

What is ILL? A Library Building Blocks video, brought to you by the University of Houston Libraries. You're reading a research article your professor assigned for class, and the author of the article references a book that would be an ideal source of information for your final paper in that class.

You try searching the library for the book, but unfortunately, the library doesn't have a copy. Luckily, there is still a way to get this book using a library service called Interlibrary Loan.

Interlibrary Loan, abbreviated as ILL, is the process where one library can give its users access to items that it doesn't already own or subscribe to by borrowing those items from another library.

ILL works because many libraries across the country participate in this process, borrowing from and lending to each other. This allows all participating libraries to provide their users with access to many resources in a cost-effective manner.

With ILL, you can request physical materials like books; and you can also request digital items like PDF journal articles.

To submit an ILL request at University of Houston Libraries, access the Interlibrary Loan page on the libraries' website. You will need to request a new ILL account the first time you use this service by filling out a short form.

Once your account has been activated, you can submit ILL requests by logging into the ILL page and filling out a request form with as much information as possible about the item you are requesting. You can usually expect to receive physical materials like books within 5-10 business days, depending on the speed of the lending library.

Digital materials are often delivered within a few hours, but may take 1-2 business days.

You will have to return physical ILL materials by a due date that will be specified when you check the items out, but PDFs of digital items can be downloaded and are yours to keep.

If you're submitting an Interlibrary Loan request at UH Libraries, please don't hesitate to reach out with questions! We're happy to help.