



# Guidelines for Best Practice in Interlibrary Loan and Document Delivery

This leaflet stems from discussions held among members of the Document Delivery and Resource Sharing Section of IFLA. It is based on best practices formulated from the following studies:

- *Performance of Interlending in Nordic Academic Libraries: Report for NORDINFO Board*  
Pentti Vattulainen, 2003
- *Measuring the Performance of Interlibrary Loan Operations in North American Research & College Libraries*  
Mary E. Jackson. Washington: Association of Research Libraries, 1998
- *Interlibrary Loan and Document Delivery Benchmarking Study*  
National Resource Sharing Working Group; Canberra: National Library of Australia, 2001

These are brief guidelines for use within your own interlibrary loan department and are standards to strive for. We are aware that not all libraries will be able to implement all the recommendations, but we would nevertheless encourage libraries to use these guidelines as a basis for their current service and to influence future development.

## General Recommendations

- Streamline the process within your own library
  - Define performance indicators for service levels and turnaround time and monitor your performance against them
  - Evaluate your own routines and change them accordingly
  - Reduce the number of hands through which the requests are passing
- All requests should be handled in one electronic system, preferably with the ability to interoperate with other ILL/DD systems
- Keep statistics to suit national monitoring schemes and local needs
- Make holdings available on Union Catalogues and keep them up-to-date, with an indication of availability for resource sharing
- Explore reciprocal arrangements

## Staff

- Use the expertise of skilled staff members
- Staff members should continuously be able to develop competencies and be trained in using new tools and resources
- Encourage the exchange of experience at the local or international level

## Technology

- Hardware and software must be up-to-date
- Encourage users to submit requests electronically
- Give the end users the ability to check the status of requests online
- Handle all communication about requests electronically

## Users

- Focus on the needs and preferences of the end user
- Perform user surveys on a regular basis

## Recommendations for the requesting library

- ILL should be an integrated part of the Library's service to users
- Introduce new technology in all processes
- Do not limit unreasonably the number of requests from users
- Involve the end user as much as possible in requesting
  - Give end users access to union catalogues with requesting facilities
- Process requests from end users quickly
- Use your experience to select supplying libraries according to speed of service and cost
- Adhere to conditions of suppliers and treat material with care
- Offer IFLA vouchers as payment
- Deliver the material as fast as possible to the end user
  - Send copies electronically if at all possible
  - Check speed of supply on a regular basis

## Recommendations for the supplying library

- Use experienced staff to collect requested material from your collections in order to minimise mistakes
- Use the fastest delivery methods
- Try to satisfy requests in the best possible way
- Be sure that your licence agreements for your e-resources will allow ILL/DD
- Create online order forms and/or interoperate with other ILL/DD systems
- Make your library's lending policies available on your web site and in policy directories
- [Accept IFLA vouchers](#)

