



NISO RP-12-2012

Physical Delivery of Library Resources

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*A Recommended Practice of the
National Information Standards Organization*

Prepared by the
NISO Physical Delivery of Library Resources Working Group

Physical Delivery of Library Resources

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Foreword

About this Recommended Practice

While much of the focus today is on electronic resources, use of physical library materials is still abundant and the transfer of materials between libraries is increasing. The increased volume and costs of library delivery is creating a demand for more information about how to run efficient and effective delivery operations.

Three recent projects—Moving Mountains, Rethinking Resource Sharing's Physical Delivery Committee, and the American Library Association's ASCLA ICANS' Physical Delivery Discussion Group—have been sharing knowledge and best practices about delivery of library materials and expressed interest in partnering with NISO to further the development of recommended practices for library delivery. The NISO Physical Delivery of Library Resources Working Group was formed in November 2009 to develop this recommended practice.

NISO Topic Committee Members

At the time it approved this Recommended Practice, the Discovery to Delivery (D2D) Topic Committee had the following members:

David Fiander

University of Western Ontario

Lucy Harrison

College Center for Library Automation (CCLA)

Peter Murray

Lyrasis

John Mark Ockerbloom

University of Pennsylvania Libraries

Jeff Penka

OCLC Online Computer Library Center

Tim Shearer (Co-Chair)

University of North Carolina Chapel Hill Libraries

Chris Shillum

Reed Elsevier

Robert Walsh (Co-Chair)

EnvisionWare, Inc.

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NISO Physical Delivery of Library Resources Working Group Members

The following individuals served on the NISO Physical Delivery of Library Resources Working Group, which developed and approved this Recommended Practice:

Ken Bartholomew
American Courier

Chaichin Chen
State of Rhode Island, Office of Library &
Information Services

Kathy Drozd
Minitex

Poul Erlandsen
The Royal Library

Valerie Horton (Co-Chair)
Colorado Library Consortium (CLiC)

Jennifer Kuehn
Ohio State University Libraries

Michelle Foss Leonard
University of Florida

Julie Blume Nye
OCLC Online Computer Library Center

Greg Pronevitz
Massachusetts Library System

Franca Rosen
Jefferson County Public Library System

Diana Sachs-Silveira (Co-Chair)
Novare Library Services

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Section 1: Introduction

1.1 Background and Purpose

The physical delivery of library materials is an integral component of the resource sharing process. The delivery community knows firsthand the power of resource sharing as it handles millions of items that are being shipped between cooperating libraries. Borrowing between libraries is cost effective, and our goal is to make the delivery piece of the process as efficient and inexpensive as possible.

Despite the ever-increasing availability of electronic journals, e-books, and other digital resources, the movement of physical items remains a major concern and a major cost for many libraries. Nationally, interlibrary borrowing traffic increased 41% from 2000-2006.^[12] In areas with library courier services, the increase is even larger; for example, during the same period ILL borrowing in Colorado increased by 107%.^[12] An analysis of Massachusetts traffic indicates an increase of 500% over the ten years from 2001-2011. Library courier systems are straining under the need to move this massive amount of materials. In a 2008 study, respondents from different library systems reported moving 5, 10, or even 15 million items a year.^[7] A recent study showed that the average academic library spends more than \$6,800/year for delivery services, with some libraries paying as high as \$60,000.^[20] Given such volumes, libraries are struggling to deal with the labor and equipment costs, material wear and tear, and transit and sorting needs.

The physical delivery of items occurs between two locations—whether between branches, systems, regions, states, or countries. From the patron's perspective, this is the “discovery receiving” function. These functions can be divided into the steps illustrated in the workflow in Figure 1.

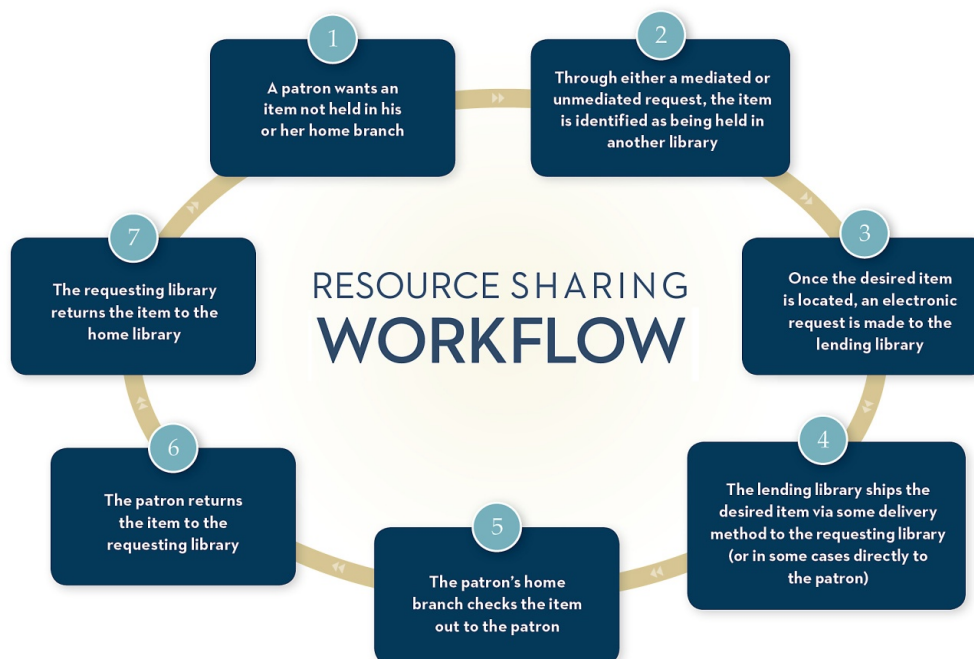


Figure 1: Resource Sharing Workflow

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The purpose of this document is to recommend practices about the physical movement of items as described in steps four and seven in the workflow shown in Figure 1: the delivery of the items to the requesting library and their return to the lending library. The recommendations in this document focus on the movement of the physical items (e.g., books and audiovisual materials) between libraries, and between library and patron. This Recommended Practice focuses on three key areas: the physical move, automation, and the management of physical delivery.

While the primary focus of this document is on the delivery piece in its many aspects, the entire system impacts how the delivery takes place. Within these recommended practices are some suggestions about other steps in the patron request process that can help to ensure the delivery piece works optimally. For example, if the lending library's circulation system also prints a delivery label, then delivery time, materials, and costs can be reduced. However, the specific recommendations are limited to those steps that ensure that the physical delivery of library materials happens in the most cost-effective and time-sensitive manner as possible.

1.2 Scope

The NISO Physical Delivery of Library Resources Working Group's interest lies in identifying methods for improving performance and reducing the cost of moving materials between a library that owns an item and another library whose patron wants to use the item.

The scope of this document is limited to the external delivery of items between separately administered libraries, although many of the recommendations could apply to delivery between branches of a single library system, as well. External delivery can be based on consortial delivery within a shared system, a region, a state, or a country. It can also apply to items moving through a standard interlibrary loan request. We do not specifically cover using international carriers such as FedEx or UPS, who have their own systems of packaging that must be followed; however, many of the recommended practices in this document, such as internal labeling, can apply with these carriers.

In developing these recommendations, the working group recognizes that library courier systems operate in various environments without standardized funding mechanisms, geographies, or library participants. Therefore, each library system must consider local needs and conditions when evaluating these recommendations for implementation. Archival, rare, and specialized materials require special handling. These unique requirements are outside the scope of this document, but we recommend the ACRL/RBMS Guidelines for Borrowing and Lending Special Collections Materials Task Force (http://rbms.info/committees/task_force/borrowing/index.shtml) for more information on handling those materials.

1.3 Terms and Definitions

Terminology used in delivery varies from standard library usage. The following terms, as used in this recommended practice, have the meanings indicated, which is standard language used by library delivery experts. Italicized terms within a definition refer to another defined term.

Term	Definition
bin	A standard-sized, heavy plastic, rectangular container used to store or to move <i>items</i> , often with covers to prevent weather damage. Also referred to as a <i>tote</i> or <i>tub</i> .

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courier service		In library use the term typically refers to the entire delivery service of library materials between libraries. May be referred to simply as courier. Our use of courier service is limited to library-managed delivery services or contracted commercial delivery vendors. This definition does not include international carriers such as UPS and FedEx.
commercial carriers		In this document we are using commercial carriers to refer to larger, international companies, such as FedEx or UPS, who ship individual packages.
destination		The physical location where the <i>item</i> is shipped.
direct delivery		Delivery from the library that has the item directly to the library patron, e.g., to the patron's home, office, medical facility, etc.
floating collection		A single, unified collection that moves freely between branches and where <i>items</i> are shelved in the library where they are returned, regardless of where they originated.
hold		To set aside an <i>item</i> , because it has been requested by another patron or library.
hold shelf slip		A slip created by a requesting library that identifies the requesting patron and that is secured to an item placed on the hold shelf. A hold shelf slip may also include due dates and other <i>routing slip</i> information.
incident		A service problem or a significant deviance from normal operations, such as delayed <i>route</i> , vehicular accident, or damage to library property.
integrated library system ILS		A computer system that integrates several library functions, such as acquisitions, cataloging, serials, circulation, and the patron catalog, into a single system. It often includes functions that support resource sharing.
item		The library resource, e.g., book, DVD, report, or CD, that is shipped.
lending library		The institution that owns the <i>item</i> and is lending and delivering it to the <i>requesting library</i> . Also known as <i>owning institution</i> or <i>originating library</i> .
logistics industry		Business enterprises that deal with the management of inventory and related information from its origin to its final destination, often involved with improving efficiency of delivery.
mediated request		A patron resource sharing request that goes through a library staff member at the requesting library for review or other handling prior to the request being submitted to the <i>lending library</i> . Compare to <i>unmediated request</i> .
mis-labeled		An <i>item</i> that has incorrect information on its <i>routing slip</i> .
mis-sort		To incorrectly arrange <i>items</i> by label and/or destination.

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originating library		See <i>lending library</i> .
owning institution		See <i>lending library</i> .
package		A bundle of <i>items</i> , usually of small or medium size, that have been packed and wrapped or boxed. Also called a <i>parcel</i> .
padded envelope		An envelope that contains a layer of cushioning material to protect products against damage.
parcel		See <i>package</i> .
pick slip		A slip printed by a library system that indicates the <i>item</i> to be retrieved and put into delivery. Pick slips often include the call number, bibliographic information, transaction number, name of the patron who has requested the <i>item</i> , and the date requested. A pick slip may be merged with a <i>routing slip</i> .
requesting library		The library or institution that initiates the resource sharing transaction and receives delivery of the <i>item</i> from the <i>lending library</i> .
route		An identifiable line of travel for delivery of library <i>items</i> that typically includes the same <i>schedule</i> of stops in the same pattern.
routing slip		A slip attached to a library <i>item</i> indicating the destination library where the <i>item</i> is to be delivered. The slip may include destination code, address, date, and transaction number. A routing slip may be merged with a <i>pick slip</i> .
schedule		A plan for delivery of <i>items</i> to libraries on a <i>route</i> , usually including the number of stops per week and a set delivery time or time range.
shipper		The <i>library</i> that is delivering the <i>item</i> to another library.
tote		See <i>bin</i> .
tracking		The process of tracing the movement of a library <i>item</i> from origin to destination. A third-party system may be used, for example the UPS system, to track an <i>item</i> during the delivery. Primarily used to track individual <i>packages</i> ; <i>bin</i> tracking is not as prevalent.
transit		The transportation of an <i>item</i> from the one library to another library. It is also used to describe the status of an <i>item</i> ; e.g., "This item is in transit."
tub		See <i>bin</i> .
unmediated request		A patron resource sharing request that is sent by an automated system directly to a potential <i>lending library</i> without any review or handling by staff members at the <i>requesting library</i> . Compare to <i>mediated request</i> .

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warehousing		The process of moving <i>items</i> to a separate facility for processing, e.g., central sorting, to complement inbound and outbound transportation services.
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