

*Developed by the West Virginia Library Commission and the Reference and Interlibrary Loan Roundtable of the West Virginia Library Association - 2007.*

Interlibrary loan service is essential to the vitality of libraries of all types and sizes. It provides every library an opportunity to reach beyond the local collection to meet the information needs of the community. West Virginia Interlibrary Loan Best Practices, in conjunction with the Interlibrary Loan Code for the United States, assists libraries in West Virginia to share resources within a framework of mutual understanding and good faith.

- Become familiar with and adhere to the Interlibrary Loan Code for the United States.
- Have a written Interlibrary Loan policy. A written policy is essential for every library. It provides staff and patrons with a consistent plan of action. The policy may be simple or elaborate but needs to address the following points:
  - What materials in the collection are loaned.
  - What materials in the collection are photocopied.
  - The length of the circulation period for the loan.
  - Renewal of interlibrary loans.
  - Procedures for overdue or lost interlibrary loan materials.
  - The eligibility of patrons for Interlibrary loans.
    - In public libraries, all registered patrons in good standing should be eligible for interlibrary loan, including children and young adults.
    - Section V of the Library Bill of Rights states that "A person's right to use a library should not be denied or abridged because of origin, age, background, or views." The ALA interpretation of "use" includes services as well as materials and facilities.
  - Limits on number of patron interlibrary loan requests.
  - Photocopying, postage, and/or service fees for interlibrary loans.
  - Subject requests
- Be as liberal and nonrestrictive as possible. Lend unto others, as you would have others lend unto you. The item you refuse to lend today may be the same type item one of your patrons requests tomorrow. Materials often not available on interlibrary loan are:
  - Books in current and/or recurring demand
  - Bulky or fragile materials
  - Rare materials
  - A large number of titles for one person at any one time
  - Genealogical materials.
  - Reference materials. A library may consent to loan a reference book or other item but limit it to use in the borrowing library. The policy designates the person responsible for making such decisions. Promptly return, with an explanation, requests for materials that are on loan, missing, or not available for loan.
- Be a responsible borrower.
  - Requesting Libraries should exhaust local resources before initiating an interlibrary loan request.

- If the book is in print, consider buying it instead of requesting it on ILL. This helps develop a collection based on patrons' needs. Interlibrary loan is not a substitute for collection development at the local level.
- Do not request current bestsellers. Local demand takes precedence over interlibrary loan requests.
- If you own the item and it's checked out, consider placing a local hold for your own patron.
- If your copy is lost, consider buying a replacement.
- Check full text databases online for journal articles, e.g. WV Info Depot
- Verify format, citations and holdings. Clearly identify the specific format requested, e.g., VHS, DVD, CD, Cassette, Large print, etc.
- Do not request electronic books.
- Suggest reciprocal borrowing as an alternative to ILL. If a nearby library owns the book, consider asking the patron to visit the owning institution to check out the book.
- The Borrowing Library is always responsible for requested items, including materials lost in the mail, on the courier, or by the patron.
- The Borrowing Library is responsible for copyright adherence.
- Use large libraries as a last resort. In other words, only use Kanawha County Public Library, Cabell County Public Library, West Virginia University, Marshall University, etc., only if there are no other owners. If there are other owners, request from them first - spread the load around the state.
- Use electronic methods to request items. An interlibrary loan management system (IMS) such as OCLC ILLiad is essential for many medium to large libraries. Consortia may develop electronic forms and/or procedures for member libraries. Fax requests should be a last resort. Avoid phone requests if at all possible.
- Be a responsible lender.
  - Do not charge other West Virginia libraries for ILL if at all possible. Respond to requests promptly, daily if possible. If a request cannot be filled, include the reason with the response.
  - Supply the format that was requested.
  - Honor the requesting library's cost and use limits.
  - Verify copyright compliance.
  - Package the material in a way that prevents damage during shipping. Include any special packaging instructions.

Improving the process of interlibrary loan is worthless unless service to the patron is also improved. A library's policies and regulations should not create barriers that shut out the user in an effort to keep everything neat and tidy within the library. In reviewing the above guidelines, remember that what is convenient for the staff, is not always what is best for the patron. The library exists to serve patrons.