

# Guidelines for the interlibrary loan of rare and unique materials

## The national, approved guidelines

by the RBMS Ad Hoc Committee on Interlibrary Loan of Rare and Unique Materials

These guidelines were adopted by ACRL in 1994. This revised version was approved by the ACRL Board of Directors in June 2004. The committee's objectives in preparing these guidelines are:

- to encourage and facilitate interinstitutional loan from special collections for research use;
- to affirm curatorial responsibility in decisions regarding the loan of special collections;
- to specify the responsibilities of lending and borrowing institutions; and
- to ensure the safety and security of items loaned.

### I. The guidelines

These guidelines are intended for use by libraries, museums, archives, historical agencies, and other cultural repositories in order to facilitate the interinstitutional loan for research use of special collections, including books, manuscripts, and archival and pictorial material.

Basic assumptions underlying these guidelines are:

1. Interinstitutional loan from special collections for research use is strongly encouraged but must be conducted in

a manner that ensures responsible care and effectively safeguards materials from loss or damage.

2. Institutions may refuse to lend materials of exceptional rarity or monetary value, items in fragile condition, or materials for which size or format creates increased potential for shipping damage or possible loss (e.g., folios, maps, unbound manuscripts). Loans of these materials might be possible with the addition of security measures outside of the normal interlibrary loan procedures outlined in this document, such as formal written agreements, insurance certificates, or other relevant documentation.

3. Patrons who contact potential lending institutions directly regarding loan of rare or unique materials usually will be referred to their own institution to initiate an interlibrary loan request.

4. The decision to lend materials should involve the individual exercising curatorial responsibility for those materials. Such decisions should reflect an item-by-item, series-by-series, or collection-by-collection consideration, whichever is appropriate, rather than broad categorical responses.

## About the guidelines

Members of the original RBMS Ad Hoc Committee on the Loan of Rare and Unique Materials are: H. Thomas Hickerson (chair), Cornell University; Lori N. Curtis, University of Tulsa; Scott H. Duvall, Brigham Young University; Alice N. Loranth, Cleveland Public Library; Daniel Meyer, University of Chicago; Judith Overmier, University of Oklahoma; Susanne McNatt, Princeton University; Peggy E. Daub, University of Michigan; Connell

B. Gallagher, University of Vermont; and Richard Lindemann, University of California-San Diego.

Members of the committee responsible for the 2004 revised guidelines are: Laura Micham (chair), Duke University; Amy Cooper, University of Iowa; Margaret Ellingson, Emory University; Laura Guelle, National Library of Medicine; Daryl Morrison, University of California-Davis; and Danette Pachtner, Duke University.

5. The loan of materials should rest on well-defined interinstitutional commitments rather than on personal contacts. However, personal familiarity and/or direct communications with curatorial staff at other institutions may facilitate the lending process.

6. A borrowing institution must meet specific criteria described in this document in order to provide appropriate conditions for security, housing, and use of rare and unique materials.

## II. Responsibilities of borrowing institutions

### *A. Institutional prerequisites for borrowing*

The borrowing institution must:

1. provide a secure reading room under continuous supervision to ensure the safety of the materials during use,
2. have a special collections program, including staff with responsibility for and trained in the care and handling of special collections,
3. provide secure storage for borrowed items during the loan period, and
4. provide storage under environmental conditions that meet accepted standards for housing special collections.

### *B. Guidelines for initiating a loan request*

1. Loan requests from non-circulating special collections must indicate that the borrowing institution meets the institutional criteria specified above and that the borrowing institution subscribes to the principles expressed in these guidelines.

2. Loan requests should normally be routed through the respective interlibrary loan (ILL) departments or staff responsible for ILL.

3. Every effort should be made to locate requested material in a circulating collection before submitting a request to a non-circulating special collection. When requesting an item from a non-circulating collection, the fact that a circulating copy, alternate edition, facsimile, digital surrogate, microform or other acceptable substitute for the requested materials was not located should be noted.

4. When distance presents no extraordinary hardship, patrons should be encouraged to travel to other institutions for on-site access, particularly to manuscript, archival, and pictorial material. When distance, long-term use, or the need to access large quantities of materials does present an extraordinary hardship, both the borrowing and loaning libraries should evaluate the patron's request in the spirit of these guidelines,

giving due regard to Section III items 1 and 2.

5. The borrowing institution should describe the requested material fully. Whenever possible, standard bibliographic sources should be used to verify each request. When a request cannot be verified in these sources, full information regarding the original source of citation should be submitted.

6. In addition to a bibliographic description, requests should include, when possible, bibliographic record identification number and the name of the special collection or department in which the item is housed.

7. The request should indicate whether or not another edition, version, or form of material (e.g., a reproduction) can be substituted for the one specified. The request should also indicate willingness to pay for reproductions up to a specified amount and/or include a request for a price quote.

### *C. Guidelines for handling materials on loan*

1. The borrowing institution's interlibrary loan and special collections staff must communicate effectively to ensure that all records and systems accurately document receipt; patron notification; renewal, if applicable; and return of the item loaned.

2. No reproductions of borrowed materials should be made without the explicit permission of the lending institution.

3. If reproduction is permitted by the lending institution, it should be done by special collections staff at the borrowing institution and in compliance with U.S. copyright law. The borrowing institution may, however, decline to make reproductions and refer the patron directly to the lending institution to negotiate arrangements for reprographic services.

4. The borrowing institution must comply with the loan period set by the

lending institution, normally 30-days use. The patron should be encouraged to use the material within the original loan period. If an extension is needed, the borrowing institution should request a renewal prior to the original due date, normally via the same method used to initiate the request.

5. The borrowing institution must abide by any requirements of the lending institution for special handling or use of borrowed materials.

6. If a borrowing institution or patron fails to comply with the conditions of a loan, including proper care, packaging and shipping of borrowed items, that institution or patron can expect that future requests to borrow special collections materials will be denied.

### **III. Responsibilities of lending institutions**

1. Institutions receiving requests should be as generous as possible, consonant with their responsibilities both to preserve and to make accessible to their on-site user community the materials in their care.

2. Decisions regarding the loan of materials from special collections should involve the individual with curatorial responsibility for the requested material and should be considered on a case-by-case basis.

3. Lending institutions should respond to a request for loan of rare materials in a timely fashion, generally within four to five working days.

4. The lending institution should indicate any special conditions governing the use of loaned materials, clearly stating any restrictions or limitations on research use, citation, publication, reproduction, or other forms of dissemination. Lending institutions may limit the volume of material lent and the loan period. Lending institutions are encouraged to set due dates that

allow approximately 30 days' use at the borrowing institution plus travel time.

5. If it is determined that a request can best be fulfilled with a reproduction, lending institutions should provide reproductions at a cost comparable to the standard rate within the lending institution. If requested, a price quote should be made available to the requesting institution. The request might then become a transaction between the patron and the lending institution, and would no longer be the responsibility of ILL staff at either institution.

6. Unless reproductions are marked as loans, the borrowing institution need not return them to the lending institution.

7. Refusals either to lend or copy a requested item should include a specific reason (e.g., local demand, fragile paper, tight binding, extraordinary rarity, too large to ship safely, etc.). That an item is part of a special collection is not a sufficient reason in and of itself to refuse a request.

8. The lending institution should lend rare material at a cost comparable to the standard ILL fee, if any, charged by that institution for the loan of circulating material. If the costs of shipping, insurance, and/or creation of reproductions exceed the normal ILL fee, the lending institution may require additional payment. If the amount to be charged exceeds the maximum cost specified by the requesting institution, the lending institution should notify the borrowing institution of any additional charges and secure an agreement to pay prior to sending the material.

#### **IV. Liability and transport for borrowed materials**

1. The safety of borrowed materials is the responsibility of the borrowing institution from the time the material leaves the lending institution until it is returned to the lending institution.

2. The lending institution is responsible for packing the borrowed material so as to ensure its return in the condition in which it was sent. The borrowing institution is responsible for returning the material in the same condition as received, using the same, or equivalent, packing material. Staff responsible for packing and shipment of materials should be instructed in proper handling and packing of rare materials.

3. If damage or loss occurs at any time after the material leaves the lending institution, the borrowing institution is responsible for the cost of repair, replacement, or appropriate compensation, in accordance with the preference of the lending institution.

4. The borrowing institution may specify that the material be delivered directly to its special collections department. The lending institution may specify that the material be returned directly to its special collections department and may also specify use of a preferred shipping service, insurance, and/or special wrapping requirements.

5. If special shipping arrangements are required, the lending institution should notify the borrowing institution in advance and secure an agreement that the material will be handled as specified.

6. Verification of transfer and delivery should be made through the respective ILL staff, regardless of method of delivery.

#### **Note**

The Rare Books and Manuscripts Section has also produced a set of guidelines for loan of rare and unique materials for exhibition. A revised version of the "Guidelines for Borrowing and Lending Special Collections Materials for Exhibition" is currently in production. The current guidelines can be found at [www.ala.org/acrl](http://www.ala.org/acrl) (click on "Standards and Guidelines.") ■