Dr. Lynne Porat, Head, Interlibrary Loans & Chair, ILL Forum | Younes & Soraya Nazarian Library

An Interview with Dr. Lynne Porat: New Coordinator of the IGeLU RapidILL Working Group

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As I transition from my role as Coordinator of the IGeLU RapidILL working group, a position I've held since the group's formation in January last year, I'm delighted to introduce **Dr. Lynne Porat**, who is taking over from me. For those unfamiliar with RapidILL, it's a sophisticated resource sharing solution from Clarivate | Ex Libris that enables over 850 institutions in 36 countries worldwide to efficiently share content with each other, serving researchers, academics and students with access to over 25 million documents since the service began.

Lynne brings over three decades of expertise in resource sharing, having transformed practices at both institutional and national levels. Her combination of practical experience, research insights, and collaborative leadership makes her the ideal person to guide our community forward. I recently sat down with Lynne to discuss her journey and vision for the role.

What first drew you into the world of resource sharing?

Since my Library Science studies, I have always been interested in library cooperation. It was clear to me that no library can own everything they want, and sharing resources with other libraries is the best way to save costs and fulfil patron needs.

I was also attracted to the variety of skills needed to perform interlibrary lending: Reference, Circulation and Technical Services, and to the challenge and intellectual stimulation involved in finding esoteric items.

The challenges in my early career were due to the fact that Interlibrary Loans was often considered the "poor cousin" of the library world. When I became a librarian in 1991, few of the ILL units in Israeli academic libraries were independent departments, and only one librarian was a department head. ILL was usually a small unit within one of the larger departments, with no dedicated professional staff.

Our knowledge and expertise were recognized, but we weren't given significant credit or remuneration. I tried hard to change this situation by demonstrating the requirements of the role and the professionalism necessary to run a successful service. After several years, my request fell on sympathetic ears.

> "Since then, times have changed, especially since Covid when Resource Sharing was given a new lease of life, with products such as RapidILL and Rapido taking centre stage."

My advice is to advocate for ILL among managers and stakeholders, emphasizing its importance to your patrons. With persistence, and luck, an influential person will agree with you.

You led Meli, the Israeli national user group, for many years. What did that teach you about building consensus across diverse institutions, and how will those lessons shape your approach to the RapidILL working group?

As in all leadership situations, it is important to give everyone a chance to express themselves and to reach decisions democratically. I will continue to do this with the RapidILL working group.

Your work with the ILL Forum has had significant impact. Which achievement there are you most proud of, and why?

My most significant achievement as Head of the ILL Forum was collaborating with the heads of the Israeli Library Directors Standing Committee and the Inter-University Center for Digital Information Services to convince university CEOs to provide funding for ILL, enabling the elimination of fee-charging to patrons and libraries.

The process took two years, during which I provided reports, presentations, statistics and financial data. Initially, the project included the nine university libraries, and two years later the college and hospital libraries were included.

> "The venture was particularly meaningful for students who were often deterred from requesting multiple items at $5 per request as they didn't have funding."

That must have required significant operational change. What other technical advances did you champion during your time leading the Forum?

Beyond fee elimination, I'm also proud of the technical advances we achieved. I successfully convinced and trained all nine universities to adopt RapidILL, and worked with over 40 university and college libraries to migrate to ISO-ILL. I also collaborated with Ex Libris on integrating Alma

What drove your decision to pursue a doctorate later in your career, and how has that academic lens influenced your practical work?

I have always loved research, and after completing my MA thesis on cooperation among Israeli colleges and universities, I wanted to pursue more in-depth research on the types of patrons who request ILL and its impact on their research.

Undergoing the research process myself helped me understand the difficulties MA and PhD students encounter in the humanities, such as lack of funding and difficulties obtaining articles for their research.

Among your research publications, which findings surprised you the most or challenged conventional thinking in resource sharing?

I was surprised that fee-charging is still quite a common practice around the world. I think it deprives MA and PhD students and some faculty members of doing their research effectively. I believe resource sharing should be a free service in all academic libraries.

I was also delighted by the widespread commitment among libraries to share resources, cooperate, and supply high-quality scans within hours.

The RapidILL analytics dashboards you co-created with Clarivate generated tremendous interest. Walk us through how you approached that collaboration—how do you ensure new tools solve real problems for practitioners?

I approached Mike Richins, the RapidILL Product Manager, with the idea of creating Analytics dashboards and offering a webinar, because it seemed unnecessary for libraries to use the native RapidILL interface for RapidILL statistics and Alma Analytics for all other ILL statistics. After comparing the RapidILL statistics with Alma Analytics, it was clear that the RapidILL statistics were more comprehensive.

How did you ensure these dashboards would work across different institutional contexts?

I worked with Yoel Kortick from Clarivate on creating all the additional reports in Analytics, which we tested in three environments: the University of Haifa, the University of Cardiff, and the University of Auckland. We discovered that each university worked in a slightly different way, particularly regarding the statistics of non-filled requests. Each library can easily adjust the out-of-the-box reports to meet their specific needs.

Following the webinars and based on the feedback received, it seems that these reports solved a real problem for RapidILL users.

As you step into the RapidILL coordinator role, what's the first challenge you're eager to tackle, and what does success look like to you?

I will continue the fantastic work that you have done, Kip, by advocating for the community and pushing both old and new ideas forward. This includes customizing the work week across different time zones, transferring notes from Alma Borrowing requests to RapidILL to Alma Lending, adding OCR to files, implementing smart fulfilment based on actual performance rather than just the identification of relevant holdings and load balance, and creating training videos.

I love Interlibrary Loans, and it has been my passion for 35 years. I often say that it runs through my veins! Every day I am deeply gratified by helping patrons obtain items—sometimes esoteric ones—that they otherwise wouldn't obtain. They are regularly surprised at the speed of the service and the fact that we succeeded at all.

Here's an example from a grateful patron that exemplifies why this work matters:

> "Dear Lynne, I wish to express my thanks to you and your staff. I feel that your whole team is with me trying to accomplish the challenges of the seminar. What you have done is far beyond my expectations, and I send my thanks to all of you. The University of Haifa can be proud of the way you manage the department during such complicated times."

I am always searching for new projects to pursue, such as coordinating the RapidILL Working Group, and I am deeply committed to educating the next generation of ILL librarians and ensuring that ILL remains on centre stage of the library world. When I am not working, I love spending time with my four granddaughters.

The RapidILL working group continues to meet monthly and welcomes new members from the IGeLU community. For more information, visit the IGeLU website.

About the interviewer: Kip A. Darling is Inter-Library Loans Coordinator at Birmingham City University, where he has led the ILL team since 2016. He coordinated the IGeLU RapidILL Working Group from January 2024 to September 2025.