



## Interlending and Document Supply Services at Qatar National Library: A Focus on Multicultural Patron Engagement and Enhancement

**Rowena O. Aquino**

Access Services Department, Qatar National Library, Doha, Qatar.

E-mail address: [raquino@qnl.qa](mailto:raquino@qnl.qa)

**Aquino, R. O.** (2024, December 2). *Interlending and document supply services at Qatar National Library: A focus on multicultural patron engagement and enhancement* [Conference paper]. 18th IFLA ILDS Conference: Global to Local – Diversity and Inclusiveness in Resource Sharing, Baku, Azerbaijan. ADA University.

<https://doi.org/10.60119/YRYL9278>



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### Abstract:

*Furthermore, it examines the diversity of collections accessible through ILDS highlighting the prevalence of requests of materials pertaining to culture, history, and ethnic studies. Data indicates a portion of requested articles and titles falling within this thematic domain, emphasizing its importance to patrons.*

*This paper also evaluates the current status of cultural and ethnic studies within the ILDS framework and proposes strategies for enhancement. Recommendations include targeted acquisitions, fostering partnerships with institutions specializing in these areas, and advocating for the inclusion of diverse perspectives in collection development policies. Ultimately, the paper underscores the significance of cultural and ethnic studies within ILDS Services at QNL and offers actionable insights for future improvements and advocacy efforts.*

**Keywords:** Resource sharing; Inclusivity; Diversity; Accessibility, Collaboration.

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## Introduction

Qatar National library continues its goal as a global hub for culture and education to significantly contribute in shaping the intellectual and cultural landscape of the nation. In this context, observing inclusivity and diversity in library resource sharing and upholding the principles of intellectual freedom are imperative. As a central repository of knowledge and cultural heritage, it has the responsibility to reflect and serve the diverse demographics of its community. Inclusivity in resource sharing ensures that materials representing a wide array of perspectives, cultures, and experiences are accessible to all patrons, fostering a more comprehensive and equitable educational environment.

Moreover, the practice of intellectual freedom is crucial in maintaining an open society where individuals can freely explore and exchange ideas. For the Qatar National Library, embracing diversity and inclusivity not only aligns with global best practices but also supports the library's mission to be a beacon of knowledge and cultural exchange. This approach enhances the library's role as a facilitator of intellectual growth and societal progress, ensuring that it remains a vital resource for fostering understanding, respect, and innovation across Qatar's diverse population.

### On the Importance of Inclusivity and Diversity in Library Resource Sharing

Observing inclusivity and diversity in library resource sharing and the practice of intellectual freedom is essential for multiple reasons. First and foremost, libraries strive to provide equitable access to information and resources for everyone, irrespective of their background, identity, or socioeconomic status. By prioritizing inclusivity, libraries ensure that all community members have equal opportunities to access the materials they need for learning, personal growth, and active participation in society<sup>1</sup>. Additionally, offering diverse resources and perspectives is crucial for representing the varied experiences and viewpoints within a community. This representation is necessary for fostering a well-rounded understanding of the world, allowing marginalized or underrepresented groups to see themselves in the materials available. Exposure to a wide range of ideas enriches the educational experience, encouraging critical thinking and helping individuals develop a more nuanced understanding of complex issues, which is vital for personal growth and informed citizenship<sup>1</sup>.

Intellectual freedom is another key aspect, as it is foundational to democratic societies and integral to the mission of libraries<sup>2</sup>. By promoting inclusivity and diversity, libraries uphold individuals' rights to seek and access information from a multitude of

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<sup>1</sup> Morgan-Daniel, J., Hough, C., Tennant, M. R., Edwards, M. E., Adkins, L. E., & Rethlefsen, M. L. (2022). Developing a Culture of Inclusivity through a Library Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Team. Part 1: Team Formation. *Medical Reference Services Quarterly*, 41(1), 1–12. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02763869.2021.2020565>

<sup>2</sup> Schlak, T., & Macklin, A. S. (2024). A Transformative Agreement Community of Practice: Collaboratively-Produced Insights into the Current Open Access Environment. *New Review of Academic Librarianship*, 1–29. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13614533.2024.2381527>

perspectives, including those that may challenge conventional views or provoke debate. Furthermore, libraries act as community hubs, bringing together individuals from various backgrounds. Embracing diversity fosters an inclusive environment that nurtures mutual understanding and respect among different groups. Libraries also play a significant role in addressing systemic biases; by actively promoting diversity and inclusivity, they can help combat historical and ongoing inequities in access to information and representation.

Finally, libraries must remain responsive to the evolving needs of their communities<sup>3</sup>. Emphasizing inclusivity and diversity ensures that libraries stay relevant and attentive to the diverse interests and needs of their patrons. In summary, inclusivity and diversity in library resource sharing and intellectual freedom practices are vital for creating an equitable, informed, and engaged society, allowing libraries to serve as accessible and supportive spaces for all.

### **Involvement of Qatar National Library in promoting Inclusivity and Diversity**

The Qatar National Library (QNL) operates as a non-profit organization under the Qatar Foundation for Education, Science and Community Development. The announcement for the new national library was made by Her Highness Sheikha Moza bint Nasser, the Chairperson of Qatar Foundation. QNL is designed to fulfill three main roles: as a national library, a research-level university library, and a modern central public library suited for the digital era. As a national library, it collects and makes accessible global knowledge, including heritage materials relevant to Qatar and its region, in accordance with UNESCO guidelines. In its role as a university and research library, it supports education and research across all levels. Additionally, as a contemporary public library, it offers services and resources aimed at addressing the reading interests of the community and promoting information literacy among the general public.

#### ***Library Collection and Services***

Any Qatari citizen or resident permit holder can register for free at the Qatar National Library (QNL), reflecting its commitment to inclusivity and accessibility. The library's website provides registered users with free online access to a wide array of resources, including international scholarly databases, esteemed academic journals, popular literature, magazines, children's materials, and music, ensuring that diverse interests and needs are met. QNL offers an extensive selection of books and e-books in multiple languages, including English and Arabic, encompassing fiction and non-fiction, bestsellers, classics, magazines, DVDs, CDs, and audiobooks. As of 2023, the library

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<sup>3</sup> Schlak, T., & Macklin, A. S. (2024). A Transformative Agreement Community of Practice: Collaboratively-Produced Insights into the Current Open Access Environment. *New Review of Academic Librarianship*, 1–29. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13614533.2024.2381527>

had amassed over 1.2 million physical books in 16 languages, 224 databases and more than 700,000 digital resources, periodicals, and special collections, demonstrating its dedication to diverse content. Aligned with its mission to prepare Qatar's residents for active engagement in the global knowledge economy, QNL has

developed a range of educational programs focused on information literacy, early literacy, research skills, and digital resource utilization. Its inclusive programming features book clubs, language-learning classes, musical events, and craft workshops, as well as family-oriented activities such as storytelling, crafts, and science exhibits, fostering a vibrant community that values diversity and shared learning experiences.

### ***Heritage Library***

In addition to its diverse general-interest and academic collections, QNL significantly contributes to cultural and heritage appreciation through its Heritage Library. This specialized collection, which includes rare books, manuscripts, and various materials related to Arab-Islamic civilization, was established by His Excellency Sheikh Hassan bin Mohamed bin Ali Al Thani in 1979 and became part of QNL in 2012. By housing these invaluable resources, QNL serves as a guardian of cultural heritage, ensuring that future generations can access and appreciate the rich history of the Arab world.

The Heritage Library boasts an extensive array of historical resources that illuminate the culture and history of Qatar and the surrounding region. It features writings from travelers and explorers who documented their experiences in the Persian Gulf, providing unique insights into the region's past. The collection includes Arabic manuscripts, historical maps and globes, scientific instruments, and early photographs, all of which contribute to a comprehensive understanding of the cultural heritage. Among its notable treasures are approximately 2,400 valuable manuscripts, which include 'Mushafs' (Holy Qur'an) and scholarly works in sciences such as geography, astronomy, and mathematics. The inclusion of printed materials from the early days of European printing, like Latin translations of significant texts such as Avicenna's *Canon of Medicine*, further emphasizes the library's role in connecting cultural heritage across time and geography.

To improve accessibility to these important cultural artifacts, QNL has undertaken the digitization of maps and manuscripts from the Heritage Collection. This initiative allows registered users to explore these resources via the library's online catalog, breaking down barriers to access and encouraging a wider appreciation of the region's heritage. Moreover, select items of international significance have been made freely available through the World Digital Library (WDL), which QNL actively supports, promoting global engagement with Arab-Islamic culture.

In recognition of its unwavering commitment to preserving cultural heritage, QNL was designated as the Preservation and Conservation Centre (PAC) for the MENA region by the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions in August 2015. This honor places QNL among a network of 13 other global PACs, highlighting its role not only in safeguarding local heritage but also in fostering international collaboration and awareness around cultural preservation efforts. Through these initiatives, QNL stands as a pivotal institution in the appreciation and celebration of Qatar's rich cultural legacy.

### ***Qatar Digital Library***

The Qatar Digital Library (QDL) represents a significant collaboration between Qatar Foundation, Qatar National Library, and the British Library, launched in 2012. This partnership is dedicated to digitizing a wealth of heritage materials that document Arab and Islamic history, with the goal of making these resources freely accessible to the public. The QDL went live on October 2014, providing a bilingual interface in both English and Arabic, which is crucial for promoting inclusivity and catering to diverse audiences. By offering access to more than 15 million digitized pages of historical documents related to the Persian Gulf region, the QDL plays a vital role in celebrating and preserving cultural heritage. These documents, which span from the mid-18th century to the 1950s, include materials from the India Office Records and Private Papers, along with archives from the East India Company. Notably, the collection features around 25,000 pages of medieval Arabic scientific manuscripts, showcasing the rich intellectual contributions of the Arab world.

The initiative not only provides access to a diverse range of historical materials but also actively promotes inclusivity by ensuring that these resources are available to a global audience. The bilingual interface allows users from different linguistic backgrounds to engage with the content, fostering a deeper understanding and appreciation of Arab and Islamic history. QDL has an ongoing commitment in expanding the digital archive and assume its role in enhancing access to diverse historical narratives and supporting the cultural and educational needs of the community. Through these efforts, QDL stands as a beacon of diversity and inclusivity in the realm of cultural heritage, ensuring that a broad spectrum of voices and perspectives is represented and accessible to all.

### **Interlibrary Loan and Document Supply Service of the Qatar National Library**

Resource sharing plays a crucial role in meeting the study and research needs of members of the Qatar National Library. The Interlending and Document Supply (ILDS) service is designed to enhance access to a broader range of resources by exploring various alternative sources. This includes obtaining full-text materials, utilizing commercial document delivery services, and leveraging current digital platforms to ensure that members can find the information they require.

Through the ILDS, the library is able to request materials from partner libraries and institutions around the globe, effectively expanding the resources available to its members. This service ensures that when specific articles or books are not available through the library's existing electronic resources or catalog, members can still access them via partner libraries. This resource-sharing approach not only enriches the library's offerings but also promotes inclusivity by ensuring that all members, regardless of their individual research needs, can access a wide variety of materials. The ILDS service is structured to adhere to Qatar Copyright Law and aligns with the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA) guidelines on resource sharing and document delivery. By following these standards, the library emphasizes its commitment to ethical practices while promoting diversity in the types of resources available.

Ultimately, the ILDS enhances the library's role as a hub for knowledge and information, facilitating a more inclusive environment where diverse perspectives and research interests can flourish. By broadening access to a wide range of scholarly

materials, QNL fosters an inclusive community that values diversity in research and learning, empowering all members to engage deeply with their areas of interest.

### **Resource sharing impacts diversity and inclusivity**

By sharing resources, libraries can provide access to a broad range of materials that reflect diverse cultures, viewpoints, and experiences<sup>4</sup>. This helps ensure that all patrons, regardless of their background, can access information that is relevant and representative of different perspectives, promoting a more inclusive environment. Resource sharing helps libraries overcome limitations in their own collections by allowing them to borrow materials from other institutions. This practice can fill gaps in resources related to underrepresented or marginalized groups, making it easier for libraries to offer a more comprehensive and diverse selection of materials. When libraries engage in resource sharing, they can offer their users access to specialized or unique materials that they might not otherwise have. This enhances educational opportunities and supports a more inclusive learning environment where diverse topics and voices are represented. Moreover, resource sharing encourages collaboration between libraries and institutions from various regions and backgrounds<sup>5</sup>. This fosters a sense of community and mutual support, helping to promote inclusivity and understanding among different groups. Libraries can better meet the needs of multicultural communities through resource sharing. By accessing and providing materials in various languages or on different cultural practices, libraries can better serve diverse populations and support their cultural and educational needs.

Qatar National Library is committed to promoting inclusivity and diversity through a multifaceted approach to ILDS services. By first understanding the diverse backgrounds and needs of its patrons, the library engages in data collection methods such as surveys and focus groups. This allows the library to identify specific cultural preferences and interests, ensuring that ILDS services are tailored to meet the varied expectations of its community. Utilizing demographic data and feedback from patrons, the library enhances its collection and service offerings, fostering a more inclusive environment.

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<sup>4</sup> Morgan-Daniel, J., Hough, C., Tennant, M. R., Edwards, M. E., Adkins, L. E., & Rethlefsen, M. L. (2022). Developing a Culture of Inclusivity through a Library Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Team. Part 2: Team Activities. *Medical Reference Services Quarterly*, 41(2), 127–137. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02763869.2022.2054178>

<sup>5</sup> Maestro, R. S., Ramos-Eclevia, M., Eclevia, C. L., & Fredeluces, J. C. L. T. (2018). Teaching Diversity, Becoming Inclusive: Perspectives and Possibilities in ASEAN Library and Information Science Schools. *Journal of the Australian Library and Information Association*, 67(2), 96–115. <https://doi.org/10.1080/24750158.2018.1467142>

Effective communication is another cornerstone of the library's commitment to diversity<sup>6</sup>. Qatar National Library prioritizes clear and respectful communication, employing accessible language and providing translations when necessary. By using a variety of communication channels—such as social media, newsletters, and community events—the library ensures that all patrons are informed about ILDS services. This not only helps patrons from diverse cultures to navigate library resources more easily but also strengthens connections with other libraries through respectful collaboration and adherence to shared best practices.

Collaboration and networking play a crucial role in enhancing ILDS services for diverse populations<sup>7</sup>. The library actively participates in professional associations focused on diversity and inclusion, attending workshops and conferences to share knowledge and resources with fellow librarians. By building partnerships with organizations that serve multicultural communities, the library expands its reach and enhances its ability to meet the needs of its diverse patrons. This collaborative spirit enriches the library's offerings and supports a more equitable access to information.

Regular evaluation and improvement of ILDS services are integral to Qatar National Library's mission of inclusivity. By analyzing data related to ILDS requests and patron satisfaction, the library identifies areas for enhancement. Feedback from patrons and staff is gathered through various means, allowing the library to continuously refine its services. This ongoing assessment not only highlights strengths and weaknesses but also ensures that the library remains responsive to the evolving needs of its diverse community.

Education and advocacy are key elements in promoting the value of ILDS services. Qatar National Library actively raises awareness about the importance of these services through various outreach initiatives, including newsletters and social media campaigns. By demonstrating the benefits of ILDS—such as increased access to multicultural resources and support for personal and academic growth—the library advocates for the necessary resources to sustain and expand these vital services. This proactive approach ensures that ILDS remains a cornerstone of the library's commitment to diversity.

Finally, celebrating the diversity inherent in its ILDS services is a priority for Qatar National Library. The library acknowledges the contributions of patrons, staff, and

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<sup>6</sup>White, K. L., & Gilliland, A. J. (2010). Promoting reflexivity and inclusivity in archival education, research, and practice. *The Library Quarterly*, 80(3), 231–248. <https://doi.org/10.1086/652874>

<sup>7</sup>Espinosa de los Monteros, P., & Longmeier, M. M. (2022). Developing Globally Inclusive Practices for Library Instruction Sessions. *New Review of Academic Librarianship*, 29(2), 152–173. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13614533.2022.2095289> Information Science Schools. *Journal of the Australian Library and Information Association*, 67(2), 96–115. <https://doi.org/10.1080/24750158.2018.1467142>

partners through various appreciation initiatives, fostering a culture that values multiculturalism. By sharing stories and experiences from its diverse community through newsletters and events, the library creates a vibrant narrative that highlights the richness of its services. This celebratory approach not only honors diversity but also strengthens community ties and promotes a sense of belonging among all patrons.

### **Strategies for Advancing Inclusivity and Diversity at Qatar National Library**

Qatar National Library is dedicated to enhancing its resource-sharing services and facilities to address the evolving needs of its diverse community. A key focus is on demonstrating inclusivity and diversity within interlibrary loans, which involves not only the variety of resources available but also ensuring access for a wide range of patrons.

By developing a diverse collection that includes various subjects, languages, and cultural perspectives, the library collaborates with institutions that specialize in these areas. This approach enriches the interlibrary loan offerings with materials that represent minority authors and different cultural experiences.

Cultural sensitivity is another crucial aspect of promoting inclusivity<sup>8</sup>. Library staff receive training to understand and respect the cultural nuances of the materials requested through interlibrary loans. This training emphasizes the importance of handling potentially sensitive topics with care and competence. Furthermore, the library ensures that diverse materials are available in accessible formats—such as audio, Braille, large print, and digital formats—so that patrons with disabilities can equally benefit from these resources.

To further enhance inclusivity, Qatar National Library actively promotes its interlibrary loan services to underrepresented communities, encouraging them to engage with available resources. Establishing partnerships with organizations that serve diverse populations allow for a richer selection of materials. The library also provides language support services for patrons who require resources in languages other than the primary language offered. Regular feedback from patrons is essential for ongoing assessment and improvement of the library's services, ensuring that policies explicitly support diversity and inclusiveness. Training sessions for staff on cultural competence and accessibility will help cultivate a deeper understanding of how to serve a diverse community effectively. Through these initiatives, the library affirms its commitment to providing a broad and varied range of resources that reflect diverse perspectives and experiences.

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<sup>8</sup> Adetayo, A. J., Odunewu, A. O., Oyeniyi, W. O., & Otuyalo, M. A. (2023). Fostering comfort and inclusivity in library environments: Exploring factors influencing the avoidance of reading within the library. *Journal of Access Services*, 20(3–4), 99–119. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15367967.2023.2291204>

### **Acknowledgments**

The author would like to express her unfeigned gratitude to Katia Medawar, Director of Research and Learning of the Qatar National Library for providing invaluable resources and support that greatly enriched this paper.

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