

Good Morning Maine Library Directors and Maine Library Community:

Seamless and direct patron borrowing (i.e. a statewide library card) between Maine's libraries has been a topic of discussion for the better part of four decades. For many reasons—ranging from system-related issues to local control and funding—the effort to bring direct “walk-in” statewide borrowing privileges to all card-carrying library users has evaded us.

Last October at the Maine InfoNet Pre-Conference and subsequently at the Maine Regional Library System (MRLS) Business Meeting the following day at the Maine Library Association Conference, librarians in attendance discussed taking additional steps to further resource sharing initiatives among libraries in our state. During those conversations, we determined to actively prioritize the improvement of resource sharing initiatives among libraries in our state—up to and including direct “walk-in” borrowing privileges at as wide a range of libraries as possible.

The Maine State Library and Maine InfoNet established a broad team representing multiple library types to begin looking at what might be possible. This group's initial work brought forward numerous recommendations and considerations relating to direct walk-in borrowing. **These recommendations offer a testing model – not a comprehensive directive or mandate to fully implement a “statewide” library card.**

Over the next few weeks, we will have conversations and outreach with libraries to do the following:

- 1) Invite eligible libraries to participate in scalable pilot tests that encourage direct walk-in borrowing/sharing between libraries that utilize similar systems.
  - a. The most straightforward **opt-In** pilot would invite libraries using any version of Innovative's Sierra within consortial systems or through the “Visiting Patron Check Out” functionality. This INNReach function is available to those libraries who are part of the “Maine InfoNet” hosted system (URSUS, Minerva, MILS, and stand-alone libraries using Sierra and connected through MaineCAT).
  - b. We further want to gauge the interest of - and work with **(on an opt-in basis)** - libraries using other ILS systems to see if direct sharing capabilities could be enabled between those libraries (i.e. Balsam/Evergreen libraries, Atrium libraries, Apollo, etc.).
  - c. We especially want to communicate with libraries incapable of participating in any such pilot at this time. We want to work with them to identify the barriers to their participation and how we might overcome them. (Please See #2a and #2b below.)
  
- 2) Actively encourage the Appropriations Committee and the Maine Legislature, respectively, to pass and fund **LD-1149**. This bill provides significant resources to Maine Libraries to help expand access to MaineCAT and make direct lending to Maine library cardholders at any Maine library much easier systematically.

- a. **LD-1149** seeks funding to bring more libraries into a Maine InfoNet supported system (e.g. MILS).
  - b. Expanding access to MaineCAT also means supporting technology enhancements such as APIs (automated protocol interfaces) that might enable a non-Innovative Sierra ILS to “talk” with MaineCAT.
  - c. Funding to provide a comprehensive analysis of resource sharing between Maine libraries will be provided if LD-1149 passes. We will use this to inform the types of future resources or funding levels required to better support direct borrowing between all libraries and possibly set the stage for Direct State Aid.
- 3) Analyze the pilot tests that are created to best understand what was successful and what created challenges. We will use this data to make modifications and inform how we can better deliver library services for all Maine residents.

I ask for your support and patience as we explore this. Although we will be using already established systems, it will involve changes to a variety of practices in public services. For many libraries, the ideas proposed here are not new – many have honored direct walk-in borrowing arrangements, and have done so using the ILS system’s functionality described above or by creating unique arrangements between their library and others. We can look to them for guidance and inspiration!

I fully acknowledge that there is no “switch” that can be turned on to make all of this happen seamlessly or effortlessly. The path to truly recognizing greater resource sharing and more ubiquitous statewide library services will take time – but each day that passes is a missed opportunity. And, while the world is changing at an ever-accelerating pace, we all recognize the one constant is that we are better able to serve our patrons when we work together. For this reason, the time to expand the ways we collaborate statewide is now.

To paraphrase from John F. Kennedy and make this applicable to our situation in Maine, I offer this: “...[A]ll of this will not be finished in the first 100 days. Nor in the first thousand days... But let us begin.”

**Note:** In addition to the Frequently Asked Questions, available here, [http://www.maine.gov/msl/libs/resource\\_sharing](http://www.maine.gov/msl/libs/resource_sharing) please also feel free to join one of two statewide zoom conference calls (calls will be recorded for individuals to watch if they can’t attend):

**When: May 14, 2019 3:00 PM Eastern Time (US and Canada)**

Register in advance for this meeting:

<https://zoom.us/meeting/register/876474e76ec67893cde7dc3c8da9331e>

**When: May 15, 2019 10:00 AM Eastern Time (US and Canada)**

Register in advance for this meeting:

<https://zoom.us/meeting/register/1eaabdd35fd86f8dc5b9141539e44ee6>