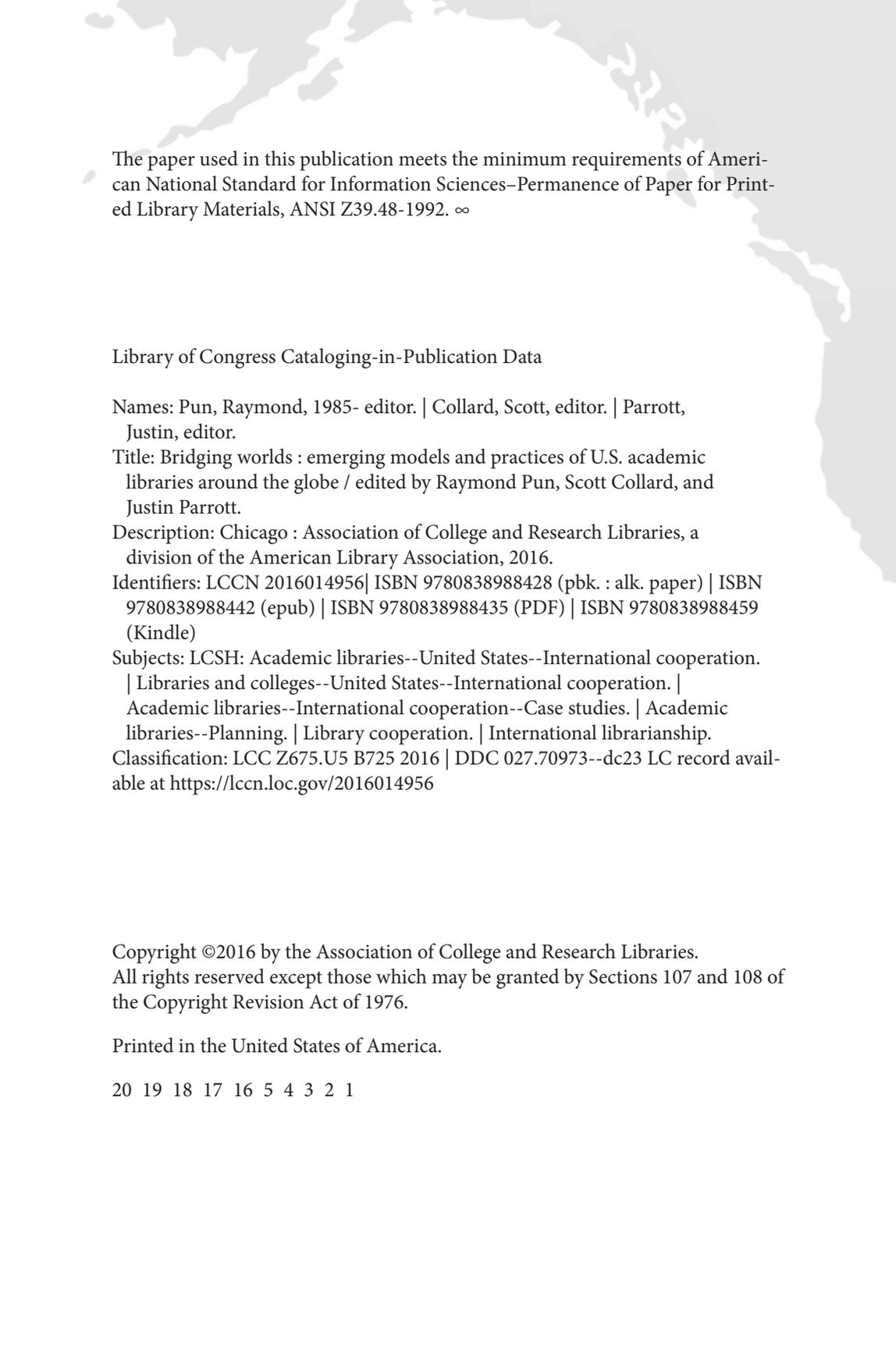


# Bridging Worlds:

## Emerging Models and Practices of U.S. Academic Libraries Around the Globe

Edited by  
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chapter two

# Creating Global Delivery Strategy: Services, Systems, and Practices

Beth Daniel Lindsay, Kristina Rose, Sydney Thompson, and Shoshannah Turgel

*Six years ago NYU Libraries did not offer comprehensive delivery services, scanning or paging of local collections, to library users. Today delivery services are well developed for select library users throughout NYU's global network. How does a major research library develop these services? This chapter outlines the conceptualization, development, and current state of delivery services at New York University's three degree-granting campuses and academic centers. Topics include selection of request system, shipping of materials, user expectations, usage statistics, staffing, and the rewards and challenges of working with a team based around the globe.*

## Why NYU Needs Global Delivery Services

New York University has three degree-granting campuses and eleven academic centers worldwide with an enrollment over 50,000, nearly equally divided between undergraduate and graduate students, and over 4,500 full-time faculty.<sup>1</sup> The development of NYU's degree-granting campuses in Abu Dhabi in 2010 and Shanghai in 2013 represented a sea change for library services. Unlike academic centers that primarily support students and scholars for a single semester-abroad experience, the degree-granting campuses were expected to develop a full suite of library services to support the needs of undergraduates, teaching and research faculty, and, eventually, graduate students and faculty as well.

In 2007, NYU President John Sexton described the creation of a “global network university” that would allow “faculty and students to move seamlessly through the network... without leaving the University’s intellectual community and resources.”<sup>2</sup> President Sexton’s mandate that faculty and students in this network have the same access to resources, as those in New York City required a reimagining of library services, particularly access to print collections. NYU network connectivity at all locations, portal campuses as well as academic centers, and license agreements allow full access to NYU’s e-resources. However, access to print materials is a challenge for students and faculty at both the academic centers and the portal campuses. The portal campuses are better equipped due to in-house library collections, but these collections are still limited and primarily intended to support curricular needs. They are not always adequate to meet the research needs of visiting scholars, standing faculty, postdoctoral candidates, and students.<sup>3</sup> In this context, providing access to NYU Libraries’ 5.9 million-volume print collection—primarily located in New York’s Elmer Holmes Bobst Library (Bobst) and its offsite storage facility, as well as interlibrary loan services—is a critical requirement for supporting instruction and research, and fulfilling the promise of a “seamless” experience throughout the global network.

Providing access to library materials for students and faculty studying and working at a distance is not new for libraries. Many libraries offer some type of delivery service, either document delivery (scanning) or paging services (campus delivery or mail), to support faculty, graduate, or distance education students.<sup>4</sup> However, NYU Libraries was challenged to expand this model to accommodate the academic needs of a far-reaching community that allows for users to move within a global network.

For example, Abu Dhabi and Shanghai students are expected to spend one to three semesters during their course of study at another NYU location, and the composition of faculty at portal campuses is fluid, including visiting faculty who retain their positions at other universities or other NYU sites. This means NYU has both students and faculty who will either graduate from the institution or teach at one of its locations and never step foot in New York. To accommodate a mobile user population, the global delivery strategy was developed to work seamlessly for individuals who might change locations multiple times and who might not be able to visit an NYU Library or interact with a librarian before using the system.

Over the past five years, library staff in New York, Abu Dhabi, and Shanghai have collaborated to develop a system to support the academic demands of the University’s far-reaching international community. This effort has resulted in the creation of the Delivery Services unit, housed under the greater umbrella of Access, Delivery & Resource Sharing Services. The primary goal is to ensure library users have timely access to requested materials regardless of their location within the global network. Specific services include the scanning of materials and the paging of materials from New York to portal campuses in Abu Dhabi and Shanghai.

## Building a Foundation

NYU Libraries is a complex institution that comprises eleven libraries in New York City alone. In addition, the Libraries have consortial agreements that include a shared catalog with five other New York-based institutions.<sup>5</sup> Before the development of delivery services, scanning and paging services were provided for collections in the Libraries' offsite storage facility but delivery was limited to Bobst Library. Users, regardless of patron status, were required to visit the owning library to both borrow and return materials.

In early 2009, NYU Libraries hired a Delivery Services Librarian to implement user-focused delivery services. The opening of NYU Abu Dhabi provided an impetus for rapid development, but a scheduled upgrade to the integrated library system (Ex Libris Aleph) and interlibrary loan software (ILLiad) occupied institutional resources, which delayed the development of a sophisticated global delivery services. At the time, there were a small number of library users in Abu Dhabi who required materials from New York and several stopgap systems were developed so requests for materials, both scans and pages, could be immediately fulfilled. Initially users were directed to a simple web form. Later, their requests were directed via catalog links to ILLiad and requests were processed through the interlibrary loan workflow. This workaround was not user-friendly because the interface was intended for unavailable materials (ILL loans) but not delivery services. Users were instructed to disregard most of the on-screen instructions and to indicate their delivery location in the notes field. Staff had to check the notes field and manually sort incoming requests for delivery services. Not surprisingly, this proved problematic because interlibrary loan (ILL) requests for locally available materials were usually canceled; thus many requests from global delivery were canceled in error.

A more robust system scalable to President Sexton's vision of the Global Network University was needed to develop sustainable delivery services. Initial research was conducted to determine the best software to process requests. Listservs were queried and processes used by institutions offering scanning and paging services were reviewed.<sup>6</sup> The choice was between Aleph and ILLiad; both systems have their merits. Aleph works extremely well for paging and delivery with a streamlined stacks search list, simple hold trapping, transiting, and patron notification. ILLiad works well for article and chapter scans where there are more steps in the process, more information attached to the request, and has a more sophisticated delivery and article retrieval method. The user experience is similar as both Aleph and ILLiad link from the discovery point to place a request. It was determined that ILLiad would require more development at the outset to integrate with the online public access catalog (OPAC) and that development efforts in Aleph would prove more scalable for a seamless patron experience with additional campuses and user mobility. The decision was therefore made to use Aleph for scanning and paging

requests for available material, and ILLiad for unavailable material, i.e. non-circulating or reserve items, as well as ILL requests from global users.

In addition to creating the request process, Abu Dhabi's library holdings needed to be integrated into the shared catalog. The creation of a globally shared discovery system, patron database, and request system introduced a new level of complexity to an already complex system. Aleph is not able to support multiple time zones in a single administrative unit (ADM), so a second ADM was required to allow for short-term loans such as reserves. Introducing the second ADM required more work than initially anticipated and broke some functionality regarding the circulation of materials. For example, items going from New York to Abu Dhabi would not be labeled "In Transit." As a result, materials were checked out prior to shipment and users were notified the material was on its way. A staff member in Abu Dhabi manually emailed each user once the material arrived. Transit handling was a main reason the request process was automated through Aleph, so this development was an unwelcome surprise. Luckily, material does update as "In Transit" back to the owning library when returned by the user. Transit functionality also works when material is moved between libraries in the same ADM. Another unanticipated outcome of the separate ADM for each time zone is that users have an account in each ADM; meaning their circulation history, fine history, and permissions are maintained separately.

Over time these challenges resulted in a better understanding of the capabilities of Aleph and ultimately improved services for NYU Library users. Aleph allows for differentiated services based on locations and/or patron statuses. It is therefore possible to create new patron statuses to accommodate users located at different pickup locations abroad and to allow for seamless requesting from the catalog.

It was correctly anticipated that faculty would move between campuses frequently. To ensure seamless access, services for paging and scanning were made available to all faculty at the outset (subsequently extended to all doctoral students in Fall of 2011). The new services were handled differently in New York and Abu Dhabi. In New York, services were soft launched to allow library staff time to refine and improve workflows and ensure that staff had adequate training to meet the demands of a large user population. In Abu Dhabi, the services were widely publicized to allow for immediate access. There were two reasons for this decision. First, when the NYU Abu Dhabi Library opened in fall 2010 there were approximately 5,000 print volumes, most of which were directly related to the curriculum. Access to materials in New York was therefore required to meet the needs of the faculty. Second, the portal campus initially enrolled only 150 first-year students and had approximately 100 faculty members. Unlike New York, library staff were able to personally assist most users with their delivery services needs. All Abu Dhabi-based employees were cross-trained, even the library director, on the request and receipt process so anyone could assist and communicate with the user

population about how to access material. This highly involved service was necessary given the limitations of the initial stopgap system. Fortunately, by the time most students and faculty arrived and began to request materials, the process was running more smoothly.

The ability to request scans and page materials was seen as a major service improvement for New York-based faculty and a necessary one for users at NYU Abu Dhabi and Shanghai. Regardless of location, the process is entirely automated and requires no setup on the part of the user. All faculty members and doctoral students have access to scanning and paging services, but undergraduate access is limited to students located in Abu Dhabi and Shanghai. Access is automated, as configuration in Aleph controls the display for the appropriate request options in the Libraries' discovery layer. Differentiated services, based upon a user's location and status within the global university, requires coordination between the Libraries' and the University's student and employee information systems to determine a user's status and location within the global university. As a result, obtaining the most current data and correctly loading it into Aleph has become a critical but unseen component of the service. The data is dependent on many variables and underlying systems. Maintaining differentiated permissions and statuses is time-consuming and difficult, but is well worth the benefit to users.

## Extending Services to a Second Portal Campus

As part of the third portal campus, the NYU Shanghai library inherited the concept of global delivery services and benefitted greatly from the philosophy and workflow developed to provide resources for patrons at Abu Dhabi and other global sites. When NYU Shanghai opened in August 2013, testing of shipments and developing of systems was well underway. Global Delivery was promoted, among other library services, during the library's first orientation presentation. NYU Shanghai's initial print collection was limited to several hundred volumes, most of which directly supported the curriculum. Like Abu Dhabi, collections in New York are considered offsite storage for NYU Shanghai. Unmediated access to library resources in New York was therefore an initial service goal, necessary to provide students, faculty, and staff with the resources needed for academic research and coursework.

Unfortunately, Shanghai experienced some of the same challenges that were seen in Abu Dhabi and, similarly, a stopgap system was put in place to accommodate initial requests. This involved emailing the Access Services Librarian who manually input all requests on internal spreadsheets shared between Shanghai and New York.

The reasons for the delay in automated service were threefold. First, there were concerns about shipping books to China because of an assumption that cer-

tain materials are banned and censored. Moreover, several meetings with China-based book vendors led to the conclusion that used books, which includes library books, are inspected more closely than new books and sometimes held for long periods of time in China's customs facilities. Test shipments were sent over the course of several months, all of which confirmed there was, in fact, no problem shipping books through Chinese customs. Second, there were staffing changes in New York that delayed the ability to make systems changes required to develop this service. Third, Aleph upgrades delayed implementation and created unanticipated technical problems, which prevented many users from using the automated system. Those problems took time to work through and staff in both New York and Shanghai collaborated on troubleshooting and documenting outcomes to ensure reliable service.

By the end of the Fall 2013 semester, ILL forms included NYU Shanghai as a delivery location and library users were able to submit requests for articles and chapter scans directly, echoing the work-around developed for NYU Abu Dhabi. Aleph was appropriately configured to allow for automated requests in the Spring 2014 semester.

## Staffing

The number of staff required to maintain this complex operation has grown steadily since the first Delivery Services Librarian was hired in New York in 2009. Currently, there is a small team of employees in New York, Abu Dhabi, and Shanghai who collaborate to support all global delivery requests. Scrupulous attention to detail and daily communication between this team are essential to ensure high-quality service and guarantee a fast turnaround on requests.

An Abu Dhabi-based Access Services librarian was hired in spring of 2010 and four Abu Dhabi-based library assistants were tasked with providing support for all library services, including delivery. Over the past several years, the staff has grown to include an Access Services Supervisor and two additional library assistants. The Abu Dhabi staff no longer do technical services work and their tasks extend beyond delivery services to include staffing the information desk, shelving, and other access services work. On average, the majority of delivery services work is handled by two staff members, translating to approximately .15 full-time equivalent (FTE).

Staffing for Shanghai followed a similar pattern. A Shanghai-based Access Services librarian was hired in spring of 2012. Since Fall 2013, the staff has grown to include one senior library assistant, two library assistants, and one library assistant/administrative aide. The majority of delivery services requests are supported by the two library assistants who also have other access-related responsibilities, including hours at the circulation desk, course reserves, and stacks maintenance. Their delivery services work translates to approximately .25 FTE.

The majority of the global delivery team's work is completed in New York where one full-time employee works exclusively on global delivery services, a supervisor splits her time between ILL and Delivery Services, and a Delivery and Resource Sharing Services Librarian provides oversight and strategic development for all of NYU's request services (delivery services, interlibrary loan and direct consortial borrowing, E-ZBorrow). New York depends heavily on the support of many student workers, the equivalent of about 2 FTE, for retrieving books from the stacks, scanning and shipping. Thus work on delivery services in New York requires approximately 3.75 FTE.

## Practical Concerns: Shipping and Time Zones

Providing seamless services to users around the globe is challenging, especially for staff required to collaborate while maintaining asynchronous schedules. Although anticipated and planned for, shipping, time zone, and staffing concerns have proved to be dynamic issues that were not fully understood in advance and which continue to require adjustments.

Shipping materials is a major aspect of any delivery services operation. Shipment tests were conducted to track cost, speed, and compatibility of infrastructure at each portal campus. Materials leaving New York bound for Abu Dhabi are shipped via UPS because NYU contracts with UPS, has negotiated preferential rates, and has established pick up times. Materials shipped from Abu Dhabi to New York go by FedEx for similar reasons. Materials shipped to and from Shanghai are sent via DHL, which is widely accepted as the international carrier of choice in China. Round-trip shipping expenses are paid by the portal campuses.

An overhead Bookeye scanner was purchased to manage the anticipated increase of scanning requests. This was an upgrade over the equipment used previously for ILL scanning and software integration with ILLiad allowed for increased efficiency. Here again, while this equipment was purchased with portal campus users in mind, all users have benefited from improved turnaround times and our materials are treated more gently as well.

Shipping between New York, Abu Dhabi, and Shanghai is complicated by different time zones and academic calendars at each of the global sites. In the US and China the standard workweek is Monday through Friday, while in Abu Dhabi it is Sunday through Thursday. All three portal campuses follow different holiday calendars, which has an impact upon the academic calendar and vacation schedule. Some holidays, such as Chinese New Year, follow the lunar calendar and thus change from year to year. Time zones also affect shipping duration. Materials traveling east go against the clock and thus take an additional day to arrive. As a result, an item shipped from New York to Abu Dhabi takes two days to arrive even if it is sent overnight. Materials traveling west arrive more quickly, sometimes even appearing to arrive before they left! Both staff and students must keep track of materi-

als' destinations and use the appropriate shipping method. Fastidious coordination of schedules is necessary to ensure library users experience consistent turnaround times for requested materials. Initially, spreadsheets were kept to track shipping because there was concern that materials might go missing. The same spreadsheets are still maintained to establish benchmarks, estimate delivery time, track requested items in transit, and help trace claim returns. While this appears seamless to users, it requires great attention to detail necessitating excellent training and supervision.

Time zones greatly affect staff communication and coordination. At 9 a.m. eastern standard time when library staff are getting to work in New York (-5 UTC), Abu Dhabi library staff are leaving for the day (6 p.m. gulf standard time, +4 UTC), while in Shanghai they're heading to bed (10 p.m. china standard time, +9 UTC).<sup>7</sup> Work schedules were created to help facilitate communication. When the Delivery Services Supervisor in New York was hired in 2011, we created a Sunday through Thursday early morning work schedule so her workday would overlap with staff in Abu Dhabi.

The need for global collaboration is not only considered in the planning of staff work schedules, but also in identifying meeting times. Flexibility is paramount; colleagues often call into meetings from home. While in the planning stages for NYU Abu Dhabi, library staff in New York scheduled a weekly meeting to discuss the project, but initially the meeting did not include NYU Abu Dhabi Library staff. Realizing what now seems to be an obvious oversight, the meeting was rescheduled to allow NYU Abu Dhabi librarians to attend. With the addition of NYU Shanghai, the most popular meeting time, and only practical meeting time for all three locations is 9 a.m. in New York, 6 p.m. in Abu Dhabi, and 10 p.m. in Shanghai. Google Hangouts, campus phones, Skype, or combinations of the three are utilized for these meetings and work, for better or worse, at any given campus on any given day.

Although we have made strides improving our communication strategies in this global work environment, our different time zones can still delay solutions when problems arise. When an issue is encountered in Abu Dhabi or Shanghai, it often cannot be addressed in New York until staff arrive. When follow-up or troubleshooting is necessary, the resolution can be delayed by days. Providing visual supplementation using video screen capture programs, such as Jing, greatly facilitates identifying and resolving problematic issues.

While time zones, work schedules, and academic calendars have proved challenging in providing delivery services throughout the NYU global network, meeting the challenge has not only helped to develop strong relationships across global sites, but strengthened relationships in New York as well. Moving physical materials around the world both required and allowed for an expansion of our delivery services in New York and provided an opportunity to collaborate with new colleagues. In order to provide a seamless and reliable service, a strong communication strategy for training staff and tracking material was necessary; creating

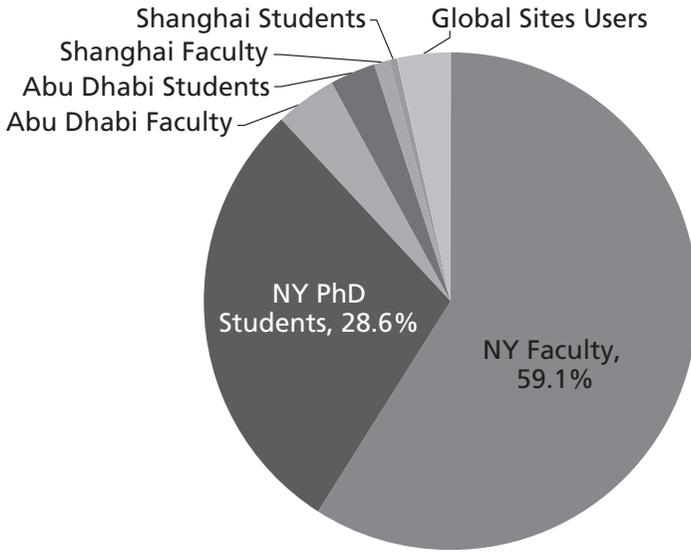
this required the support of staff members working together in New York and throughout the global network. The unanticipated outcome has been the valuable rapport we have built across the organization, ultimately allowing for further service development and improvement.

## The System in Action

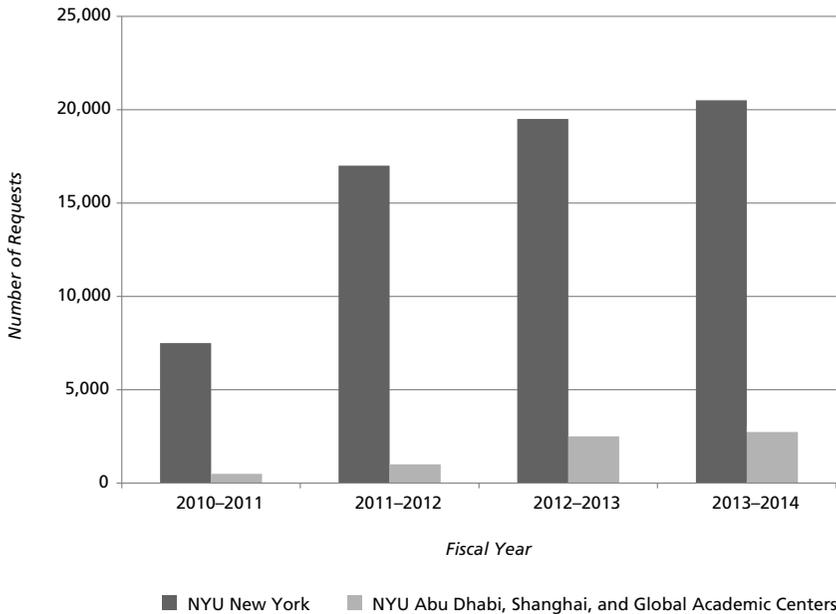
Global delivery services is now a well-established and well-regarded service at NYU. Currently NYU faculty, administrators, and doctoral students on all three campuses may request items from Bobst Library, Courant Institute of Mathematical Sciences, Avery Fisher Center for Music and Media, offsite storage, direct consortial lending program E-Z Borrow, and interlibrary loan to be delivered to one of eight locations: six in New York City, as well as Abu Dhabi and Shanghai. For patrons in Abu Dhabi and Shanghai, this privilege is extended to university staff, undergraduate students, and graduate students. Patrons studying at one of NYU's eleven global academic centers may request scans using the Libraries' ILL system, but paging services are limited to Graduate Research Institute Fellows, a program which supports faculty and graduate students conducting research outside the US. Patron permissions are updated nightly to ensure users have appropriate access to the full network of library resources. This is particularly important for undergraduates who only gain access to delivery services if they are studying at NYU Abu Dhabi or Shanghai. New York area library users may return items to all locations, both NYU and consortium. The libraries in Abu Dhabi and Shanghai, as well as global academic centers, handle the return and shipping of items back to Bobst Library on behalf of the patron. Patrons are not charged for shipping items nor are they limited to the number of requests they may place.

While the initial impetus for delivery services was to support users studying and working at Abu Dhabi and Shanghai, nearly 90 percent of requests originate from users on the New York campus. Faculty in all locations account for the majority of use (see Figure 2.1). However, student usage continues to rise as enrollment at global campuses increases and as students, particularly doctoral students, learn about the service. In the 2013-2014 academic year, usage by Abu Dhabi students increased by 33 percent and New York doctoral student usage likewise increased 33 percent. The number of requests has increased each year since the official launch in September 2011, however overall usage began to level off academic year 2013-2014, only increasing 4 percent from the prior year (see Figure 2.2). For the most recent academic year, 90 percent of requests were for the entire item rather than a scanned portion. Turnaround times for New York users requesting available items average one to two days, and for global users, four to seven days depending upon location. Generally, delivery to Abu Dhabi takes three to five days and Shanghai takes seven days. Requests for chapter or article scans are typically delivered within 24 hours, six days per week.

**Figure 2.1.** Scanning and Paging Requests by User Type, 2013–2014



**Figure 2.2.** Requests by Delivery Location: 2010–2014



## Circulation Policies and Practices in a Global Context

Global delivery services have resulted in several beneficial changes to long-standing circulation policies and practices, particularly fines and recalls. In 2008, prior to implementation of global delivery services, NYU Libraries ended daily overdue fines for general collection materials. This policy change was enacted in response to changing user expectations in the era of Netflix.<sup>8</sup> However, it was also quite prescient for supporting global delivery services, in which context charging daily overdue fines are cumbersome, particularly given differences in currencies. Additionally, Aleph does not have functionality for self-service payment of fines and fees so users are required to either call or pay fines in person, an untenable model for global users. For all users, the Libraries charge replacement fees for lost materials and overdue fines for short-term loans, interlibrary loan, or overdue recalled materials.

Similarly, the Libraries' practice of allowing users to recall items from one another, thereby shortening the loan period, is proving impractical for materials delivered to global locations given the time and expense involved in shipping materials between locations. Library staff regularly cancel recall requests on materials delivered overseas, referring users to our interlibrary loan service. The Libraries plan to eliminate the ability of all NYU patrons to place recalls in the near future, a change motivated by the particularities of our global campuses and NYU's joining E-ZBorrow, a direct-consortial borrowing service, in 2014.

## Conclusion

After six years, global delivery services at New York University continues to grow at a steady pace. During that time the university has added two international campuses, neither of which have yet reached full capacity. However, request volume has already begun to stabilize as the majority of requests come from New York-based users and that population has not changed drastically. For nearly all users the experience is seamless, as President Sexton challenged university administration to provide. This is the major strength of NYU Libraries' strategy.

Due to the significant difference in number of both staff and users, user expectations and library practice in Abu Dhabi and Shanghai will remain significantly different from New York. At both portal campuses delivery will always be a high-profile service. The availability, via delivery services, of library resources for research is a major attraction, particularly for faculty considering NYU Abu Dhabi or NYU Shanghai. While delivery services are a popular benefit for faculty and doctoral students in New York, they are widely viewed as essential services at the portal campuses. Therefore, service disruptions cause a great deal of distress for both the user and library staff at global campuses.

When the service opened, in both Abu Dhabi and Shanghai, a small number of faculty members could not request materials. This was a crisis since they represented a significant portion of the users at the portal campuses and were personally known to library staff. Since delivery services are essential for global faculty and students, service performance must be as routine as possible, especially delivery times. If library staff cannot meet service expectations, clear communication with the user and library staff at the receiving location is essential to prevent distrust in the service and anxiety about the library. In New York, errors or service gaps are less likely to cause widespread alarm among users or staff. Most of the staff responsible for maintaining systems are located in New York so problems can be resolved in real-time and, of course, New York users have the option of retrieving materials themselves or visiting several other local libraries. In Abu Dhabi and Shanghai the on-campus library is, for all intents and purposes, the only library available.

Even though the system is robust and easy for users, from the backend it depends on many systems, which need periodic upgrades. It is also dependent on staff expertise. Staffing changes are inevitable and are particularly challenging in this context. For true integration, staff must be globally minded and move around campuses; faculty and students are not the only ones who circulate throughout the global network university. NYU Libraries staff around the globe continue to collaborate in developing and troubleshooting services around the needs of this dynamic user population. The goal of seamless user experience requires sustained and significant staff time and effort.

Due to the success of delivery services, user expectations are high. Users may experience delays that have no readily apparent reason. When hurricane Sandy hit New York City in 2012, Bobst Library was closed for days. Users in Abu Dhabi may not have realized why their requests were not being fulfilled as usual because the weather in Abu Dhabi was unremarkable. Users are often unaware of holidays at other locations and so do not account for processing and shipping delays when they request materials.

Just as the previous six years have brought significant change to NYU Libraries, so will the future. For now, delivery services are New York-centered with materials going from New York to the portal campuses and then returning. Going forward, NYU Libraries may modify the delivery model to allow for reciprocity from and between portal campuses. Floating collections—where items do not necessarily have an assigned “home” library—are another possibility, although not one to be entered into lightly and one that brings considerations well outside the scope of delivery services. Our current model would allow us to easily and quickly expand the service to other groups of users based in New York, e.g. graduate students. However, the staffing required for servicing a larger user base is a significant concern.

Libraries considering implementing or expanding delivery services should carefully consider their institutional capacity—both within the library and in cooperation with other administrative units—and the context in which they operate. For NYU Libraries the demands on library staff, while significant, more than justify the benefits offered to end-users.

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## Biographies

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