



March 30, 1976

Ministry of Education, for Ontario,
Queen's Park,
TORONTO, Ontario.

Dear Sir:

Subject: The Rising Cost of Interlibrary Borrowing

During the past few months, we observed with considerable apprehension, the tendency of large libraries to charge exorbitant prices for interlibrary borrowing.

The resources of rich libraries were collected over many decades at the expense of the public purse. Now that these libraries are capable of satisfying the needs of their users, little consideration is given to the plight of younger and smaller libraries who must also cope with inflation, lower budgets and rising operating costs.

If the practice of charging \$8.00 for a loan is allowed to spread across the land - as it may well do - many Canadians will be seriously hampered in their research or educational efforts. Large libraries constitute a national resource and as such have a national responsibility. To impede the dissemination of information by the imposition of enormously high fees is an abrogation of the librarian's role as dispensator of knowledge.

Some of us still remember the time when the National Library of Medicine provided the world with free copies of scientific papers. Have we reached the stage in our development where only the very rich can afford to indulge in the pursuit of knowledge?

We are aware of the efforts made to obtain special grants from government agencies, such as the Canada Council, to help alleviate the costs of interlibrary loan services. Since the Federal Government is already subsidizing the Ministries of Education in each of the provinces, what is needed is a more rational distribution of available funds within each institution, a distribution based on priorities. Some will say that it is unfair for large libraries to carry most of the burden. Let it be known that these large institutions received most of the money and consequently have an obligation to share their wealth with the less fortunate.

We were asked, sometime ago, to join in a cooperative acquisition program as a means of counteracting the debilitating effects of inflation. Such a policy would not serve the interests of weak libraries but strengthen the dominating position of rich libraries who can determine, at their leisure, the value of their services.

Universities and governmental organizations in Ontario and Quebec contribute an appreciable sum of money to support IUTS/QUILL. The reason for setting-up IUTS/QUILL was to facilitate and accelerate the flow of information between libraries for the benefit of all users. The imposition of high ILL charges effectively places barriers to the transfer of information; it is contrary to the philosophy which initially inspired the creation of IUTS and QUILL services.

Since Universities and governments are autonomous bodies, we do not know how the situation can be corrected. Nevertheless, we strongly believe that there is an urgent need to stop the spread of a practice which is detrimental to the health and education of Canadians.

Yours respectfully,

Maurice Alarie,
Esther James Ingle

for

Committee of Health Sciences Librarians
OTTAWA/HULL Group