

ILL at the University of Liège: From Fee to Free

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Since summer 2022, the interlibrary loan service has become free for the ULiège community. The poster describes the different steps that led to a free ILL service.

- 1) In 2018, the Library Board requested to carry out a feasibility study, in line with the promoted strategy where services are at the centre ('Library as a Service').
- 2) The study started in 2019 and was completed in 2022. The study paid particular attention to the internal context, the external context, the stakeholder analysis, and a SWOT analysis.
- 3) In March 2020, because of COVID-19, ILL service had become temporarily free of charge for the ULiège community. This was a great opportunity for a real two-year pilot phase. Thanks to the length of the pilot, solid statistics and usage data were obtained and the ILL operators had two years' experience in a free context.
- 4) Changes in our workflows such as RapidILL subscription, peer-to-peer resource sharing between Alma institutions and more automation in some tasks have reduced ILL charges.

Thanks to the feasibility study, the two-year pilot, changes in our workflows and reactions of users and ILL staff, it was recommended to the Library Board to maintain a free ILL service for the ULiège students, faculty, and staff members with some practical safeguards to prevent abuses and avoid uncontrolled costs.



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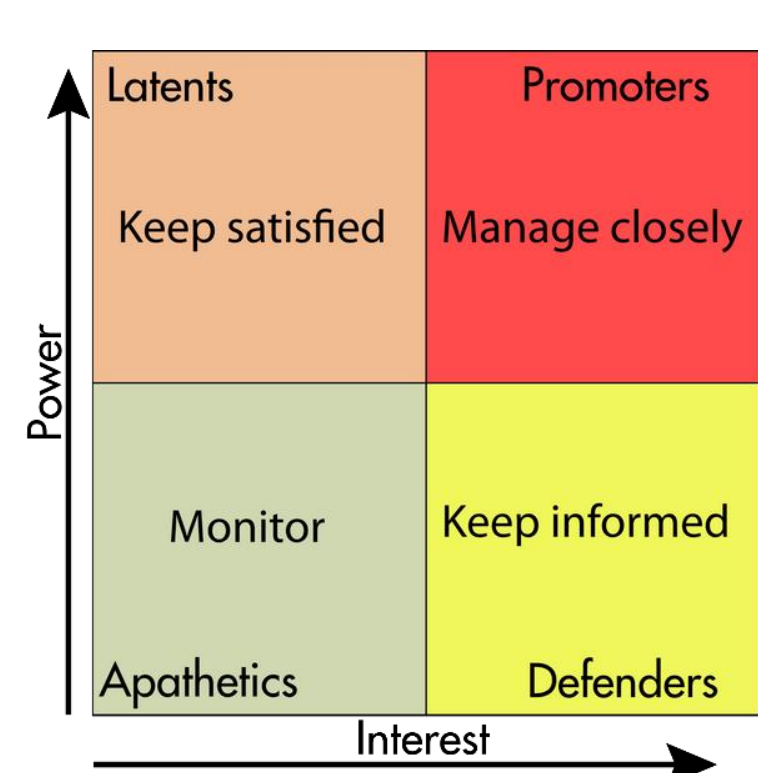
1) Feasibility Study (2018)

- Official mandate from the Library Board
- Mission letter was open
- Framework "Library as a Service"



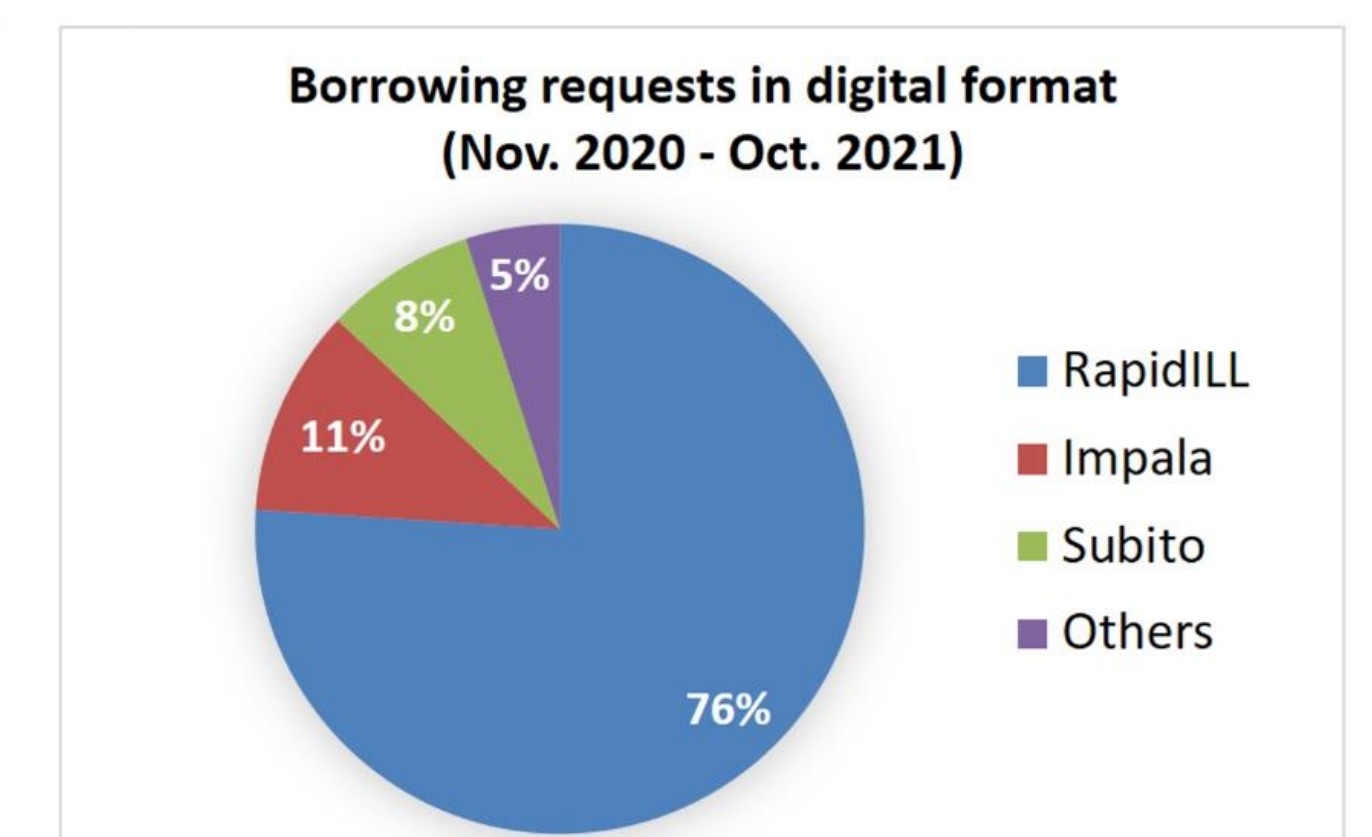
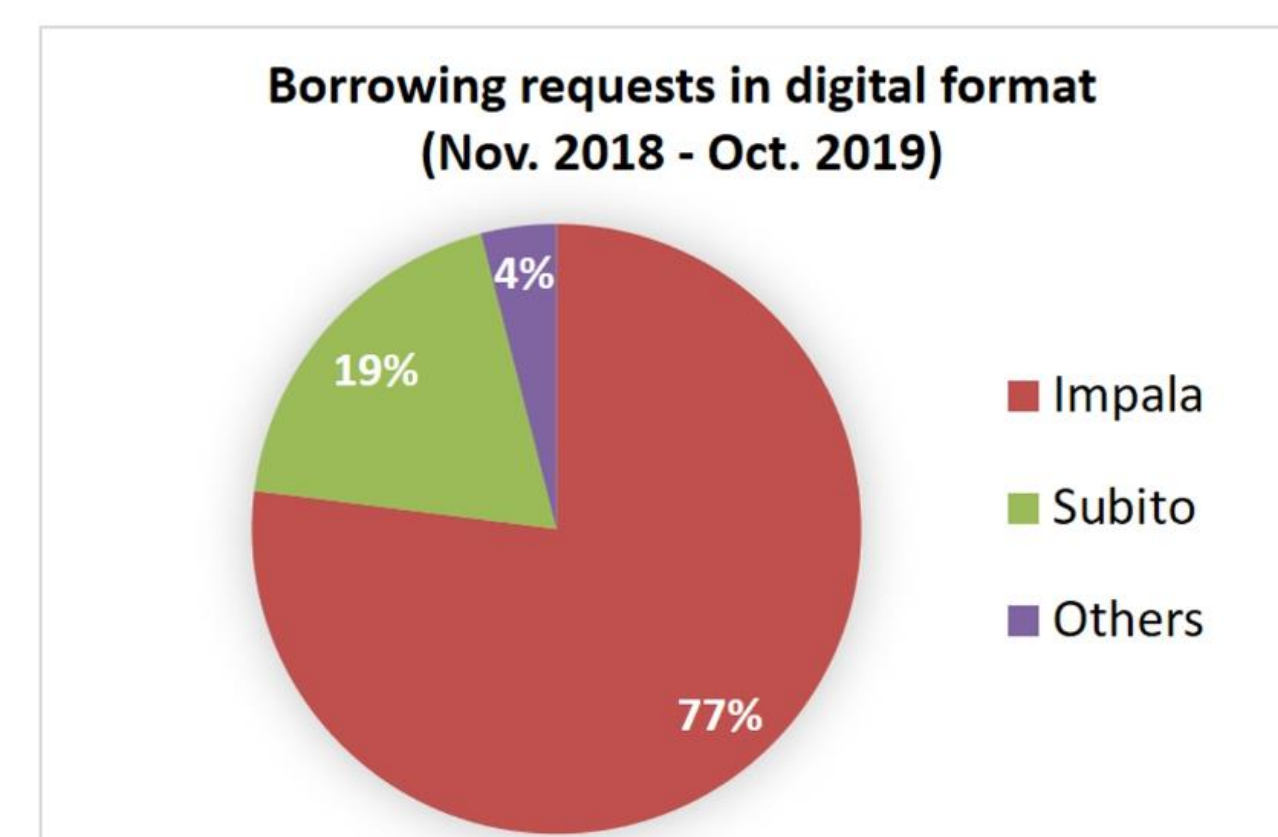
2) Realisation of the study (2019–2022)

- **Internal context:** current status, recent history and milestones, facts and figures
- **External context:** survey among Belgian academic libraries, literature review, impact of COVID-19, impact of RapidILL trial
- **Stakeholder analysis:** power-interest grid + interviews with 8 key stakeholders (ILL staff)
- **SWOT Analysis:** all internal and external factors summarized in a SWOT analysis (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats)



4) Changes in workflows (2020-2022)

- Subscription to **RapidILL** solution for ILL digital requests (articles and book chapters)
 - Main supplier for digital materials since November 2020
- **Alma P2P** for physical items with Belgian Alma partners
- More **automation** of some tasks
 - No action needed from ILL staff if a RapidILL partner can supply: students and researchers get the requested articles directly by email from Alma.

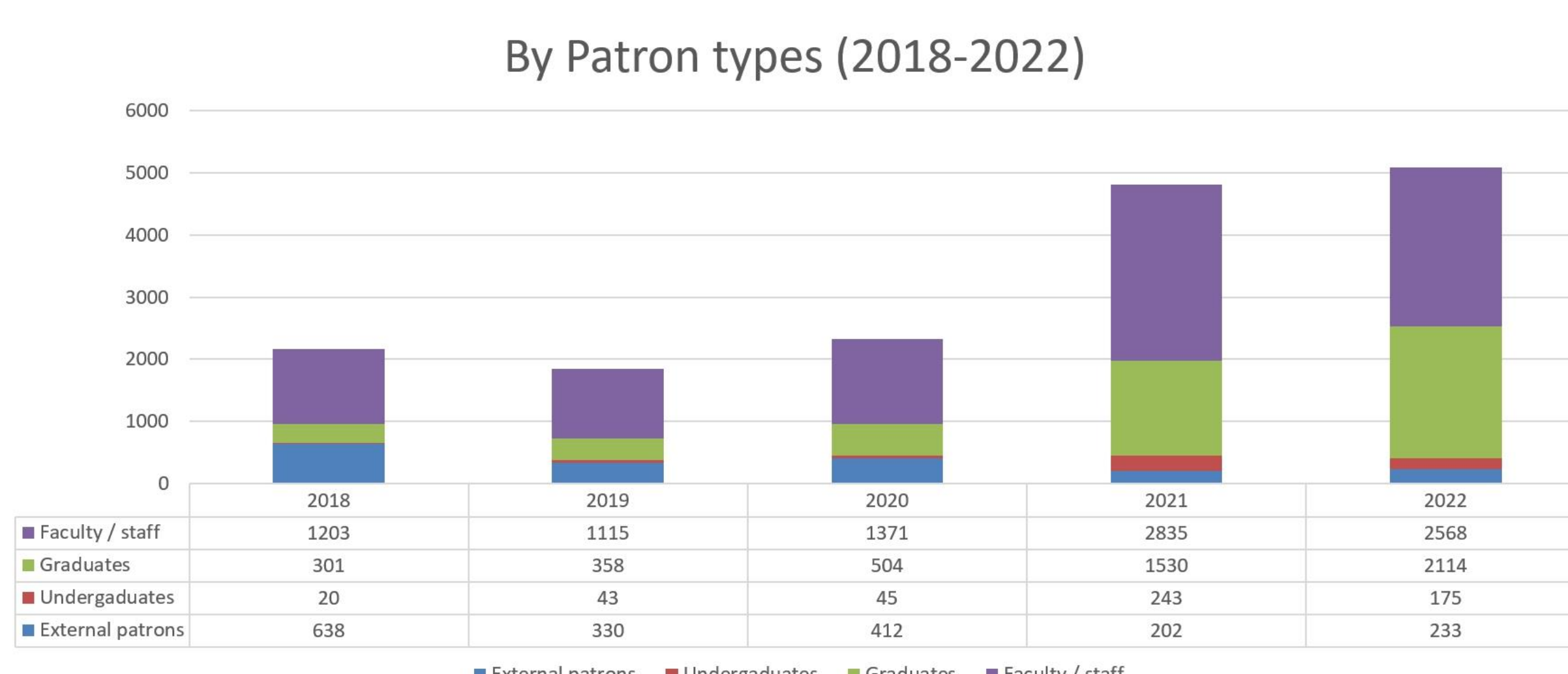
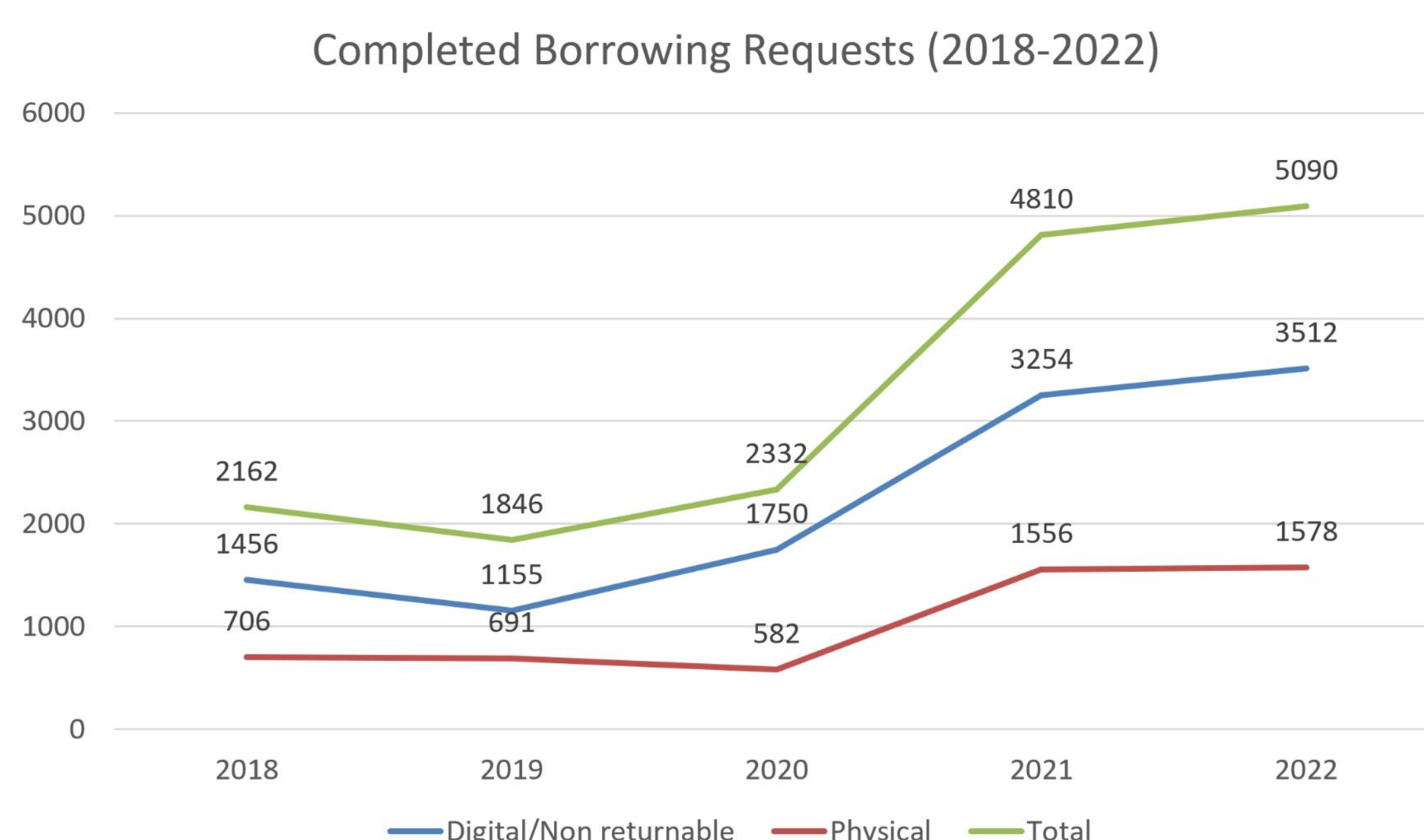


Main first reactions and observations

- **Satisfaction** of the users
- Request increase seem to meet a need
- **Time saving** for operators and secretaries in administrative tasks
 - No invoices anymore, no need to check if ILL fees have been paid...
- **Shipping costs** sometimes very high for books in physical format when supplied from abroad
- **More requests** to complete, but more automation (RapidILL and Alma P2P)
 - Automation helps to balance the overload!

3) Pilot during COVID-19 (March 2020–June 2022)

- Real statistics and usage data collected
- First reactions and observations:
 - ILL operators could have an overview of what ILL would look like if it remains free
 - Patrons started to get used to a free ILL service



Recommendations to the Library Board

- Free ILL should be considered as a priority within the Library as a Service model
- Free ILL should be maintained for the ULiège community
 - With no limit for digital articles and chapters delivered via RapidILL
 - With an increase budget for postal charges
 - With no symbolic contribution to the costs
 - And Alma P2P for physical delivery should be encouraged

But with some safeguards:

- Asking a contribution to the costs for physical item requests from abroad (from the 4th request/year)
- Purchase of a copy or of the ebook version in case of too high costs for delivery or of item frequently requested
- Raise awareness among patrons that there are always hidden costs, even if it is free to them

Free ILL service is not a pipe dream
as long as costs remain under control

MORE INFO

