

Developing your Interlibrary Loan Policy

Typically, an interlibrary loan policy has two aspects -- one for the public and one for the back-of-the-house. The public aspect of the policy deals with issues between your library and your patrons -- who can make ILL requests, how often they may do so, whether your library will charge them for this service, etc. The back-of-the-house aspect of an ILL policy deals with issues between your library and the libraries you lend to and borrow from. This worksheet outlines the questions that this inter-library aspect of your policy should answer.

Note: All quotations come from the *New Hampshire Interlibrary Loan Protocol Manual (1999, updated Summer 2019)* the full text of which is available at

<https://www.nhsl.dncr.nh.gov/sites/g/files/ehbemt726/files/inline-documents/ill-protocol-manual.pdf>

1. **Who are you and how can you be contacted?**

It is important in a written version of an ILL policy that you indicate the full name, address, phone & fax numbers, email addresses, web site, contact people, and relevant identifying codes (such as your HSA code) for your library. The hours your library is open may also be useful here.

2. **Which libraries will you lend materials to?**

As a member of NHAIS, this would probably include all NHAIS libraries. However, “the decision to lend materials is at the discretion of the lending library.” You may also lend to libraries beyond New Hampshire. What categories of library you will or will not lend to should be clearly spelled out in your policy.

3. **What types of requests will you accept?**

“For libraries with access to NHAIS, [it] should be the primary method for transmitting and responding to ILL requests” is the recommended policy in the NH ILL Protocol Manual. There may be other methods of requesting that you will accept as well, however. Will you accept ALA approved interlibrary loan forms? Can they be faxed to you? Will you fill ILL requests that are sent to you as email messages? How about phone calls? These questions should be answered in your policy.

4. **What types of materials will you lend?**

This may be answered by designating what you will lend – anything that is requested, for example. Or, you may choose to designate what will not be lent – CDs and fiction less than one year old will not be lent, for example. Which items you choose to reserve strictly for the use of your own patrons is entirely up to you, but it should be clearly stated in your policy. Your existing circulation policy may provide a useful model for drafting this section of your policy.

5. **How long will you lend materials for?**

“The recommended loan periods for books shall be four weeks.” You may wish to designate a longer or shorter loan period. You may also wish to designate a specific loan period for other formats of material such as videos or sound recordings. You may also want to include how (and if) you will handle requests for renewals.

6. What types of materials are you willing to send photocopies of?

There may be materials in your collection that you will not lend – journals or reference material perhaps – but which you will provide another library with photocopies of. The number of pages that will be copied and any charges incurred by the borrower for this should be addressed here. You may also need to look at your license agreements for electronic resources to determine whether they offer options (or necessitate restrictions) on providing copies of the materials they cover.

The NH ILL Protocol Manual recommends the following: “New Hampshire libraries participating in the New Hampshire Interlibrary Loan system will photocopy materials free of charge to other participating NH libraries. Libraries may place a copying limit of 30 pages per item.”

A statement on copyright compliance would also be appropriate here: “All libraries are responsible for compliance with the copyright law ... and its accompanying CONTU guidelines, and shall inform its users of the applicable portions of the law. An indication of compliance shall be provided with all copy requests.”

7. How long will it take you to fill/answer requests?

A general idea of how quickly a borrowing library might expect to hear back from you about a request is helpful to potential borrowers. Factors to consider in making this estimate might include whether you have full time ILL staff, how many days a week your library is open, how often there is a Van Delivery System pickup at your library. The NH ILL Protocol Manual recommends the following: “Lending libraries shall respond to requests within two working days by filling the request, denying the request, or acknowledging reserve of the material.” Of course there will be occasions when factors beyond your control will change this turnaround time, but if your normal circumstances dictate that you are unable to respond to requests in less than a particular number of days that should be indicated in your policy.

8. How will materials be delivered?

For transactions between libraries that receive NHSL Van Delivery that might be designated as the preferred method of delivery. You should also address whether you will send materials by US Mail and how postage charges will be handled, whether you will transmit documents electronically (be sure to check license agreements!), and if you will allow a library (or their patrons) to pick up items themselves.

9. How should materials be returned to you?

This will probably be very similar to your answer regarding the delivery of materials, but there may be differences. You may also want to consider stating explicitly what methods of return are NOT acceptable to you – having the patron return the item to your library directly causes problems in tracking ILL transactions and is generally discouraged, for example.

10. What questions have past borrowing libraries asked you about ILL transactions?

Identifying issues that have been raised in the past and addressing them explicitly in your policy can save time in the future for both your library and potential borrowers.

For additional information on creating interlibrary loan policies you may wish to consult the following:
Boucher, Virginia. *Interlibrary Loan Practices Handbook*, 2nd edition. Chicago: ALA, 1997.
(NHSL LIS collection 024.68 B753)