ENHANCING INTERLIBRARY-LIBRARY LOANS IN AN OPEN DISTANCE LEARNING INSTITUTION: THE UNISA EXPERIENCE
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The University of South Africa (Unisa) is the African continent’s largest Open Distance Learning (ODL) institution, and it is one of the ten mega universities in the world. This paper discusses how the Library has aligned its Interlibrary Loan service with the ODL definition of learning for remote clients in order to enhance and adapt the service to this unique operational environment. In particular, the Unisa Library responds to the challenge of the University’s ODL focus areas pertaining to: excellence in research support, student centredness, overcoming distance and time, multi-modal learning, and training and development programmes. Within the newly designed Unisa Library model, an InfoHub was established with a view to providing equitable services to remote clients who cannot visit a Unisa Branch Library. The Request service of the InfoHub is a driver towards a change strategy for the Interlibrary Loan service, together with other drivers of change such as developments within South Africa’s Interlibrary loan infrastructure, the needs of clients in contemporary society, the role of mobile phones in the provision of information and services, and the fostering of international partnerships within the global information environment.