The Project: Design and conduct a survey focused on how interlibrary loan (ILL) operations are staffed in different sizes and types of libraries. A possible part 2 (or 3) of the project could be to design a "databank" for the survey results that would allow interested persons to search for data relevant to their library environment.

This project is a natural follow-up to previous work done within STARS and other organizations, including a survey conducted earlier this year by the STARS Task Force on Qualifications for Interlibrary Loan Operations Management, contact persons: David Larsen, U of Chicago Library, and Susan Lieberthal, Stonybrook U Library. Information re: staffing in research libraries is also included in Assessing ILL/DD Services: New Cost Effective Alternatives, Mary E. Jackson, with Bruce Kingma and Tom Delaney.

Purpose: We met with the group mentor and learned that the idea of this survey was introduced as a result of many ILL departments facing increased services and yet, stagnant or decreased staffing. Another trend for Interlibrary loan in many libraries is moving towards integrating with other units. The results of this survey could assist library directors and ILL librarians when faced making staffing and service decisions.

Methodology
Who: Unlike many ILL staffing surveys in the past, this survey was intended to gather information on different sizes and types of libraries. We initially planned to have a membership in RUSA as an incentive for participating in the survey. This was not granted, however, we successfully received over 1000 responses. Instead, we focused on canvassing ILL related listservs.

What: We put together a survey monkey survey [http://tinyurl.com/23va3e](http://tinyurl.com/23va3e). It was posted online on April 4, 2008 and available until May 5, 2008. The survey was advertised via the listservs ARIE-L, Circplus, Clio, Doclibs, Docline-l, FISC-L, ILL-L, LIS-ILL, ILLiad-L, RAPID-L, Stars, and wa_ill. It was also advertised via direct email to CSU and WSU staff as well as via a personal account on Twitter. Reminder emails were sent to ARIE-L, ILLiad-L, ILL-L, Circplus, and RAPID on April 28 and 29.

The email sent to solicit responses was as follows:
Subject: Interlibrary Loan Staffing Survey
“Dear Colleagues,
Are you involved in interlibrary loan services in your library? We are a team of ALA Emerging Leaders involved in a RUSA-sponsored survey project. We are seeking your feedback on how interlibrary loan operations are staffed in your library. Simply click on this URL: [http://tinyurl.com/23va3e](http://tinyurl.com/23va3e)
Thank you for taking a few minutes to give us your expert opinion. The survey results will be presented at the ALA Emerging Leader Poster Session in ALA 2008 Annual Conference, Anaheim, CA.
We would appreciate your response to the survey no later than Monday, May 5th, 2008. If you

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The Survey Questions:
In addition to staffing and institution sizes, the group was interested in the growth and changes in the field. We were also interested in qualifications of ILL staff in general as a follow-up to the earlier study of ILL management.\(^2\)

Questions 1-3 and 21 were regarding information about the institution size, type and location. Questions 4-5 asked about ILL staffing roles and titles. Questions 6-8 were related to activities, functions, and organizational structure of ILL units. Questions 9-11 asked about the past present and future projections of ILL related processing stats. Question 12 had to do with the software. Questions 13-17 were focused on the qualities and characteristics of ILL personnel. Questions 18-20 were focused on past, present, and future projections of ILL staffing levels.

When:
April 4 - survey officially opened
April 7 - 462 responses received by 13:30 PDT
April 8 - 635 responses received by 13:30 PDT
April 14 - 808 responses received by 13:30 PDT
April 29 - reminders sent
May 5 - survey officially closed. 1,033 responses received.

Respondents
The survey received 1,033 responses from ILL workers from 695 institutions in 7 countries. Many responses were from one-person libraries and other libraries where ILL staff also have duties in other areas.

Most questions were skipped by 350-550 respondents. Question 2 (What is your institution type?) was by far skipped the least, by only 4 respondents. Question 14 (What kind of qualifications should/do ILL workers have) was skipped the most, by 550 respondents.

Results

Question 1: Please provide your OCLC code (or other identifier) so duplicate questionnaires can be identified.
Of the 779 responses to this question, there were 84 duplicate entries. There were 32 “n/a” or “unknown” responses, as well as 254 who skipped this question. Assuming the latter two categories contained no duplicates, we received data from 695 institutions.

Question 2: What is your institution type?

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\(^2\) ALA RUSA STARS Task Force on Interlibrary Loan Operations Management: Ranked and Annotated Qualifications for the Position of Manager of an Interlibrary Loan Department, http://dspace.sunyconnect.suny.edu/handle/1951/43004
Question 3. What is your Full-Time-Equivalent student enrollment or community base?

Question 4: What is your Full-Time Equivalent (FTE) staffing for ILL?
Typical ILL staff consists of one faculty/librarian, one staff, and only one student worker.

Question 5: What are the titles/roles of ILL staff?
Many titles included the phrase “Interlibrary Loan,” “Circulation,” “Access Services,” “Document Delivery,” or did not specify. There were many directors, heads, supervisors, librarians, and specialists, but library assistants and ILL assistants were the group best represented.

Question 6: How are your ILL activities organized and where are they located?
The majority of ILL activities are located in their own department, as opposed to being a unit within a different department.
Question 7: What is the closest title for the department that performs ILL functions? 
Interlibrary Loan is most frequently used in the department name, followed by Document 
Delivery and Access Services.

Question 8: Do your ILL activities include any of the following? (Borrowing, Document 
Delivery (on campus), Document Delivery (distance learners), Purchase-On-Demand 
Theses/Dissertations, Purchase-On-Demand Books/Media, Due Date Approaching 
Communications, Automatic Renewals (not patron requested)) 
Borrowing, on-campus Document Delivery, and Document Delivery to distance learners are the 
most common ILL services provided.

Question 9: How many transactions did ILL process during the most current year for 
which you have figures available? Please provide as much information as you can, but the 
grand total is especially requested. 
32% of the surveyed libraries processed more than 10,000 transactions during the most current 
year.

Question 10: In the past 10 years, how have transaction levels changed? and 
Question 11: In the next 10 years do you expect the number of transactions to 
increase/decrease/or stay the same? 
All types of ILL transactions have increased in the past 10 years and are expected to keep going 
up in the next 10 years by most of the libraries.

Increases in transaction levels are predicted due to increased ease of request, electronic delivery 
of articles, increasing awareness of the service and of resources, participation in consortia, 
addition of new services (such as document delivery), increasing patron base, better holdings 
information in WorldCat/OCLC, loss of local collections due to budget cuts, and expansion of 
distance programs. Decreases are predicted due to increased online availability of materials, 
increased postage costs, imposition of fees, increase in open access publications, better collection 
development, and movement to pay-per-view models.

Question 12. Which ILL software do you use? 
ILL software is diverse. The top three software technologies are Ariel, Illiad, and Odyssey. 
Interestingly, some respondents mentioned not so new technology such as phone, email, and fax.

Question 13: What kind of characteristics should/do ILL workers have? 
Almost every survey respondent mentioned attention to detail. Other highly noted characteristics 
were computer skills, time management skills, flexibility, reference skills, customer service 
skills, the curiosity to solve mysteries, patience, persistence, thoroughness, and tenacity.

Some ILL departments are very quiet, others busy and friendly. Some specify tolerance for 
boring, repetitive tasks, others multi-tasking and tolerance for there always being more to do.

Question 14: What kind of qualifications should/do ILL workers have? 
ILL workers should have library experience and the ability to learn, as well as knowledge of 
copyright, languages, and ILL functions.

Questions 15 and 16: How does the pay and morale of interlibrary loan employees rate 
compared to other employees in your library?
Although ILL workload significantly increased during the years, the pay of interlibrary loan employees relative to other employees in their library stayed at about the same level. The overall morale is also about the same as other library employees.

**Question 17:** Are professional development/training opportunities provided for ILL staff? What kinds?
Most ILL employees have some training opportunities, mainly online and regional training/conferences, as well as IT, vendor, and subject-specific options. Training for many is limited by lack of funds, low staffing levels, and, in some cases, by lack of interest.

**Question 18:** How have interlibrary loan staffing levels in your library changed over the past 10 years?
**Question 19:** How do you expect interlibrary loan staffing levels in your library to change during the next 10 years?
**Question 20:** How do you think interlibrary loan staffing levels in your library SHOULD change during the next 10 years?
ILL staffing level in most libraries stayed about the same during the past 10 years. Most libraries expect the same ILL staffing level for the next 10 years. 51% of the libraries believe they’ll need more students/hourly workers.

**Question 21:** If you are willing, please supply your information for follow-up contact and demographic analysis.

### Respondents by Location

- **US Midwest:** 22%
- **Canada:** 2%
- **US West:** 20%
- **US Southwest:** 12%
- **US Southeast:** 10%
- **US Northeast:** 25%
- **Australia:** 4%
- **China:** 1%
- **Great Britian:** 4%
- **Lebanon:** 0%
- **Ireland:** 0%

**Conclusions**
The results of this survey are very similar to those of Beckendorf’s 2007 survey: “interlibrary loan staffing patterns and organizational structures are more unique than uniform.” However, after further investigation of the comments to our survey questions, we learned many interesting trends in Interlibrary loan. For example, re-organization

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is common and Interlibrary loan units can be found in Technical Services, Access Services, Reference, Public Services.

Similarly to Beckendorf, we also found that most in interlibrary loan “anticipated an increasing volume of interlibrary loan transactions with static staffing and budgets.” The reasons for this analysis are multifold. The information climate is changing resulting in lending requests increasing and borrowing requests decreasing. This change is due to factors such as automated ILL management systems, unmediated patron requesting of materials, Google, and electronic resource licensing agreements, and updated holdings.

As a result, many libraries are addressing ILL staffing by cutting staff, increasing automation, and merging units to maximize workflows.

TEAM O Survey Recap and notes:
If we could ask any follow up questions based on the results, they would be:
1. Does your ILL unit staff its own service point?
2. Do you offer any of these services for a fee to your patrons?

What we should have done differently:
1. Many survey takers noted that we had an academic bias. “N/A” should have been an option for many of the questions, and would have helped mitigate our bias.
2. We also had a US bias, but updated the survey on the first day after learning that OCLC codes are not used in Britain.
3. We should have provided better options for one-person libraries and other situations where staff have many duties, and ILL is just one part of their work.
4. There was confusion with question 6 (How are your ILL activities organized and where are they located?) between physical location and location on organizational chart.
5. Many respondents noted that consortial borrowing is not always part of ILL stats.

Issues that are of interest or concern to survey respondents:
1. Many respondents indicated concern that patrons increasingly expect instant service, and will be unwilling to wait for ILL, and instead make do with a more available but perhaps lower quality resource.
2. There is curiosity as to how the NIH open access mandate will affect ILL in the future.

TEAM O Profiles:

Linda Shippert: Linda is interim head of the Health Sciences Library at Washington State University. She was recently elected ALA Councillor-at-large for 2008/2011 and Networking Director of the ALA New Members Round Table for 2008/2010, and will co-chair the ACRL Science & Technology Section Continuing Education Committee for 2008/2010. Linda’s other research interests include emerging technologies and ways to help librarians become more comfortable using them.

Ying Zhong: Ying is a senior Assistant librarian at Walter W. Stiern Library in California State University, Bakersfield. Ying’s job responsibilities include teaching, reference, departments liaison, and collection development. Ying is also working as the Web Service Coordinator in the library. Ying graduated from University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign in 2005. Her research interests were Reference Services, Information Economics, and Services Assessments and Evaluations.
**Bethany Sewell:** As the Access Services Librarian, Bethany leads the Access Services Team of the Penrose Library, which includes Circulation, Interlibrary Loan, Reserves, and Stacks Maintenance. Bethany received her undergraduate degrees in Philosophy and the Visual Arts at the University of Northern Colorado in Greeley. Following her undergraduate work, she moved to Indiana to pursue her masters' degrees in both Art history and Library and Information Sciences at Indiana University.