

Cooperative Borrowing

Board of Trustees

Because public libraries are locally funded, those living outside a particular political subdivision have typically had to purchase cards to gain borrowing privileges from neighboring libraries, but recently signed interlocal service agreements among four Northern Utah cities and counties have changed all that and opened the doors to better service. Weber County residents may now get a free library card from the Davis County, Morgan County, Summit County (excluding Park City), Brigham City, and Logan City libraries. Residents served by these partner libraries also qualify for free borrowing privileges in Weber County.

Under the terms of these agreements, borrowers are subject to the rules of the library from which they check out materials, including rules related to loan periods, fines, and the legal methods used to recover money owed to the library. Customers must also pick up materials and return them to the owning library. Each partner has a printed handout, which describes their rules and compares them with those of the Weber County Library (WCL).

These agreements between the WCL and its partners have produced a consortium of the largest number of cooperative borrowing libraries in the state. In addition to saving residents out-of-area fees, they also provide access to collections that are uniquely designed to complement one another. The agreements work because each library brings something valuable to the table.

The mission of the WCL is twofold: to provide the highest quality library and information services to people of all ages, and to help users develop the skills they need to participate in an information society. In support of this mission, the WCL has available a rich amalgamation of reference and information resources in print, non-print, and electronic formats. WCL also encourages young children to develop an interest in reading and learning. This service priority results in an emphasis on providing a robust collection of picture books, easy readers, and children's non-fiction books and audio and videotapes.

Other libraries along the Wasatch Front have different missions and, therefore, different strengths.

The Davis County Library has strong collections of current, high-demand, high-interest materials as well as books that support those involved in formal courses of study. The Brigham City Library collection overlaps those of both the Weber and Davis libraries by emphasizing popular materials and services to preschoolers, but the Brigham City Library also has a unique collection of more than 1,900 books on audiotape. Like Davis County and Brigham City, the Logan Library emphasizes current, high demand materials, but adds a circulating collection of CD-ROM's and an archival history of Cache Valley, including a nearly complete collection of the local newspaper dating back over 100 years.

Since no one library can be "all things to all people," cooperative borrowing agreements create a synergy that strengthens each individual collection by offering free access to libraries with different missions.

To further expand access to materials not held along the Wasatch Front, area libraries also participate in an interlibrary loan network (ILL), which is made up of 6,600 libraries of all types and sizes located throughout the world. ILL agreements allow libraries to borrow books from their ILL partners, and then check them out to their own customers. Interlibrary loan service is *free* to Weber County residents but is limited to those items that are not owned locally, are out of print, or are beyond the scope of the library mission.

Cooperative borrowing and interlibrary loan agreements, whether with area libraries or with libraries flung across the globe, improve access to books and other materials while holding down costs.