



# Open Access in Interlibrary Loan: a Practitioner's Handbook

## Your Key Questions Answered

### **What is Open Access, and is it legal to use in ILL?**

Yes, papers that are Open Access, including those delivered through tools like “DeliverOA”, are legal to send to patrons. Open Access is a way to publish academic articles that better aligns with library values. Open Access work is digital, online, free of charge, and free of most copyright and licensing restrictions ([Suber, 2004](#)). There are two ways works are made Open Access. The first is self-archiving, where an article published in a subscription access journal has a nearly identical copy legally made freely available through a repository. The other route is publishing in an Open Access Journal. These journals maintain the high standards of traditional publishers and have business models that allow them not to charge for access. It can be difficult for patrons to find Open Access works, particularly those that are self-archived, and ILL can aid patrons with discovery.

### **Does your patron complain about delivering Open Access?**

Patron complaints are infrequent when delivering Open Access through ILL. If you are concerned about this, there are ways to preempt such complaints. For instance, in your patron notification, you can include a description of what you are delivering and an offer to obtain the final, published version if necessary for their research.

### **How do I deliver Open Access materials?**

Regardless of your ILL management system, you can integrate Open Access delivery into your workflow ([Baich, 2015](#)). Tools like [DeliverOA](#) will create a more streamlined process than was previously possible.

## More Questions?

The Open Access Button runs an Open Access & ILL helpdesk at [help@openaccessbutton.org](mailto:help@openaccessbutton.org). If you need support, they're happy to assist.

## Why should I care about Open Access?

### Increased Ability to Fill

Open Access increase fill rates and user satisfaction by delivering generally difficult to borrow items such as theses and dissertations as well as those not widely collected such as reports, conference presentations, and white papers.

### Increased Speed of Fulfillment

Open Access is a faster way to fill some requests. By searching for likely open Access materials prior to submitting requests to other libraries, ILL practitioners can reduce the turnaround time for these requests and alleviate the workload of other libraries. You are a better ILL partner and provide better customer service through the delivery of easily located Open Access documents.

### Decreased Cost

In addition to making you a better partner to other libraries, utilizing Open Access reduces ILL costs. Instead of potentially paying borrowing fees, practitioners can obtain Open Access documents free of charge with the only cost being a minimum of staff time ([Baich, 2015](#)). If you'd like to see how much you can save, try [OAsheet](#).

### Serving the Library's Mission

By integrating Open Access into ILL, practitioners can better serve the library's mission of providing access to information. Practitioners can help users quickly access content they'd otherwise miss, educate them about a critical issue, and help deter unauthorized sharing ([Baich, 2018](#)). Practitioners can also advocate for the introduction of Open Access discovery tools like the Open Access Button and Unpaywall into user environments, which may reduce the number of requests received in ILL, allowing you to direct more of your focus toward the truly thorny requests.