

Interlibrary Loans

If a patron would like to borrow an item that is not currently in our Shortgrass catalogue, there are options available to help that patron receive that item. While you may sometimes wish to purchase said item for your library (e.g. if it's a newer title, or by a well-known author), at other times it may be more prudent to temporarily acquire the item through requesting it as an interlibrary loan (ILL). **Interlibrary loans are items that are borrowed from libraries outside of Shortgrass Library System.** Shortgrass both borrows and lends items through interlibrary loan, so your items could potentially travel all over Canada!

While interlibrary loans can theoretically be borrowed from or sent to libraries all over the world, Shortgrass typically only deals with libraries in Canada, and in fact, most of our interlibrary loan materials are either borrowed from or sent to other Alberta libraries! Further, despite our relatively small size, Shortgrass is actually one of the biggest loaners of ILL items in Alberta. Books, movies, video games, and articles are shipped from our headquarters daily.

Interlibrary loan services in Alberta are provided and managed by a variety of players, including The Alberta Library, Chinook Arch Regional Library System, and the Public Library Services Branch. Each of these organisations helps to manage a different element of the ILL system:

- Chinook Arch handles the VDX software (a web-based interlibrary loan platform that serves as the main tool for libraries managing their interlibrary loans);
- PLSB provides funding and access to the government courier service, as well as partial funding for TAL Online;
- The Alberta Library developed and maintains the TAL Online catalogue, which allows users to search for and request items from libraries across the province.

Making Interlibrary Loan Requests

On occasion, you will be asked to make an interlibrary loan request for your patron. Full instructions for completing this process can be found in the Procedures manual.

Shortgrass has centralized the ILL request process for most of our member libraries. While you (or your patrons) may make the initial loan request, Shortgrass staff are responsible for manually approving and managing interlibrary loan requests. This includes making requests to other libraries, managing requests made by other libraries to Shortgrass, and handling and shipping the physical items that are requested by non-Shortgrass libraries.

The life cycle of an interlibrary loan request looks like this:

1. You (or your patron) places a request on an item to be borrowed from outside SLS.

2. Shortgrass staff manually check and approve the request to ensure that the desired item is available for borrowing elsewhere. If it is not, we will cancel the request. You will receive paperwork confirming that this has been completed.
3. The request is received by loaning libraries, who then must determine whether or not they are able to fill it. When making ILL requests, we generally try to request the item from all libraries who have it available for borrowing. If none of these are able to fulfil the request, it is returned to us as an "End of Rota", request, which means we must either find an alternate source for the item or cancel that request. We will always try to find an alternate location before cancelling a request.
4. When a library is able to loan us an item, they will confirm the request for us on VDX and we will be notified that they will be fulfilling the request. Depending on where the item is coming from, it generally takes between 1-3 weeks for items to be received by you.
5. When you receive the physical item, you will need to notify the loaning library. This can be done in VDX.
6. The item can now be checked out to the borrower.
7. When the patron returns the item to your library, you must again process it in VDX, this time as a return.
8. Send it back to Shortgrass. We will return it to the loaning library for you.

Please see the interlibrary loan section of the Procedures Manual (beginning on page 26) for a detailed explanation of how to process interlibrary loans.