

Resource Sharing Survey 2021

In September of 2021, the Resource Sharing Advisory Committee released a survey to the SCRLC community. The survey was intended to allow us to learn the different platforms and systems libraries are using for interlibrary loan/resource sharing, as well as discover how the pandemic has affected resource sharing work and workflows.

There were a total of 28 respondents from 21 institutions, The majority of respondents were from academic libraries (67%); hospital and special libraries each represented 11% of respondents; school library systems (7%); and public library systems (4%). Based on the number of respondents from academic libraries, it was not surprising to find the most used ILS was ALMA (50%), followed by Worldshare Management OCLC (18%). Other ILS reported were Polaris, SCOOLES, and CyberTools.

The platforms/systems used for interlibrary loan/resource sharing revealed a myriad of resources used across our membership. OCLC ILL Worldshare was used by 39% of respondents, followed by ILLiad and ALMA ROTA Partners at 36% each. The information from this question is valuable for our members, as the pandemic caused budget decisions where at least one member changed Interlibrary Loan systems due to cost and currently they are needing work-arounds to maintain the efficient levels of delivery for their patron requests.

In relation to how the pandemic affected individuals and institutions workflows, 63% of respondents said that their resource sharing/ILL work was affected when they began working from home. Many replied that they were unable to loan or borrow physical material for their patrons. Others commented on the increase in e-resources to satisfy requests. Some ceased their ILL services during the pandemic, or put them on hold during the mandated work-from-home period.

In answer to the greatest challenges respondents had to adapting to working from home, the results were mixed. On the negative side: finding material to borrow when not allowed access to the collection; the inconvenience of going to the library to get physical items to digitize and post if they were allowed in the building; having to meet patrons at off-site locations, as campuses were often closed; or simply finding a balance between work and child-care. On the positive side, many enjoyed working from home and one respondent replied, *"I actually thought it worked better for us in many respects. A lot more ability to connect with people."*

When asked how staff communicated when working remotely, the majority of respondents said email (89%) was the predominant method, followed by Zoom (67%) and phone calls (60%). Microsoft Teams, Slack, and Google Meet were other platforms mentioned.

When asked about the challenges of returning to on-site work, respondents said that quarantine protocols for materials, interacting with patrons in-person, and doing the same or more work with less staff were the top answers, at 50% each. Other challenges included rearranging furniture for social distancing measure, adherence to health protocols, and, as one stated: *"Balancing COVID best practices with fear of the unknown."*

When asked how respondents managed work-arounds in order to get material to patrons, when physical loans were suspended, copying articles/book chapters was the most popular choice at 57%, followed closely by digitizing materials and sending them electronically to patrons (52%).

E-book purchases were also popular at 48%. Controlled Digital Lending and use of the HathiTrust were also favored.

When asked about concerns regarding the long-term effects of the pandemic and resource sharing, the main concern (81%) of respondents chose budget issues as their main concern. Staffing followed at 50%; outstanding overdues, returns, and complying with COVID guidelines were also causes of concern.

The biggest concerns reported since March of 2020 included work environment, maintaining staff and services and handling the “unknowns”. Change in systems used, as well as adapting new services for patrons were concerns but not as great as the aforementioned ones.

Comments, when asked about the most valuable thing respondents had learned since March of 2020, included:

- *Libraries adapted and changed as they needed to in order to meet community needs.*
- *Impermanence: when faced with a big challenge, our library colleagues have really come together, melded and made things work, despite change, lack of resources, etc.*
- *Be adaptable, tolerance for ambiguity, be patient with ourselves and others.*

When asked for one thing they would carry over in the future that they learned or adapted to since March of 2020, responses included:

- *Flexibility is important!*
- *Collaboration is necessary during times like this. Also, listening to staff and responding.*
- *Being able to shift gears in an instant.*
- *Mental health is important and a priority.*
- *Playing Irish music on the Tenor banjo. 😊*

The final question queried the changes libraries have faced since March of 2020. 61% of respondents said there has been a change in what and how they purchase material; 56% responded there has been a change in the material format patrons are requesting; and 48% said there has been a change in how they deliver material. Some comments include:

- *Budget constraints have changed how I order supplies.*
- *We have changed reference from daily walk-in service to by appointment only.*
- *Greatly increased purchases of ebooks.*
- *Everybody's ordering .pdf's. Our Library Budget has collapsed.*
- *In how we provide library instruction. And how we use the library space, e.g. we converted some closets and an office into individual study rooms where students can participate in a class via Zoom.*

Molly Brown, Outreach Services Librarian
Resource Sharing Advisory Committee
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