InstantILL: A Collaboration Between IUPUI University Library and The Open Access Button

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Throughout 2019, several staff at IUPUI University Library have been collaborating with developers at the Open Access Button to build InstantILL, a tool to integrate library link resolvers, open access searches, and interlibrary loan article requesting in a simplified user interface. Associate Dean Tina Baich, User Experience/Project Management Librarian Gary Maixner, and Resource Sharing Librarian Mike Paxton, with Joe McArthur from the Open Access Button, presented a paper on InstantILL and the development process at the 2019 IFLA Interlending and Document Supply Conference in October, and during Open Access Week 2019 InstantILL was made available to libraries worldwide.

Figure 3: The embedded search box on a University Library test page

1 https://openaccessbutton.org/
2 https://ilds2019.org/
The team believed that a key part of helping library patrons to obtain research materials ethically (rather than by pirating articles, or giving up when obstacles appear) is improving the user experience for known-item searching and delivery. InstantILL integrates searching library holdings, searching open access materials, and submitting interlibrary loan requests into a single action, and can be embedded into a library webpage or integrated with existing interlibrary loan request forms.

Users can search for a known article by entering the title, full citation, DOI, PMID, or even the URL of its page on the publisher’s website. InstantILL checks the library link resolver and several Open Access repositories and metadata sources (such as Crossref, Europe PMC, Unpaywall Data, and DOAJ), and determines whether a copy of the article is available to the patron. If the article is found to be available through library electronic resources or Open Access sources, a link to the article is provided. If no copy is found to be available, InstantILL provides a link to submit a request to the library interlibrary loan system. Libraries can also choose to provide the ILL link on all result pages, in case a pre-print OA version does not meet the user needs or there is an error with link resolver access.

Because all of InstantILL’s searching is done without logging in and the interlibrary loan request is generated through OpenURL, no patron information is sent to the Open Access Button servers. This means that InstantILL can improve access without compromising patron privacy. Though InstantILL is linking several tools from various vendors, the setup process is simple and straight-forward. The process guides library staff through configuration and customization, with a test/preview to show the effects of various options. In the end, it is expected that setup should take less than 30 minutes, regardless of the staff’s level of technical proficiency.

InstantILL was built through an iterative design process, including several rounds of user testing for the search and results screens. An early version was put onto the University Library Interlibrary Loan page in April 2019, with a notice about testing a new article request form. This let the team get feedback and error reports from users while features such as link resolver integration were still being finished.

Once development was largely complete, shortly before the fall semester, the form was integrated into UL’s interlibrary loan request forms (ILLiad webpages) and branded as a “Simple Article Request Form.” This search/request form has been seeing steady use. Because of the patron privacy protections with information sent to Open Access Button and the lack of interlibrary loan requests for articles that are found to be available, a specific and accurate number of form uses is not available; however, the team believes it to be comparable to requests submitted through the older form (which is still available, now branded as “Advanced Article Request Form”).

Response to InstantILL from the library community has been overwhelmingly positive. Prior to the public beta launch in October, over 200 libraries had joined a waiting list for more information about when it would be available.

The paper “Engineering a Powerfully Simple Interlibrary Loan Experience with InstantILL” is freely available in the Czech National Library of Technology repository under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives license, and at IFLA ILDS 2019 the paper was recognized as first runner-up for Best Paper. More information about InstantILL and access to the beta is available at https://instantill.org/

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3 http://repozitar.techlib.cz/record/1373