

SUGGESTED WORKFLOW FOR PATRON INITIATED HOLDS

Here's a detailed description of how you might approach the workflow associated with patron initiated holds. Each library will certainly want to modify this workflow to best fit their individual situations. This description is based on interviews of staff in Chester County Public Library System in Pennsylvania, and the Minuteman Library System in Massachusetts. Both libraries have allowed patron initiated holds for at least three years. At the end of the description is a list of FAQ's that will help to clarify the process.

Morning Routine:

1. Download paging slips for your library, both the item level holds list and the title level holds list.
2. Go to shelves and collect the items that appear on your paging slips
3. Go to "Check-in" in the Millennium circulation module
4. Scan the items you've collected. If you discover an item in the group that you do not wish to lend, do not scan the item. For instance, the item may be in poor condition and needs to be sent to repair before it can circulate. Unless your library is the only library that owns the item, this is not a problem. Item requests not filled by your library will appear on the paging slips at another Marmot library the next morning.
5. Once you've scanned the items you wish to lend, the computer screen will give you directions as to the destination of that item. If the book is on hold at your library, the screen will say, "place on hold shelf" and give you the patron's name and barcode number. Follow your procedures for marking the item and placing it on your hold shelf. Notify the patron in the way you are accustomed.
6. If the screen says the item is in-transit to another Marmot library, it will generate a transit slip that you can place in the item. Mark the item with a courier slip identifying the Marmot destination library. For your convenience, the Marmot web site offers courier slips to download.
7. The computer will prompt you to say ok after each hold is trapped and give you the option of putting the item in transit or placing on the hold shelf. Read the screen to make sure you are directing the book to the right location. If you make a mistake and say you want to transfer something that should stay at your library for your patron, simply check the item in again and you'll be able to route the item in the right direction.
8. Band up to three items traveling to the same library together and place the items in the courier totes along with other ILL items.

Processing Courier Delivery:

1. Check in incoming items one by one. Directions for handling the item will appear on the computer screen. Items will show three different statuses:
 - a. It's your item returning home. The computer will direct you to shelve the item.
 - b. The item will be from another library to satisfy a hold for your patron. Mark the item according to your procedures and place the item on the hold shelf. Notify the patron as you are accustomed.
 - c. The item is on its way to somewhere else. The screen will read "continue routing to ___." Make sure the courier slip matches the destination listed on the computer screen. Place the item, properly marked, into the courier bin for pickup.

Managing Holds:

Occasionally, no library in Marmot will be able to fill a request. This may be because only one or two libraries own the item and it cannot be found, the only copies available need repair before they can circ, or the request is ignored in all libraries that could fill the hold. From conversations with large library systems who do this daily, these problems are rare. However, it's good to keep track, just in case. There are two ways of tracking these problems. Two Millennium reports will alert you to problems:

1. The View Outstanding Holds report: This can be set up to show what holds with available copies are sitting out there unsatisfied and how long they've been unfilled. Staff can select to show only their library and only the last week to reduce the length of the report.
2. The Hold Cancellation notice: (See the first FAQ below.) Each library can choose what to do about cancelled holds. Some libraries hold the notices and contact the patrons personally. I suggest allowing the patron to follow up via the automatically generated cancelled hold notice.

FAQ's

Q: What happens if we cannot fill a request from another library and we are the only library in Marmot that owns that item?

A: If you cannot fill a request and another library owns the item, you will not see the request again on the next day's paging slip. The request will simply move to the next library's paging slip. If your library is the only library that owns the item requested and you do not fill the hold, skipping that item will cancel the hold. Hold Cancellation notices will be generated daily, alerting the patron to the fact that his request cannot be filled within Marmot and inviting him to contact library staff to request an interlibrary loan.

Note: If you cannot find an item on a paging slip, mark the item missing in the catalog. If it is damaged, check it out to mending. That way the system will not ask you for that copy again until it returns to available status.

Q: How does the system decide which library should be asked to fill the hold?

A: All participating libraries in Marmot have agreed to share equal responsibility in filling holds. If only one copy is available, the library with an available item will be selected to fill the hold. If more than one copy is available, the system randomly selects any library with a copy available to fill the hold. If a patron chooses your library as a pickup location and your copy is available, your copy will be chosen to satisfy the hold.

Q: If my library has a copy available, and a neighboring library has a copy available, which library will satisfy a hold placed by my patron?

A: All items are paged from the desired pickup location first, if a copy is available. If a Telluride patron places a hold and chooses Mesa County as a pickup location, the Mesa County copy will be paged to fill the hold. Normally, patrons will select their home library as the desired pickup location. In that case, if your copy shows available, your patron will get your copy.

Q: Will patron initiated holds be item holds or title level holds?

A: Based on advice from other library systems, Marmot has chosen to make patron initiated holds title level holds. The exception will be when patrons are prompted to choose a particular volume within a record to hold, such as one issue of a magazine or volume 2 of a multi-volume set. Staff will always be able to place item level holds but should only do so when requesting a specific copy of a title.

Q. What happens to holds that never get filled?

A: If a hold revolves through a list of libraries and never gets filled, there are two reports that will alert staff to the problem:

- a. Expired holds report: Holds that have been presented to every library with an available copy and are still not filled will be cancelled by the system. Hold Cancellation notices will be generated to send to patrons. Libraries may choose to address each cancellation before sending the notice, or send the notice, inviting patrons to pursue an interlibrary loan request.
- b. View Outstanding Holds Report. This report shows you what's available that should have been shipped by now. Choose status of available, and limit your display to the previous week to keep the list manageable. Select your pickup location. The results will alert staff to a hold that's been "out there" too long.

Q: What if we find that our DVDs are all going out to other libraries? I feel an obligation to my own patrons first.

A: Any library may choose to limit what they loan to other libraries, whether by item type, subject, or location. For instance, a library may have special collections focusing on railroad history that they wish to keep locally. It is possible to restrict borrowing on that collection to local patrons only. The same goes for DVDs.

Q: How will replacement funds for lost or damaged items be transferred?

A: Marmot will use the same system as traditional ILL to collect refunds for lost or missing items between libraries.

Q: How will we evaluate the success of patron initiated holds?

A: The goal of patron initiated holds is to:

1. expand the number of materials directly available to our patrons
2. enable patrons to control their own request functions
3. reduce the turnaround time to fill holds
4. reduce the cost of interlibrary loan by automating the process among Marmot libraries

Participating libraries will evaluate the success of the service by examining success toward these goals. If we find turnaround times to be too long, we can change the priority tables within the module so that different libraries are chosen more often or less often to fill a hold. After the initial test period, administrators will calculate the cost per item to deliver patron initiated holds and compare the cost to traditional methods of interlibrary loan service. And each staff member will be able to collect feedback indicating customer satisfaction.

Libraries in Pennsylvania and Massachusetts report tremendous patron satisfaction and high use of the service. In 2003, Chester County Library System began patron initiated holds. The first month, without advertising the service, they had 2,000 requests within a 20 member library system. Three years later, they have 22,000 requests per month.