

Measuring and Sustaining the Impact of Area Studies Collections in a Research Library: Balancing the Eco-System to Manage Scarce Resources

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For decades, the community of research libraries and funding agencies quietly implemented a process of aggregating or concentrating collections of difficult to acquire international and area studies materials at research universities that could provide access and service on a regional, national and international level. The discovery and use of library resources constitute one way to assess the impact of these collections and whether the founding assumptions behind this aggregation—namely, that institutions could serve broad constituencies—were correct. This study compares five years of resource sharing data from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign (UIUC), focusing on interlibrary lending data for those materials published in Less Commonly Taught Languages (LCTL) and those materials published with a foreign imprint. The analysis generated by this study sheds light on the resource sharing network of academic libraries and provides a snapshot of one element within the network of libraries that supports the needs of area studies scholars.



Introduction

Individual academic libraries and the academic communities they support form part of a broader information ecosystem. In this broader network, area studies collections remain among the least commonly held titles. Presenting their host institutions with challenges from their point of acquisition to their discovery and use, they remain valuable resources that require

focused stewardship in order to ensure continued access and availability. The vernacular language materials and materials with foreign imprints that reside within international and area studies collections remain uncommon due to the specialized knowledge and financial resources required to build such collections. They require highly trained personnel with the ability to work with one or more vernacular languages

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and deep knowledge of the publishing landscape in different geographic locales. Despite the challenges in acquiring and maintaining these collections, these materials are important, serving not just researchers at their holding institutions, but scholars across disciplines from many institutions who need access to disciplinary research from outside of the United States and Western Europe. To ensure local, national, and international access to these uncommon holdings, international and area studies specialists often led their peers in developing innovative resource sharing and cooperative collection development schemes.

Though much has been written about cooperative collection development in the international and area studies, little recent research exists that assesses either the efficacy of these programs or their impact on a regional, national and international level. How do we know if international and area studies collections are serving their intended purpose across the ecosystem of libraries? More importantly, can we determine from readily available data whether research library programs that establish formal agreements to divide the collecting in particular regions by subject area can serve the broader scholarly community?

This paper examines the relationship between international and area studies collections and interlibrary loan services in order to evaluate the value of resource sharing and the feasibility of cooperative collection development programs among communities of scholars. Synthesizing two related studies, this study compares five years of UIUC's resource sharing data, focusing on lending data for those materials published in Less Commonly Taught Languages (LCTL) and those materials published with a foreign imprint. The paper examines the value of aggregating collections of difficult to acquire specialized materials at institutions that can provide service at a regional and/or national level. In other words, it considers the feasibility of collective action on behalf of the broader scholarly community by examining the usage of a concentration of resources gathered at one institution with the specific intent of serving both the local and the broader academic community.

Problem Statement

In order to draw conclusions about the current state of resource sharing and the role that cooperative collection development could play in serving the community of scholars requiring access to international and area studies collections, the authors evaluated five years of ILL lending transactions, focusing on UIUC's fulfillment of requests (a) for non-English collections published in Less Commonly Taught Languages (or LCTLs, as identified by the National Council of Less Commonly Taught Languages: <http://www.ncolctl.org/>), and (b) for materials with publication imprints located in regions outside the United States. By analyzing this data, and focusing on Africa and East Asia as case studies for this paper, the authors sought to draw conclusions about how intensively collections of area studies materials housed at one institution serve broader user communities, whether there is a correlation between outgoing LCTL materials and the materials published with a foreign imprint, to what extent such collections and associated services benefitted individuals beyond the community of research universities, and whether the lending of specialized materials from one university was disproportionately directed to particular groups of borrowing institutions within a particular geographic area.

Literature Review

Research on the use of international and area studies materials is limited when viewed within the context of a defined network of borrowing institutions and the set parameters of this study. Although there is a long bibliography of studies examining interlibrary loan operations and extensive research on the development, history, and role of international and area studies collections, limited research exists on the role of ILL in serving the needs of scholars requiring access to these collections. This area of research, however, does appear to be growing. A 2006 study by Jackson et al. provides a useful analysis of global collecting patterns within Association of Research Library (ARL) institutions. This research shows both the distribution of publications from outside of North America within

ARL and the level of overlap, which is much fewer than for North American imprints.¹ J. A. Williams and D. E. Woolwine's study, "Interlibrary loan in the United States: analysis of academic libraries in a digital age," examined interlibrary loan statistics for the period 1997-2008. This extensive study on resource sharing in American academic libraries analyzed two primary elements: the effect of full-text databases and the size of print collections on interlibrary loan rates and activity.²

In addition to demonstrating that statewide networks often over-acquired to serve their user populations, Edward T. O'Neill and Julie A. Gammon's paper, "Building Collections Cooperatively: Analysis of Collection Use in the OhioLINK Library Consortium" also touched on the opportunities for LCTL collections to serve broader populations. While multiple holdings benefitted users in some cases, usage indicated that significant bodies of material within the OhioLINK network did not require duplicate holdings to serve the membership. In their study, O'Neill and Gammon concluded that a typical circulating book circulated 0.109 times per year. They also concluded that foreign language items only circulated an average of 0.019 times per year, supporting the notion that less commonly held and less frequently used materials could be effectively shared across a network of academic libraries.³

O'Neill and Gammon's results were largely confirmed by Lynn Wiley, Tina Chrzastowski, and Stephanie Baker's 2011 examination of the usage of domestically produced monographs in Illinois' I-Share network.⁴ Both studies point to something that pioneers in international and area studies collecting believed and many librarians long suspected, namely that the long-tail of our holdings—those items infrequently used and not needed for regular on-site reference-type consultation—could effectively serve broader populations of scholars if resource sharing networks exist to facilitate access and usage within defined geographic areas.

Drawing on that conclusion, a recent study by Lenkart et al. focuses on the lending of LCTL materials

from UIUC, and established important base-line data on the regional distribution of lending and the types of institutions borrowing LCTL materials (2015). This work also places the global collecting patterns within the context of national-level cooperative collection building that impacted the LCTL collecting patterns since the mid-20th century.⁵ While lending data may support networked collecting, the decision to shape local collection development practices by using ILL data remains problematic. For example, Andrew Leykam's 2008 study, "Exploring Interlibrary Loan Usage Patterns and Liaison Activities: The Experience at a US University" cautions against using ILL statistics as a basis for collection development decisions as these requests may reflect the interests of individual users and not broader institutional needs.⁶ While this is true, in the realm of international and area studies collecting, the concept of the collective collection has long permeated discussions and planning among scholars, subject specialists and administrators.

The Impact of One Research Collection: The Use of Area Studies Materials at Illinois by Non-Illinois Users

Data needed to answer many of the research questions for this project resided in reports made available by UIUC's Interlibrary Loan department. Information about the Library's ILL lending transactions for five years were supplied after being redacted to obscure information that could be used to identify individual borrowers. The fields included in the data are shown in Table 1.

Upon receipt of the monthly reports, the authors combined the monthly files into annual files for the years 2009 through 2013. For the purposes of our analysis, the data was processed further to add an additional field to the original data set to show which world region an imprint was associated with. With a few exceptions, the world regions align with the ways many universities group their area studies programs. These regions are: Africa, East Asia and Oceania, Latin American and Caribbean, the Middle East, South Asia, Western and Northern Europe, North America, and the United Kingdom and Australia.

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TABLE 1
Record Fields

Borrower Symbol	Borrower Full Name	Borrow State	ILL Record Number
Title	Author	Date 1	Imprint
OCLC Number	Call Number Congress/ Other	Call Number/ Dewey	Call Number Medicine
Language	City	Country	CTL/LCTL/NA
Region	ISBN	ISSN	Maximum Cost
Lending Charges	Article (Citation)	Date (Citation)	Numbers (Citation)
Pages (Citation)	Volume (Citation)	Dissertation Notes	Photocopy Flag
Received Before This Month	Received This Month	Series Notes	Lender Received Date
Lender Filled Date	Lender Unfilled Date	Library Type	Borrow Completed Date

The analysis of the results for this paper focus on materials published in Africa and East Asia and Oceania and materials in the languages associated with those regions. These two regions were chosen as case studies, in part, because Africa represents a geographic area where common vernacular languages may include English and French, both of which are considered Commonly Taught Languages (CTLs), and East Asia and Oceania represents an area where there are limited regions that include CTLs as common vernacular languages (though this does necessarily mean that East Asia doesn't have a large English-language publishing industry). Please see Appendix A for more information about which languages and countries of imprint are largest within these two regions. For the purposes of this preliminary analysis we focused on how inclusion or exclusion of English impacts lending statistics for these two regions since English language materials are the most widely used materials in US libraries. In this way, the authors will be able to address the extent to which excluding CTLs, especially English, from an analysis of area studies collections may skew the results.

Preliminary Results

Based on the annual files for the period 2009-2013, the authors conducted a preliminary analysis of the aggregated, user-generated ILL request information provided by the Library's Interlibrary Loan Department. Overall this dataset contained 177,366 outgoing

ILL records, which were sorted by imprint language, region, and borrower type. The preliminary analysis revealed the following: 89% of the ILL records were for materials in CTLs, 9% were for materials in LCTLs, 1% was classified as LCTL-other, and 1% of the analyzed data was lacking identifiable markers for classification. In terms of geographic representation by imprint, the analyzed data revealed: Western/Northern Europe (22%), United States (42%), United Kingdom (15%), South Asia (2%), Eastern Europe/Russia/Eurasia (6%), Middle East (1%), Latin America/Caribbean (4%), East Asia and Oceania (4%), Canada (1%), Australia/New Zealand (1%), and Africa (1%).

Although outgoing ILL data alone cannot reveal the complexities of collection usage and preferences, the authors, in order to examine the above mentioned correlations, focused on Africa and East Asia and Oceania as case studies for this paper. Of the 7,400 ILL transaction records identified as East Asia and Oceania imprint region, nearly 4,732 (64%) ILL requests were for materials in East Asian languages, 2,325 (31%) records were for materials in English, and 298 ILL requests were for Southeast Asian languages (4%). In the case of Africa, a total of 1,858 ILL requests were identified with this region and its languages. The authors observed an interesting correlation between this region and its vernacular languages. Nearly 1,453 (78%) ILL requests classified under Africa were for materials in English. Although both regions showed significant presence of vernacular languages, exclud-

ing ILL requests for area studies materials in English results in an under-representation of the demand for materials from this region. Moreover, 85% of the total number of ILL requests for area studies materials—representing 151,185 ILL requests—were borrowed by academic libraries, and 75% of these requests were for commonly taught language materials that were published in areas associated with the area studies. Clearly, the exclusion of English and other Commonly Taught Languages presents an inaccurate picture of regional publishing trends, local acquisitions patterns at Illinois, and the borrowing of collections materials by scholars from off campus.

Observations and Conclusions

To continue their study of measuring the impact of vernacular language materials, the authors in this study analyzed five years of resource sharing data from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign (UIUC), focusing on LCTL materials and materials with a foreign imprint. Using the compiled data, the preliminary comparative analysis included East Asia and Oceania, and Africa as regional case studies. Although these two regions are ethnically and linguistically different from one another, the user driven ILL lending data for LCTLs and materials with foreign imprint from both regions showed the impact to be far beyond the community of research libraries. Even for regions where the spoken vernacular languages are primarily LCTLs there may be significant publishing in CTLs, and so the representation of CTLs remains significant for area studies materials across regions. In the case of regions and/or countries where both the spoken vernacular language and the primary publishing languages are CTLs, it is particularly important to ensure CTL materials are represented in area studies collection assessments. The strong representation of CTLs in these two regions warrants further investigation into regional publishing trends and the historiography of these trends within the local narrative.

As the community of research libraries adapts itself to changes in publishing, the use of library materials, and the management of collections, area studies

specialists and administrators are further exploring opportunities for collaboration in cooperative collection sharing, storage, and usage. In their previous study, the authors confirmed that area studies collections at a research library can indeed have a significant national impact through lending vernacular language materials. This national impact reflects the current trajectory of cooperative initiatives to strengthen unique repositories for area studies materials. Since these repositories are part of a vibrant ecosystem, understanding its many dimensions, needs, and constraints will benefit the entire community of research libraries. A multifaceted analysis of this ecosystem is the first step towards understanding the intricacies associated with area studies materials and the current publishing trends in the regions represented in this dataset.

Appendix A. Languages and Countries of Imprint within Africa and East Asia and Oceania

AFRICA TOP 7: IMPRINT LANGUAGE

Language	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
English	82.49%	78.18%	77.57%	74.10%	76.83%
Afrikaans	1.31%	2.73%	2.16%	2.71%	1.93%
Portuguese	0.22%	1.14%	1.08%	0.30%	1.54%
Arabic	2.19%	1.36%	3.24%	3.92%	3.86%
French	8.53%	9.09%	10.81%	14.76%	11.20%
Swahili	1.09%	4.09%	2.70%	0.90%	1.93%
French	8.53%	9.09%	10.81%	14.76%	11.20%

AFRICA TOP 7: IMPRINT COUNTRY

Country	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
South Africa	13.75%	21.88%	18.07%	15.12%	15.00%
Morocco	16.25%	9.38%	16.87%	17.44%	26.67%
Senegal	13.75%	10.42%	12.05%	12.79%	8.33%
Congo (DRC)	7.50%	5.21%	2.41%	13.95%	5.00%
Algeria	5.00%	7.29%	9.64%	6.98%	5.00%
Tanzania	6.25%	13.54%	6.02%	0.00%	1.67%
Tunisia	8.75%	1.04%	7.23%	6.98%	6.67%

EAST ASIA AND OCEANIA TOP 7: IMPRINT LANGUAGE

Language	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
Chinese	28.37%	32.19%	30.47%	32.95%	38.26%
Japanese	32.05%	33.29%	33.69%	31.41%	28.05%
English	35.52%	29.93%	30.82%	30.56%	28.89%
Korean	3.25%	3.62%	4.37%	4.39%	3.66%
French	0.22%	0.06%	0.07%	0.08%	0.08%
Thai	0.00%	0.06%	0.00%	0.08%	0.08%
Burmese	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.15%

EAST ASIA AND OCEANIA TOP 7: IMPRINT COUNTRY

Country	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
Japan	50.46%	48.34%	49.22%	45.68%	39.55%
China	33.08%	31.83%	34.40%	36.36%	39.98%
Taiwan	11.00%	14.11%	9.84%	11.20%	14.15%
South Korea	5.04%	5.17%	6.32%	6.32%	5.25%
Indonesia	0.17%	0.09%	0.10%	0.11%	0.43%
Malaysia	0.08%	0.28%	0.00%	0.11%	0.11%
Thailand	0.00%	0.09%	0.00%	0.11%	0.11%

Notes

1. Jackson, Mary E, Lynn Silipigni Connaway, Edward T O'Neill, and Eudor Loh. *Changing Global Book Collection Patterns in ARL Libraries*. Washington: Association of Research Libraries, 2006.
2. Williams, Joseph A. and David E. Woolwine. "Interlibrary Loan in the United States: An Analysis of Academic Libraries in a Digital Age." *Journal of Interlibrary Loan, Document Delivery & Electronic Reserve* 21, no. 4 (09, 2011): 165–183.
3. O'Neill, Edward T and Julia A. Gammon, "Building Collections Cooperatively: Analysis of Collection Use in the OhioLink Library Consortium," in: *Pushing the Edge: Explore, Engage, Extend: Proceedings of the Fourteenth National Conference of the Association Of College and Research Libraries*, March 12–15, 2009, Seattle, Washington, 36–45.
4. Wiley, Lynn, Tina E. Chrzastowski, and Stephanie Baker, "A Domestic Monograph Collection Assessment in Illinois Academic Libraries: What are We Buying and How Is It Used?" *Interlending & Document Supply* 39, no. 4 (2011): 167–175.
5. Lenkart, Joe et al. "Measuring and Sustaining the Impact of Less Commonly Taught Language Collections in a Research Library." *College and Research Libraries* 76, no. 2 (2015): 222–233.
6. Leykam, Andrew. "Exploring Interlibrary Loan Usage Patterns and Liaison Activities: The Experience at a US University." *Interlending & Document Supply* 36, no. 4 (2008): 218–214.