
5. InterLibrary Loan

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What Is an Interlibrary Loan?

“Interlibrary Loan (ILL): The transfer of print and non-print library materials, or a copy of those materials, from one participating library to another in response to a specific patron request. This may be done physically or electronically.” [Definition taken from: *Resource Sharing Operational Policy for Public Libraries*, December 2012 by Municipal Affairs, Public Library Services Branch.]

Libraries share resources because no single library can meet all of the information, leisure, and entertainment needs of its entire community. Library budgets are limited and the number of items each library is able to purchase and house is limited. The interlibrary loan service is an excellent tool that makes available materials that your patrons require, but which you may not be able to afford. Because libraries need access to such a wide range of information, all public libraries in Alberta participate in a provincial resource sharing network.

On the other hand, interlibrary loans only supplement the local collection and are not a substitute for local collection development. Each local library continues to develop its own collection in response to local community needs. Repeated interlibrary loan requests for specific topics can indicate subject areas for which the library needs more resources. You can track these requests through reports in Polaris.

Provincial Resource Sharing Policy

The library community’s endorsement of the Resource Sharing Operational Policy for Public Libraries allows for equitable access to library resources. This is available online at:

<http://www.albertalibraries.ca/structure-of-alberta-library-service/>

The seven regional public library systems and the other large municipal public libraries agreed to a formal resource sharing policy, and are partners in coordinating resource sharing activities and providing resources to other public libraries in the province through interlibrary loans. The Chinook Arch Regional Library System, located in Lethbridge, Alberta, is the interlibrary loan center, providing Alberta-wide access to interlibrary loans through VDX (Virtual Document Exchange) resource sharing software.

As a result of the Resource Sharing Operational Policy for Public Libraries, all member libraries of TRAC share their materials with other libraries through interlibrary loans. Patrons from other libraries may request materials from your library and your library will send those materials to other public libraries. Your library patrons can also request materials from other libraries, which will be sent to your library.

ILL in a nutshell

There are five basic steps in completing an ILL **borrowing** transaction:

- Verifying the request
- Searching for the item
- Placing a hold
- Receiving and circulating the item
- Returning the item

It is also necessary to track the item through each step, so that it gets to the patron in a timely manner and is then returned safely to its home library.

There are four basic steps in completing an ILL **lending** transaction:

- Receiving the request
- Filling the request
- Sending the item to the requesting library
- Receiving the item back to its home library again

For Libraries Outside of TRAC

This includes ALL those libraries that are NOT on the TRAC Polaris system; i.e. all libraries that are NOT members of the Peace Library System, Northern Lights Library System, Marigold Library System, or Yellowhead Regional Library.

1. Check out the item to the requesting outside of TRAC library, and place receipt in the book/item. Please note that an extra 3 weeks to the normal due date is automatically added to cover the shipping period. The item is checked out to the library itself. For example, a patron from Edmonton Public Library will not have an account in Polaris, but “Edmonton Public Library” does.
2. If you have courier services, then ship out to the library if they also have courier, or to their HQ if they don't
3. If you don't have courier or if it's a mail-only library, please follow the first two steps, attach a note to the bag saying that it's checked out to Library A and send on your van run.

Mechanism for ILL

Currently, the mechanism in place for ILL involves the following sources:

- TRAC (The Regional Automation Consortium)
Interlibrary loans are possible between TRAC libraries (libraries in Yellowhead Regional Library, Northern Lights Library System, Marigold Regional Library, and Peace Library System). If an item cannot be located in your local library, it is possible to search the TRAC catalogue at <http://www.tracpac.ab.ca> to see if the item can be found in another TRAC library. This type of loan does not require intervention by Chinook Arch Regional Library System.
- The Alberta Library (TAL)
If the book you require cannot be located in TRACpac, you may borrow it directly from TAL Online at <http://www.talonline.ca> (You can also access TAL Online from the library system and TRACpac website). You can place a request, complete an online form, and specify the library to which you want it delivered. Note: You can only borrow books from TAL Online, not any audiovisual materials.
- The Provincial Resource Sharing Network (VDX)
If the book you require cannot be located in TRACpac; you may borrow it directly using the Provincial Resource Sharing Network software known as VDX at <https://alberta.vdxhost.com/vdx/> provided you have received training from NLLS. The software is directly linked to TAL Online. The VDX system goes out to other system libraries, Edmonton and Calgary Public libraries, and academic libraries. Material may also be loaned from other Canadian libraries. These ILLs may require intervention by headquarters staff.

Inclusions

In theory, any material may be requested from another library. However, every library has the right to refuse a request if they have legitimate reasons, such as not wanting to send bulky storytime kits or expensive and/or delicate electronics. In TRAC, libraries are encouraged to share as many of their materials as possible, regardless of format.

Alberta Interlibrary Loan Routing

NLLS headquarters' staff assists in handling interlibrary loan requests for items not found in the TRAC Catalogue. In the case of lost or damaged items, it is the responsibility of the borrowing library and/or customer to pay for lost or damaged interlibrary loan items. If an item is lost or damaged in transit, it is considered the cost of doing business, and the owning library absorbs the cost. See the TRAC Operational Guidelines for more details.

The following Alberta Interlibrary Loan Routing Chart indicates what happens to a request in Alberta. If the request cannot be filled within TRAC, or the rest of the province, it goes to Chinook Arch Regional Library System, which has contracted with Alberta Municipal Affairs for out-of-province interlibrary loans.



