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Abstract

The British Library Lending Division came into being in 1973 when the National Central Library was integrated with the stock and services of the National Lending Library for Science and Technology at Boston Spa. The original buildings have been added to by specially designed accommodation. The loan/photocopy service, based on the use of a pre-paid three-part request form, has been supplemented by computer requesting, links through database operators such as DIALOG, and the telephone for urgent requests. Road/rail transport links with many parts of the country have been introduced and now account for over half of all items dispatched. A rapid growth in demand in the first seven years was followed by a decline and then a levelling off in 1982/83. The proportion of demand accounted for by International Services increased from 9% in 1973/74 to 21% in 1982/83. The Division has developed close connections with IFLA and the European Communities. As a result of a British Library Ad hoc Working Party on Union Catalogues, which reported in 1982, the Division's stock records and union catalogues are being automated. The British Union Catalogue of Periodicals ceased to be issued and its bibliographic function was replaced by Serials in the British Library, issued by the Bibliographic Services Division from 1981. Certain libraries with large or important stocks were designated to serve as backup collections; from 1979 more requests went to backups than were provided with locations. The British Library Reference Division has not only supplied photocopies as a backup but begun to lend items held in the Department of Oriental Manuscripts and Printed Books and the Science Reference Library. Close relations have been maintained with users and with relevant organizations. The acquisitions policy established in 1973 has changed little, though music scores were added in 1974, and rationalization of resources with Reference Division has resulted in a small drop in the number of serials acquired. The British National Book Centre activities of the NCL were merged with the donations activities of the NLLST to form the Gift and Exchange Section. Until 1982 the service was free but economies on staff and resources led to a restricted and priced service. Courses in the use of the scientific literature were extended to other subjects but had to be terminated as an economy measure in 1980. For similar reasons the ad hoc translating service was discontinued at the end of 1981. The cover-to-cover translations of (mainly Russian) scientific and technical journals sponsored by the NLLST have continued as part of the Division's extensive publication programme, which now recovers all its costs. Cost recovery increased from a quarter to a half of all expenditure over the period. The Division has kept up with relevant developments in automation and electronic publishing.

Citation


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The British Library is the largest public library in Britain. It consists of the Reference Division, the Bibliographic Service Division, the National Sound Archive and the Research and Development Department in London, and the Lending Division in Yorkshire. The Reference Division has its origins in the library departments of the British Museum founded in 1753. It is housed within the same 19th century building of the British Museum, with more than 9 million books stored along two miles (three km) of shelving, and includes a Gutenberg Bible, the Magna Carta, medieval illuminated manuscripts and