ASPENCAT

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Resource Sharing Guide

The purpose of this guide is to help explain the best practices for sharing items between AspenCat libraries. It will cover how sharing works using Koha, how to use the courier, keeping track of items borrowed/lent, and what to do when shared items are lost/missing/damaged. With the amount of items lent any given year, it is important for libraries participating in lending to pay close attention to these guidelines to ensure better accuracy and an efficient handling of problems when they occur. When libraries share resources it expands their collections well beyond what they could ever afford to purchase or have the room to keep on their shelves.

Section 1. Sharing Items in Koha

Circulation Rules

Circulation Rules establish loan periods, fines, and lending policies for items. Each library can have a customized set of rules unique to them. Circulation rules are set up and maintained by the AspenCat team and can easily be changed by submitting a ticket. Rules are based on patron categories and item types. Some examples are: DVDs may checkout for a shorter time than Books; or, Juvenile Patrons may not incur overdue fines while Adult patrons do. If a rule is not set up, then selecting that patron category or item type will follow default rules. Non-Circulating is an item type that will only prevent items from not circulating if that rule is set up in the system.

Resource sharing rules can be created to regulate which items are lent to "Any Library", "Home Library", or "No Holds Allowed". These rules create the opportunity for the owning library to select which items can be borrowed by other libraries, which items can only be requested from their own patron base, and which items should never have holds placed on them. Some examples of each include…

- Any Library – A normal book that isn't brand new
- Home Library – A newer item that the owning library wants their patrons to have first crack at
- No Holds Allowed – A magazine or reference book that may or may not circulate, but isn't meant to have holds placed on it

When items are shared, the rules of the owning library are followed and not the rules of the borrowing library. Occasionally, there will be differing checkout lengths or different fines charged from the borrowing library's rules. Checkout lengths should be honored, while fees can be adjusted or waived.

While libraries may choose not to lend parts of their collection, AspenCat practices reciprocal borrowing. If a popular type of item like DVDs are not lent by a library, that library will not be able to borrow DVDs from other libraries. This rule is in the interest of fairness, allowing each library's patrons to have a similar equity of access with other library collections.

Holds Queue

The holds queue populates once a day with requests for the owning library's available items. The holds queue should be checked at regular intervals (at least twice a week) to ensure that requests are being filled when they can and passed to another library when they can't. When an item can't be passed to another library either because it is item level only or because there are no other available copies on that record, the owning library should communicate with the requesting library, so they can cancel the hold cancelled, and make other arrangements for their patrons. No holds should remain in the queue for longer than a week. They need to be filled, passed or cancelled. If a hold is cancelled because the item is damaged or missing, it should be deleted or marked as missing, so no more holds can be placed on it.

Some items in transit to the home library may show in the holds queue prior to their in-transit status being cleared. These items can be ignored until the hold is triggered upon check in when the item is received via the courier.

Instructions for how to find and utilize the holds queue can be found [here](#). The AspenCat team does check and make sure that holds queues are regularly cleared in a timely fashion. If they are not, the AspenCat team will offer training on how to keep the queue up to date.

Transferring, Receiving, and Returning Items

Holds can be placed on records that have items attached which allow hold requests, even if there are no available copies at the time of the request. These items will not appear in the holds queue and are triggered upon check in. A similar message will pop up to provide options to transfer or ignore the hold. Circulation rules can prevent unwanted holds from showing in the holds queue, but they can't prevent this pop up from occurring when items that aren't lent to other libraries are checked in. If it is not an item the library wishes to lend, staff can simply hit "ignore". The patron will not lose their place in line and eventually their holds will get filled. If it is something that is normally holdable, then transfer the item and prepare it for courier pickup.

Whether a hold is transferred from the holds queue or upon check in, Koha will show the items as in-transit to the requesting library and list the name of the patron requesting it. It is no longer considered "available" and will not show up in the holds queue while it has this status. Upon arrival at the requesting/borrowing library the item should be checked in. This check in will change the status from being in-transit to being ready for pick up by the requesting patron. That status will remain for 7 days or until the item is checked out to a patron or the hold is cancelled, and the item returned to the library. After 7 days the item should be checked in again and returned to the owning library, although it is possible for a checkout to the requesting patron to still occur in rare instances where the patron comes in before the item is picked up by the courier.

Note: AspenCat uses 14-digit barcodes so checking in does not require the typing of another library's barcode prefix. Some libraries have not converted their entire collection to 14-digit barcodes, but they should do this prior to sending their item to another library. This can be done using these instructions. If a mistake is made and a shorter barcode is sent, the prefix for the owning library can be looked up on the library directory.

Once an item is checked out to a patron and returned, or the hold expires, or is cancelled the item should be checked in (even if it is not checked out) and a pop up box with options to send to the next library or ignore will present itself. At this point should always be transferred. Typically, the item is sent back to the owning library, but it can be routed to another patron who has requested it, if there is a hold on that record.

Finally, after an item is received back at the owning library, the item should be checked in again. The check in screen will say that the item was not checked out, and there will be no messaging to indicate a transit status has cleared, but the item will continue to show in-transit without this step. This continues to make the item unavailable for library patrons to find it on the shelf or be able to request it. The theme of this section is that if a person isn't sure what to do with an item, they should always check that item in. The system will then send the item to the place it is supposed to go next.

Fines and Fees Accrued on Another Library's Item

Fines from another library's items should never be sent back to the owning library. If the borrowing library does charge fines, then they may adjust the fine to match their rate (if it differs) and keep whatever the charges are. It is far too complicated to have all libraries in AspenCat cutting checks for small amounts of money. Libraries that do not collect fines should just waive anything accrued upon check in.

Reordering and Cancelling Holds

In most circumstances reordering holds should not be done. The line exists for a reason and is based on the order patrons placed holds. There are some exceptions to this general rule. Since holds are triggered upon check in whether or not an item is lent to other libraries, there are scenarios where another library's patron will always pop up. In that case the best approach is to move the home library's patron to first in the queue and immediately trigger that hold. It isn't skipping the line because the item is meant for only home library consumption, and the line begins with the first patron from that library. Anything that is meant for general consumption should not have the holds list reordered, as that violates the spirit of a line that involving all library's patrons.

Cancelling holds can be done by any library, but should never be done on another library's item or for another library's patron (unless permission is given). This can be done from either the patron account (which other libraries don't have access to) or in the item's record by clicking on edit holds. This is also where reordering the holds list can be done. Ensuring that the holds are cancelled by a patron's home library allows that library to communicate with the patron that a hold request cannot be filled or for them to make alternate arrangements.

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Section 2. Courier Best Practices

Community Stops vs. Full Stop Service

The size and topography of Colorado makes for some unique challenges in providing courier service to some areas. While residents of those areas delight in the beauty and quiet lifestyle, it makes for a huge logistical challenge in providing equitable courier service. There are some AspenCat libraries that are located in communities that aren't part of a normal courier route and the cost for a special route is prohibitive to create. The solution is often to create community stops.

Some libraries do community stops despite availability of an existing courier route for cost savings, but other libraries have no other choice to receive courier service. A community stop occurs when a library picks up and drops off their materials for the courier at another library that has full service. Their courier code will have a matching 3 digit number starting with a C to their pickup stop, with an added extension of two letters. For example, C123.ab would allow the library hosting the community stop to differentiate between items meant for them and those meant for a library picking up materials at their location. It is imperative that the full courier code is filled out in the courier slip to ensure items get to their proper destination. In some cases, libraries that aren't on AspenCat are hosting community stops and have no way other than an accurate code to tell where something is headed. Libraries on community stops sometimes have trips of over and hour to get to their nearest courier stop. This complication can delay how regularly they are able to get materials onto the courier.

A full stop refers to a library that receives courier service at their door. However, depending on courier routes and pricing, some libraries only get 1 or 2 visits, instead of 3 to 5. Much like with community stops this can delay when items are received and returned relative to other libraries with more regular service. Allowing some extra time for certain libraries facing more limited courier service should be considered.

Filling Out Courier Slips

The only piece of paper that should be attached to an item should be the courier slip. It has all the pertinent information to get something where it is going, and it is what the courier sorters are expecting to look at. The courier website has numerous helpful links for contacting the courier manager (Sharon Walker), best practices, looking up courier codes and more. It can also generate blank or partially filled out courier slips. The ability to prepopulate information is helpful in two areas that are important for correctly filling out a courier slip: putt down the library code from the item is coming from and marking box for an AspenCat loan is a helpful time saver that ensures better accuracy. It is beneficial to know where an item originates in case it needs to be returned there. It is also helpful to know if an item is an AspenCat loan, so the receiving library understands they can just scan it to trigger a hold.

To create the prepopulated form:

1. Go to couier@clicweb.org
2. Click on "Print Colorado Routing Slips"

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📄 Print Colorado Routing Slips ⬅

🔗 Print Out-of-State Routing Slips

🔗 Report a Service Issue

3. Enter your library's courier code

Please enter your library's Courier Code

Courier
Code:

| |

Close   Submit

4. Click on "Identical Slips"

☰ Blank Slips   ☰ Identical Slips   ☰ Individual Slips

5. Your library should show up in the "From" tab below. Check the box next to "AspenCat" for type of loan

☐ ILL ☐ Circ ☐ OCLC ☐ SWIFT

☐ MARMOT ☐ Prospector Loan

☐ Prospector Return

☐ Correspondence ☑ Aspen Cat

☐ Blue Sky

A prepopulated form will look like the image below and is ready to be printed, cut, and filled out the rest of the way.

Colorado Library Courier Routing Slip	Colorado Library Courier Routing Slip	Colorado Library Courier Routing Slip	Colorado Library Courier Routing Slip
TO:	**TO:**	**TO:**	**TO:**
Use Library Courier Code Only	*Use Library Courier Code Only*	*Use Library Courier Code Only*	*Use Library Courier Code Only*
DATE:	**DATE:**	**DATE:**	**DATE:**
☐ ILL ☐ Circ ☐ OCLC ☐ SWIFT ☐ Marmot ☐ Prospector Loan ☐ Prospector Return ☐ Correspondence ■ AspenCat ☐ Blue Sky	☐ ILL ☐ Circ ☐ OCLC ☐ SWIFT ☐ Marmot ☐ Prospector Loan ☐ Prospector Return ☐ Correspondence ■ AspenCat ☐ Blue Sky	☐ ILL ☐ Circ ☐ OCLC ☐ SWIFT ☐ Marmot ☐ Prospector Loan ☐ Prospector Return ☐ Correspondence ■ AspenCat ☐ Blue Sky	☐ ILL ☐ Circ ☐ OCLC ☐ SWIFT ☐ Marmot ☐ Prospector Loan ☐ Prospector Return ☐ Correspondence ■ AspenCat ☐ Blue Sky
Attn:	**Attn:**	**Attn:**	**Attn:**
From: **C000** Colorado Library Consortium	**From:** **C000** Colorado Library Consortium	**From:** **C000** Colorado Library Consortium	**From:** **C000** Colorado Library Consortium
Questions, Problems, Suggestions? **Colorado Library Consortium** **(CLiC)** 888-206-2695 **courier@clicweb.org** Routing Slip Revision: 2007-06-01	Questions, Problems, Suggestions? **Colorado Library Consortium** **(CLiC)** 888-206-2695 **courier@clicweb.org** Routing Slip Revision: 2007-06-01	Questions, Problems, Suggestions? **Colorado Library Consortium** **(CLiC)** 888-206-2695 **courier@clicweb.org** Routing Slip Revision: 2007-06-01	Questions, Problems, Suggestions? **Colorado Library Consortium** **(CLiC)** 888-206-2695 **courier@clicweb.org** Routing Slip Revision: 2007-06-01

Once the slips are ready to be used the other two pieces that are important of fill out are "To" and "Date". As stated on the courier slip only write the courier code, not the name of the library. Writing only the library name or both can add a significant delay to getting the item to the correct location and creates extra work for the person filling out the slip. Whenever an item is checked in and the holds message pops up, the code for the library that the item is being sent to is in parenthesis.

Transfer to: Carnegie Public Library (C392) (CARNEGIE)

✓ Confirm hold and Transfer

🖨 Print slip, Transfer, and Confirm   ✗ Ignore, Keep here

"Transfer to" shows three pieces of information. The official name of the library, the courier code, and the branch code for Koha. All a library needs to do when filling out a slip is focus on the courier code and ignore the rest. That will ensure the best accuracy and reduce delays for patrons receiving items and items being returned.

It is recommended that when this hold pop up occurs that the library immediately writes down the code on a courier slip, even if the item isn't going to be packaged immediately. If a slip is printed, it will also list the code, or an item can always be checked in again to recreate the pop up.

Courier codes need to be written both clearly and big. The sorters are trying to move as quickly as possible to get things where they are going and if it is written clearly in a medium sized sharpie, it does help them move more quickly and accurately.

There is an option to fill out the "Attn" part of the slip. This should not be done in the normal transport of requested items but should be limited to objects shipped in the courier meant for a specific staff person. This should be a rare occurrence.

Packaging Courier Items

There are some do's and don'ts to packaging courier items that should be adhered to. (Visual Examples to be included with each)

Do use two rubber bands and staple the courier slips over the rubber bands. This makes it less likely that the courier slip will fall off during transport. All items in which the slip falls or tears off are routed to the CLiC office, creating a massive delay in getting them to their intended destination.
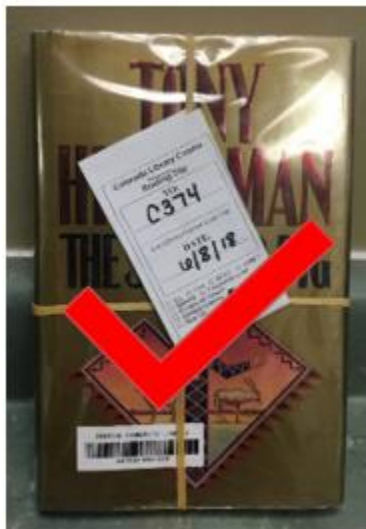
Filling out the slip correctly and packaging the item correctly is all you really have to "Do". This should be simple and low effort to correctly package courier items. If a library is doing many additions to this, they are probably overcomplicating things.

Don't package too many items together even if they are headed to the same place. Packaging 6 large hardback books together will strain the rubber bands and possibly lead to them snapping. Placing a large picture book and a music cd together increases the possibility that the cd could slide out from under the rubber bands and become lost.

Don't include the printed transfer slip with items sent in the courier. Transfer slips include personal information of patrons including name, address, phone number, and email. It is a major violation of privacy and is completely unnecessary in helping get an item where it is going. Even if a slip is placed inside the item, it may end up not being removed until another patron checks that item out.

Don't tape things to another library's items. Courier slips should be attached via staple and rubber bands as indicated previously. Some libraries send thank you messages taped to items, which is meant to be friendly. However, tape can damage the materials that are being returned. This should be avoided. This includes adhering due date slips to another library's item.

Don't feel obligated to return DVDs in cardboard protective sleeves. It seems that library vendors are increasingly cutting costs on packaging for audio visual materials which can lead to damaged items in the courier. To combat that some libraries have placed those materials in between cardboard cutouts to create additional protection. While this makes sense, it is impossible for the borrowing library to keep track of who has cardboard and who doesn't. Thus, there is no requirement that any library return items in cardboard. To combat damaged cases, it is recommended that libraries talk to their vendors about getting extra cases, even if it is at an additional cost. Unfortunately, some attrition of materials from using the courier should be factored in.

Section 3. Tracking Lent and Borrowed Items

When lending on AspenCat the owning library is ultimately responsible for keeping track of their materials. The vast majority of items will be returned with no incident, but that will never be the case 100% of the time. There are some reports that can aid in keeping an eye on where things are and some processes for trying to locate items that may be missing. Ultimately some items will end up being lost on the courier and reported to CLiC/the courier.

Using Reports to Track Items

There are a few reports that can help identify where items during their journey from one library to another. Any Library – Items Owned by Your Library with an In-Transit Status will show all the items that are either on their way to another library or are returning. This is important because if an item is lost on the courier it will likely show on this report. Any Library – Holdings at Other Libraries will show items from that owning library that are checked out at another library. Koha will mark anything that is 45 days overdue lost automatically, so there is no need to contact the borrowing library for overdues, but this report confirms where items not showing on the in-transit report are. To find items that are owned by other libraries the borrowing library can run Any Library – Items at Your Library Owned by Other Libraries. It is not the responsibility of the borrowing library to keep special track of what they are borrowing, outside of damaged or lost items, but this is a way to keep an eye on things. All reports will use the Koha branch code and not the Courier Code to return results.

Process When Items May be Missing

Due to the inequity of courier stops previously addressed AspenCat libraries should take more time than is typically recommended before considering something as potentially missing. By the end of the month it is still possible that an item could have been misrouted, but waiting a month is a good rule of thumb for attempting to track down the item in question. The process for doing so is as follows:

1. Check the shelf of the owning L=library – This should eliminate the possibility that upon return something was shelved before checked in, or put in transit and shelved prior to being sent out on the courier.
2. Contact the library the item is in transit to or from – This will eliminate the possibility the item was re-shelved at the borrowing library, instead of sent on the courier.
3. Report a Lost Item, Multiple Lost Items, or Damaged Items to the Courier Manager – This may help the item be found, but even if it is not found, it is imperative that CLiC has accurate statistics of the loss rate of items on the courier. It helps in negotiating with the courier vendor and can track if there is a sudden upswing in losses, so the problem can be fixed. If reports aren't filed, then CLiC cannot make the case to the courier vendor that they need to improve. If an item does turn up, it should be reported as found. It is also important to report when the courier does not make a scheduled stop. This provides the accountability that is important to keep items moving through the system as quickly as possible.

Section 4. Billing for Missing, Lost, or Damaged Items

Determining Responsibility of Payment

Borrowing libraries are always responsible for items owned by another library while they have custody of them. This moment begins when the item is received in the courier and ends when it is placed back on the courier. Using the Process When Items May be Missing (listed above in section 3) will determine whether the item was lost on the courier. If the item is lost on the courier, the library who borrowed the item should not be billed. If a patron reports a borrowed item from another library as lost, fails to return it, or the item is damaged the owning library should invoice the borrowing library for the replacement cost. The borrowing library is responsible for paying that and then recouping those costs

from their patron. If a patron pays prior to an invoice for a lost or damaged item, the borrowing library should send a check to the owning library. Despite that option, the owning library is responsible for ensuring they receive payment.

Invoicing Another Library

The most important thing to remember when invoicing is that all AspenCat member libraries are part of a community. If there is a standard invoice and message that are sent out, these should be reviewed to make sure the language is friendly and collegial. Messages accompanied by invoices don't have to be crafted from scratch every time, but they should be able to be received warmly by a reasonable person. Everyone participating in resource sharing will be on both ends of the invoicing process at some point.

Some libraries do charge patrons processing charges as part of their normal billing. In this case please do not create an invoice that charges another library an extra fee. As every library will have to both pay and receive payment for items lost or damaged please extend fellow AspenCat libraries the courtesy of waiving that extra charge. Please just bill for the replacement cost.

Some libraries have done a great job of working with their fellow member libraries on certain bills. Perhaps the item is a bit older and doesn't have the same value as when it was originally purchased, providing a discount might be nice. Another scenario that actually happened involved a patron who had a house fire and multiple DVDs were damaged, and that patron couldn't afford to pay for everything. The owning library was responsible for all the borrowed DVDs that were damaged, but knew they would be covering the majority of the cost for that patron. A variety of libraries were willing to negotiate down some of those costs, so all parties paid something into the replacement cost of the damaged DVDs. This is an excellent example of finding ways to work together towards an outcome everyone can feel good about. There is no way to codify exactly how these situations should be handled, so it is up to libraries to find ways to make things work amongst themselves.

Sometimes libraries may accept a replacement copy of an item in lieu of restitution. However, this should not be an assumption. While a library deserves compensation for something they lent that has been borrowed or damaged, they reserve the right to make a collection development decision to not replace that item. Additionally, a library may have a particular process with new books that a replacement copy may not work for. Often a library will accept replacement copies, but an agreement should be reached prior to that copy being sent.

Handling Payment Disputes

If there is ever is a dispute between two AspenCat libraries on payment for something shared, it will be arbitrated by the AspenCat Services Manager. There having been shockingly few instances over the course of AspenCat's existence when this has become necessary. When it has, it has been resolved through discussion and never required a final ruling. Having a guide that clearly lays out procedure should serve to eliminate even more of these rare instances.

To reiterate, all of AspenCat is a community that is working together to provide excellent library service to their patrons/students and as long as that remains the focus resource sharing will continue to be a great service.