

---

# Interlibrary Loan Code for the United States

## STARS Codes, Guidelines, and Technical Standards Committee

*Prepared by the Interlibrary Loan Committee, Reference and User Services Association (RUSA), 1994, revised 2001. Revised by the Codes, Guidelines, and Technical Standards Committee, Sharing and Transforming Access to Resources Section (STARS) 2008 and 2015. Approved by RUSA Board January 11, 2016.*

**T**he Reference and User Services Association, acting for the American Library Association in its adoption of this code, recognizes that the sharing of material between libraries is a core library service and believes it to be in the public interest to encourage such an exchange.

In the interest of providing quality service, libraries have an obligation to obtain material to meet the informational needs of users when local resources do not meet those needs. Interlibrary loan (ILL), a mechanism for obtaining material, is essential to the vitality of all libraries.

The effectiveness of the national interlibrary loan system depends upon participation of libraries of all types and sizes.

This code establishes principles that facilitate the requesting of material by a library and the provision of loans or copies in response to those requests.

---

## 1.0 DEFINITIONS

- 1.1 Interlibrary loan is the process by which a library requests material from, or supplies material to, another library.
- 1.2 In this code, “material” includes books, audiovisual materials, and other returnable items as well as copies of journal articles, book chapters, excerpts, and other non-returnable items.

---

## 2.0 PURPOSE

- 2.1 The purpose of interlibrary loan as defined by this code is to obtain, upon request of a library user, material not available in the user’s local library. Interlibrary loan is primarily intended to provide a requesting individual with a physical loan of a defined duration or a non-returnable copy or scan from another library.

---

## 3.0 SCOPE

- 3.1 This code regulates the exchange of material between libraries in the United States.
- 3.2 United States libraries are encouraged to engage in interlibrary loan with libraries in other countries. International transactions are governed by the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions.

## 4.0 RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE REQUESTING LIBRARY

- 4.1 Establish, promptly update, and make available an interlibrary borrowing policy.
- 4.2 Ensure the confidentiality of the library user.
- 4.3 Describe completely and accurately the requested material following accepted bibliographic practice.
- 4.4 Note any special requirements regarding the format needed, specified shipping address, or use to be made of the material on the request sent to potential supplying libraries.
- 4.5 Identify libraries that own the requested material. Check and adhere to the policies of potential supplying libraries.
- 4.6 When no libraries can be identified as owning the needed material, requests may be sent to libraries believed likely to own the material.
- 4.7 Transmit interlibrary loan requests electronically unless otherwise specified by the supplying library.
- 4.8 Comply with U.S. copyright law (Title 17, U.S. Code) and be aware of related guidelines for copy requests.
- 4.9 Assume responsibility for borrowed material from the time it leaves the supplying library until it has been returned to and received by the supplying library. This includes all material shipped directly to and/or returned by the user. If damage or loss occurs, provide compensation or replacement, in accordance with the preference of the supplying library.
- 4.10 Pay promptly any service, replacement, or damage fees charged by the supplying library.
- 4.11 Assume full responsibility for user-initiated transactions.
- 4.12 Honor the due date and enforce any usage restrictions specified by the supplying library. Unless otherwise indicated, the due date is defined as the date by which the material is due to be checked in at the requesting library for return to the supplying library.
- 4.13 Request a renewal before the item is due whenever possible. If the supplying library does not respond, the requesting library may assume that a renewal has been granted, extending the due date by the same length of time as the original loan.
- 4.14 Respond immediately if the supplying library recalls an item. All borrowed material is subject to recall at any time.
- 4.15 Package material to prevent damage or loss in shipping and comply with any special instructions stated by the supplying library.
- 4.16 Failure to comply with the provisions of this code may result in suspension of service by a supplying library.

The Interlibrary Loan Code for the United States is also available on the RUSA website ([www.ala.org/rusa/resources/guidelines/interlibrary](http://www.ala.org/rusa/resources/guidelines/interlibrary)).

## 5.0 RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE SUPPLYING LIBRARY

- 5.1 Establish, promptly update, and make available an interlibrary lending policy, contact information, and a service schedule.
- 5.2 Ensure the confidentiality of the library user.
- 5.3 If it is necessary to charge service fees, make available a fee schedule as part of an interlibrary lending policy. Bill any service, replacement, or damage fees promptly.
- 5.4 Consider filling all requests for material regardless of format or the collection in which it is housed.
- 5.5 Process requests in a timely manner, recognizing the needs of the requesting library and/or the requirements of the resource sharing system being used. If unable to fill a request, respond promptly and state the reason the request cannot be filled.
- 5.6 Send sufficient information to identify the particular request when filling or communicating about requests.
- 5.7 Indicate the due date, any restrictions on the use of the material, and any special return packaging or shipping requirements. The due date is defined as the date the material is due to be checked in at the requesting library for return to the supplying library.
- 5.8 Ship material by the fastest method reasonably available to the location specified by the requesting library. Package loaned material to prevent damage or loss.
- 5.9 Respond promptly to requests for renewals. If the supplying library does not respond, the requesting library may assume that a renewal has been granted, extending the due date by the same length of time as the original loan.
- 5.10 The supplying library may recall loaned material at any time.
- 5.11 Deliver copies electronically whenever possible. Provide complete and legible copies, and adhere to any special scanning instructions of the requesting library.
- 5.12 The supplying library may suspend service to a requesting library if it fails to comply with the provisions of this code.

### Supplemental Documentation

For more detailed information, please see the accompanying Explanatory Supplement posted on the RUSA website ([www.ala.org/rusa/resources/guidelines/interlibraryloancode](http://www.ala.org/rusa/resources/guidelines/interlibraryloancode)).

### Related File

ILL Request Form (Fillable PDF) available on the RUSA website ([www.ala.org/rusa/sites/ala.org.rusa/files/content/sections/stars/resources/ALA\\_ILL\\_Request\\_Form.pdf](http://www.ala.org/rusa/sites/ala.org.rusa/files/content/sections/stars/resources/ALA_ILL_Request_Form.pdf)).