

Voyages of discovery, tales of endeavour – New Zealand's interlending scene

David Reid

National Library of New Zealand, Wellington, New Zealand

Abstract

In 2004 New Zealand published seminal research providing a snap shot on interlending in the country. In the intervening period what, if anything, has changed? This paper describes the current environment based on a statistical analysis and attempts to map a path to the future. It includes

- A roundup of developments and local solutions and their influence on interlending, and
- A discussion of the environmental changes including the development of consortia and the 'big deal'.

There'll be a brief discussion of the ISO-ILL protocol before finally attempting to predict the place for traditional interlending services in the digital world. Do they compete or complement, or are they no more than a desperate diaspora in the twilight of a golden age?

1. Background

In 2004 New Zealand published seminal research (Cullen, 2004) about the nation's interlending scene. It was clear from this report that three things were vital to the ongoing health of interlending in New Zealand:

- A national electronic interlending system
- A strong National Union Catalogue (NUC), and
- The continued support of the National Library of New Zealand (Reid, 2005a).

Given the period of time that's passed since publication, the timing is now opportune to review the interlending scene, consider what issues are impacting on it and postulate its future course.

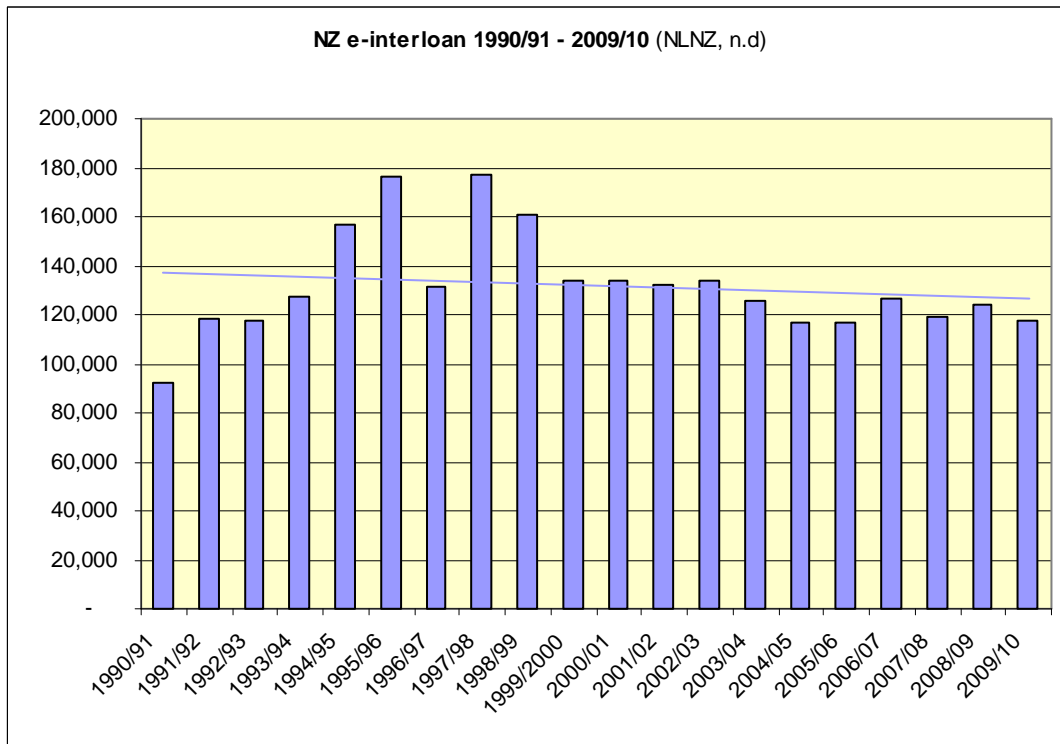
2. New Zealand interloan trends

2.1. An historical perspective

Since 1990/91 electronic interloan in New Zealand is characterised by two main trends. (Fig. 1). From 1990/91 to 1999/2000 there was continuous growth in the transaction base. The second period from 2000/01 to 2008/09 has seen a steady fall in the number of transactions generated. Yet this latter period presents two sub-trends. The decline in transactions continues at close to 15% during the period 2001/02 to 2004/05. Between 2004/05 and 2008/09 that has become something of a plateau. This has a marked effect upon the trend-line to the point where over the entire 20-year period it is close to being flat.

In the period of the early 2000s more resources have become available in digital format. There has also been the growth of 'Big Deals' offering nationwide access to digital material. New Zealand's example is EPIC, plus there is the growth of electronic serial subscriptions in the university sector in particular.

Fig. 1

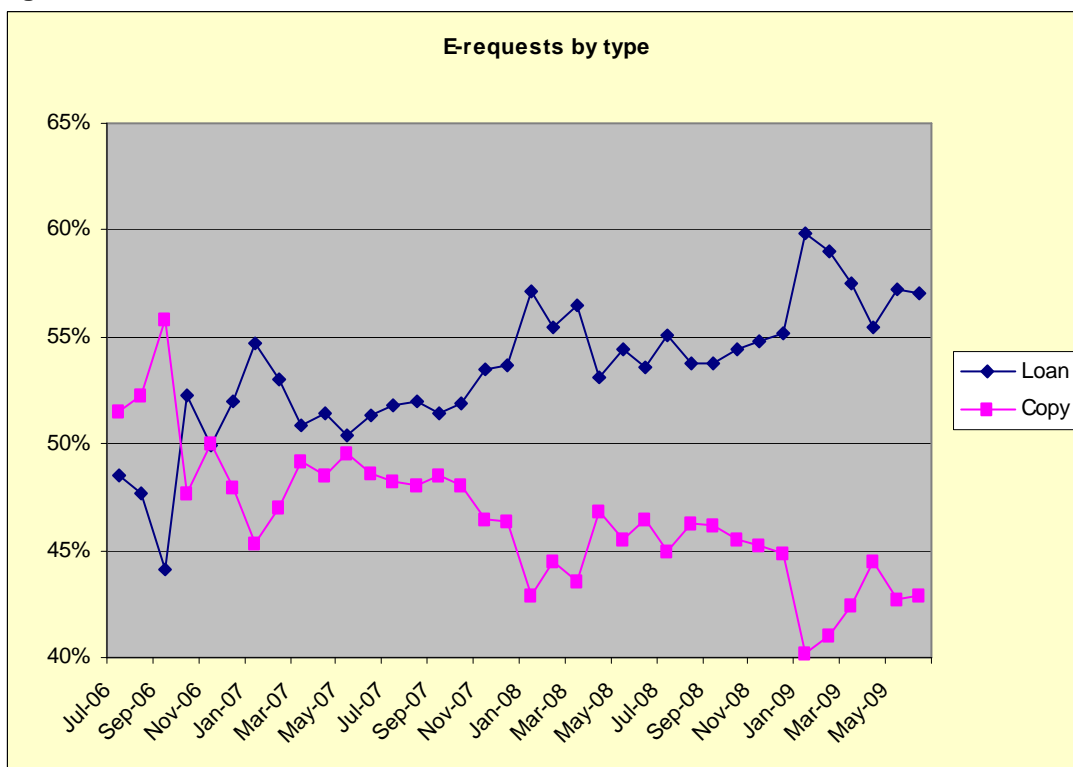


2.2. Interlibrary loan usage statistics 2006 - 2009

2.2.1. Requests by type

Historically the ratio of copy to loan requests has always favoured copy. At the implementation of Te Puna interloan in 1999 the ratio was 60%: 40% in favour of copy. Over time this has changed to 53%: 47% in favour of loan requests. (Fig. 2). This changeover occurred in July 2005 and reflected a trend where both request types converged until they parted again into the pattern we have today. With only circumstantial and anecdotal evidence available it is easy to presume that the arrival of EPIC in 2004/05 had a significant bearing on this result. It is also probable that, as major educational institutions signed 'Big Deal' contracts with publishers, access to digital material dampened demand for traditional interloan requests.

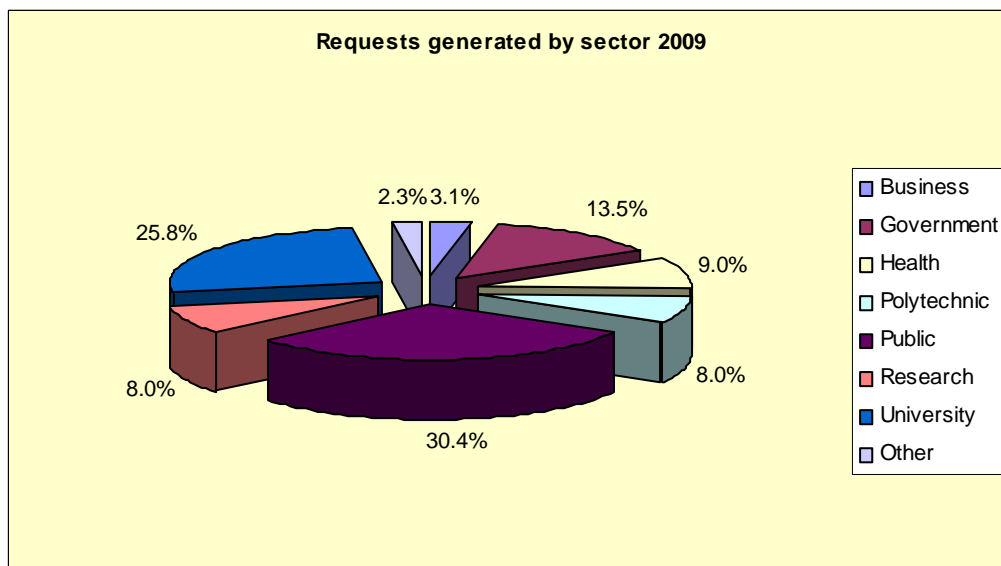
Fig. 2



2.2.2. Library sector breakdown

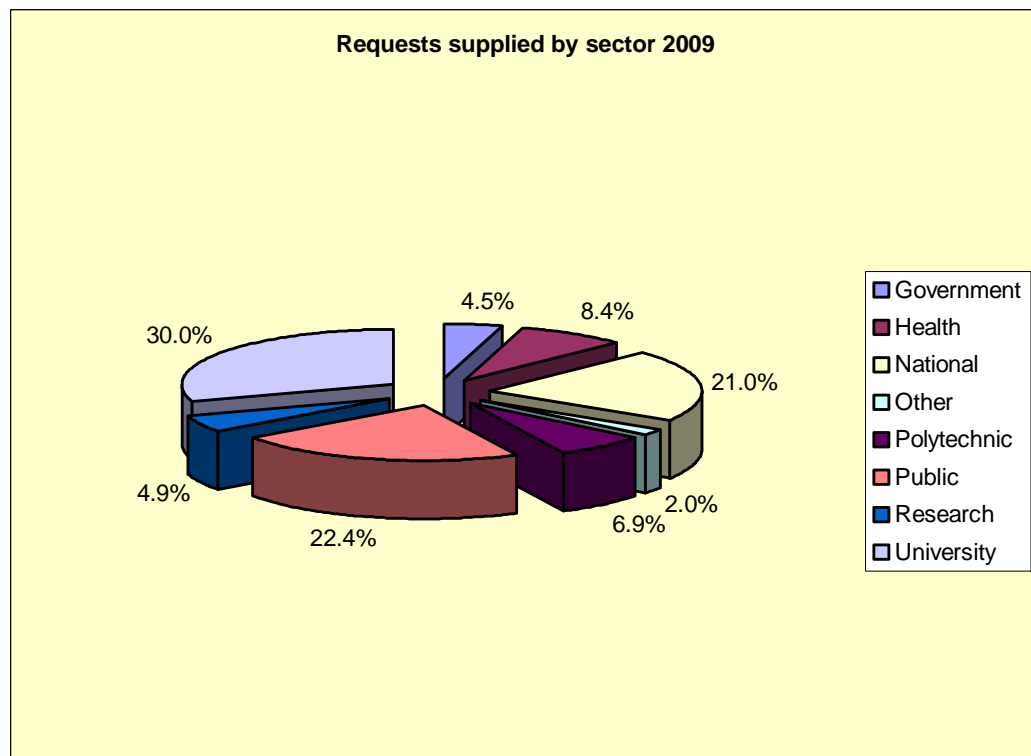
In 2009 the public library sector generated the greatest proportion of requests at 30.4%, followed by the university sector 25.8% and government sector 13.5%. (Fig. 3). Compared with 2006 there is an interesting sea change when universities were the largest sector at 35.5%, public libraries at 25.6% and government at 14.3%.

Fig. 3



In 2009 university, public and the national library sectors are the largest suppliers of interloan requests: 30%, 22.4% and 21% respectively. (Fig. 4). The change since 2006 is dramatic when the university sector accounted for 40.2% of supply, national library at 23.6% and public libraries at 15.4%. Overall supply volumes have fallen 8.4% in this period. This changing balance is most noticeable for the university and national library sector with falls of 31% and 18% respectively, while the public library sector has growth of 35%.

Fig. 4

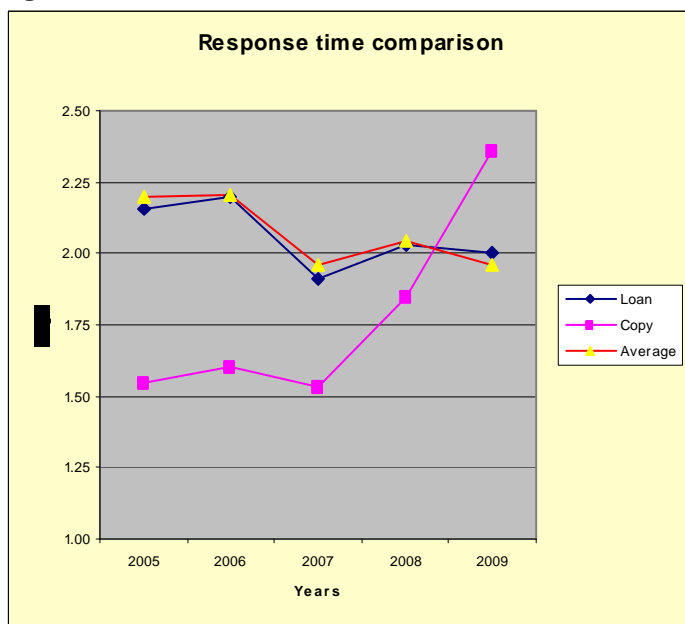


2.2.3. Response times

Since 2005 average response times, with some minor variation, have improved by almost 11%. That is, supply times are faster. (Fig. 5). While it might be assumed that the advent of an electronic delivery mechanism in 2006 aided this, the initial improvement for copy requests has not continued. At the same time the response time for loan requests also shows improvement. There is no data to aid in

understanding these trends, although it is known that the number of copy requests has decreased while the number of loan requests has increased during the period. It's possible that fewer copy requests to supply has resulted in the release of resources to supply loan requests.

Fig. 5



2.2.4. Success rates

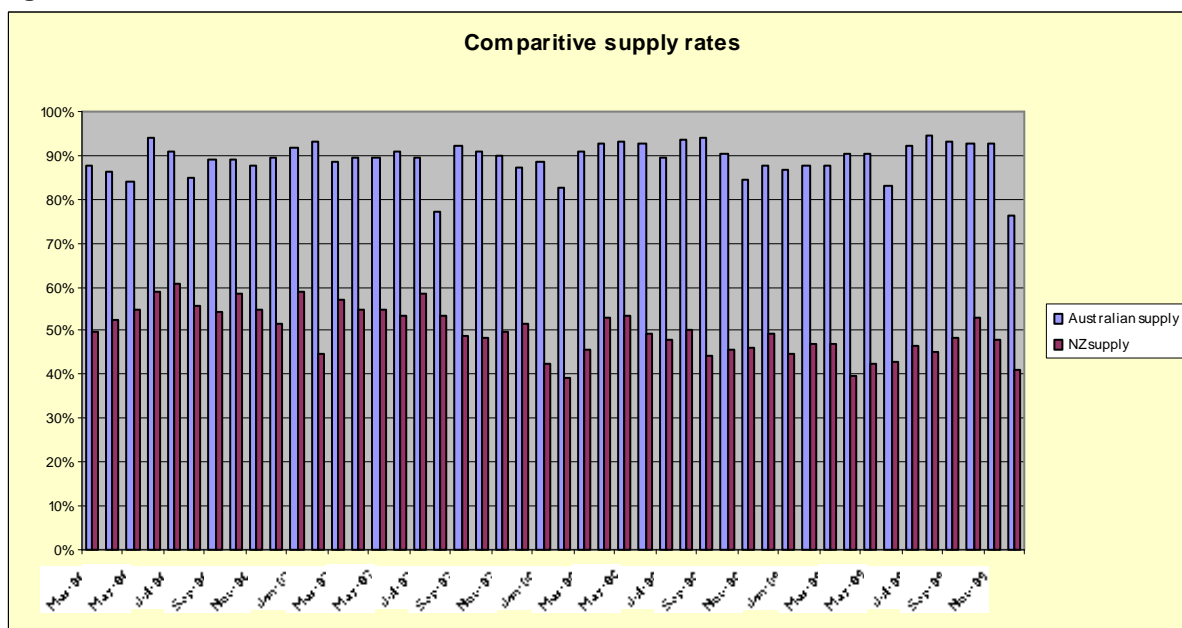
Statistical evidence shows that New Zealand libraries have a success rate of 88% when it comes to supplying requests. This has remained relatively static for many years and the advent of the Osmosis project, which seeks to maintain the currency and accuracy of New Zealand library holdings on the NUC, does not appear to have influenced this in any way. While it's possible the project has yet to attain a broad enough reach, it has already included many of the biggest supply libraries and therefore any trend should be obvious. Where an improvement may be evident is in how soon in the rota successful supply occurs, although currently there is no data on which to evaluate this. However anecdotal evidence does support this notion.

2.3. Innovations

2.3.1. Trans Tasman Interlending

Trans Tasman Interlending went live in March 2006 providing a seamless link between Te Puna Interloan and Libraries Australia Document Delivery (Ong, 2007). While technically feasible earlier, issues relating to the harmonisation of business practices and charging practices proved larger obstacles to overcome (Davidson, 2009). This development immediately generated an increase in traffic of 8.9% and continues to account for 9.1% of the total request traffic. A split of 55%: 45% in favour of copies shows for New Zealand-generated requests. Australian-generated requests display a split of 51%: 49% in favour of copy. The success rate on New Zealand-generated requests is 89% while the rate on Australian-generated requests is a paltry 49%. (Fig. 6). The latter is somewhat difficult to explain as the supply rate is evenly split 50:50 between copy and loan requests. A more likely explanation probably lies in Krall's theory of hydrophobia – a reluctance to send materials across water. The UK experience suggests that involvement in international interlending is one way to overcome this affliction (Street, 2003). As individuals we're most willing to travel across water and vast landmasses, yet not send materials. It's time for New Zealand's interloan community to get over this one – in the event of a loss, which is the greater, people or print?

Fig. 6



2.3.2. Electronic supply of documents

Two main methods of electronic delivery of documents operate in New Zealand – Ariel® and DocStore. Owned and supported by Infotrieve, Ariel® enables the scanning and transmission of electronic images to other Ariel® workstations elsewhere in the world. The downside to Ariel® is that it is a legacy product undergoing no further development. It also requires the purchase of the software. While there are other specific electronic delivery products, such as Prospero, none seem to have the capabilities of Ariel®. An alternative is DocStore, an electronic delivery mechanism within Te Puna Interloan. It can transmit a variety of formats from within the application once a suitable electronic document is available. It takes output from multi function devices that are ubiquitous in most organisations and does not require any additional investment. Its downside is that the DocStore driver does not always work as efficiently as possible and this can create delivery delays.

Some suppliers have moved to secure web delivery of documents. This involves sending the requester an email with a URL address and login token to retrieve the document. The National Library of New Zealand will move to VDX 4 during 2010, and this version upgrade offers this method of document delivery. Although it's unlikely to be delivered on Day One because of the resources required to invest in its implementation.

2.3.3.D-I-Y interloans

This product developed from the Voyager to VDX interface enabling request creation from searches of New Zealand's NUC. Implemented at Lincoln University it continues today and proves that end-user requesting can be implemented from within a national service (McCartin, 2004; Reid, 2005a). Downsides lie in the need to continually promote the service to an ever changing clientele and the need to train them. However the benefits that accrue from improvements in the quality of request data and a reduced need for library staff to modify this data outweigh these considerations.

3. Environmental changes

3.1. 321 toru ki te tahi

321 toru ki te tahi is a work programme resulting from a government decision to integrate the operations of the National Library of New Zealand and Archives New Zealand with the Department of Internal Affairs. The departments are seen to have related functions. Principally they are storing and providing information which is of particular value because it is gathered, verified, classified, preserved or organised by government for the present and future benefit of our people and nation. Integration is viewed as:

- Best meeting future investment needs
- Realising potential economies of scale
- Enabling agencies to respond to changing expectations, and
- Consolidating agency expertise to align approaches in supporting New Zealanders in accessing government based information.

The overall objective is the services we provide today will be better tomorrow. At the time of writing the information gathering stage is underway and there remains much work to do. What is clear is that no job will remain unchanged which has both positive and negative connotations. Already we are seeing gains with the government's announcement of NZD12.6 million of new funding to develop a Government Digital Archive. This will extend National Library's National Digital Heritage Archive for use by Archives New Zealand to preserve valuable government information and make it widely available to the public online. And for interlending, at this time the service continues pending future decisions that may, or may not, change the nature of the service.

3.2. The Library Consortium of New Zealand (LCONZ)

During 2010 LCONZ will commence the implementation of a local ILL management system. The initial implementation will require discussion of the operating model, a load of locations data and thorough testing. The operating model discussion will address whether LCONZ gateways via Te Puna Interloan to access LADD or connects directly as in the University of Auckland model. Creating the new operating environment will see many of the issues experienced in the Australian environment start to become more apparent in New Zealand (Hanington, 2010). One example is maintaining the currency and synchronisation of location information. To this end the National Library of New Zealand has trained another staff member in order to address some of the support requirements that will arise.

3.3. Leadership and learning

Over the last two years a number of the leading thinkers in New Zealand's interloan scene have retired or moved into other roles. As well as the loss of institutional and business knowledge this also creates a gap in professional learning. Where do 'Interloans Best Practice' workshops now fit as a learning mechanism? Allied to this is Te Puna Interloan training. There is a noticeable increase in the number of new faces attending introductory courses. This would indicate a reasonably high level of staff turnover in the interloans field and raises questions about the retention of knowledge and skills. Although libraries subscribe to the concept of resource sharing, the investment in processes and learning may not match the commitment. Perhaps linking the training offers with the LIANZA registration process may provide an option for ensuring ongoing professional development.

3.4. BONUS Plus

BONUS Plus is a resource sharing collaboration of seven Australian universities that Massey University joined in July 2009 (Hall, 2009). It utilises a module of the Millennium library system, INN-Reach, which enables consortia borrowing within the group of members. The agreement concentrates on the delivery of loan material and excludes copy and audiovisual material. A sampling of data from the period August to December 2009 shows the creation of 387 loan requests compared with 627 for the same period in 2008. This is a reduction of 38%.

3.5. Auckland Supercity

The new Auckland Council, commonly known as the Auckland Supercity, comes into effect on 1 November 2010. This sees seven local authorities merged into one entity. It will result in changes for the public libraries. Most of these libraries already share a common library system through eLGAR that also runs Millennium as its library management platform. This means they too could implement a consortial borrowing system. In 2008 and 2009 eLGAR members provided between 17 and 18% of each other's requested loan requirements. With the expected changes to flow from amalgamation it is likely that much of this traffic will disappear from Te Puna Interloan and be serviced from within the eLGAR consortium.

3.6. Shared library management system

This project for a shared library management system for New Zealand public libraries is at the RFP (Request for Proposal) stage. While seeking an interloan management module may be a consideration, the general view is that this will not be an essential function of the brief. The reasons for this include the demand on scarce resources needed to implement such a module and the ongoing technical demands to maintain it. A considered view is that most public libraries are probably better served by the availability of a shared national utility rather than investing heavily in a local solution of this nature.

4. ISO-ILL protocol

4.1. Where is the protocol going?

The ISO ILL protocol, version 2, has been in existence since 1997. A process to review and update it failed a significant hurdle in October 2004 preventing it proceeding to a vote on a Final Draft International Standard (Jackson, 2005). At this time the National Library of New Zealand was only an observer to these proceedings and registered a point of view with the National Library of Australia. We concurred with their 'no' vote, as the proposed version 3 was not backwards compatible with version 2, which most implementers were using. Subsequently in 2008, the National Library of New Zealand now with voting rights, supported retention of the ISO ILL protocol. Not to do so would have created significant future uncertainty. Up to this time no further work has been undertaken on the protocol and most likely never will be. While the tool may be imperfect, it is, nevertheless, an accepted standard to which the interlending community adheres and we must accept it for what it is.

4.2. Request Transfer Message (RTM)

Request Transfer Message (RTM) is another option undergoing development. Its intended use is for directing requests to resource delivery systems and / or electronic resolver systems. The work is being carried out by OCLC with input from the National Library of Australia. Much of this work remains at a theoretical level and has appeared in only a limited way in production environments. At this stage, whatever the outcome, RTM must still link to a delivery mechanism such as Te Puna Interloan. It will not replace the ISO ILL protocol, which is likely to remain the viable option for some time into the future.

5. The future

5.1. What place for traditional interloan services in the digital world?

While the statistics delivered above identify a steady decline in New Zealand's interloan traffic from the peaks in the late 1990s, the anticipated ongoing decline has not appeared to happen. Rather traffic is at more of a plateau than anything. This would apparently defy the odds when one takes into account the vast array of electronically delivered material that is available immediately (for a price) and at the desktop. Yet traditional interloan services continue to survive under this threat and the ever-present threat of funding reviews, mergers and closures. And if we take into account the trends from Australia and the United States then there may well be a time when they begin a growth period again. So there remains a place in library services and the digital world for this type of service. But what exactly is the fit?

5.2. Compete or complement?

There is no doubt that libraries competing head-on with digital delivery mechanisms is an unsound business approach. Slow cultural change, a bureaucratic mentality and dictates imposed by governing authorities mean such options are exceedingly limited. Where libraries do fit is in a complementary role. These include providing the gateways to commercial suppliers and providing greater access options to materials in the world (Hanington, 2010). One current example is the National Library of Australia who is investigating the options of providing a link from Libraries Australia Document Delivery to WorldCat Resource Sharing (WCRS). National Library of New Zealand staff discussed this in a previous iteration to provide access to SHARES libraries, of which it is a member. This proposal foundered on technical issues, specifically opening a port in the firewall for IP traffic. Yet in a connected world the National Library of New Zealand does not need to do everything. A simpler approach is to seek agreement with the National Library of Australia to provide gateway access for New Zealand libraries to WCRS. Charging could be resolved by using OCLC's IFM mechanism.

6. Conclusion

From the above discussion it's simple to conclude that there remains a significant interloan traffic in New Zealand and that the bulk of it occurs across Te Puna Interloan. In many ways Te Puna Interloan becomes the hub of this wheel. While request and supply rates are down from historical highs, Te Puna needs to refresh and bolster itself and its operation. Rather like cells sites where, as you move you get passed from one to another, Te Puna Interloan needs to provide that gateway for libraries to pass their requests on to other suppliers. These may be commercial suppliers or traditional library services so that the world becomes one of interconnected hubs. National services need to build on each other's links in order to provide the best access and service models available.

References

- Cullen, R., Callaghan, S., Osborne, S., Calvert, P., Chawner, B., Li Liew, C., & Dorner, D. (2004), *Interlibrary Loan Services in New Zealand: An Environmental Scan and National Survey - A report commissioned by the National Library of New Zealand and the Joint Standing Committee on Interloan*, Victoria University of Wellington, School of Information Management, Wellington.
- Davidson, E. (2009), "How close are we to having a global "Get it for me" service", *Interlending & Document Supply*, Vol 37 No 2, pp. 64-67.
- Hall, A. (2009), "Massey University joins BONUS Plus", *Library Life*, October 2009, pp. 17-18.
- Hanington, D. & Reid, D. (2010), "Now we're getting somewhere – adventures in trans Tasman interlending", *Interlending & Document Supply*, Vol 38 No 2, pp. 76-81.
- Jackson, M. (2005), "When a good standard development process fails", *Interlending & Document Supply*, Vol 33 No 1, pp 53-55.
- McCartin, S. and Reid, D. (2004), "D-I-Y interloans: from dream to reality", *The Electronic Library*, Vol 22 No 6, pp. 509-517.
- National Library of New Zealand, Annual report.
- Ong, D., Reid, D. and Simons, N. (2007), "Taming the Tasman: international interlending under the Southern Cross", *Interlending & Document Supply*, Vol 35 No. 1, pp. 38-44.
- Reid, D. (2005a) "Interloan services in New Zealand – what do the research results reveal?", *Interlending & Document Supply*, Vol 33 No 4, pp. 196-202.
- Reid, D., Bowden, M., & McCartin, S. (2005b), "End-user requesting – trail-blazing Kiwi style", *The Electronic Library*, Vol 23 No 6, pp. 652-663.
- Street, P. (2003), "Centre stage or just a supporting role? International interlending in the twenty-first century – a UK perspective", *Interlending & Document Supply*, Vol 31 No 4, pp. 246-252.