

# Inter-Library Loan Services in Ontario

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**Inter Library Loan (ILL) is an economical program for libraries to reduce costs and space requirements while ensuring people have access to resources they need.** Library staff are trained to first help people find a resource from the library collection. If the library does not have the desired resource, staff try to locate it in another library system and borrow using Inter Library Loan.

Materials traditionally borrowed using Inter Library Loan include out of print items, book sets for book reading clubs, materials that the library is unable to purchase and archival materials.

In Canada, libraries use the Canada Book Rate and in addition, some library systems coordinate other types of regional deliveries (van service).

- In Ontario, Southern Ontario Library Service (SOLS) and Ontario Library Service North (OLS-N) are **provincial agencies that coordinate and streamline ILL**, amongst other services. In addition to coordination of items that are Inter Library Loaned using the Canada Book Rate, SOLS also coordinated regional van delivery for ILL. The 2019 Ontario Budget reduction in government funding for OLS-N and SOLS resulted in a decrease in funding to support ILL. Included in this reduction was the end the ILL Service via van-delivery in southern Ontario. Previously, van delivery allowed for multiple items to be shared amongst a routed network. In 2018, SOLS coordinated, delivered and returned 710,000 packages in this manner, many containing multiple items, to and from public libraries throughout Southern Ontario.
- SOLS continues to manage the virtual document exchange (VDX) software needed to efficiently coordinate ILL between library systems across Ontario.
- **Canada Post offers the Library Materials Service** which includes a reduced postal rate available to public libraries. It is available for eligible library materials that are mailed by a library to its patrons or to a borrowing library for use by their patrons. For example, a 1.28-kg package mailed at the Library Materials rate costs \$1.38. The same package would cost approximately \$30.00 at the standard post office rate. Library Materials may consist of books, magazines, records, CDs, CD-ROMs, audiocassettes, videocassettes, DVDs and other audiovisual materials and other similar library materials. Materials must be packaged and weighed in order to use the book rate. The Canadian Urban Libraries Council manages the shipping tool for Canadian libraries.

- SOLS and OLS-N continue to coordinate and help public libraries use the Canada Post Library Book Rate. This includes the provision of a partial subsidy which does not cover the entire cost of ILL volume for Ontario (based on 2018 ILL statistics).

### **Inter-Library Loan (ILL) is Essential to People in Hundreds of Ontario Communities**

- **People in smaller urban centres, rural, Northern and First Nations communities have been high frequency ILL users.** In major urban centres, where public libraries maintain large collections, use of ILL is much lower.
- ILL allows these smaller public libraries to **leverage the combined collection of hundreds of Ontario's public libraries to meet the needs of local people.** This allows local public libraries to make **strategic purchasing choices – avoiding waste**– while being able to give **people access to the same resources available in major urban libraries.**
- Serving over 300 libraries in Ontario, the **province-wide ILL service needs to be coordinated by a central provider.**
- Use is **overwhelmingly concentrated in public libraries serving communities of less than 100,000 people.**
  - In 2017, people in Stratford (population of 31,500), Belleville (population of 50,000) and Quinte West (population of 43,500) led the entire province in using ILL – **each borrowing 10x more materials than major urban areas** like Toronto, Mississauga, Kitchener or Waterloo.