data suggests a wide range of practice, not all of which is easily interpreted without detailed analysis of the practices of the libraries concerned. A number of issues are raised which CURL may wish to consider in more detail.
- 1.15 In Chapter 6 we bring together the data in the previous chapters and undertake an overview of the strengths and weaknesses of current ILL provision both within university libraries and also so far as the end user is concerned. Put simply, this enables us to ask: is there a problem, and if so what is it?
- 1.16 We have noted above that the tender for this study asked us to adopt a ten year horizon - a difficult task with the rapid pace of change in technology. Nonetheless in Chapter 7 we try and identify some of the main changes that are likely to influence ILL provision during this period, and that will therefore underpin any alterations to current operational arrangements. There may, of course, be substantial differences of view about the impact of such factors, but we have tried to be as transparent as possible about our assumptions which have been tested with the steering group for the study.
- 1.17 On this basis in Chapter 8 we identify the main options for a future interlending system as they appear to us, and select our preferred approach. There is one model which seems to us to have significant advantages over all others, and for this we set down in some detail the key business processes that will be involved, and try to build on the need for the enhanced collaboration between research libraries identified in the RSLG report. For the sake of completeness and of encouraging a broad debate we have also summarised other possible options, but these are not - in our view - desirable.
- 1.18 Finally, in Chapter 9 we make seven specific recommendations, and identify what action is required by the various parties involved: CURL, the British Library, the higher education funding bodies, and so on.
- 1.19 We have attempted to keep this report as short as possible in order to encourage as wide a readership as possible amongst relevant librarians, including ILL staff. We have, therefore, deliberately not included a large amount of contextual information (see Appendix B for references), some of which is in any case in the RSLG report. Although we have approached our study entirely independently from the RSLG (and indeed only had access to its report towards the end of our work), our general conclusions are similar: to encourage greater collaboration and more transparent ways of working in order to maximise both effectiveness and efficiency in the use of library and information resources.

## 2 An Overview of the Development of the UK ILL System and International Comparisons

- 2.1 The national monograph ILL system is dominated by the BLDSC which was formed from two previously existing institutions that came together under the auspices of the newly created British Library in 1973. They were the National Lending Library for Science and Technology (NLLST) and the National Central Library (NCL). The two organisations represented the centralised and decentralised models of document supply respectively<sup>4</sup>.
- 2.2 The NLLST was founded just after the war in response to scientific and political demand to promote science and technology. The concept behind it was that a central stock, subject to minimal cataloguing, would allow material to be rapidly supplied to researchers. The NLLST operation was deliberately simple. Books and serials were shelved alphabetically by title, enabling staff to find most items requested without the need to consult any records. NLLST only accepted requests from registered libraries using pre-paid forms, purchased in advance in boxes of 50. The NLLST grew rapidly to play a significant part in library provision: in 1962 117,486 requests were received and by 1972 this had grown to more than one million.
- 2.3 In response to a recommendation of a Royal Commission on Museums and Galleries, the NCL was established in 1930, taking over the function of the Central Library for Students which had itself been founded in 1916. The concept upon which the NCL was based was that union catalogues would allow much material for researchers' use to be supplied locally and that the NCL would act only when institutions holding the regional resources could not supply items. Thus it was very similar to the current concept of a distributed national collection. Regional library systems came into being in the first six years of the NCL's existence, although Yorkshire rejected both the notion of a national union catalogue and the creation of one for the county. The NCL functions as described in the Royal Charter of 1931 were (a) to supply on loan to libraries books for study which could not conveniently be obtained in any other way, (b) to supply books on loan to groups of adult students, (c) to act as an exchange or clearing house for mutual loans of such books between other libraries, (d) to act as a centre for bibliographical information, and (e) to facilitate access to books and information about books. Regional systems still exist, and although university libraries are generally members they do not use them greatly for borrowing; the systems are much more important to public libraries.
- 2.4 In 1973, following the recommendations of the National Libraries Committee (chaired by Frederick Dainton), NCL operations were moved to Boston Spa and merged with NLLST to form the British Library Lending Division (BLLD). In its report the Dainton Committee described NLLST as "highly successful", but regarded the NCL operations, which dominated the system of interlibrary lending in the humanities, less favourably. The Committee identified three key weaknesses, namely the incompleteness of union catalogues, the unwillingness of cooperating libraries to lend items in heavy demand, and the failure of the system as a whole to cover a sufficiently high proportion of material requested. The BLD subsequently became the BLDSC.

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<sup>4</sup> The initial part of this section which summarises the history and operation of the British Library/BLDSC is based on a paper produced for the RSLG, and is used with permission.

- 2.5 So far as higher education lending is concerned, several other initiatives are reported in varying degrees of detail in Chapter 4. The most significant has been operated in the last two years by CURL as part of the SHARES programme in the USA. CURL was established in 1983 by the seven largest university libraries in the UK, and over twenty years has grown both in numbers (there are now 26 members, including the three UK national libraries in full or part membership) and in function. It has twice mounted pilot projects in monograph interlending. In addition, interlending can and does take place between any academic, public or other library in the UK.
- 2.6 Although a considerable amount has been written about interlending<sup>5</sup>, most of the literature is descriptive and mainly concerns details of library processes. In fact at a policy level the most useful conceptualisation of interlending is probably still that produced in 1979 by Maurice Line<sup>6</sup>, who identified four possible national approaches: a centralised model concentrating on a single library; concentration on a few libraries; planned decentralisation; and unplanned decentralisation. Line acknowledged that none of these models existed anywhere in a pure form, and suggested that the UK had a mixture of concentration on the British Library, accompanied by both planned and unplanned decentralisation.
- 2.7 The importance of the British Library to the national interlending system is self-evident, and has been reinforced by our findings on the volume and sources of lending (see below) and, in terms of future policy and strategy, by the report of the RSLG. However, the role of the British Library in handling the lion's share of UK interlending has not been without problems. In Chapter 4 we note that pressure on acquisition funds has required the Library progressively to reduce the proportion of published output that it acquires. This has implications, not only for the national published archive, but also for its ability to fill requests made by university libraries. On the other hand, the British Library did, in the 1990s, combine the London and Boston Spa collections, to make both available to all users, which extended the scope of the BLDSO substantially. In addition, while a flat-rate charge for monograph interlending and document supply has obtained since the creation of the NLLST in 1957, in 1999 the Library introduced a price differentiation, such that the cost of a monograph loan increased significantly causing some librarians to complain about price in the absence of detailed cost information.
- 2.8 The planned decentralisation element identified by Line is provided by the system of regional libraries, which have not only acted in concert in the determination of charges, but have also attempted schemes of collaborative acquisition. However, the regional library systems are in a state of rapid change, and government policy on the regions and the requirement to form regional bodies to operate across the domains of libraries, archives, museums and galleries have caused systems to reinvent themselves as part of the move to 'regional Re:sources' (some of which are already in place). In some cases, the regional interlending function has been transferred to new, purpose-built organisations, in others it has disappeared. The effects of this upon higher education libraries will be limited. They have always been net lenders within regional systems and, as public libraries collection development profiles change

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<sup>5</sup> *Useful annual summaries of developments in interlending have been produced in recent years by Stephen Prowse. For example, see Prowse S, Trends and Developments in Interlending and Document Delivery in the UK in 1997, Interlending and Document Supply, Vol 26, No 2, 1998, and subsequent issues.*

<sup>6</sup> *Line M, National Interlending Systems: Existing Systems and Possible Models, Interlending Review 7 (2), 1979*

towards more popular material, their collections will become less relevant and useful to university users. Some of the big city libraries do, of course, have substantial special collections of research value, but they tend not to grow. In addition to the regional library systems, there are many other local, sectoral, and subject schemes of collaboration<sup>7</sup>, but these are principally to do with access, staff training and procurement, rather than interlending.

- 2.9 The unplanned decentralisation element is the interlending that goes on between individual libraries. This has, of course, become easier with the increasing availability of library catalogues on the web. Nevertheless, searching for a particular item can be cumbersome and time-consuming, although the situation has greatly improved with the development of COPAC, and particularly with its increased functionality. This study was not tasked with analysing the case for, or making recommendations on, the development of a UK National Union Catalogue (UKNUC), although without one our proposals in Chapters 8 and 9 will be much more difficult to achieve. However, our understanding is that an UKNUC will be developed in the near to medium future, and we support this initiative. One of its benefits will be making the location of uncommon items easier (a process also supported by full disclosure requirements), and this - in turn - will facilitate interlending (although the lack of ISO-compliant software may be an obstacle to broader use).

### **International Comparisons**

- 2.10 We summarise briefly the position concerning monograph ILL in other relevant international settings.

#### **USA**

- 2.11 The USA does not have a national interlending system, rather it has a large number and variety of formal and informal consortia which, like those in the UK, facilitate access to libraries and, perhaps, staff training and procurement of goods and services. Unlike consortia in the UK, they also generally facilitate interlending and document supply. Many libraries will belong to a number of consortia, frequently for the express purpose of widening the resources to which they have access through interlending.
- 2.12 Having a completely distributed interlending system, involving a very large number of lending libraries, has made facilitating library-to-library transactions a priority concern for the American library community. There have been four key initiatives:
- a) The Association of Research Libraries (ARL)<sup>8</sup> has taken the lead in facilitating use of the ILO ILL standard (ISO 10160 and 10161). In 1993 it established the North American Interlibrary Loan and Document Delivery (NAILLD) project to foster practical technical developments enabling libraries to work effectively in a networked ILL

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<sup>7</sup> See the recent study that we undertook for RSLP on library collaboration: Schofield A et al, *Barriers to Resource Sharing Among Higher Education Libraries: a Report to the Research Support Libraries Programme, The New Review of Academic Librarianship*, Vol 7, 2001

<sup>8</sup> [www.arl.org](http://www.arl.org)

environment. Its ILL Protocol Implementors Group (IPIG) has influenced the development of the ISO Protocol.

- b) The Reference and User Services Association (RUSA)<sup>9</sup>, a division of the American Library Association, has devised an Interlibrary Loan Code for the United States. This is a voluntary code that seeks to establish the responsibilities of requesting and supplying libraries.
- c) The Research Libraries Group (RLG) is a not-for-profit membership organisation of 160 universities, independent research libraries, archives, historical societies, museums and other institutions devoted to improving access to information that supports research and learning. Since its foundation in 1974, RLG has been a pioneer in developing cooperative solutions to the acquisition, access, delivery and preservation challenges that those institutions face. All CURL members are members of RLG.

One of RLG's major achievements has been the creation of RLIN, the Research Libraries Information Network, which is a union catalogue of over 100 million bibliographic records, including books, journal articles, dissertations and rare materials in over 365 languages. Collaborative activities have included shared cataloguing, resource sharing agreements, staff exchanges, preservation microfilming, digitisation and, importantly, interlending. There have been two key developments in interlending: SHARES and ILL Manager.

SHARES<sup>10</sup> is a resource sharing partnership arrangement, optional to RLG members, in which members agree to supply other members with loans. Its operation is summarised in Chapter 4. RLG's ILL Manager is a standards-based software system that handles borrowing and lending transactions with other interlibrary loan systems. It complies with the ISO ILL protocol and IPIG Profile, Z39.50 and the forthcoming NISO Circulation Interchange Protocol, and is interoperable with RLIN ILL, OCLC ILL, DOCLINE and the British Library. It has considerable functionality<sup>11</sup> developed on the basis of feedback from partners, but lacks functionality viewed as essential by some CURL librarians for example the ability to include automatically status reports from the BLDSC.

- d) OCLC Worldcat is a union catalogue of the holdings of over 7,000 libraries around the world that contains 48 million bibliographic records. Its activities are also summarised in Chapter 4.

2.13 Of the many other developments in the USA perhaps the most interesting is OhioLINK<sup>12</sup>, which consists of all the academic libraries in the state of Ohio, in both public and private colleges and universities. It serves over 500,000 staff and students at eighty institutions, and is

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<sup>9</sup> For details see ([http://www.ala.org/rusa/stnd\\_inc.html](http://www.ala.org/rusa/stnd_inc.html))

<sup>10</sup> For details see (<http://www.rlg.org/shares/agree.html>)

<sup>11</sup> For details see <http://www.rlg.org/illman/illmanfeat.html>

<sup>12</sup> Kohl, D F, Farewell to all that... Transforming collection development to fit the virtual library context: the OhioLINK experience. In: Schwartz, C. A. (ed) *Restructuring academic libraries: organizational development in the wake of technological change*. Chicago: Association of College and Research Libraries, 1997.108-120.

run as a state-wide function initiated by the desire of the state legislature. By using common hardware and software, the OhioLINK system allows each member library to offer its users not just a theoretical union list of other library holdings which are only available through a traditional (library mediated) ILL process, but a directly accessible, operational collection of some 30 million books.

- 2.14 If a user is unable to find an item in their local collection, a single keystroke allows them to replicate the search on the entire OhioLINK database. The service is not thought of as ILL, but simply as an extension of the normal circulation function. Many factors peculiar to the OhioLINK environment mean that such a system is not easily transferable to the UK, but there are some lessons to be learned, and we have tried to incorporate some of these into our analysis in Chapter 8.

### **Australia**

- 2.15 Although not interlending *per se*, it is helpful to remember that the Council of Australian University Libraries runs a scheme, University Library Australia, in which students and staff of member universities of the Australian Vice-Chancellors' Committee are eligible to borrow from any other library in the scheme.
- 2.16 Australia has since 1981 compiled and maintained a National Bibliographic Database; it now records the collections of over 850 Australian libraries and is accessible over KINETICA, formerly the Australian Bibliographic Network. The NBD is maintained by the national Library of Australia, and underpins the distributed inter-library lending system. There are also many other union catalogues, by region, sector, etc. The Australian Interlibrary Resource Sharing (ILRS) Code "is designed to support a multifaceted approach to resource sharing based on cooperation and fairness between libraries and respect for the moral and intellectual rights of creators and publishers". Participation is voluntary, libraries participating under this ILRS Code agree to observe specific operating principles<sup>13</sup>.
- 2.17 Partly because of the huge distances between population centres, Australian libraries (with the help of the AVCC and the National Library) have been keen to develop electronic requesting and delivery. Over 75% of requests sent to the National Library are received electronically and over 50% of documents are delivered electronically. Items sent by mail are usually delivered within three days, or within 24 hours at a premium price. A performance review of the national ILL system has recently been undertaken<sup>14</sup>, and the results and how they might improve the system are being examined by the National Resource Sharing Working Group<sup>15</sup>.
- 2.18 In addition, a group of the eight largest university libraries in Australia are reported to be investigating a SHARES-style service in which they supply each other at an accelerated rate

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<sup>13</sup> For detail see (<http://www.nla.gov.au/initiatives/ilrcode/ilrcode.html>)

<sup>14</sup> (Ruthven T and Magnay S, *Top Performing Interlending Operations: Results of the Australian Benchmarking Study. Interlending & Document Supply* 30(2), 2002. 73-79)

<sup>15</sup> (<http://www.nla.gov.au/initiatives/nrswg/>)

and without charge. It is likely that there would be some opposition in the wider higher education community to the introduction of a two-tier service.

### **Canada**

- 2.19 Like Australia, Canada has introduced a nationwide system of access and borrowing for staff, graduate students and undergraduates (with a small number of institutions making exceptions or restrictions in respect of some undergraduates). The province of Alberta has taken this principle a step further by introducing the Alberta Library, a provincially sponsored project that offers Alberta residents access to the collections of 240 different public, academic and special libraries through a single library card.
- 2.20 There is really no unified national interlibrary lending system in Canada. In general, most publicly funded libraries do participate in interlibrary loans, as do many corporate and special libraries; many charge for loans, but some do not; many are involved in cooperative networks or consortia which are based on their region and/or their type of library. Networks are particularly common among academic and public libraries, and may facilitate interlibrary loans among their members by such means as sharing a union catalogue, agreeing not to charge one another for loans, or by sharing a delivery service. Although there is a lot of cooperation in Canada with regard to ILL, there is not a lot of consistency with regard to methods of communication, loan periods or charges. A national ILL system may be evolving, but does not exist as yet.
- 2.21 The National Library of Canada (NLC) will lend to any other library in the world, free of charge, and also provides a locations service to help Canadian libraries find items that it does not hold, or to help non-Canadian libraries find Canadian material that is otherwise not available. The NLC also facilitate ILL activities in Canada by maintaining a national online union catalogue, AMICUS, which displays the holdings of over 1300 Canadian libraries and is free to search on the Web<sup>16</sup>. AMICUS includes an ILL request feature which any Canadian library can register to use, free of charge. It also maintains the online directory of Symbols and Interlibrary Loan Policies in Canada<sup>17</sup>, which displays ILL contact information and ILL policies for over 6,000 Canadian libraries. The NLC has been very active in the development of the ISO ILL protocol.

### **Europe**

- 2.22 There are, of course, many schemes and systems for monograph interlending in European countries, as is evidenced in the reviews undertaken periodically in Interlending & Document Supply. There are links at national library level, and overseas searches conducted by BLDSC no doubt rely heavily upon national libraries and national bibliographies, but there is no particular relevance of any schemes to the UK scene. Curiously, perhaps, LIBER (Ligue des Bibliothèques Européennes de Recherche), which has many UK members, makes no reference in its website to resource sharing or interlending.

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<sup>16</sup> For details see (<http://amicus.nlc-bnc.ca/aaweb/amilogine.htm>).

<sup>17</sup> See <http://www.nlc-bnc.ca/ill/s16-202-e.html>

### 3 The Volume of Monograph Interlending in UK Higher Education

3.1 In this Chapter we identify the volume and nature of monograph ILL within UK higher education. In order to do this we have reviewed data from a number of data sources including: statistics obtained in our survey of CURL libraries; statistics produced by the British Library; and annual SCONUL statistics. However, data at the institutional level often appears to be poor, and few CURL libraries were able to provide three year trend data which distinguished between monograph ILL and other forms of document supply. Therefore in order to obtain a system wide estimate of the volume of ILL we have had to make some assumptions, although we think they are realistic.

#### ILL Within CURL Libraries

3.2 From the CURL libraries either surveyed or visited we have obtained data from 19 on the number of loans successfully obtained for their own readers, although only approximately half of these were able to supply data on the number of loans requested (thereby enabling the fill rate to be calculated). Of these 19 all but one were also able to provide data on the total number of items supplied to other libraries. Table 3.1 summarises these results.

**Table 3.1: ILL Requests Filled and Supplied by CURL Libraries 2001- 2002**

<i>University Library</i>	<i>ILLs Filled For Own Readers</i>	<i>ILLs Supplied to Other Libraries</i>
Warwick	2816	1153
UCL [a]	830	795
Manchester	6379	4494
Nottingham	7382	1662
Aberdeen	1637	1757
Leeds	4056	3802
Sheffield	7116	2313
Imperial [a]	1411	352
LSE	1681	887
Glasgow	4999	2965
Bristol	2767	1750
Durham	3243	2386
Birmingham	820	3364
University of London Library	60 [b]	1,439
Oxford	4850 [b]	1861
Newcastle	3964	1087
Southampton	6645	-
Liverpool	2662	2002
Kings, London	1179	76
Total	59587	34145
Average	3136	1897

[Notes: a = main university library only; b = estimates. Data source is the libraries concerned]

- 3.3 As can be seen, a very wide range in ILL volume is reported for both requesting and supplying. For the former, four universities (Manchester, Nottingham, Sheffield, and Southampton) have a significantly larger volume than the others, while some have a lower volume than might be expected. The tight timescale associated with the study has meant that we have been unable to explore the reasons for this variation in detail, although the low volumes for UCL, Imperial and Kings might suggest a London factor with personal use by researchers of other metropolitan libraries. Taken overall, the 19 universities had an average of 3,136 filled requests a year. In view of the large number of active researchers in these institutions (including research postgraduates) this figure appears to be low, and averages around one request per researcher per year. This clearly suggests that the overwhelming majority of information needs are being met from other sources. For supplying ILL to other libraries a similar variation occurs, although volumes are lower with an overall average of 1,897.
- 3.4 Eight universities were able to provide data on the number of ILL items requested, and for these fill rates can be calculated. They varied between 75% and 95% with an average fill rate of 90%. In practice, fill rates depend on a number of factors, and the libraries we visited reported some difficulties with international and some foreign language material. This average fill rate enables an estimate to be made of actual volume (see below), as we know that the average fill rate for the BLDSC was 73%.
- 3.5 The total volume of monograph ILL transactions (both requested and supplied) of CURL libraries can therefore be assessed with reasonable accuracy, with an average of 5,346 transactions per library. This is made up of an average of 3,136 completed loans, plus 10% unfilled requests (313), and an average of 1,897 supplied to others.
- 3.6 In our survey CURL libraries were asked about the sources from which they obtained loan items, and 15 were able to provide this information which is reported in Table 3.2.

**Table 3.2: Sources of Loans Obtained by CURL Libraries 2001- 2002**

<i>Source of ILLs Obtained</i>	<i>Numbers</i>	<i>%</i>
BLDSC	42,311	79%
CURL-SHARES	3,680	7%
Other CURL libraries	1,499	3%
Local collaborative library schemes	1,252	2%
National libraries of Scotland/Wales	16	-
Other UK HE libraries and non-HE libraries	3,537	7%
Overseas sources	528	1%
Other	771	1%
<b>Total</b>	<b>53,584</b>	

*[Source: survey of CURL libraries]*

- 3.7 The data in Table 3.2 clearly demonstrates the dominant position of the BLDSC in monograph supply, and all our discussions in the libraries visited confirmed this. CURL-SHARES supplied

a similar number of loans to other UK libraries (probably mainly Cambridge), and few items were obtained from overseas sources. The only significant variation between libraries concerned obtaining items from local collaborative library schemes. While in most cases this provided a very small number of loans, for two libraries it constituted 10% and 15% of volume - in the latter case 847 items. This suggests that a well established and effective local scheme can be a useful source of supply given relevant local collections.

- 3.8 So far as supplying loans to others is concerned, Table 3.3 reports on the main types of libraries to which loans were made.

**Table 3.3: Types of Libraries Supplied by CURL Libraries 2001-2002**

<i>Source of ILLs Supplied</i>	<i>Numbers</i>	<i>%</i>
BLDSC	887	3%
CURL-SHARES	2,005	9%
Other CURL libraries	152	1%
Local collaborative library schemes	3,974	18%
Other UK libraries (in public libraries, museums, business etc)	13,199	59%
Overseas sources	368	2%
Other	1,905	8%
<b>Total</b>	<b>22,490</b>	

*[Source: survey of CURL libraries]*

- 3.9 Although our survey sought to disaggregate data in the 'other UK category' into sub-sets such as public libraries, most libraries were not able to supply such information. However, several things are clear: first, that the volume of material supplied to local consortia is relatively low<sup>18</sup>; second, that the substantial majority of items supplied go to other (non CURL) UK libraries (including public libraries); and third that few items are sent overseas.
- 3.10 No reliable data exist on the nature of ILL requesting or lending by subject or academic discipline. However, most CURL libraries visited during this study noted the particular importance of interlending for arts, humanities, social science and related disciplines, and in Chapter 7 some confirming data are cited from the RSLG report indicating the importance to researchers in these subjects of access to original sources and hard copy materials.
- 3.11 So far as trend data is concerned, only a few libraries could supply it for a three year period. In a majority of these the number of loans made had fallen although in two cases only slightly. We would, however, not wish to draw conclusions from such a small sample, for as we note in Chapter 5 there are a number of institutional factors (particularly charging) which significantly influence demand. Therefore we cannot be sure that the decline in these cases was due to common factors.

<sup>18</sup> For a discussion of the issues here see our recent study on library collaboration for the RSLP: *Barriers to Resource Sharing Among Higher Education Libraries, 2001*, [www.rslp.ac.uk](http://www.rslp.ac.uk)

## **ILL: The National Picture**

- 3.12 Nationally the main source of available data is the British Library. Up to 2000, SCONUL Annual Library Statistics provided details of interlibrary transactions, but these are no longer produced and in any case the previous statistics did not distinguish between monograph lending and other forms of document supply. Data provided for us for 2001-2002 by the British Library is reported in Table 4.1 in Chapter 4, and records that a total of 230,696 UK loans were made in the year (including 11,041 renewals).
- 3.13 Using the British Library data and that from our own survey, an estimate of the volume of national monograph ILL can be made. It is known that the British Library supplies 79% the total volume for CURL libraries with 21% coming from other sources. If these ratios are assumed to apply to monograph ILL for all HEIs then a total estimate of approximately 295,000 successful loans is obtained, with 230,696 coming from the BLDSC and approximately 65,000 from elsewhere. Although the assumption that the pattern for obtaining loans in all HEIs is similar to that in CURL libraries can be challenged, we think that it is not unreasonable. We know from our visit to Boston Spa that the BLDSC is the first lending resort for many HEIs (not just CURL members), and although other institutions may have fewer active researchers they may also have less comprehensive libraries. Applying the average 10% fill failure rate to the figure of 295,000 for successful loans suggests an overall total of ILL requests initiated by the UK higher education sector of approximately 325,000.

## 4 The Main Providers of Monograph Interlending for Higher Education

- 4.1 As required by the terms of reference for the study, in this Chapter we identify the main providers of monograph ILL, review the key operational and business processes used, and consider resulting issues. The providers of monographs by interlibrary loan are libraries, ranging from the British Library at one extreme to the smallest library at the other. Most libraries that engage in interlending do so within frameworks of policy or practice that may involve service level agreements, pricing policies, charging, technology and other aspects of service. However, some lend to other libraries without any contractual or quasi-contractual agreements, relying instead upon a tacit 'gentleman's' agreement that items will be returned. It is not simple, therefore, to categorise schemes, there being much overlap. In the descriptions that follow, some schemes fall partly into the category of software supplier<sup>19</sup>.
- 4.2 As noted in Chapter 3 the most important provider by far is the BLDSC (78% of ILL obtained by CURL libraries, followed by CURL-SHARES at just 7%). However, for the sake of completeness in considering the future options set out in Chapter 8, a number of other ILL providers are summarised: Cambridge, RLG-SHARES, OCLC Worldcat, Unityweb, V3Online, CONARLS, and SILLR.
- 4.3 An important contextual note about charging arrangements by different providers needs to be made. All the schemes reviewed below operate in different ways and levy different charges. In some cases there is little published information on how the charges made by schemes are calculated. Some schemes with low charges must operate at a considerable loss, but presumably choose to do so either because it is in their strategic interest, or because they have little idea of (and perhaps interest in) the actual costs involved. Accordingly it is important *not* to assume that because a particular provider operates with modest charges such a scheme is capable of providing a model which is scalable to the whole of the UK higher education sector.

### The British Library/British Library Document Supply Centre

- 4.4 Including all forms of document supply the BLDSC currently serves 20,584 customers in 133 countries world-wide. In the UK it serves 100% of university libraries, 100% of public libraries, and 92% of the top 100 UK companies based on research expenditure. UK use for all document supply divides into 51% academic, 24% industry and commerce, 16% government, 8% public libraries and 1% others (charities, consultants and private individuals). Use of the BLDSC rose from just over 1.8 million requests at the foundation of the British Library in 1973 to a peak of 4,281,004 requests in 1998/99. Since then demand for photocopies has fallen as libraries, especially in the UK, have acquired direct access to electronic information. Since the BLDSC serves its users predominantly via intermediaries it is not possible to give a percentage of UK use which is generated by researchers, however, the nature of the stock is not generalist so it might be argued that all use is research level.

<sup>19</sup> We have not attempted an exclusive analysis of ILL management software systems, whether as part of an overall library management system or not. The BLDSC has a factsheet on ILL software suppliers that could form the basis of a comprehensive comparison, if required at [http://www.bl.uk/services/document/pdf\\_files/Factsheet-D5.pdf](http://www.bl.uk/services/document/pdf_files/Factsheet-D5.pdf)

- 4.5 For the whole of document supply the use of the BLDSC varies greatly across the UK university sector. For 2000-2001 the largest use was just over 38,000 requests a year by one HEI while the bottom, represented by research institutes, was fewer than 100 requests. The smallest university library request was about 1,500 items a year. CURL members' use accounted for 335,700 requests at an average of 16,000 per institution or 8.6% of total requests or 13% of UK use.
- 4.6 So far as monograph ILL is concerned, Table 4.1 identifies BLDSC lending in the UK for 2001-2002<sup>20</sup>. As can be seen a total of 230,696 items were lent (including renewals), representing 55% of the UK ILL total of 419,734. Based on an analysis of a 10% sample, the average fill rate for academic users was 73%. On average the BLDSC issued 1,679 loans per day. In addition the BLDSC supplies higher education overseas, but these figures are not included in the following data.

**Table 4.1: BLDSC Monograph Lending in the UK 2001-2002**

<i>Sector</i>	<i>Loans from BL</i>	<i>Loans from backup</i>	<i>Thesis loan</i>	<i>Loans from abroad</i>	<i>Renewals granted</i>	<i>Total loans</i>	<i>Total loans + renewals</i>	<i>%</i>
Academic	206,699	2,610	9,079	1,267	11,041	219,655	230,696	55%
Government	51,889	137	307	46	2,869	52,379	55,248	13%
Industry	40,682	142	281	54	4,936	41,159	46,095	11%
Public Libraries	79,139	954	405	69	2,990	80,567	83,557	19%
Other	2,865	15	22	7	256	2,909	3,165	2%
Total UK	382,223	3,861	10,103	1,447	22,100	397,634	419,734	100%

[Source: BLDSC]

- 4.7 The average internal processing times in 2002 of the BLDSC in dealing with requests for monographs is shown in Table 4.2. Figures for the last six months of 2002 were substantially improved over those for the first six months for a number of operational reasons. Actual response times including delivery are not recorded by the BLDSC, but in most cases should be no more than one additional day from the times shown in the Table. Using a 1 in 10 sample of UK requests, approximately 20% of all loans to academic institutions involved UK end users waiting because the monograph concerned was not available.

**Table 4.2: BLDSC Processing Times in Dealing with Requests for Monograph ILL**

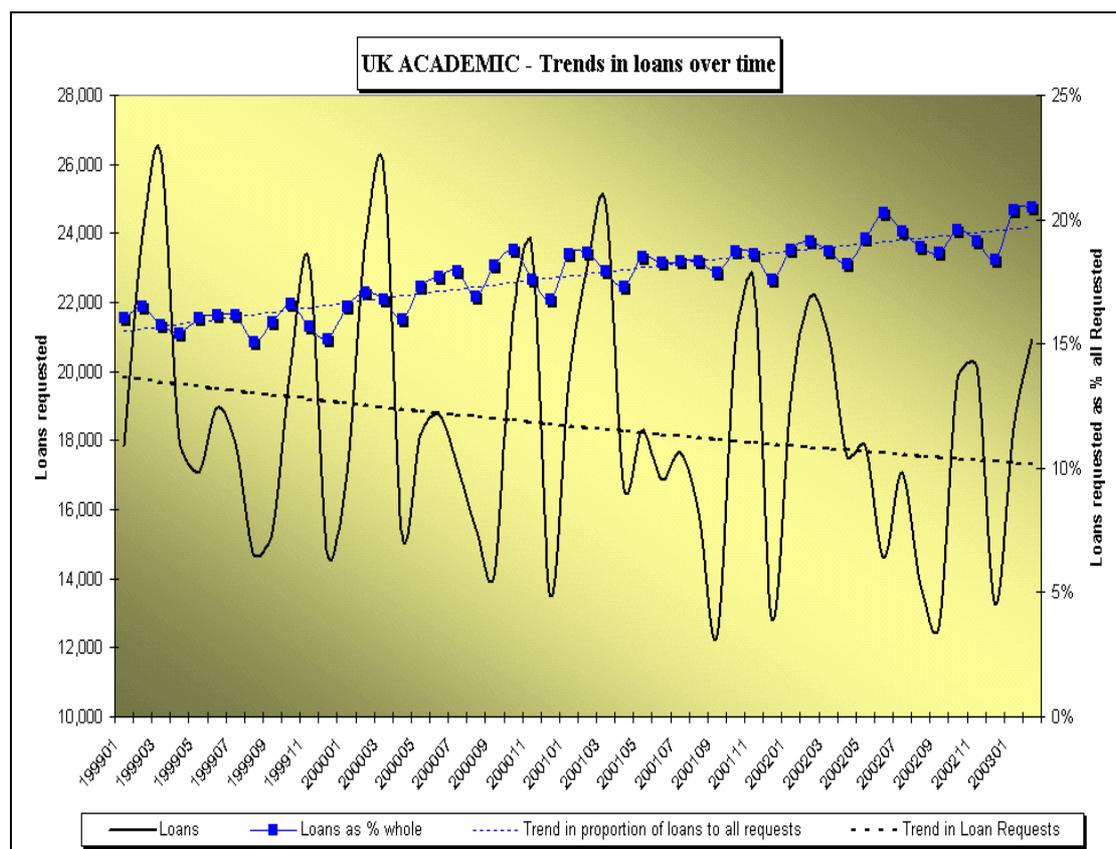
	<i>Current monographs</i>	<i>Non-current monographs</i>
Processed within 1 day	33%	39%
Processed within 2 days	64%	82%
Processed within 3 days	81%	94%
Processed within 4 days	89%	98%
Processed within 5 days	94%	99%

[Source: BLDSC]

<sup>20</sup> The BLDSC monograph lending data cited in this chapter excludes individual copies of articles and serials, but includes special collections of serials where a number of articles may be bound together in a single volume.

4.8 Trend data produced by the BLDSC on monograph lending to UK higher education suggests that there has been a decline of just under 10% in the last three years, as is shown in Table 4.2. The reasons for this are not clear, but may be a reaction to the increase in ILL charges near the start of the trend period, the change in back-up arrangements (see paragraph 4.14), and also that the pressures set out in the RSLG report for greater cross-sector collaboration on materials acquisition have yet to take effect in some HEIs. The implications for the future volume of interlending are discussed in Chapter 7.

**Table 4.3: BLDSC Monograph Lending to UK Higher Education Over Time (1999 - 2003)**



[Source: BLDSC]

4.9 It was not possible for the British Library to provide figures for acquisitions obtained specifically for the BLDSC. Since the early 1990s the British Library has been moving towards becoming a single collection library, where possible relying on a single copy with each title (except legal deposit material) functioning both for reference and for remote supply. Since it does not lend legal deposit material this necessitates duplication and only those additional acquisitions can legitimately be described as BLDSC stock. However, it is estimated that a minimum of £500,000 was spent on monographs for the BLDSC in the last financial year. These acquisition costs are not included in the charges made by the BLDSC for loans (see below).

4.10 The main BLDSC facility at Boston Spa involves automated processes combined with manual stock retrieval capable of dealing with the high volumes of materials involved. Much of the

BLDSC stock is now included in online catalogues (including COPAC), but some specialist collections are not. Accordingly although an increasing number of requests are now being made online or by email, those for items accessed by card catalogues still involve manual checking. Libraries wishing to use the BLDSC have to register and set up an account. Request records are created on the borrowing library's system (which may or may not be part of its library management system) and sent to Boston Spa. For items that the BLDSC cannot supply from stock, requesting libraries receive reports by email, which indicate if more information is needed to identify the item and, for example, if the item is on loan, if it has been ordered or if it is missing. If an item is not held, the BLDSC offers additional location searching with differential pricing. This can be requested with the original request or after receiving a report. If a wrong item is sent, there is a special helpline for reporting.

- 4.11 The BLDSC has an extensive published tariff of loan charges<sup>21</sup>, and is required by HM Treasury to charge for loans to UK libraries at not less than full cost, which it calculates to be £6.97 in the UK, although it is able to provide higher education with a small discount so that the actual current charge is £6.65. VAT is not charged (unlike for photocopy supply), and commercial and overseas borrowers are charged a higher rate which enables the Library's overall cost recovery requirements to be met. A range of other services is also provided. Lending libraries send a monthly spreadsheet to the BLDSC detailing all transactions with other libraries (apart from those to which no charge is made), with library code, details of request, prices, etc. The BLDSC issues cheques to net lenders and invoices to net borrowers. This 'banking' function is highly valued.
- 4.12 The overall pricing policy of the British Library requires all services to be costed consistently, and activities are categorised into one of three groups: those wholly or partly supported by grant-in-aid and therefore charged at less than full cost; those charged at full cost (including ILL); and those charged above full cost which include premium document supply services, publishing and bookselling, and information services. Services supplied overseas largely fall into the latter category. The application of so-called 'Treasury Rules' to lending costs inevitably impose some constraints on what the BLDSC can do in relation to its cost structure, but these are not dissimilar to similar constraints that apply to HEIs and other public sector bodies in terms of what public funds and grant-in-aid can be used for. In practice (as we show later in Chapter 5) the costs of BLDSC loans appear to be lower than the full costs incurred by CURL libraries when borrowing or lending, as indeed they should be given its huge advantage of high volume and centralisation.
- 4.13 The high volume of material sent out (including all forms of document supply) means that the BLDSC is well placed to achieve favourable transport costs, and various suppliers are used (including the Royal Mail) for different types and weight of items. The BLDSC also provides some flexibility in how materials are sent, which although normally bundled to the recipient library (to reduce transport costs) can also be sent singly to named individual end users. Libraries are responsible for returning all loan items using labels provided, and meet their own return transport costs, although some regional library systems have collaborative return transport arrangements.

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<sup>21</sup> See [www.bl.uk/services/document/pricesuk.html](http://www.bl.uk/services/document/pricesuk.html)

- 4.14 Until 2001 the BLDSC had been supported by a number of designated 'back-up' libraries. At one stage these numbered more than 70, but over the years this was reduced to 18. There were also over 700 'location' libraries recorded in the Library directory of library codes who accepted requests direct from customers and to whom the BLDSC made no direct payment. In addition to the BLDSC sending requests and making payments to back-up libraries, many of the back-ups accepted requests directly and in some cases at a lower price than they received from the BLDSC. To this extent the BLDSC could be seen as subsidising the ILL operations of the back-up providers.
- 4.15 Under the arrangements applying at the time, the funding of the back-up system provided a problem for the BLDSC. On the one hand the service increased the borrowing sources available and therefore the fill rate achieved, on the other hand the Library lost money on all requests treated in this way as almost all the loan charge was passed on to the lending library without recognition of the intermediate handling costs (estimated to be equivalent to four staffing posts). Moreover, the operation of the back-up system lacked direct control by the BLDSC, with different back-up libraries operating to varying service standards and delivery times. Accordingly, the system was clearly in need of review, and the Library decided to cancel it. One consequence of this might be that this decision has contributed to the apparent decline in BLDSC lending volume (see Table 4.3), although in practice this may be illusory as items previously recorded as being supplied by the BLDSC might now appear in the other sources of supply cited in Table 3.2.
- 4.16 For the reasons considered in this report, the future remains somewhat uncertain for the whole of the BLDSC in catering for the new situation in document supply. The British Library Board endorsed a previous review of the BLDSC which stressed that it was a core part of the Library's function to researchers and that there were no low risk or low cost options. It proposed that costs (both operating and collection) be managed downwards with limited investment in IT taking place to enhance efficiency, with the intention being to maximise income while the situation regarding information provision is clarified. This will allow the Board to take decisions in the mid-term on an appropriate model of document supply and ILL, and will also allow an assessment as to what different services and service levels the BLDSC needs to deliver to continue meeting the needs of all its customers.
- 4.17 Our email survey and visits to CURL libraries demonstrated conclusively that the BLDSC service is widely valued. Respondents to the survey rated the performance of the BLDSC (and CURL-SHARES) on a five point scale (1 = very poor to 5 = very good) on a number of key service criteria. Table 4.4 summarises the data provided by the 14 libraries responding:

**Table 4.4: CURL Library Satisfaction Ratings of the BLDSC and CURL-SHARES**

	BLDSC	CURL-SHARES
Cost of monograph ILL	3.5	4.3
Speed of delivery	4.6	3.6
Overall efficiency of ILL operation	4.3	3.9
Fill rate	4.2	3.7
Service quality (eg helpfulness etc)	4.4	3.9

*[Note: the number of CURL libraries reporting on other ILL providers was too low for data to be included. Data source is survey of CURL libraries]*

As can be seen the satisfaction ratings for the BLDSC are high, and for all criteria except cost they are slightly higher than those achieved by CURL-SHARES (see below). Even the rating concerning cost is satisfactory, and no library reported concern at the value for money provided by the mainstream BLDSC loan service. It thus appears that previous concerns expressed at the increases in the costs of BLDSC loans have either disappeared (as librarians become more aware of the real costs involved), or were not representative in the first place. In our view these satisfaction ratings constitute a benchmark by which possible alternative methods of supply should be judged (see Chapter 8).

- 4.18 The comments we received from CURL libraries on the operation of the BLDSC were also generally highly favourable, for example "we value BLDSC enormously... and we hope it continues to play a major part in the national interlending scheme", "as a dedicated document supply service the BLDSC have always provided a very good service", and "libraries want an efficient and speedy service, which is what they get from the BLDSC".
- 4.19 Nonetheless some CURL libraries perceive that a number of operational problems have existed, including: some concerns about the Library's acquiring a progressively decreasing proportion of published output, thus progressively reducing the fill rate; some initial concerns about the introduction of differential pricing for document supply and monograph loans; some concerns about the waiting time when items are being purchased and an associated lack of information about delivery times from publishers; weaknesses in some foreign language material availability; different conditions of usage applying to materials from the London Document Supply Centre as opposed to those from Boston Spa; worries about the increased costs in charging for locations services where items are not in stock (leading to a number of libraries no longer using this facility); and some lack of consultation and information about changes to service arrangements, for example one respondent noted that "the introduction of autorenewals gave us inadequate notification and has been difficult to plan for". Although these are important operational issues, none of the comments of this type that we received have a significant impact on the overall model of ILL delivery through the BLDSC.
- 4.20 In this context a weakness acknowledged by the British Library itself is the lack of a forum wherein the BLDSC (and the Library more generally) can discuss issues of mutual interest with higher education libraries. This is a significant omission as they account for a substantial proportion of users. The proposal for the development of the Research Libraries Network (RLN) made in the RSLG report may address this need in the longer term, but in the immediate future we see no reason why a mechanism should not be created to encourage discussion about service provision.
- 4.21 The relatively minor nature of the criticisms made by CURL libraries on the operation of the BLDSC suggests that the issues discussed at length in the RSLG report about the financial pressures on all libraries (and the consequent need for greater collaboration) have yet to make a significant impact. Nonetheless these issues are real, and the British Library is currently addressing a number of important questions concerning future collection development. These will, in turn, have implications for ILL, for example if the Library decides to adopt a more

distributed approach to specialist collections then the practice of ILL in those areas is likely to have to change as well. We consider these issues in more detail in Chapter 6.

- 4.22 In reviewing the appropriateness of the current monograph ILL system used in higher education, we are acutely aware of the potential impact of changes in this sector for the whole of the BLDSC operation. At the moment the other forms of ILL provision discussed in this Chapter make only marginal inroads into the operation of the BLDSC, and indeed are often used as sources when the BLDSC cannot obtain items. Should this situation change significantly then the whole cost structure of the BLDSC could alter with adverse consequences for other parts of its operation.

### **CURL-SHARES**

- 4.23 As noted in Chapter 2, SHARES is a resource sharing partnership open to any of the Research Libraries Group's 160 members (including CURL libraries), and the CURL-SHARES scheme is the UK application of the RLG model used in the USA. CURL has always appreciated the richness of its book collections and has for some years been committed to finding ways of sharing them. By way of preparation, it has spent a great deal of time and effort on the creation of its union catalogue (COPAC) supported by JISC funding in 1996. It now contains the records of 23 CURL libraries with others still being added, and is highly valued by libraries. CURL - and some of its members - have slowly been adopting a more collaborative position to sharing resources, perhaps encouraged by a perception that, in view of the British Library's decision to raise the price of monograph interlending, CURL libraries could apparently provide a service more cheaply, although only if direct transaction costs were the main element in the price.
- 4.24 There have been two pilot tests of monograph interlending within CURL. The first, conducted in 1997<sup>22</sup>, was not considered very successful by those involved; there were few participants who were required to use CURL libraries as the lender of first resort; there was no common interface; and there were some operational problems such as a lack of central accounting and billing facilities.
- 4.25 A second, and more substantial, pilot - CURL-SHARES - started in November 2000. Libraries from the five institutions that had been using RLIN ILL (see Chapter 2) started making requests to each other during November 2000 to January 2001, and another six joined in February 2001. The pilot eventually involved 28 libraries from fourteen institutions. CURL-SHARES participants agreed to sign up to the SHARES service levels<sup>23</sup> with a few small differences, one to do with turnaround time, and the other concerning charging for multi-volume works. The price charged by net lenders to net borrowers was the standard SHARES price of \$7(US) per loan. Requesting was done on RLIN ILL with SHARES acting as the financial 'clearinghouse', issuing invoices and cheques annually.
- 4.26 All participating libraries continued to use the BLDSC as the lender of first resort, thus CURL-SHARES had only to deal with a proportion of those requests not filled by the BLDSC. During

<sup>22</sup> Thompson FM, *Access to Resources. A New Review of Academic Librarianship*, 5, 1999, 143-148

<sup>23</sup> For details see (<http://www.rlg.org/shares/agree.html>)

the whole of the pilot (with varying levels of participation) the number of requests made within CURL-SHARES was 4,213; the number filled was 2972 (including 285 photocopies), or just over 70%. The pilot ended at the end of 2001, but the participating libraries continued as members of SHARES, with some additional libraries joining since then.

- 4.27 Approximately one third of CURL libraries did not participate in the SHARES pilot, and it was never intended that the national libraries would take part. (The British Library could not have done so, since it would have meant reducing their charges, which would not have been possible.) Cambridge runs its own rival service with a higher loan charge, and Oxford was keen to participate but only if they could use RLG's ILL Manager, which did not become available in time.
- 4.28 A number of issues have arisen from the pilot:
- As Table 4.4 shows, there is general satisfaction from CURL libraries about the performance of the CURL-SHARES scheme, although with ratings slightly lower than for the BLDSC. Some inconsistency in operation was the most common criticism made with some libraries unable to meet the delivery targets required by the scheme.
  - Several libraries noted that the scheme placed considerable burdens on staff time (which is not included in SHARES costs), even when dealing with fairly low volumes of requests. Partly as a result of this, in most of the libraries for which we have data there was agreement that they could not sustain a distributed ILL system that used CURL-SHARES as the lender of first resort, and that was organised on current SHARES principles.
  - The SHARES 'knock for knock' arrangement, with only net borrowers paying any real money, conceals the actual costs of the operation, and as can be concluded from the data in Chapter 5 all CURL libraries considerably subsidised the operation of the CURL-SHARES scheme. As a result net lenders can be expected to have particular doubts about the wisdom of continued participation in SHARES.
  - If the CURL-SHARES scheme were to be expanded it is not clear how it could cater for the rest of higher education if operated on current principles. The RSLG report is not concerned with supporting research just in CURL universities, but with supporting research in the UK. Thus, whatever new mechanisms are put in place to provide information support will need to cater for institutions beyond CURL. The BLDSC is at the heart of the system, and caters for institutions across the board, but there are clearly many issues that would arise if CURL were expected to extend its services. Not least that the current SHARES scheme could not apply, since SHARES partners must be in membership of RLG.
- 4.29 There are also a number of issues within the CURL-SHARES scheme concerning computer based library management systems (LMS). In the past SHARES has required requests to be made using RLIN ILL, which can be used while in the RLIN database. The RLIN database gives access to a CURL union list that lacks some of the functionality (eg availability of information) of COPAC. So, a UK (or other) ILL librarian may start with a search of COPAC (or

RLIN then go to COPAC for more comprehensive information), then go to RLIN ILL to make the request, then go to the LMS or other ILL module to create a record of the transaction.

- 4.30 RLG has developed a successor to RLIN ILL, known as ILL Manager, which is ISO compliant. RLIN ILL will cease to function in the summer of 2003, and all requesting in SHARES must then be done using ILL Manager or another ISO and SHARES compliant system. Most LMS systems are not ISO ILL compliant, but it seems that American librarians are less concerned about that than UK librarians, and are happy to use a non-integrated ILL management system.
- 4.31 As of 6 March 2003, 86 of the 152 SHARES libraries (accounting for 87% of SHARES transactions) have chosen ILL Manager or OCLC ILLiad (also ISO compliant) as their ILL management system. Of the 51 that have not yet decided, 19 are in the UK. This is a major issue, and one that threatens the future participation of some CURL libraries. SHARES is in regular discussion with its partners about requirements for developments in functionality, and if CURL-SHARES is to be encouraged there is an urgent need for discussion about possible improvements that would make ILL management less cumbersome for UK librarians.
- 4.32 There is another LMS issue concerning cost. CURL libraries receive a copy of ILL Manager at no cost, but have to pay an annual maintenance fee. If they require additional copies, these are also free, yet the maintenance fee is charged for each copy acquired. A library that uses SHARES and ILL Manager to manage all (perhaps thousands) of its ILL transactions might feel that this is reasonable value for money. A UK library that uses a different system to send virtually all of its requests to the BLDSC and ILL Manager to handle maybe a few hundred requests (and perhaps only a handful at some sites) might feel that it is very poor value for money. However, a new arrangement has been agreed whereby CURL libraries will be charged at the lower rate of maintenance (ie \$500 rather than \$1,200pa) for each copy regardless of how many ILL requests they make or receive.

#### **The University of Cambridge**

- 4.33 Since October 2001 Cambridge University Library has run its own ILL service, following the ending of the BLDSC back-up arrangement. In terms of volume Cambridge had previously been a principal back-up library, with numbers for all forms of document supply (mainly photocopies) reaching a maximum of 52,000 in 1979-1980 and then declining over time to approximately 30,000 a year. Eight staff were employed under the back-up arrangement, and on closure the Library took a decision to continue to employ the staff concerned and attempt to run an ILL service on a self-financing basis independent of the BLDSC.
- 4.34 In the year 2001-2002 they had 14,118 requests, approximately 12,000 coming from UK and Irish libraries and the rest from registered overseas libraries via the British Library. The fill rate was approximately 65%, and unfilled items were mainly for speculative requests which the Library did not hold. Exact figures for monograph ILL are unknown, but are estimated at approximately 40% of filled volume or about 3000 items. Volume is therefore in the same order as provided by CURL-SHARES. Future volumes will need to be increased considerably if self-financing status is to be achieved.

- 4.35 The Library decided not to join the CURL-SHARES scheme as its self-financing status meant that it could not operate within the agreed charging regime. ILL charges are levied at rates slightly lower than for the British Library, currently £6 for a loan, £3.50 + VAT for a photocopy sent out by first class post or £4.50 when sent by fax. Special rates are sometimes charged for non-standard items. The service attempts to process all requests within three to four days, after which loans are dispatched by Royal Mail.
- 4.36 The Library accepts requests by email, fax, post, telephone, and on pre-paid British Library forms. In all cases libraries must quote their British Library billing account number and a request reference number. The Library has developed its own internally designed web-based request form, which it encourages requesting libraries to use.
- 4.37 Loans items are not available for home reading, and must be read in the requesting library. Some categories of material are excluded from the scheme including British books published in the last five years and received under legal deposit, all books published before 1850, and other special cases.

#### **SUBITO**

- 4.38 SUBITO is a German document delivery service based upon the collections of 28 academic and specialised libraries, primarily in Germany, with two in Austria and one in Switzerland. SUBITO is mentioned here as an example of a different approach to document supply, but other than being a potential supplier of specialist material it is not thought to have particular relevance to the UK. Some member libraries supply only copies, some also lend books. Some lend overseas, some lend only within Germany. The balance of monograph lending and article supply is not known, but is thought to be heavily weighted towards the latter.
- 4.39 SUBITO offers two levels of service: standard with turnaround time of 72 hours maximum, and express with a turnaround time of 24 hours maximum. The loan period is four weeks. The charge for a loan of a book to another library is 7 euros. It is not clear whether orders are sent (by a web interface) to SUBITO in order to provide consolidated billing or to the supply library of choice. Payment may be made through SUBITO or to individual supply libraries.

#### **OCLC WORLDCAT**

- 4.40 OCLC offers a variety of bibliographic and resource sharing services that are priced, usually on a subscription basis. Worldcat, a service of OCLC, is a union catalogue of the holdings of over 7,000 libraries around the world that contains 48 million bibliographic records. Based upon this union catalogue, OCLC offers an interlibrary loan service. Requesting is via a web interface (or other means). There are no standard charges; requesting libraries indicate the maximum that they wish to pay and if a supply library's charges exceed that amount the request will not be filled. Fee management is done by OCLC, which bills requesting libraries.
- 4.41 OCLC also offer an ILL management system – ILLiad – that automates routine ILL functions. The price of ILLiad varies with the size of the institution. Although ILLiad is not thought to be especially relevant to the UK situation (because few UK libraries use OCLC management

packages), it is possible that OCLC could be thought of as a potential partner in systems development or acquisition.

### **THE BRITISH MEDICAL ASSOCIATION**

- 4.42 The BMA has an excellent medical library, principally to serve the needs of its members. Institutions such as university libraries can become institutional members for £67 (+VAT) pa. Institutional members pay £2.20 plus VAT for each loan, plus return postage. Members may borrow ten books at one time for up to three months. Requesting can be done while in the catalogue.
- 4.43 Although borrowing by most CURL libraries is low in volume the BMA service is valued because of the particular nature of its collection, and is a good example of a the kind of specialist research collection that - circumstances permitting - might be brought within our proposed revisions of the national ILL system (see Chapter 8).

### **UnityWeb**

- 4.44 Unity, now known as UnityWeb, is provided by Talis Information in conjunction with the Combined Regions<sup>24</sup>. It is a union catalogue providing bibliographic and location information covering the holdings of over 450 libraries across the UK and Ireland, including the British Library. The database has over 10 million bibliographic records and more than 35 million locations. Electronic requesting facilities are provided for library staff, including the ability to build rotas into requests. However, limited interloan requesting functionality of the kind required in higher education appear to be available.
- 4.45 UnityWeb can be made available directly to end-users. Powerful but easy-to-use search facilities enable users to discover and locate materials in library collections nationwide. Access is via a web interface. Licences are available to any library or information service for one or more staff users and for public users. UnityWeb has over a hundred subscribing institutions. However, it is principally of interest to the public library sector, and has little relevance to the research library community as a source for obtaining materials.

### **V3.Online**

- 4.46 V3.Online is a union catalogue previously known as Viscount, and developed by LASER (the London and South East Regional library system). V3.Online consists of: a bibliographic database of four and a half million titles; locations of over 40 million library holdings; transaction management facilities for lending and borrowing; management information and accounting for use; a web interface. It claims ISO ILL compliance.
- 4.47 V3.Online has limited ILL management functionality, and is principally of interest to the public library sector. It appears to be of little relevance to the HE research library community as a source for obtaining materials.

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<sup>24</sup> See <http://thecombedregions.com>.

## CONARLS

- 4.48 CONARLS is the Circle of Officers of National and Regional Library Systems. It has issued a Code of Practice to guide systems and their member libraries in their provision and use of ILL lending services,<sup>25</sup> although some of this is at a very simplified and routine level. The CONARLS scheme has a standard charge of £5, and is reported to be increasingly used by public libraries as an alternative to the British Library.
- 4.49 The CONARLS scheme is well-established and appreciated by the public library community and is likely to be of enduring relevance to that sector. It is of little relevance to the research library community, except to the extent that it continues to supply public libraries as net lender and at a subsidised price to them.

### The Scottish ILL Rate Scheme

- 4.50 The SILLR scheme enables 163 participating Scottish libraries to lend at a lower cost than in other schemes, and for 2003-2004 this is £4.50 an item. The scheme is administered by the Inter-Library Services Division of the National Library of Scotland is open to any Scottish library involved in ILL and having a BLDSO customer account. In our survey, although the Scottish CURL libraries emphasised the value of links with the National Library (including for location services for which no fee is charged), the actual volume of research loans using this source is low.

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<sup>25</sup> See (<http://thenortheast.com/conarls/ILLstand.pdf>).

## 5 An Analysis of Current Interlending Activity in CURL Libraries

- 5.1 In this Chapter we comment on the institutional usage of monograph ILL and the issues arising, with much of the data being drawn from our email-based survey and institutional visits.
- 5.2 In Chapter 2 we have already noted the substantial variation in the volume of ILL monographs requested by CURL libraries. However, explaining such variations is not easy, and they may depend upon unique institutional factors, for example the culture of requesting ILL; disciplinary differences; the proximity to other local research libraries; and the existence of local special collections. However, we were also interested in obtaining data on internal charging arrangements, in order to investigate the extent to which charging had the effect of dampening demand.
- 5.3 The data from our survey are inconclusive but suggest that charging may have some effect. Certainly several libraries told us in our visits that demand for ILL had fallen when charging against departmental budgets was introduced, with loans for students being particularly reduced. Of the 17 libraries providing information a wide range of charges were levied: four made no charges for either staff or students; five made charges of between £1 - £2; four charged between £3-£3.50; and a further four levied charges of between £5 - £6.65. Two of the libraries with the largest volume of ILL made no charges. Of those charging, almost all charged the same rate to staff and students, with some charging an additional amount for urgent items, or to externally registered readers. Where charging arrangements were devolved to academic departments, few libraries appeared to have data on the implications for ILL volume of different departmental practices and allocation systems.
- 5.4 Charges are reported as being made for three main reasons: first, as an explicit attempt at direct cost recovery (although no library charged at rates likely to cover full costs); second, to act as a check on frivolous requesting; and third, as a specific response to cuts in library resources. Conversely, those not charging saw ILL provision as part of a high quality research-oriented library service, and took the view that as users were not charged for books borrowed from the host library there was no reason that they should be charged for ILL borrowing despite the additional costs incurred.
- 5.5 These results are broadly consistent with a study by Clinton<sup>26</sup> on UK higher education libraries as a whole which found that in 1999 approximately 35% of libraries did not charge for ILL and approximately 65% did, but that there was a trend for charging to be introduced.
- 5.6 If charges do have a tendency to dampen demand, then a number of interesting questions follow: first, is this necessarily undesirable? After all charging is recognised in most areas of life as an appropriate way of mediating demand. Second, is any dampening felt more by certain groups of readers? For example, common sense suggests that students and those

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<sup>26</sup> Clinton P, *Charging Users for Interlibrary Loans in UK University Libraries, Interlending and Document Supply, Vol 27, No 1, 1999*

researchers without access to research grants might be particularly affected. As CURL libraries tend to report higher usage of ILL by arts and humanities researchers (who tend to be those with least research funding) there may also be issues of disciplinary equity arising here. Third, do researchers obtain material from other sources where charges are lower or non-existent or do they simply not bother? Fourth, what is the effect on research output - if any - of decisions by researchers not to pursue material (particularly 'marginal' material) through ILL? The nature of this study did not permit answers to these questions to be obtained, but they are nonetheless important issues at the institutional level which CURL librarians will need to pursue.

- 5.7 A possible source of material other than ILL is, of course, by physically using other libraries, and our data suggests the existence of a probable London factor as all CURL libraries in London reported low volumes of ILL requests. In addition, local library consortia may be used, particularly by students. However, other data exists which suggests that outside of the main metropolitan areas academic staff are reluctant to travel to use other libraries even where collaborative schemes have been established<sup>27</sup>. In this context it will be interesting to see if the SCONUL Research Extra scheme (which allows borrowing between participating libraries) manages to enhance existing local collaborative arrangements.

#### **The ILL Needs of CURL Libraries**

- 5.8 We asked all CURL libraries about their future needs and priorities in relation to monograph ILL, and there was considerable unanimity of view. The main needs identified by a majority of libraries were:
- A widespread need for an efficient, speedy and user-friendly ILL service. These needs included efficient payment systems that avoided individual transaction costs. In this context some libraries noted the desirability of ensuring a single point of contact for all ILL requests to maximise efficiency and minimise staff time. We have already noted that the BLDSC is held in high regard, and there is a general view that future loan operations should not fall below current BLDSC benchmarks.
  - The need for what three respondents called "reasonably priced services". Some libraries recognised that such calculations should include internal staff time (see below) whereas others were more narrowly concerned about actual loan charges.
  - The need for ILL systems to reflect collection development policies, particularly so far as the BLDSC are concerned. Thus any move towards distributed collection development by the British Library will need to ensure that the libraries hosting specific collections had both permit borrowing and also participate in a national ILL scheme.
  - The need for a comprehensive online catalogue - suitably updated and maintained - as the prime discovery tool for determining the availability of material. This need has two parts: first, the need for a union catalogue (UKNUC) to incorporate the contents of existing

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<sup>27</sup> See, for example, the experience of the CORSALL scheme in the East Midlands, Bloor I, CORSALL, *Collaboration in Research Support by Academic Libraries in Leicestershire, 2001*, de Montfort University

catalogues; second, the cataloguing of as yet uncatalogued materials in line with the work of the Full Disclosure Implementation Group.

- Encouraging the development of systems by which end users could request loans online without mediation by home institution librarians. Although this raises a number of operational issues which will need to be addressed, we consider the issue further in Chapter 9.

5.9 As we note below these needs were set within differing views about future demand for monograph ILL, with approximate one third of CURL members predicting a decline in demand, one third an expansion, and one third a relatively stable volume.

### **Staffing and Institutional ILL Costs**

5.10 In order to try and obtain data on the real costs of ILL, we asked all CURL libraries to provide comprehensive details of their staffing loads concerning ILL, and also the other costs of their ILL services. While staffing data was generally provided, only five libraries presented detailed cost data in a way that was usable, and in most cases the actual costs of ILL were unknown. We consider both sets of data below, but it needs to be understood that the data was based upon self-declaration and may not be reliable for making rigorous comparisons. Nonetheless the results will be of interest to CURL librarians who should review the performance of their own ILL services against the data presented.

5.11 So far as staffing is concerned, libraries were asked to supply the number of library staff "involved in monograph interlending, converted to the nearest 0.1 FTE". The number of staff varied considerably, and of the 14 CURL libraries returning data two employed 8 or more staff, three 4 or 5 staff, five 3 staff; and the rest fewer than 3 staff. With two exceptions staffing appears closely correlated with the volume of ILL undertaken, although not with institutional size. The average number of loans (both requested and supplied) per staff member declared was 1552 with most institutions being in a 20% range on either side of this figure. Three libraries reported low ratios, but in two of these special factors probably applied leaving only one (678 per staff member) with a ratio that suggested particularly low internal productivity. Conversely, two libraries declared figures in excess of 2000 items per staff member, with one reporting 4522 - a figure based on high volume and low staffing levels. This latter figure suggests particularly high productivity, and CURL should discuss the results with the library concerned to see if there is any good practice that could usefully be made known to other libraries.

5.12 Our data on costs comes from two sources: our email survey and a detailed cost analysis that has recently been undertaken for one CURL library. Table 5.1 presents recurrent cost data from the survey for the five libraries presenting broadly comparable data, and appears to show a significant variation in costs per transaction. However, three of these libraries were unable to identify non-staffing direct costs, which would increase the cost per loan significantly and we would therefore estimate this range to be between £10 to £26 with an average of approximately £15 (excluding acquisition costs, overheads, and non-recurrent capital items) .

**Table 5.1: Costs Per ILL For 5 CURL Libraries 2001-2002**

1 = HEI	2 = Total all ILL charges by (requested & supplied)	3 = Total charges by suppliers (eg BLDSC)	4 = Total staff costs	5 = Total other costs	6 = Total (3+4+5)	7 = Less fees received	8 = Total (7-6)	9 = Cost per transaction: (2 into 8)
	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£
a	3969	17952	26700	0	44652	7300	37,352	£9.41
b	3394	29200	86011	0	115,211	32,600	82,611	£24.34
c	2568	11178	27387	962	39527	5898	33,629	£13.10
d	5629	23596	35483	0	59079	12160	46,919	£8.34
e	4748	12217	58968	13452	84637	18097	66,540	£14.81
Average	4062	18828	46909	2882	68621	15211	53,410	£14.00[a]

[a: note in practice the average is likely to be at least £15 - see paragraph 5.12]

- 5.13 Clearly the figures in Table 5.1 need to be treated with very considerable caution, but some confirmation is obtained in data from the one CURL library we discovered to have undertaken a detailed costing of its ILL function. This study was based on a detailed activity based costing of staff time and included direct costs such as recurrent IT charges, stationery and postage, but did not allow for overheads, acquisition or non-recurrent items. The study showed that the staff cost per loan was £5.94 and per photocopy £3.96; this apportionment was arrived at by weighting an average cost rather than actual figures for each kind of transaction. The final cost for supplying a loan to an internal customer was calculated at £14.83, including the British Library charge. In comparison the cost of meeting an external request for a monograph was £8.44; as the BLDSC only paid the supplier its own charge of £6.55, this meant that it was costing the library £2.15 for every monograph that it supplied to another institution. The report was used by the library staff to justify a claim for much higher internal charges than at present.
- 5.14 In all ILL costing exercises staff time is the largest single element (76% of the total of the cost of lending in an ARL study in 1999)<sup>28</sup> but calculating it accurately involves activity based costing and is a complex and time consuming exercise. An Australian study in 2001 reported the same staff time percentage in universities within an average cost of A\$18 for supplying monographs<sup>29</sup>.
- 5.15 One reason why ILL costings are so few is that the activity is a relatively small part of a library's activity. In a recent exercise in a major British research-led institution, all library staff analysed their time by the activities they were performing and the study found that a mere 2% of total costs were attributable to ILL.
- 5.16 The financial data we have obtained shows one point conclusively; that the BLDSC charge of £6.65 appears very reasonable for the service involved. If the average cost in CURL libraries is about £15 per transaction, this means that they are benefiting very considerably from the BLDSC's operational efficiency. The implications of this are that it would be difficult to find an alternative model to the BLDSC at the same price for customers. All alternatives are likely to cost more. The other main conclusion is that CURL members ought to review their internal charging policies. Although the dominant factor in price setting may not be full cost recovery,

<sup>28</sup> ARL. Jackson, Mary (1999). *Measuring the performance of interlibrary loan operations. Proceedings of the 6<sup>th</sup> Interlending and Document supply International Conference. Pretoria. pp 209-213.*

<sup>29</sup> National Library of Australia (2001) *Interlibrary Loan and Document Delivery Benchmarking Study. For the National Resource Sharing Working Group.*

the implications of the costings are that the internal subsidy given to ILL could well be redeployed to acquire additional monographs.

### **Library Management Systems**

- 5.17 All libraries use management systems (LMS) to manage acquisitions, cataloguing and catalogues, loans and other transactions with users. Most systems have a module for managing ILL, and there are also standalone ILL management systems that are used by some libraries even though they have another LMS for most functions. The advantage of using the LMS module is that it integrates ILL management with all other functions (catalogue, user database, files recording other transactions, etc (for example, a library might choose not to allow an ILL request from a user with an outstanding fine).
- 5.18 We sought information on the library management systems that CURL libraries are using to support ILL services, and the extent to which they are ISO compliant. This is likely to be important in future, because whatever form the future UK interlending system takes, it is almost certain to involve a greater reliance upon the use of the ISO Protocol. A variety of LMS are in use or are about to be installed, three of which are reported as being ISO compliant: Innopac (2); Millenium (1); Sirsi Unicorn (3) and three of which are not: Aleph (3); Dynix (1); and Talis (3). In some cases the associated ILL software is not used because of a lack of functionality, and in some cases the Lancaster ILLOS system is used. ILLOS is an interlibrary loans management system developed at Lancaster University since 1985. It is currently used by 42 academic and public libraries throughout the UK and Republic of Ireland. ILLOS provides ILL request management with support for document ordering from the BLDSC and other libraries, however it is not ISO compliant<sup>30</sup>.
- 5.19 In some libraries there is an understandable concern about the possible proliferation of library systems, and a small number in both our visits and survey had reservations about the possible future use of ILL Manager because of duplication of systems and the effort required in data inputting, etc.

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<sup>30</sup> *For details see (<http://www.illos.lancs.ac.uk/features.html>)*

## 6 The Strengths and Weaknesses of Current Arrangements

- 6.1 In this Chapter the current strengths and weaknesses of the national ILL system for higher education are summarised, along with consideration of the risks to future provision if no action is taken to enhance the current position. It needs to be recognised that these strengths and weaknesses are specific to higher education and research libraries, and different perceptions may exist for other users of the BLDSC (for example, public libraries).

### **The Strengths of the Current ILL System**

- 6.2 The first, and most important, strength of the existing ILL system based on the BLDSC is that it works, and has done so successfully for many years. Indeed the RSLG Report concludes that document supply and ILL have been "an important element in achieving the UK's high international standing in research excellence based upon a comparatively modest research infrastructure" (paragraph 132). The system is well understood by researchers, is valued by them, and as our own data demonstrates has the support of all CURL libraries. The overall performance of the system is high in terms of speed of delivery and other operational benchmarks.
- 6.3 The current system also represents good value for money for the system as a whole. Studies undertaken for the RSLG Report estimated the savings achieved through all forms of central document supply in the research sector to be between £45 and £50 million. In relation to individual loan charges our survey suggested that although responding librarians welcomed the cheaper options provided by some other providers, the charges of the BLDSC were accepted as being at least satisfactory
- 6.4 These are, of course, major strengths, and led the RSLG Report to conclude that although "we recognise that the volume and pattern for such services is likely to change, as a means of assuring access for all researchers to the largest number and broadest range of resources we can conceive of no better arrangement" (paragraph 132). We test this conclusion below.

### **The Weaknesses of the ILL System**

- 6.5 There are two issues - we would hesitate to call them weaknesses - in current ILL arrangements which need to be addressed. First, in Chapter 2 it was noted that despite being the largest user of the BLDSC ILL service there is no mechanism by which the needs and interests of the higher education community can be fed into British Library operations. As a result some decisions have come as surprise to higher education librarians, and some say that greater planning and implementation time would have been useful. Were the current system to remain as it is, we would recommend that a consultative body be established to provide a forum for such discussions. However, we incorporate the idea in our proposals for system revisions contained below.

- 6.6 The second issue concerns the adequacy of the current fill rate for ILL. We noted in Chapter 2 that the total number of requests completed from all sources by a sample of CURL libraries was approximately 90%, leaving approximately 30,000 requests a year remaining unfilled. The adequacy of this figure is a matter for debate. For the researchers concerned and for many ILL librarians we suspect a one in ten failure rate may be frustrating, however, we take the opposite view and regard it as a success. A real 80:20 issue applies here, and a great deal of time and energy can be spent in finding the most elusive materials. In our view what is required is the need to ensure the continuation of a robust and reliable system (performing at least to current BLDSC benchmarks) for the 90% of ILL volume, rather than attempting to ensure that the maximum possible proportion of requests can be met at the margin. This then enables individual libraries to make judgements concerning the value for money involved in trying to obtain the most elusive items.
- 6.7 However, the real weaknesses of the ILL system do not concern current provision but the future. The RSLG Report sets out in some detail the general resource constraints which are liable to affect future library provision and these are not repeated here. More specifically the current ILL system is likely to come under increasing strain because of :
- Declining investment in loan stock which is likely unless more collaborative approaches to acquisition take place. This is likely to involve the British Library as much as CURL and other libraries, and will almost inevitably lead over time to a declining central fill rate. However, it is difficult to calculate how quickly this will have an impact on researchers.
  - An increase in the diversity of ILL provision as libraries struggle to meet the needs of their own researchers in the context of a declining central fill rate, leading to more unplanned and decentralised lending environment.
  - Specific difficulties concerning the loan of items from special collections as collection development becomes more distributed without document supply necessarily being a planned aspect of such arrangements.
- 6.8 It has already been noted in Chapter 4 that monograph interlending by the BLDSC has declined by a little under 10% in three years, and if this increased it would, of course, have potentially serious consequences for the BLDSC, although the details of these fall outside our terms of reference. Any significant fall in its higher education ILL business is likely to have major consequences for its overall document supply pricing structure. Although it is not the task of this study to protect the BLDSC unnecessarily, it is important that any discussion of future options takes full account of its overall position.
- 6.9 If such developments take place, they would all lead to the loss of many of the significant advantages of centralisation that now exist, and involve ILL librarians spending much more time trying to source material than many would wish to do. Rather we see the opposite as desirable: obtaining maximum benefit through a suitably run single source of supply, with as much ordering and distribution as possible being done electronically.

### **Is There a Problem?**

- 6.10 In the light of the above, two key questions need to be answered: is there a problem in current ILL arrangements, and if so is it severe enough to warrant changing the current system? Our answer is set within the discussion and analysis of the RSLG report that considers the same questions except at the broader level of provision for researchers as a whole.
- 6.11 Our conclusion is that in the short term there is no major problem with the national interlending system, although the slight decline in BLDSCL lending over the last three years coupled with the growth of new providers at the margin demonstrates that libraries are having to seek new sources for approximately one fifth of their loan items. This position could continue for some years, but it is likely that the future pressures noted above will slowly erode the fill rate, and that gradual deterioration of the ILL service will occur. This, in turn, may require greater effort from institutional library staff in seeking out requested items from new sources. The RSLG has made it clear that such a gradual deterioration in resource availability for research use should not be accepted, and our conclusion is that the same principle should apply to document supply and loans.
- 6.12 Accordingly, although doing nothing is an option, it is not consistent with the RSLG report and it would undermine one part of its overall approach to enhancing the development of research libraries. Therefore we consider options for change in Chapter 8.

## 7 Assumptions About Future Monograph Interlending Requirements for Higher Education

- 7.1 The terms of reference for this study require any restructuring of ILL provision to take place within the context of the requirements for the next ten years. Planning over this time span in the information environment is extremely difficult, and it is now widely recognised that the influences of rapid developments in information technology cannot easily be predicted. However, we agree with CURL that any change in operational arrangements must try to take probable - perhaps even possible - trends into account. Therefore, in this Chapter we set out some of the factors that may influence monograph ILL in the next ten years, and try to be explicit about our assumptions of their importance. We have sought to gain the views of the CURL library community on such questions through our email survey, and our library visits, and also by asking the study steering group for their views. We are aware, however, that there will be differences of opinion about these assumptions, and our data collection suggested very different priorities are being given to the potential importance of such factors as e-books.
- 7.2 The starting point is the RSLG report which is clear about the future need for hard copy material for researchers. For example, in paragraph 11 it notes that "even in those disciplines where electronic resources have made a heavy impact, there is no sign of hard copy resources being abandoned", and follows this up in paragraph 12 by observing the importance of subject differences "61% of researchers in area studies and languages regard access to rare books and manuscripts as essential to their research, compared to 49% in arts and just 3% in medical and bio-sciences. Social scientists, on the other hand, generally use both hard copy and electronic resources equally."
- 7.3 It goes on to note (paragraph 40) that 74% of researchers across all disciplines regard ILL and document delivery as essential access methods and 31% anticipate using these services more in the future. To meet this demand the report draws two conclusions: first, "for all researchers the importance of comprehensive online catalogues of nationally distributed research holdings is paramount, tied to efficient ILL and document delivery services and physical access rights", and second, for researchers in the arts and humanities, area studies and languages, and the social sciences, "online catalogues should extend as far as possible to resources held beyond the higher education sector".
- 7.4 In this context we set out summary conclusions on the importance of other key factors that are already starting to occur and will probably grow in importance over the next ten years.
- a) Continued Pressure on Resources**
- 7.5 Our assumption - and that of everyone that we have met - is that this will continue, that the effect of price inflation on library resources will grow, and that as a result libraries will acquire a progressively smaller fraction of published output (which is itself growing). This, in turn, will increase pressure to share more. As noted above this pressure faces the British Library as

well as HEIs, and raises numerous collection development issues which go well beyond this study. It follows that any revisions to the current ILL system should offer significant increases in efficiency, and the savings made should be reinvested in materials acquisition.

#### **b) The Development of a Comprehensive Online Catalogue**

- 7.6 The RSLG regards this as essential, and we agree: put simply we do not think that significant enhancements in the effectiveness of the ILL system can be achieved without it. We understand that funding to start UKNUC will probably begin in 2004, and it may be operational in its first phase by 2006, with COPAC possibly being at its core. However, if the union catalogue is to form the basis of an efficient distributed system of ILL, it will be important that all higher education libraries (not just CURL) have interoperable library management systems which may involve ISO/IPIG compliance (see Chapter 8). Amongst some libraries surveyed there is reluctance to move in this direction, and to duplicate or replicate existing ILL systems.

#### **c) The Role of the BLDSC**

- 7.7 We have discussed this issue with the Chief Executive of the British Library and other senior staff and have been assured that monograph interlending remains a key service that the Library wishes to maintain. However, this must be on the basis of responding to market demands and must also meet Treasury rules on the use of public funds. In Chapter 3 we noted some of the current pressures on the Library, and these are only likely to increase. Their response - along with the RSLG - is to encourage closer collaboration with the higher education sector as a way of enhancing resource utilisation and service delivery. We agree that such steps are desirable, and our discussion in Chapter 8 takes this into account.

#### **d) The Effect of More Electronic Materials**

- 7.8 All the evidence that we have seen suggests that for the next decade at least the need for hard copy materials will remain, particularly in the humanities, social sciences and related areas. However, there is a division of view about the possible impact of e-books, with some seeing them being widely available and replacing hard copy monographs in due course, while others see e-book publishing being more centred on the textbook market. In any case formidable problems of electronic licencing are likely to restrict the loan of electronic materials for some time to come. We found the library staff very divided in their opinions on this issue. Approximately half of those expressing a view said that they thought that 'in time' e-books would significantly reduce the need for ILL, and the other half disagreed. In any case we think that the 'in time' period is unlikely to be earlier than towards the end of our ten year horizon.

#### **e) The Impact of Greater Research Selectivity**

- 7.9 Notwithstanding the call by the RSLG for greater collaboration, all the evidence of the past is that universities - and in this case CURL libraries - do what is in their own strategic interest, and numerous central calls for greater collaboration have broken up on the rocks of self-interest. Clearly the way that the funding bodies support research in the period after the White Paper will be highly influential, and greater selectivity might encourage further inter-

institutional competition thus making collaboration less likely. However, as far as ILL is concerned we suspect that such pressures are unlikely to have much effect on demand. Not only has CURL itself become more active during a time of heightened research selectivity, but interestingly most CURL members have signed up to be members of SCONUL's Research Extra, which might signal an increased willingness to collaborate.

#### **f) Continued Pressures to Collaborate With Libraries Outside Higher Education**

- 7.10 Despite the trends noted above there will also be pressures for all higher education libraries to play an increased role in supporting information access within their region. The policies of government concerning widening participation will have an influence here with all higher education libraries and specialist research libraries (eg the Natural History Museum Library) under pressure to loan more within regional consortia. However, in practice these developments should not be in conflict with the interlending arrangements discussed in this report. All our data suggest that research libraries borrow very little from local public or regional libraries, and only a small number are significant lenders. Thus, important as regional collaboration will be, its influence on loan traffic between HEIs and the BLDSC will be small.

#### **g) The Impact of Student Fees**

- 7.11 The increase in student fees is likely to make students more demanding customers. This may increase demand for ILL, but this is likely to be modest as undergraduate provision will remain the responsibility of the host institution. However, there may be pressure to reduce delivery and turnaround time by making the current ILL procedure more efficient. If demand in this area does increase, in our discussions it was clear that some libraries might respond by requiring undergraduates to use copies of stock in other local libraries (where these exist), while others would be prepared to provide loans but at full cost. This might increase the activities of metropolitan consortia in sharing provision (eg the M25 group, SINTO, etc), and thus encourage borrowing through physical access to local collections rather than through ILL.

#### **h) The Impact of Institutional Mergers/Rationalisation**

- 7.12 The next decade is likely to see continued rationalisation of providers: and we considered the likely effect on interlending. Our conclusion is that potentially this could lead to a small reduction in ILL through greater internal library resources becoming available, but in practice the volume of such loans is likely to be small.

#### **i) The Impact of Greater International Collaboration**

- 7.13 As research becomes increasingly international this may have an impact on the sharing of resources and hence the use of ILL. However, although a good deal is heard about the internationalisation of research, our survey shows that the volume of loans both requested and sent overseas by CURL libraries is currently small. The librarians surveyed felt this volume would increase as collaboration grew, but it would only ever represent a relatively small proportion of ILL volume overall.

## **h) End User Direct Requesting**

- 7.14 In the Chapter 9 we consider the use of direct end user requests for ILL using an electronic catalogue, a step which was welcomed by more than half of libraries responding to our email based survey and opposed by a smaller number. One respondent observed - and we agree - that such a step might well lead to much greater demand for ILL, particularly in libraries which apply only modest charges or none at all. Clearly such a step could not be taken without appropriate operational authentication and payment procedures in place.

## **Conclusions**

- 7.15 Available data does not point conclusively to future levels of demand for ILL: some of the developments listed above will tend to increase it and others to diminish it. Amongst the libraries we surveyed there was also a difference of view: approximately one-third felt that local demand might increase, another one-third that it might diminish, and the other one-third that it might stay at roughly the same level.
- 7.16 On balance, our conclusion is that if nothing is done to enhance the national system then a gradual decline in lending might occur, with the slight downward trend in borrowing from the BLDSC continuing and only being partly compensated for by a modest growth in lending from alternative providers. On the other hand, if libraries continue to acquire a progressively smaller fraction of published output, if an online national union catalogue becomes available, and if easy to use end-user online requesting (without prohibitive fees) is introduced, a substantial increase in ILL could take place - particularly if these developments are set within the arrangements we propose in the next Chapter. Developments after that are likely to depend on the impact of electronic resources and e-books, which is currently the concern of a separate study being undertaken by JISC whose findings might usefully be considered by CURL.

## 8 Options for a New Approach to Monograph Interlending for Higher Education

8.1 It was concluded in paragraphs 6.10 to 6.12 that if the future of interlending is to be assured then the current system needs enhancing, and in this Chapter we set out the options for doing this. Although we see considerable merit in building upon existing strengths rather than adopting a completely new approach, we have nonetheless identified nine different options: some of which are radical. Most of these are dismissed as impractical, but are included in order to stimulate debate about the future of interlending.

8.2 Whatever new approach is introduced it should meet at least six key criteria:

- It should enable the current fill rate in higher education libraries of approximately 90% to be maintained, and if possible improved.
- It should operate to performance standards not lower than those currently achieved by the BLDSC.
- It should enable value for money to be maximised in relation to collection development, procurement, and other related areas.
- It should aim to maximise operational efficiency in all parts of the interlending process, including within requesting libraries.
- It should not harm by oversight other aspects of the national interlending system, for example public libraries etc.
- Where the other criteria can be satisfied an option should seek to be consistent with the approach of the RSLG Report.

### The Options

8.3 Of the nine options presented below, it is our view that the option which as a shorthand we call BLDSC Plus has considerable advantages over the others, and this is the one we recommend. As requested by CURL in commissioning this study we set out in some detail the business processes by which this option might be applied. However, before that we list all the options summarising their advantages and drawbacks.

8.4 The nine options are identified in Table 8.1:

**Table 8.1: Options for a Revised Interlending System**

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i	The BLDSC continues to operate as now, but rebuilds its network of a small number of back-up libraries to assure supply.
ii	The BLDSC is the key partner in a new national network of ILL providers with common charging and operating standards. We call this BLDSC Plus
iii	CURL-SHARES is extended and the BLDSC is brought into the scheme.
iv	CURL-SHARES takes over all the ILL operations of the BLDSC for higher education.
v	Building on options (iii) or (iv) an explicit partnership is created between the UK CURL-SHARES/BLDSC scheme and the RLG's SHARES.
vi	The creation of a new national ILL scheme based on the holdings of the legal deposit libraries.
vii	An expansion of the local collaborative schemes between higher education libraries to encourage them to develop effective ILL services for their members.
viii	A scheme based on SCONUL Research Extra.
ix	The national ILL service to be put out to tender to a private provider.

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Each option is now considered.

***Option i: The BLDSC continues to operate as now, but rebuilds its network of a small number of back-up libraries***

- 8.5 We note in paragraphs 4.14 and 4.15 that the British Library abolished its system of back-up libraries in 2001, and this option essentially re-establishes that position. It follows that to work effectively the problems that caused the Library to remove back-up provision need to be addressed. In summary these included: funding mechanisms which were unsustainable for the BLDSC; a wide variety of practice by back-up libraries without any shared service standards or performance indicators; the absence of a common system by which the flows of loan requests could be tracked satisfactorily; and multiple methods of requesting which meant that the same library could both be a back-up and also work independently and under-cut BLDSC charges.
- 8.6 Even if the funding issues could be addressed, we are not convinced that an approach based upon the acceptance of the different operating arrangements within back-up libraries is in the best interests of researchers and all other users. Service standards and delivery times would inevitably vary, and over time a greater burden would probably come to fall on the more efficient libraries. Instead we would prefer to see a collaborative approach working to common service standards. Although an attempt could be made to introduce such standards within this approach, it would not be easy, and the ownership of the system by the BLDSC might militate against the collaborative approach that is desirable.

8.7 In some ways, it could be thought that there is little to separate this option from our preferred approach in option ii. However, there are important -although perhaps subtle - differences. Echoing the RSLG report our preferred approach is to create a partnership of suitable ILL providers with a separate management board, rather than having one (albeit the main one) run a system in which others are 'back-ups'. Set within the context of the development of the RLN, we believe that such a partnership approach has a much greater chance of obtaining the necessary institutional support for collaborative working than would the re-establishment of the back-up model.

***Option ii: BLDSC Plus - the BLDSC is the key partner in a new national network of ILL providers***

8.8 This is our preferred and recommended approach. BLDSC Plus builds upon existing strengths, maintains the cost and operational efficiencies associated with central operation, and also potentially integrates a wide range of other library resources into the model. It meets all the criteria set out above in paragraph 8.2, and is consistent with the collaborative approach to collection development set out in the RSLG report. When combined with online single user requesting (which although not essential is highly desirable - see Chapter 9), the option has the potential to enhance efficiency in operation, both nationally and within requesting libraries. An analysis of the key business processes involved is set out later in this Chapter.

***Options iii, iv, and v: The central involvement of CURL-SHARES in interlending***

8.9 The three options concerning building upon the operation of CURL-SHARES are considered as one as similar issues arise. In Chapter 4 we reported that those CURL libraries seeking loans through CURL-SHARES (and in a small number of cases directly through RLG-SHARES) generally reported high levels of satisfaction, although some disquiet was expressed about the inability of all participating libraries to maintain common performance standards. As a result the option exists (in various forms) of building upon this, and effectively adapting the UK ILL system to operate much like RLG-SHARES in the USA.

8.10 Were this to be done then in all three options it would be essential for CURL to create a new entity (presumably a company limited by guarantee) to own the activity, and to manage it and the funding processes. The board of the company would contain representatives of the relevant stakeholders and would decide on major policy and operational changes.

8.11 Such an approach to delivering interlending using the richness of the combined CURL collection is clearly possible, but would suffer from a number of weaknesses compared to our preferred approach. These weaknesses include:

- That none of the CURL libraries we visited or who responded to our email survey wished to see CURL-SHARES become the lender of the first resort, but all those involved valued it as a fall-back mechanism by which difficult to obtain items could be sourced.

- The current lending volume of CURL-SHARES is small (at 7% of ILL for CURL members). To scale this up to make it the lender of first resort (perhaps in partnership with the BLDSC in option iv) would require entirely different ways of working. We doubt CURL members' willingness to embark on a venture that is not their core business, and to invest in a venture that is unlikely to be profitable.
- Even if CURL members wished to participate we doubt that all would be able (or perhaps want) to meet the performance standards for delivery and service that would be required. Any attempt to penalise poor performance would be extremely difficult within what is a voluntary collaborative association.
- Many of those interviewed made the point that there is little willingness to invest time and resources in introducing potentially risky systems and operational changes for the collective (rather than the institutional) good. It follows that there must be a significant risk that any attempt to establish a dominant position for the CURL-SHARES scheme might suffer from subsequent internal tensions if operational difficulties were subsequently encountered.
- One of the main attractions of CURL-SHARES is the cost of loans, but it would not be possible to maintain the existing cost structure if the operation were scaled up to the volume required. Increasingly the funding bodies encourage HEIs to charge the full costs of services provided, and just as the British Library has to comply with Treasury guidelines so would CURL-SHARES. This is likely to have two consequences: first, based on the institutional costs identified in Chapter 5 the price of loans (including staffing) would probably be higher than BLDSC rates (thus removing the most attractive element of the current scheme); and second, there would have to be a sharp differential in pricing between CURL-SHARES and RLG-SHARES and we doubt whether that would be possible under existing arrangements.
- Even if a CURL-SHARES consortium could be made to work - which we doubt - the position concerning the rest of the UK higher education sector (who are not eligible to be members) is not clear.
- Finally, it would seem perverse, when the UK has an ILL system centred upon the national library (that it is envy of much of the world) to replace it with a system that bypasses the national library, thus leaving the UK in the position of many countries that are struggling to put ILL systems in place.

8.12 Accordingly, we do not recommend any of the three options which involve CURL-SHARES having a dominant position in UK interlending for higher education. In our view many of the advantages of researchers gaining access to the diversity of resources contained in their libraries can best be gained by the creation of a voluntary consortium centred on the British Library/BLDSC which is at the heart of our preferred option. Notwithstanding our proposal individual CURL libraries will, of course, be able to continue to participate in SHARES, assuming they have ILL Manager or another ISO and SHARES compliant system.

***Option vi: A new national ILL scheme based on the holdings of the legal deposit libraries***

- 8.13 So long as the BLDSC wishes to continue providing a national ILL service, this option has little to commend it and there are several serious problems associated with its possible operation. However, if for some reason the BLDSC wished to withdraw from its national role, then this option might be one way of continuing to ensure a national ILL system (for all sectors), although the associated problems would still have to be addressed.
- 8.14 This option would involve the creation of a new national ILL scheme based on the holdings of the legal deposit libraries, all working to common operational standards. The potential advantage of this option is clear: it enables the 'national collection' to be made available for loan in a convenient and coordinated way. However, three substantial difficulties would need to be addressed:
- First, currently there is an understanding (although not a formal binding agreement) between the libraries concerned and the publishers, that items should not be lent from legal deposit until ten years after publication. Thus a prerequisite of this option would be the need to recognise that items could be used for ILL immediately. Obtaining such agreement with publishers would not be easy, as can be illustrated by the difficulties caused recently when Cambridge decided to apply a five year (rather than ten year) rule, even though the number of items concerned was small. Moreover, the British Library has recently reached agreement with publishers over the storage of electronic material, and would not wish to reconsider the agreement on printed materials at the moment.
  - Second, only Cambridge of the legal deposit libraries allows borrowing, but then imposes a condition that items must not be read outside the receiving library (a practice also adopted by other libraries operating under the old BLDSC back-up system). The reluctance of legal deposit libraries to permit borrowing and home reading is partly a matter of convenience for them, but it also reflects their views on the need to preserve the national collection and rare material.
  - Third, in practice it would be extremely difficult to ensure that the libraries concerned could operate to common standards of performance in relation to ILL supply even if the two problems noted above could be addressed.
- 8.15 Accordingly, we do not believe that this option could be made to work. The necessary renegotiations would take a long time, and would inevitably become part of a package of issues for discussion between the national libraries and publishers.

***Option vii: an expansion of the local collaborative schemes***

- 8.16 As noted in Chapter 7 government policy is likely to continue to emphasise regionality, and most HEIs are now playing enhanced regional roles. One part of this is the encouragement of greater regional collaboration in library provision, although in some areas progress has been

slow particularly with some - not all - CURL libraries<sup>31</sup>. However, if networks of local consortia can develop and operate effectively in the USA, why should it not be possible here? Given that several consortia allow reader access to members' collections, an extension to ILL is an obvious next step.

8.17 However, there are a number of significant problems with this option:

- It is widely recognised that major barriers to deep resource sharing amongst university libraries still exist, and would have to be addressed if this option were to be introduced.
- Although some CURL libraries play important roles in lending to local consortia, the data from our email survey suggests that only two borrow in any significant way from local schemes. Thus as a basis for borrowing to support researchers (although not necessarily students) they appear to be largely irrelevant except in London, and possibly some of the other large metropolitan areas.
- The coverage and effectiveness of regional collaborative schemes is very uneven. Some are for HEIs only, while others cover provision in FE and the public library service. In some regions such as Yorkshire the collaborative schemes overlap and the holdings are quite extensive, while in others holdings are relatively few. For most of the schemes their first priority is ensuring reader access to all member libraries, and the more successful they are in achieving widespread access and local borrowing, the less need there will be for a local ILL scheme. In one case a collaborative network evaluated the idea of developing a regional ILL service but rejected it on the grounds of its cost, having found it "to be significantly more expensive than the BLDSC".<sup>32</sup>
- It is difficult to see how this option could do anything but increase duplication of stock and therefore costs.
- Those CURL libraries outside the main metropolitan areas would be likely to find themselves with no reliable ILL service locally, and in the absence of any national lender of last resort would be forced to use RLG SHARES or library-to-library agreements. Non CURL libraries would be forced to make a large number of individual arrangements with other institutions' libraries.

8.18 For all these reasons we do not believe this option is feasible for a nation-wide lending system between HEIs. Were it to be considered, presumably the BLDSC would be expected to continue to meet needs nationally until an agreed cut off date, when the regional schemes would assume full responsibility. However, there are two areas where local or regional provision on lending will continue to be important (and may grow): first, most HEI libraries should play an increased role in providing support to other public sector libraries; and second, some HEI libraries might continue to expect students (particularly undergraduates) physically to borrow items from local partner libraries as opposed to requesting a loan.

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<sup>31</sup> See the RSLP study on barriers to resource sharing among higher education libraries, 2002. Available at [www.rslp.ac.uk/circs/](http://www.rslp.ac.uk/circs/)

<sup>32</sup> CORSALL, *Collaboration in research support by academic libraries in Leicestershire*, 2001.

***Option viii: a scheme based on SCONUL Research Extra***

- 8.19 SCONUL's Research Extra (SRX) scheme (due to be launched on 7 April 2003) is a reciprocal borrowing scheme which enables eligible staff and research students to borrow from other libraries in membership. As of 21 March 2003, 83% of the membership of SCONUL had signed up to the scheme. This represents a very helpful new dimension in national borrowing arrangements. Access by users to the monograph they want is at three levels: – the library of their own institution, the libraries of local consortia partners, and finally through SCONUL's Research Extra. The ultimate limiting factor is the cost of travel and researchers' time, which leads to the need for a second route of getting materials to the researcher. The RSLP acknowledged the additional costs to host libraries of serving researchers from other institutions.
- 8.20 Notionally this scheme could be extended to include interlending, and the advantage would be that a national scheme could be located within an existing structure for library collaboration. However, other than this no real advantages would be gained. Not only would a new operational entity have to be set up to handle all transactions, but simply providing a convenient 'home' does nothing to address all the other issues raised above which have caused the current system of ILL to be at risk.

***Option ix: contracting out the national ILL service***

- 8.21 A radical option to consider is for the national ILL service to be put out to tender to a private provider. It is possible to see the British Library as a monopoly supplier, and in principle (as in other parts of the public sector) there is no reason why competition should not exist in the provision of lending if increased efficiency and effectiveness could be achieved. Indeed some competition has already arisen in the provision of copies of articles, for example as noted in Chapter 4, the German company SUBITO offers a document supply service (mainly serials) which is considered to be providing a satisfactory standard of support for some CAUL members in Australia, and at charges lower than some local provision. Accordingly the question needs to be asked: could not this model be extended into monograph lending?
- 8.22 However, there are several factors which would make it unrealistic for this approach to be successful in practice. First, the nature of interlending (as opposed to supplying copies of articles) is such that few if any private providers would be likely to be interested in providing a service. The volume of lending is too low, and the costs of acquisition too high, particularly at the research end of interlending when each copy may only be lent out a small number of times, or even only once. Moreover, it should be remembered that the BLDSC does not include the cost of purchasing monographs in the charge for a loan. Thus, if a private sector supplier were to seek to build up the necessary collection, the costs charged to customers would be very much higher than those of the BLDSC.
- 8.23 A private international system of supplying lending is one way of possibly increasing volume and therefore reducing costs, but it is not clear that the necessary specialist English language material could be obtained in this way. Moreover the need to ensure compliance with national

legislation over the usage of material becomes more complex, and the approaches of at least one document supply service have recently been questioned in relation to possible breaches of international legislation.

- 8.24 In principle there would, of course, be nothing to stop proposals from public bodies to run a national ILL service, although great care would have to be taken over avoiding issues of cross-subsidy, and the potential misuse of public funds. However, even if this obstacle were overcome it is not clear where a potential provider would source materials from, as the majority of research materials are only held in a small number of locations - mainly the national libraries, CURL libraries and some specialist collections.
- 8.25 It is therefore difficult to see how this option could be a practical proposition. However, there could be a role for the private sector as manager of an ILL scheme drawing on the collections of CURL members, other HEI libraries, or even the BLDSC. As such, this option becomes a possible component of those listed above and is not worth separate consideration.

#### **BLDSC Plus: The Operational and Business Processes in Our Preferred Approach**

- 8.26 We recommend this approach (option ii in Table 8.1) which involves the British Library forming a consortium with a range of partner libraries who would agree to provide ILL services to defined service standards and charges. The consortium would have its own management board, whose membership and role would be agreed at funding body levels. The consortium could invite into membership any library it wished (including CURL members), but the focus should be on participation by those with unique research collections, or those which house British Library special collections. This latter consideration means that the Library should consider very carefully the wisdom of locating special collections or developing special collection development partnerships within libraries (whether CURL or not) which are not prepared to become part of the loan consortium.
- 8.27 A number of key characteristics should guide the development and subsequent operation of this option:
- It should be explicitly customer oriented. Potential partners would not be free to opt out of core service delivery standards irrespective of the perceived quality of their own collections. Contracts and service level agreements would bind all parties to agreed performance standards.
  - As soon as is practicable there should be a single online routing for all ILL requests via the BLDSC (other forms of requesting would be permitted but not encouraged). Requests that could not be met by the BLDSC would automatically be sent on to an appropriate partner library for completion. The outline process by which this could be done is set out below in Figure 8.1.
  - A common pricing system should be developed based upon a realistic cost structure. As an incentive for participating libraries we propose below an extension of the RSLP access principle to provide recompense for those involved.

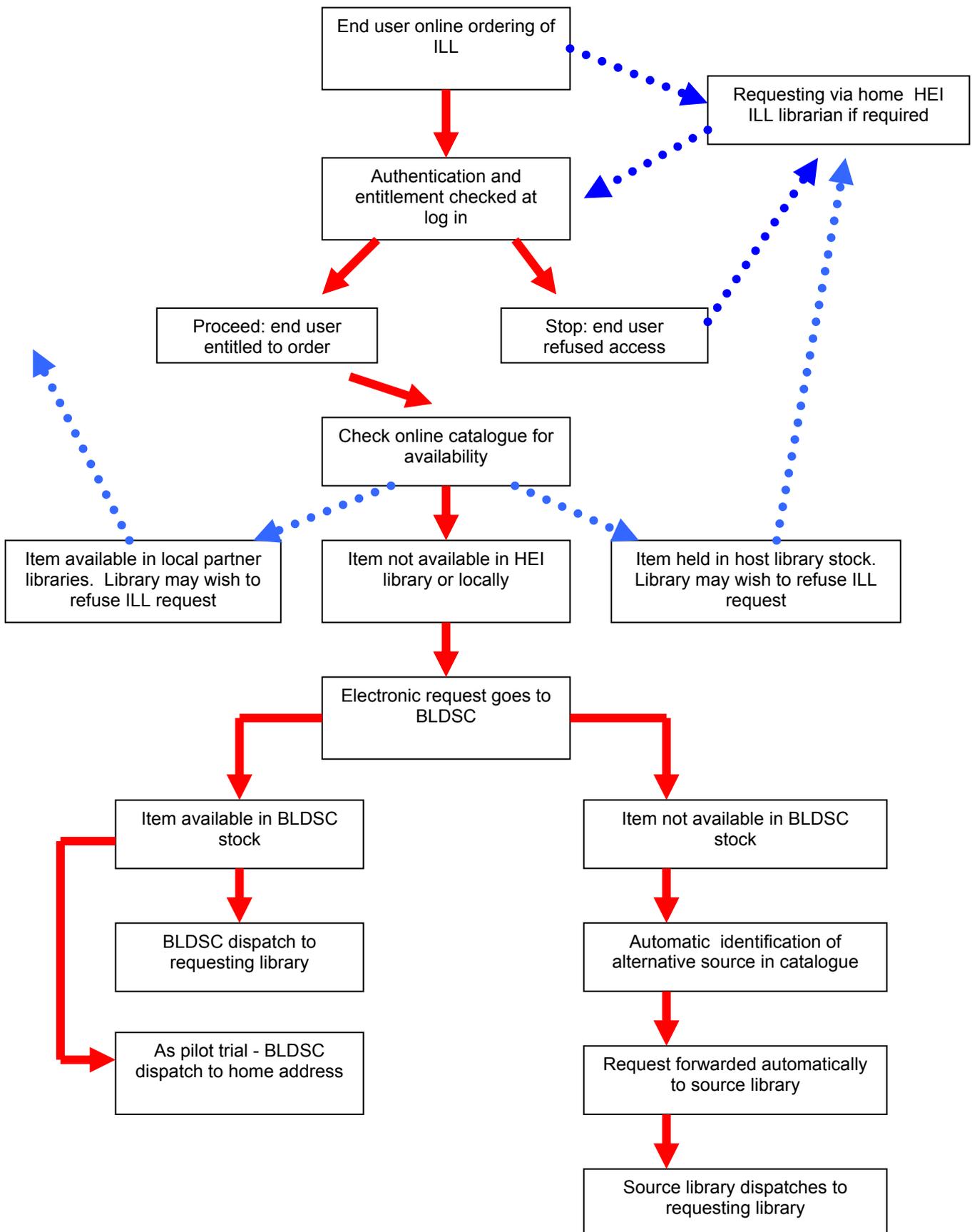
- Using the most comprehensive on-line catalogue available, the ordering process should encourage direct end user requesting. In Chapter 9 we recommend a pilot study on how this and home delivery might be taken forward.
- Although the operation of the new system would be based upon present BLDSC systems, its management would represent a genuine partnership whereby the British Library was only a member of the management board - albeit an important one. One function of the management board would be to consider the question of the procurement of loan stock for the consortium and how duplication could be avoided. This should reduce BLDSC costs on stock acquisition at Boston Spa, but it should be a planned change and undertaken gradually over time.

8.28 One advantage of these arrangements is that we can see no negative consequences for the national ILL system outside higher education - indeed it may be that the increased efficiencies which are obtained by the BLDSC will have some carry over to other sectors. Once such a system is in place, there will, of course, be nothing to stop individual libraries continuing to obtain loan items from whatever sources they wish, but there should be little incentive for them to use libraries outside the system.

8.29 In Figure 8.1 we identify the main flows in the requesting process that we foresee operating in the new arrangements. The solid lines represent the main - and most efficient - processes and the dotted lines, alternatives that individual requesting libraries may wish to adopt to meet their own needs. The processes are largely self-evident, but comments may be useful on some of the specific steps:

- Although on-line end user requesting is not essential, we view it as desirable (see Chapter 9).
- It will be necessary to design an initial authentication, entitlement, and payment 'front-end' to the online catalogue. This will enable the user to check whether they are entitled to request ILL online, and to initiate online payments systems (whether by credit card, an institutional entitlement system, or whatever).
- All requests go directly to the BLDSC, and where available items are dispatched from stock. Where items are not available (either because they are in use or because they are not held), a request is automatically and immediately routed to a partner library where the item is available. This information is currently held in the COPAC catalogue, and should be part of the UKNUC.
- Currently the BLDSC batches requests when sending them out to requesting libraries, and in the short term this is likely to continue. However as a pilot we propose that tests should be made of the feasibility of home delivery (see Chapter 9).

Figure 8.1: The Main Processes of a Revised ILL System



8.30 In the context of Figure 8.1 we now set out the principles which should guide the development of detailed business and operational processes that might be adopted for our recommended approach. Because we are proposing an option based upon the existing business processes of the BLDSC, there is no need to set down every detail of the proposed new system. Rather the proposed management board will need to review the need for any detailed changes in current operational arrangements in the light of set-up negotiations between the funding bodies, the British Library, and other key partners. Five key aspects are considered in turn:

- The funding arrangements.
- The organisational and management structure.
- The main operational processes.
- System requirements and standardisation.
- Risk assessment.

### ***The Funding Arrangements***

8.31 Overall, the operation of the funding arrangements associated with payments to the BLDSC for requests should continue much as they are at present. The main new requirement will be to determine an agreed fee for participating libraries for loans made by them. However, this cannot be calculated until a decision has been reached by the funding bodies on whether to extend the principle of RSLP access funding to ILL arrangements (see paragraph 8.33).

8.32 Our proposed answers to specific funding questions are as follows:

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| a) How would the option be funded in the short and long term? | As with the current ILL system, the option would be self-financing with the exception of acquisition costs and overheads. Some overall savings would accrue from avoiding stock duplication, but resulting resource allocation issues would need to be determined within the partnership management structure.  |
| b) Would any transitional funding arrangements be needed?     | Three forms of funding would be required: help with system and software development; an extension of the RSLP access fund to meet the costs of participating lending libraries; and modest implementation costs of the new management structure. We recommend that funding in these areas should be treated as part of the broader implementation of the RLN. |
| c) Is the long term funding sustainable?                      | Yes, within the ten year period which was the remit for this study, and subject to demand continuing at a level which means that the loan fees levied are realistic.  |
| d) What would the flow of funds be for each type of           | The financial impact of the options would be similar to the position today. Net lenders would be recompensed  |

stakeholder? through the charging system (and/or the extension of the access funding principle), and net borrowers would pay according to the number of loans requested.

e) Would there be any positive or perverse incentives? None can be identified.

f) What changes in day-to-day financial administration might be expected? None. The current 'banking arrangements' of the BLDSC which are valued by some CURL libraries would continue.

- 8.33 So far as an extension of the RSLP access fund is concerned, the amounts involved are modest, and are unlikely to involve more than £250,000 pa allocated to libraries providing material not stocked by the BLDSC on a pro-rate basis for actual lending undertaken. The individual amounts involved by any individual library are likely to be small, but of symbolic importance in encouraging collaborative interlending, and compensating for materials not being available to their own readers. The size of the proposed fund is based on the data presented in Chapter 3, where a figure of 65,000 loans from sources other than the BLDSC was estimated. Assuming that approximately half of these continue to come from research libraries this represents an annual volume of 32,500 loans. To this figure needs to be added the 20% of loans that are now delayed within the BLDSC because the items are already being used or awaiting purchase; an approximate number of 44,000. This makes a total figure of around 76,500 items that might be dealt with by non-BLDSC partner libraries under the new arrangements.
- 8.34 As with the old back up arrangements part of the fee collected by the BLDSC in future should be passed on to the individual partner lending library, but some will need to be retained as a contribution to overall running costs. Assuming that 50% of the cost is passed on, this leaves participating libraries with a £3.50 shortfall over the full costs of a loan as calculated by the BLDSC, equivalent to approximately £250,000 pa. In practice, this figure is modest enough to suggest that our preferred option could still run without this additional funding, but the likelihood is that some individual libraries may decide not to participate if this were done. Accordingly we recommend that an extension of RSLP access funding is provided to the value of £120,000 pa.
- 8.35 There is one funding issue that could be treated in different ways and will need further discussion by the new management board: the scope for generating income from outside the UK research community. Our option is only designed to benefit the UK higher education and research environment, but a significant proportion of the lending of the BLDSC is to higher education overseas and this may grow. Accordingly, the management board could decide only to operate the new partnership lending arrangements within the UK, or they could support broader BLDSC lending with different financial arrangements operating. If the latter course were pursued, then a stated criterion for libraries joining the consortium would be willingness

to lend overseas. Some CURL libraries are already used to such arrangements as the RLG-SHARES scheme involves higher charges for international lending.

### ***The Organisation and Management Structure***

- 8.36 Under our proposal the new lending structure would be managed by an independent management board. It might be desirable to form a company (limited by guarantee) but this will depend upon the details of discussions between the main parties. One of the potential advantages of this would be that the company could take a neutral stance in the event of any dispute between BLDSC and partners, and it could be structured to incorporate the views of users at all levels. All the main stakeholders would be represented on the main management board, whatever its legal status. Annual reports would be made to the British Library, the higher education funding bodies, and other key players. The new structure should also have links to the proposed RLN (indeed in due course it may be part of the RLN), but until that develops further it is difficult to say how exactly those links should operate.
- 8.37 As all UK research libraries currently use the BLDSC, we propose that the new arrangements also operate UK wide, with the various higher education funding bodies represented on the management board. The various national libraries might also be members, although only if they choose to be part of the consortium. The board should not include representatives of all participating libraries, but some sort of consultative mechanism for participating partners would be required.
- 8.38 Within this new structure, the most important organisational issue will be ensuring effective working between the management board (in respect of the new option for higher education), and the British Library in relation to the overall operation of document supply. Ensuring that a clear basis exists from the outset to ensure effective collaboration will be one of the most important parts of the initial negotiations between the partner bodies (see below).

### ***The Main Operational Processes***

- 8.39 The core operational processes will be very similar to those operated currently by the BLDSC, and the main differences will be: direct linkage to an online catalogue (we assume UKNUC); direct end user online requesting (if adopted); and for items not in the BLDSC stock automatic software identification of availability elsewhere within the catalogue and re-routing of requests to the holding library concerned. As now, billing will be the responsibility of the BLDSC and there will be a monthly accounting statement for all borrowers and lenders. Payments systems will minimise the administrative load falling on users. Despatch will use carriers on terms negotiated by the management board, to try and ensure that a common transport tariff is obtained.
- 8.40 Items not in the online catalogue would not be supplied, and those making requests would have to seek for alternative sources elsewhere (including the BLDSC's own overseas searching service).

- 8.41 The main changes to operational processes are likely to be needed in some participating libraries rather than the BLDSC. Those involved will need to become accustomed to using standard operating procedures (both requesting and borrowing), although for many the processes are likely to be quite similar to those presently used. All libraries participating as lenders will need to abide by rigorous service level agreements, agreed between them and the management board.
- 8.42 It would be for the management board to determine which libraries should be invited to become members of the BLDSC Plus consortium, although it is hoped that all UK institutions with unique research collections (irrespective of whether they are formally in the higher education sector) would be encouraged to join. We have already recommended that realistic pricing be adopted for lending, so this should not be a barrier to libraries participating. Clearly efficiency gains can only be maximised when a high proportion of research lending libraries are involved. There would be no bar to forming relationships with other lending schemes (for example RLG-SHARES) as long as the same standards of service were adopted and compatible charging schemes negotiated.

#### ***System Requirements and Standardisation***

- 8.43 Because BLDSC Plus would be based upon existing systems, our expectation is that although some additional software would be required, this might be relatively modest at least so far as the central operation of the scheme is concerned. However, there would be a need to ensure standardisation of systems amongst all participating BLDSC Plus partner libraries. There may also be a need to ensure compatibility with other aspects of BLDSC document supply.
- 8.44 When UKNUC becomes available it will be necessary to ensure appropriate functionality to support the new ILL system. The adoption of standard ISO/IPIG compliant software to support the new arrangement is probably desirable. Alternatively it may be possible for the BLDSC to translate an Arttel order (its current ordering system) into an ArtISO order. The systems of partner libraries would need to be compatible before joining the scheme, but as long as there was not a widespread network of library to library transactions, the level of compatibility could be designed to be quite low.
- 8.45 The costs of the necessary system and software development are difficult to calculate at the moment, and much depends on how UKNUC will be specified. Since one of the key purposes of a national online catalogue is to enable it to be used for lending, we assume that its specification should have a large element of ILL functionality built in (for example, the ability for direct end user requesting and so on). If this is the case then the main additional system development costs will be in creating software to automatically route items not held by the BLDSC to partner libraries. If the specification of UKNUC does not include the kind of functionality that BLDSC Plus requires, then additional software development costs will need to be incurred. Similarly the issue of ISO/IPIG compliance of ILL software may need to be dealt with as part of the technical specification of UKNUC.
- 8.46 Because of the key role of the BLDSC in the implementation of proposed future option, the only sensible way of taking forward consideration of the future system and software

requirements is to ask for an analysis by British Library specialists of what would be required to enhance their existing systems. The resulting costs should be considered as part of the set-up negotiation between the funding bodies, the British Library, and other key players, and come within the funding discussions on the implementation of the RLN.

### **Risk Assessment**

8.47 The main risks associated with BLDSC Plus are:

- Potential partners might not consider the benefits of joining the scheme as suppliers to be worth the cost and trouble. However, if this is true many of the assumptions about future collaboration in the RSLG report are also incorrect.
- The prices set by the new service might not cover what members perceive as their costs. If realistic rates are charged the less efficient suppliers may lose money.
- If the prices levels rose significantly above those currently set by the BLDSC customers might not be willing to pay, and might not link the increase with the extra quality of service. However, we do not expect significant price rises to occur, and indeed expect the proposed system to deliver some efficiency gains.
- Members might resist changing their ILL software.

8.48 All these risks could be overcome by the measures proposed above, and by giving the scheme a high profile with the support of the funding bodies, the British Library, and other key stakeholders.

## 9 Implementation and Recommendations

- 9.1 In this final Chapter we: consider the issue of direct end user requesting of loans and possible home delivery and propose two pilot studies; summarise our recommendations; and consider the actions that need to be taken to implement BLDSC Plus.

### End User Requesting and Home Delivery

- 9.2 Currently all requests for ILL (including those to the BLDSC) are made by libraries, to whom the item is delivered and returned. Some providers (for example Cambridge) stipulate that items loaned must be physically read within the library concerned, whereas others allow home reading. All providers require requesting libraries (not individual readers) to return items. Through these processes the requesting library can - as far as possible - ensure responsible use by individual readers, and gain some cost advantages in mailing items in bulk. However, it is also expensive in staff time, and our data in Chapter 5 suggests staff costs might be in the order of £5-£6 per item.
- 9.3 In the past this process has been acceptable - even necessary - as ILL librarians would often have to complete ILL requests after manually searching catalogues. However, the increasing availability of online catalogues provides the opportunity (given some additional software functionality) for direct online requesting by authorised readers. Such approaches are now becoming commonplace in the USA; for example Ohiolink (see Chapter 3) allows researchers in Ohio access from their desk top to the 30 million holdings in member institutions and the ability to order online directly. Similarly libweb at the University of Oregon allows online requesting of both journals and ILL<sup>33</sup>, as does BorrowDirect among a subset of Ivy League universities<sup>34</sup>.
- 9.4 Assuming the availability of an online catalogue, direct end user requesting has a number of potential advantages, noticeably reducing delays in supplying requests and saving staff time through not requiring ordering via ILL librarians. In our email survey a majority of CURL libraries responding to a question about direct end user online requesting supported the process, although some raised a number of potential operational concerns that need to be taken into account when designing a system. These included: the dangers of inaccurate requesting (although this should be largely removed by a reliable online system); a possible growth in frivolous requesting; the need to ensure that institutional policy on entitlement is complied with (for example, some libraries require undergraduates to get approval by tutors before requests are permitted); and the fear that without any checks there may be a substantial - and potentially expensive - growth in ILL requests. Although such concerns are genuine, the USA experience suggests that they can be overcome.
- 9.5 Accordingly we recommend that a pilot trial takes place to test how such an end user system might work. Such a trial would also help to specify the design for an eventual national system working through UKNUC. The trial would need to involve the design of authentication,

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<sup>33</sup> See <http://libweb.uoregon.edu>

<sup>34</sup> See <http://webdoc.library.upenn.edu/borrowdirect/>

entitlement, and payment software that would be the first step in the direct end user requesting process (see Figure 8.1). We are not, at this stage, able to cost the pilot and this needs to be undertaken at an early stage by the proposed management board (see paragraph 9.8c) with advice from specialist British Library advisers.

- 9.6 Home delivery of requested loans raises different issues, and is more contentious with librarians who have understandable concerns about the loss and damage of loan items, and therefore - in general - prefer to retain their role as responsible intermediaries in the ILL process. Nonetheless if it can be successfully achieved the possibility of home delivery has a number of advantages (although not all readers would want it). It would be particularly advantageous for part time and distance learning students who may rarely attend the physical campus, and if institutions are serious about widening participation they will have to come to terms with delivering materials in non-traditional ways. The adoption of home delivery would probably mean some small changes to ILL operating processes (including pre-payment of return postage, and a small charge for insurance for lost items), but we suspect that the problem is primarily one of the views of library staff. We recommend that a pilot trial, funded by the funding bodies as part of the RLN implementation, would be valuable in this area as well, and should ideally be linked with the proposed study on direct end-user online requesting.

### **Recommendations**

- 9.7 Our key recommendations can be summarised as possible, although for more details the relevant paragraphs in the text should be read:
- a) We recommend the adoption of a BLDSC Plus model for the future operation of interlending services in UK higher education. This approach involves the British Library forming a consortium with a range of partner libraries who would agree to provide ILL services to defined service standards and charges. (paragraph 8.26)
  - b) We recommend a five phase adoption and implementation process, involving the initial creation of a steering group to guide extensive consultation about our proposal, followed by the establishment of a new management board to prepare the details of implementation of the operation. (paragraph 9.9)
  - c) As part of the preparation phase of BLDSC Plus, a pilot trial should take place of direct online user requesting to test how such a system might work. Such a trial would help to specify the design for an eventual national system working through UKNUC. (paragraph 9.5)
  - d) Similarly, a pilot trial of home delivery of ILL should be undertaken at the same time as that of direct end user requesting. (paragraph 9.6)
  - e) An extension of the principle of RSLP access funding should be adopted for higher education libraries participating in BLDSC Plus to the value of £250,000 pa. (paragraph 8.33)

- f) These proposals are entirely consistent with the thrust of the RSLG report, and therefore implementation of BLDSC Plus should be considered in parallel with the proposed RLN, although not necessarily to the same timescale. (paragraph 9.8)
- g) Because of the very close link between this study and the RSLG report, funding of our proposals should be considered as part of the implementation of the RLN. (paragraph 8.32)

### **The Implementation of our Recommendations**

- 9.8 It is important that early commitment to the idea and implementation of BLDSC Plus is obtained from the key organisations involved, including the funding bodies and the British Library. CURL also has an important role to play in encouraging member libraries to participate. We believe that our proposals are entirely consistent with the thrust of the RSLG report, and therefore recommend that implementation should be considered in parallel with the proposed RLN, although not necessarily to the same timescale. The relationship of the management board to the proposed RLN is a matter for discussion. Clearly the links should be close, and if the RLN develops as proposed in the RSLG report, the management board could be part of the RLN. However, should the RLN not come about or develop in a different way, the validity of our proposed option remains unchanged.
- 9.9 At least five stages are necessary in considering the adoption and implementation of our proposal, and we recommend the following:
- a) Initial discussions between the key organisations involved, including the funding bodies, the British Library, the other national libraries, the RSLG secretariat, and a sample of research librarians (including CURL librarians). The purpose of this meeting would be to discuss this report, and to give outline approval for its recommendations. If they are approved these organisations should create a steering group to oversee the adoption and implementation of the new arrangements, convened by the British Library.
  - b) A consultation phase when the proposal for BLDSC Plus is considered by the higher education library community and relevant libraries in other sectors. We see this as an important step in gaining commitment to the new arrangements from as broad a base as possible.
  - c) A preparation phase when the proposed management board is created, systems are developed, service requirements defined, and partner libraries assembled. It will be a matter of judgement for the management board as to when the new service should be launched, and whether to wait for the full implementation of the UKNUC.
  - d) A piloting and testing phase (which will run concurrently with the preparation phase) when systems and software testing will be undertaken, together with the pilots of direct end user requesting and home delivery as recommended above.

- e) The launching of the new service at a date agreed by the management board.
- 9.10 The full costs of our proposals cannot be known until the preparation phase which will see detailed plans produced by the management board. The scheme has the potential to make significant savings in two areas which will enable some reinvestment in library services: first, the gradual elimination over time of the duplication costs of the British Library in providing additional stock for the BLDSC of at least £500,000 pa; and second, within HEIs the saving of staff time of ILL librarians due to an increase in electronic ordering, routing and delivery. This is difficult to calculate, but at a minimum might be between £1.5 and £3 million pa (equivalent to a saving of an average of between a half to one full time ILL staff post per HEI). Over the ten year period that we were asked to review we would therefore expect that savings in the region of between £20 and £35 million should be achieved for reallocating to priority areas of library activity.
- 9.11 So far as expenditure is concerned it was noted in Chapter 8 that additional costs are of three kinds: software costs - which need to be calculated by the British Library in terms of adaptations to existing systems when the UKNUC specification is known (these include the cost of the proposed pilots of end user requesting and home delivery); an extension of the RSLP access principle designed to acknowledge the increased costs of participating libraries costing approximately £250,000 pa; and modest organisational set up costs.

## Appendix A: List of Acronyms

AMICUS	The National Online Union Catalogue Canada
ARL	Association of Research Libraries (USA)
BLDSC	British Library Document Supply Centre
BLLD	British Libraries Lending Division (defunct)
BMA	British Medical Association
CONARLS	Circle of Officers of National and Regional Library Systems
CURL	Consortium of University Research Libraries
DOCLINE	The (USA) National Library of Medicine automated interlibrary loan requesting system
HEI	Higher Education Institution
ILL	Interlibrary loans
ILLiad	OCLC's software for the automation of interlibrary loan functions
ILLOS	Interlibrary lending software system produced by the University of Lancaster
ILRS	Interlibrary resource sharing (Australia)
IPIG	Interlending Protocol Implementors Group (USA)
ISO	International Standards Organisation
LASER	London and South East Regional Library System
NAILLD	North American Interlibrary Loan and Document Delivery (USA)
NCL	National Central Library (defunct)
NISO	National Information Standards Organization (USA)
NLC	National Library of Canada
NLLST	National Lending Library for Science and Technology (defunct)
OCLC	Online Computer Library Center
RLG	Research Libraries Group (USA)
RLIN	Research Libraries Information Network (USA)
RSLG	Research Support Libraries Group
RSLP	Research Support Libraries Programme
RUSA	Reference and User Services Association (USA)
SCONUL	Society of College, National and University Libraries
SILLR	Scottish Interlibrary Lending Rate
UKNUC	UK National Union Catalogue

## Appendix B: Bibliography

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