Although the editorial project of which I am a part has used rare books on interlibrary loan, and hopes to do so again, I want here not to engage in mere special pleading. Rather I wish to look at some of the wider ramifications, for scholars and librarians alike, of lending rare books—a process which for simplicity's sake I shall refer to as special lending.

What has repeatedly struck me as I have discussed special lending with librarians is that the primary barrier is a distrust of the librarian on the other end. On this crucial part of the problem, there is something to learn from Ellen Dunlap and Kathleen Reed's draft guidelines for exhibition lending. Dunlap and Reed recognize that a great barrier to such lending is the potential lender's lack of knowledge concerning the borrowing library. The draft guidelines accordingly try to enable both libraries to convey their bona fides, so that the decision about whether to lend can be reasonably informed and confident.

I will suggest that special lending could similarly be facilitated; let me now, though, say why it is needed and also what problems it could cause us.

I take it as axiomatic that the ultimate purpose of a research library is to advance learning by permitting scholars access to information, and that therefore, other things being equal, a library is doing its job if its books are being used.

Even if you wanted to, you could now no longer suppress the grand ideal of a global research library, a network on which your library is a node. This ideal is driven by technology, including abundant photocopying, the satellite transmission of television, international telephone, and now telefacsimile. Within the academic culture the global ideal has certainly been driven by conventional interlibrary loan, which is now international, and by institutions such as the Cen-
ter for Research Libraries and the British Library Document Supply Centre (formerly the British Library Lending Division).

Perhaps the idea of the global special collection got its serious start when, about 1901, a few U.S. libraries went together to form a card index that grew to become the National Union Catalog. Now we have Mansell, OCLC, and RLIN, and more to the purpose of special lending, the Eighteenth-Century Short Title Catalogue, which proposes redoing the STC and Wing to ESTC standards. If we don’t already have a catalogue for the global special collection, we’re getting there.

To a textual editor—if I may choose an instance close to my experience—these new resources make the borrowing of multiple copies of a title extremely attractive and indeed virtually necessary. What the textual editor wants to do with multiple copies, of course, is to collate them, preferably optically (with the aid of a Hinman, a Lindstrand, or a McLeod), in the search for variant states, issues, and editions that would otherwise remain unnoticed. From this information, the editor seeks to infer the history of textual transmission and to identify versions of the text supervised by the author. Even though it is possible, with pains and expense, to do such collation using copyflo enlargements from microfilm, it’s never quite as accurate, because microfilming and its subsequent enlargement both introduce distortion. Having the copies physically present permits examination of the paper and binding. The volume is not subject to what at some sites must be termed the hazards of microfilming, and the research is not subject to the delays of microfilming.

As this example suggests, not only general cultural forces but the specific demands of current scholarship encourage libraries to conceive of the community they serve as global. And one way they might serve such a community is through special lending.

When for an edition of Laetitia Pilkington’s memoirs A.C. Elias wanted to do optical collation of numerous surviving copies, special lending made it possible. Some of his most important findings come from libraries not on the usual list of luminous eighteenth-century collections—the University of Wisconsin at Oshkosh, for example, or the University of New Brunswick at Fredericton.

David Foxon’s bibliography, English Verse, 1701–1750, gives us for its material a rough idea of the relative strength of the various libraries it surveys. The British Library holds 43 percent of all items listed, the Bodleian 32 percent, Harvard 26, Yale 21, Texas 16, Cincinnati 9, Leeds 8, Illinois at Urbana-Champaign 8, Cambridge 6, Trinity College Dublin 6, the Clark 5, and the Newberry 5. These are the only twelve libraries in the world with as much as 5 percent of the total. In no single library in the world could one find as many as half of the Foxon poems, and in no library outside England could one find more than a quarter of them. I suggest that there is a good deal of important material
besides Foxon verse that is analogously dispersed. No single library can claim to be complete: this is what global bibliographic databases teach us. And no scholar can visit all the dispersed sites, or even most of them.

It is true that there are risks associated with special lending. On the one hand, the risk of loss or damage in transit and the risk that the book won’t be on the shelf when an on-site reader calls for it. On the other hand, a less easily quantifiable risk that the book will sit on its shelf unused and that the book and the library will not have contributed as they should to the advancement of learning. Entropy is inevitable, and so I would surmise that risk avoidance is not a possibility in rare books librarianship; what is wanted is risk management, if I may appropriate a chic phrase.

Are there libraries which should manage their risks by not lending at all? Very few, I think. Even comprehensive and high-demand collections should ordinarily be willing to lend for brief periods, especially if other borrowable copies cannot easily be secured, or if the library’s particular copy needs to be seen, or if, as in an editing project, a number of copies need to be seen and compared.

All libraries, and most particularly those unwilling to lend, should be willing to borrow. And because research generally benefits from being carried out at a library with rich supporting collections, the best libraries will be called upon to be the most active borrowers: noblesse oblige. I realize noblesse doesn’t actually pay expenses, and I’ll say something about them in just a moment.

As to procedures, it might seem that whatever needed saying had been said already in the RLG’s generally admirable “Additional Guidelines.”* But as I’ve suggested, special lending cannot effectively be confined to the RLG. So a different though largely similar compact is needed. My suggestion is that the Rare Books and Manuscripts Section set up a structure and procedures within which reasonable special lending could function satisfactorily. For the sake of discussion, I’ll outline one possible plan:

1. The RBMS would appoint a task force to assess needs, risks, and current practices, and to propose standards and procedures for special lending.

2. After considering the recommendations of its task force, the RBMS would agree on acceptable standards and procedures and appoint a committee to supervise special lending. (The special lending system should require very little supervision, but some monitoring would be desirable, especially at first.)

3. Any special collection could commit itself to the standards and procedures and, with the committee’s approval, could be admitted to membership in the special lending group. A directory of librarians and collections subscribing to this group would be widely circulated. The directory might include notes of pertinent local practices and policies, particularly restrictions. The intent would be to provide enough information about qualified potential borrowers that loans could be made with justifiable confidence.
4. The special lending group would seek an NEH grant enabling it for a three-year trial period to pay a flat per-loan subvention to both borrower and lender. These payments would in most cases substantially cover the out-of-pocket costs at both ends. A grant could also be sought to develop software to administer the special lending system if the electronic communications of the regular interlibrary-loan system were not used. The generation of central statistics should be automated, so that subvention reimbursement checks could be issued periodically with little outlay of clerical time.

5. The new procedures would encourage the lending collection to supply a copy of its cataloguing with the lent volume and where appropriate would encourage the borrowing scholar to return this cataloguing annotated with relevant findings.

6. The procedures should minimize risks while maximizing ease of transaction. But I would recommend that for each loan, both the borrowing librarian (who would have primary responsibility) and the borrowing user sign a brief acknowledgment of their obligations.

7. The special lending system would include speedy shipments, optional advance reservations by any user, on- or offsite, and optional instant recall.

8. It would be understood that special lending was not intended for casual use—that borrowers should not seek special collections materials when modern editions or already published facsimiles or microfilms would suffice. Because of the extraordinary flowering of microfilm series, I believe that in many fields, certainly including pre-nineteenth-century British and American imprints, libraries would very seldom feel that the burden of special lending was onerous.

To summarize: we—librarians and readers—are entrusted with the stewardship of a modest portion of our cultural artifacts. The challenge before us is to maximize the advancement of learning by scholars distant as well as scholars present, by scholars present as well as scholars future. Our task is to find out how we can most effectively invest our intelligence, our energies, and the books entrusted to us, for that larger good. With the right provisos, and not otherwise, special lending may be one good way to pursue this common mission.

NOTES

1. With A.C. Elias, Jr., and John Irwin Fischer, I am editing the Delaware Edition of Swift’s poems.


3. John W. Cronin, “History of the National Union Catalog, Pre-1956 Imprints,” Prospec-

5. Librarians and scholars must also be concerned about potential hazards of the collating device. The Lindstrand and McLeod comparators are both quite kind to books; on either a volume may easily be used without being opened more than 100°. The Hinman Collating Machine requires greater care from the user.

6. I am grateful to A. C. Elias for this information about his edition, to be published by the University of Georgia Press. Borrowing for his research was accomplished through the good offices of the University of Pennsylvania’s Department of Special Collections.


ADDITIONAL GUIDELINES FOR ACCESS TO ARCHIVES, MANUSCRIPTS, AND SPECIAL COLLECTIONS

8.1 INTRODUCTION

These additional guidelines are intended to facilitate and standardize interlibrary loan of research materials housed in the special collections departments of member institutions. They are designed to:

1. reflect the common commitment of member libraries to meet research needs as stated in the RLG Shared Resources Manual;
2. adapt the interlibrary loan protocols set forth in Chapters 6 and 7 to the particular conditions that distinguish special collections materials from those in general collections;
3. be sufficiently flexible to accommodate intra-institutional interlibrary loan regulations.

These guidelines are not intended to cover the loan of materials for exhibit purposes.

Both this manual and the National Interlibrary Loan Code (1980) state that some special collections materials are inappropriate for interlibrary loan because of rarity, monetary value, uniqueness, or fragility. However, other materials in special collections are not rare, expensive, unique, or fragile. Consequently, these guidelines recommend that special collections departments in all RLG libraries treat interlibrary loan requests case by case and that, in the spirit of the RLG compact, they interpret their lending policies as generously as possible.

8.2 RESPONSIBILITY OF BORROWING LIBRARIES

1. Requests for loan of special collections materials and the screening of such requests may originate either in an institution's special collections department or in its interlibrary loan department. Loan requests should normally be routed through the ILL department.
2. Every effort should be made to locate requested material in a general collection before submitting a request to a special collection of non-circulating ma-
materials. When a circulating copy cannot be located, that fact should be noted in requesting the item from a non-circulating collection.

3. Patrons should be encouraged to travel to other libraries for on-site access when large amounts of materials or long-term use is required.

4. The library making the request should inform its patrons if materials cannot be lent because of rarity, uniqueness, fragile condition, format, or donor/creator restrictions. Reproductions will be supplied in lieu of a loan as permitted under copyright law and as the condition of the material allows.

5. The library making the request must describe the material completely and accurately. Standard bibliographic sources should be used to verify each request. When a request cannot be verified in these sources, curatorial consultation should be encouraged before the request is sent on RLIN ILL; the degree of verification should then be stated on the request along with full information on the original source of the citation.

6. In addition to the RLIN record identifier (ID) and call number of items requested, when available, requests should contain the name of the special collection or department within the library to which the request is being addressed, if known.

7. The request should indicate whether another edition, version, or form of the material can be substituted for the one specified. A reason should be provided if substitution will not meet the borrower’s need.

8. The borrowing library is responsible for compliance with the copyright law and its accompanying guidelines. The library should inform its users of the applicable portions of the law and provide an indication of compliance with all copy requests.

9. The loan period for materials borrowed from academic libraries will normally be one month. Exceptions may be made on the basis of the material lent. The lending library is responsible for notifying the borrowing library whenever the loan period differs from the recommended standard.

10. Renewal of a loan should be requested only under unusual circumstances.

11. If a member library fails to comply with the conditions of loan, including proper care and packaging of special collections materials, that library will have its privileges for borrowing special collections materials suspended.

8.3 RESPONSIBILITY OF LENDING LIBRARIES

1. Libraries receiving requests should be as generous as possible, consonant with their responsibilities both to preserve and to make accessible to their on-site and RLG user communities the materials in their care.
2. Requests should be considered case by case.
3. It is the responsibility of the lending library to indicate any specific conditions governing the handling and use of loaned materials, including custodial and supervisory restrictions, and restrictions or limitations on research use, citation, publication, or other forms of dissemination, including photocopying.
4. Lending institutions reserve the right to limit the volume of material loaned or the period for which it is loaned.
5. Response to a request for special collections material should be made within three working days. Response to a request for archival or manuscript material should be made with all possible promptness.
6. If the request is to be satisfied by photocopy, lending libraries are expected to provide a minimum of fifty photocopy pages free of charge per request. Additional free copies may be provided at the library’s discretion. Provision of free copies of archival and manuscript material is at the discretion of the lending institution.
7. Member libraries are expected to provide access to items in a subject field for which they have primary collecting responsibility, within the limitations noted above in paragraph 1. When copyright and condition permit, the lending library may choose to substitute reproductions.
8. Unique materials will, wherever possible, be reproduced for lending purposes.
9. Unless the lending library so stipulates, it will not be necessary for the borrowing library to return photocopied archival or manuscript materials.
10. If materials specified in paragraphs 8 and 9 can be copied and, in the judgment of the lending institution, constitute complete bibliographic units, or if other bibliographic units can be copied for loan purposes, the lending library will make a film or photocopy and send the reproduction on loan. Photocopies sent as loans must be clearly marked as loans. When such copies are returned, the owning library may, if appropriate, catalog them on RLIN as circulating copies, as indicated in RLC’s preservation guidelines.
11. Refusals either to lend or to copy a requested item must include a specific reason (e.g., fragile paper, tight binding, too big to send, etc.). That an item is part of a special collection is not a sufficient reason.

8.4 SHIPPING SPECIAL COLLECTIONS MATERIALS

For special collections materials, lending libraries have the option of specifying alternative methods of delivery to those discussed in section 6.12. These methods may include a different system of transportation, insurance, special
wrapping instructions, and delivery directly to and from the special collections department of the borrowing library. When a library uses alternative systems, verification of transfer and delivery must be made through RLIN ILL. Sections 6.4.6, 6.8.3, and 6.12 outline procedures for delivery of ILL materials. Before the request is processed, these delivery specifications should be communicated via RLIN ILL to the borrowing library, which must agree to return the material in precisely the manner specified. The lending library will pay for sending the material, the borrowing library for returning that material.

8.4.1 Use of Materials in Borrowing Libraries

Conditions for use at the borrowing institution include the following:

1. Protection and use of borrowed materials are the responsibility of the borrowing institution.
2. Borrowing libraries will employ their own regulations governing use of borrowed materials as long as they comply with conditions imposed by lending institutions.
3. Staff of the borrowing institution must communicate to researchers any restrictions on the use of materials and obtain written acknowledgment that the researcher agrees to abide by these restrictions. If written approval by an outside party (donor, executor, etc.) is required, this permission must be established by the lending library prior to loan and sent to the borrowing library prior to the loan transaction.
4. Patrons of lending institutions have priority on use of borrowed materials, and materials may be recalled at any time.
5. The borrowing library is responsible for compliance with the copyright law and its accompanying guidelines. The library should inform its users of the applicable portions of the law and provide an indication of compliance with all copy requests.
6. The borrowing library and its users must comply with the conditions of loan established by the lending library. For special collections materials, the conditions may include use in a supervised reading room where precautions are taken for the security and proper handling of the material. Duplication of the material by the user may be expressly prohibited by the lending library.

8.5 GUIDELINES FOR LIABILITY

With the exception noted in paragraph 1 below, the safety of borrowed materials, in keeping with RLG interlibrary loan policy, is the responsibility of the borrowing library.
1. The safety and insurance of loaned materials is the responsibility of the lending library when sending materials to the borrowing library.
2. The borrowing library will assume liability obligations for borrowed materials on receipt.
3. The safety and insurance of loaned materials is the responsibility of the borrowing library when returning materials to the lending library.
4. When appropriate, lending libraries should assign insurance values for materials loaned to borrowing libraries.

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