



Maximising access, minimising costs: ILL and resource-sharing

Robert Mizzi

Malta Library and Information Association (MaLIA)

*Presented during a seminar organised by the Committee for the
development of Public Libraries under the Local Councils (KILP) on Friday
9th June 2006 at the Gozo Farm, L/O Xewkija*



The current situation in public libraries

- Not all of our public libraries are yet networked.
- All libraries have very limited financial resources.
- A sporadic approach to collection development.



What are interlibrary loans (ILL)?

- The lending of books between different libraries for the users.
- A loan made by one library to another for use of an individual including the provision of a photocopy of the original work requested.



History of ILL

- the oldest documented article found on ILL in the U.S. is: Green, Samuel S., "The Lending of books to one another by libraries," *Library Journal*, 1, (September 1876), 15-16.



The philosophy behind ILL services

- Interlibrary loan takes the philosophy of public libraries to the max. It is all about providing access to anyone anywhere.
- Interlibrary loan means that people in the smallest towns in Malta and Gozo can access the resources of libraries across the country.
- The general gist of consensus in the ILL world has come down on the side of generosity and open sharing, but also cost consciousness and making responsible decisions at the local level.



Why do we need an ILL service?

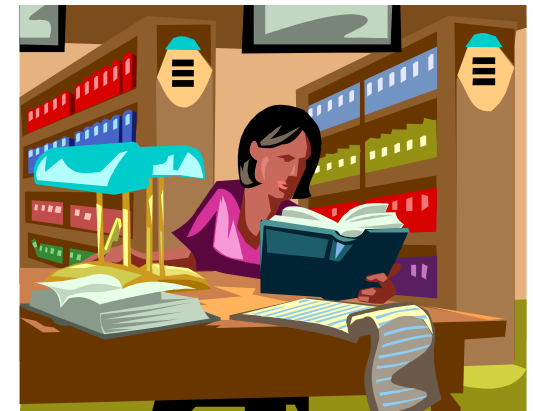
- Today, more than ever before, no library can meet all the needs of the users. The main reasons are:
 - Budgetary constraints
 - Escalating costs of library resources
 - Public demands are becoming more sophisticated and lifelong learning resources are more important

How does an ILL service work?



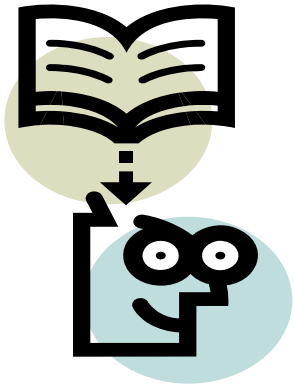
A library users residing at Gharb consults the online catalogue from his/her home PC to identify a particular book

Alternatively, the user can visit the public library at Gharb and enquire about the required book





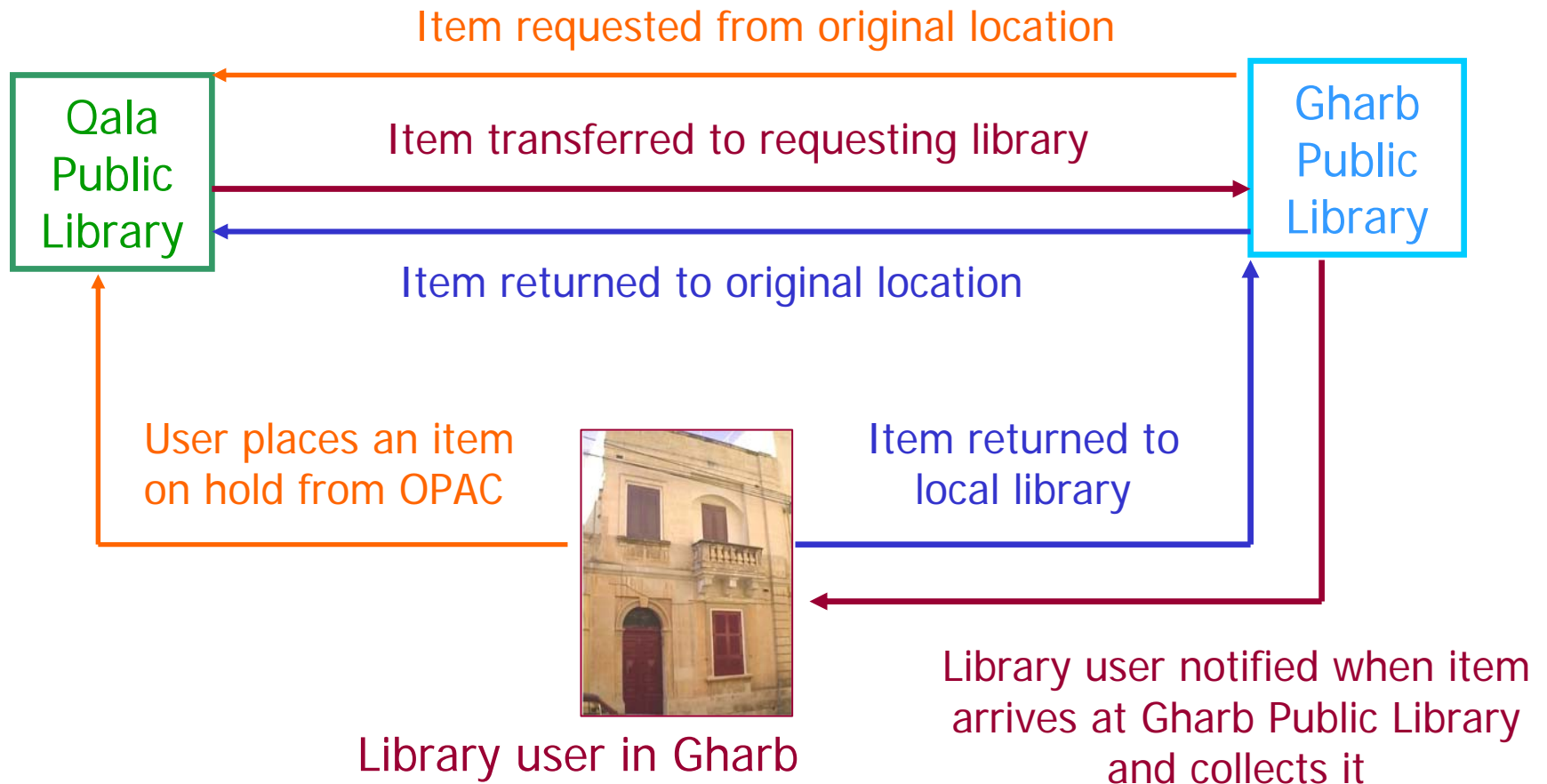
How does an ILL service work?



The requested book is identified as available in a particular library e.g. Qala

The user can either place the required item on hold (reserve) from the online catalogue or ask the local library officer to place the item on hold if enquiring at the library (and no OPAC is available).

How does an ILL service work?





ILL - bringing books to the user

- The proposed ILL service will allow the user to request the item to be transferred to the Gharb Branch Library. The user will be notified that s/he can collect the requested item from the his/her local library when it arrives from the Qala Branch Library.
- The item can be returned to the local branch that will ensure that the item returns to its original location – Qala.



What does an ILL service entail?

- A number of public libraries are already networked. Enlarging the network will mean increasing availability.
- A basic resource delivery system is required.
- Commitment from participants in the project and a control system.



Information technology

- IT has changed the traditional procedures, especially in the method of searching and locating items.
- IT allows one library to search another library's catalogue, a function increasingly conducted via the Internet and gateways.
- All networked public libraries in Malta and Gozo are using the same library management system. IT can link the catalogue of the public libraries to other catalogues (e.g. the University/school Library) thus creating more resource sharing opportunities.



The benefits of an ILL service

- Users will have the opportunity to loan items from any library participating in the project – a greater choice.
- Items will be brought to the local library of the user – a better service.
- Acquisitions of library items can be viewed in a wider and more cost-effective context (Cooperative collection development).



The potential barriers

- A change in mentality is required – participant libraries must now contribute towards the development of the whole system rather than “their library”.
- Implementation of technology. Networking libraries is a important (but not a pre requisite for ILL) – not all libraries can participate at the moment.
- A financial investment is required by central government.



The future...Resource Sharing

- Resource sharing focuses largely on three functions
 - bibliographic access - that is, knowledge of what is available for sharing from other sites through such means as union catalogues;
 - A system for making requests and providing delivery of information, mainly through the ILL process, often bolstered by agreements among members of a consortium to provide expedited service to members;
 - cooperative collection development...to ensure that libraries build complementary collections of resources on which to draw.



Resource Sharing

- Sharing of resources must be seen as an essential feature of the delivery of “comprehensive and efficient” library and information services in Malta and Gozo.
- It will allow for the establishing of new additional services, possibly with new strategic partners. New services may include:
 - shared access to electronic resources
 - life-long learning modules shared between public libraries



Resource sharing

- a means of maximising expendable resources and ameliorating the impact of financial reductions experienced in libraries over many years.
- the concept of resources to be shared in the new electronic environment needs to be broadened to include human and computing resources, among others.



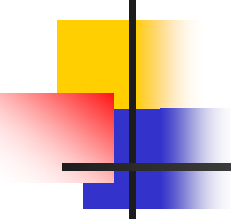
Key issues

- cost-cutting can often be the main reason for collaboration rather than efficient and effective use of resources which may be overlooked
- electronic developments could create a faster interlending service
- inter-library lending and resource sharing is essential to a library service as no library can stock every item
- The strengths of co-operation, and in particular resource sharing, are the improved access to information for library users, more efficient use of resources and a stronger library community.
- it is important to keep abreast of developments in Europe and internationally.



Points for discussion

- Should central government cover the costs of ILL services in public libraries?
- Are Local Councils interested in such a service?
- Who will be responsible for managing this service?
- Resource sharing implies the establishing of new services. Are our libraries prepared (or preparing) to offer such services?

- 
-
- Thank you
 - Any Questions?