Massachusetts Library System
Interlibrary Loan Policy

Interlibrary Loan Vision

Massachusetts Library System (MLS) members participate in interlibrary loan (ILL) on a reciprocal basis for all permitted library materials, including online content.

MLS provides ILL services in an efficient manner, balancing the workload and costs among MLS, borrowers, and lenders appropriately.

Introduction

Interlibrary loan is essential to libraries of all types and sizes as a means of expanding the amount of materials that can be made available to patrons. Each library has the responsibility to develop and maintain a collection designed to meet the needs of its patrons. ILL borrowing relies on cooperation among libraries to supplement local library collections, and MLS, which has a long history of resource sharing, encourages such reciprocity for ILL participants.

Definitions

An interlibrary loan is a transaction in which library material or a copy of the material is made available by one library to another library upon request. This policy is meant to address mediated interlibrary loan transactions handled by the Massachusetts Library System on behalf of the members. It does not include local transfers between libraries in the same automated library system. Such local transactions are outside the scope of this policy. It also does not include such separate resource sharing systems as Point-to-Point, MassCat or the Commonwealth Catalog. These organizations issue their own policy statements.

Interlibrary loan consists of two simultaneous operations: borrowing and lending. In the borrowing operation, materials are borrowed for members of the MLS from libraries anywhere in the United States and abroad. In the lending operation, materials from member libraries are loaned out to libraries in the United States and abroad.

Resource sharing encompasses interlibrary loan and document delivery services. ILL is mainly concerned with returnable items in all formats, while document delivery consists of non-returnables such as journal articles, copies of chapters, tables of contents, indices, etc. MLS partners with the Boston Public Library to provide for the document delivery needs of member libraries.
Agreement

The MLS Interlibrary Loan policy is meant to conform to such existing policies as the Interlibrary Loan Code for the United States and Title 17 of the United States Code concerning copyright law, particularly Section 107 (concerning fair use), and Section 108 (reproductions by libraries and archives). The MLS policy also resolves to preserve a patron’s right to privacy, as outlined in the American Library Association’s statement.

Member Responsibilities

MLS is dedicated to promoting the independence and education of the member libraries. The responsibilities of the member libraries who participate in ILL include, but are not limited to:

- Lending to other MLS members at no charge in most circumstances, per the MLS membership agreement;
- Mastering the basics of ILL requesting, including the provision of complete citations;
- Updating ILL requests in a timely manner;
- Maintaining open lines of communication with MLS and responding to inquiries in a reasonable amount of time;
- Providing library contact information, and informing MLS of staffing and other changes within the library;
- Seeking out training opportunities offered by the MLS;
- Creating interlibrary loan policies for their own libraries;
- Familiarizing library staff with copyright laws and guidelines, including those governing document delivery requests;
- Being accountable for items that are overdue, damaged, lost in transit, or in pending status for more than 14 days;
- Preserving patron privacy by using, as much as possible, alphanumeric codes in place of patron names on ILL requests;
- Defining for each individual library what it means to be a patron of good standing;
- Determining limits on the number of ILL requests allowed for each patron;
- Deciding how far MLS may seek for resources and how much the library is willing to pay for loans;
- Abiding by all loan restrictions, including but not limited to: in-library use only; returning items via a trackable method (i.e., FedEx or UPS); special handling of fragile items; mailing resources back in a box or other packaging; supervising patrons during the use of rare items.
Interlibrary Loan Borrowing Policy

Mediated Interlibrary Loan service is available to the users of the MLS’s member libraries. This service has no age restrictions. Borrowers must, however, be in good standing at the member library.

Libraries may request any type of material via interlibrary loan, except video console games. MLS will make every attempt to find lenders for items in all formats, investigating non-traditional venues, digital sources, and institutions with uncataloged but potential resources.

The Commission on New Technological Uses of Copyrighted Works (CONTU) guidelines to the copyright law of the United States specify that each library may borrow no more than five photocopies of articles from the most recent five years run of each periodical within a calendar year without paying a fee to the copyright holder. It is the borrowing library’s responsibility to keep track of their requests so that these limits are not exceeded. There are additional limitations as to the proportional amount of an item that may be copied. There are exemptions to these limitations for periodicals subscribed to by the library, but discarded by date. Copies of photocopy requests must be retained for three full calendar years beyond the year in which the request was made. It is each library’s responsibility to be knowledgeable in copyright issues.

Requesting libraries must provide as complete a bibliographic citation as possible on the appropriate request form. They must also provide library contact information for any necessary follow up.

MLS will process member libraries’ interlibrary loan requests in a timely fashion and will keep the members informed as to the progress of their requests. If items cannot be borrowed, locations for potential local or electronic use will be provided, if available.

Insofar as possible, materials will be borrowed for use outside of the library. If the lending library imposes a restriction of some kind, MLS will obtain approval for the restriction from the member library. Once the member library has agreed to the terms of the lender’s restriction, the member will be responsible for enforcing those restrictions during the period of the loan. These restrictions may include requiring the item to be used in the borrowing library only, returning items via a trackable method (FedEx or UPS), mailing resources in special packaging, supervising the use of rare items, short loan periods, no renewals, and other conditions imposed by the lender.

Due dates for interlibrary loan materials are set by the lending library. Member libraries must ensure that borrowed materials are on their way back to the lending library by their due date. Tardy returns jeopardize the borrowing privileges of the entire MLS membership. Renewals may be requested on most materials and should be done so before the due date.
Requesting libraries will respond in a timely fashion to queries about long pending items, overdue materials, or materials that have been recalled by the lending library.

Materials will be obtained from free lenders, if possible. Libraries are asked when making a request whether the patron or library is willing to pay a fee. If the item is only available from a charging lender, the cost will be passed on to the patron or the requesting library. Otherwise, the request will be cancelled. Lenders who impose a charge for lending will be levied an equivalent fee should they seek to borrow from the MLS. The money gained in such transactions will be used to benefit the work of MLS and its service to member libraries.

Materials being returned by a requesting library will be packaged and shipped by the requesting library in such a way as to minimize the potential of damage in transit. If materials are lost or damaged between the lending library and the requesting library, the requesting library will pay any fees or, if the lending library agrees, purchase a replacement copy. If materials are lost or damaged while in the hands of the requesting library or its patron, the requesting library or its patron will pay any fees or purchase a replacement copy, should the lender be amenable. Prompt replacement or payment is necessary so as to not jeopardize MLS’s status as a borrower.

ILL services may be suspended or limited for member libraries who abuse the privilege by repeatedly keeping materials beyond their due date, damaging or defacing materials, not paying for materials lost or damaged by their patrons, or failing to respond to queries in a timely manner.

MLS will maintain and provide access to such statistics as are required by the Massachusetts Board of Library Commissioners (MBLC) and the MLS.

**Interlibrary Loan Lending Policy**

Member libraries are strongly encouraged to loan out materials as freely as they request them. The resource sharing team at MLS serves as a conduit for interlibrary lending services to libraries within the United States or abroad as long as their requests are sent in a recognizable format via such mechanisms as OCLC, email, mail, or fax. MLS passes on such lending requests to member libraries, answers the request appropriately, and ships the item to the borrower and back to the lender, tracking it throughout the process.

Any item that would be loaned to another library within the local automated system may be requested for interlibrary loan lending. Non-circulating materials such as reference materials or microfilm will be requested only in exceptional circumstances. The owning libraries may refuse any request, but they are encouraged to state the reason for such a refusal. Such reasons may include local need, a non-circulating or reference item, poor condition, age of material, etc. MLS will make every effort to provide specific reasons to requesting libraries when refusing to lend resources.
Member libraries must respond to queries in a timely manner as to whether or not they are willing to lend a particular item.

Items will be loaned for 28 days and may be renewed if there is not a request outstanding on the item.

Occasionally, materials that belong to member libraries will be lost or damaged while they are out on loan. In such cases, MLS will ask for a bill from the member library. Any such fees will be passed on to the borrowing library. MLS will mediate successful payment or replacement.

The Massachusetts Library System is dedicated to providing equitable and inclusive services for all member libraries. The resource sharing team at MLS affirms these values through the practice of thorough, accurate, and responsive interlibrary loan service for borrowers and lenders.

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