

# Peer-to-Peer (P2P) Resource Sharing at WRLC

Peer-to-Peer (P2P) resource sharing is a library-to-library lending model that enables academic libraries to share physical materials directly with one another using the Alma library services platform. At the WRLC, P2P resource sharing expands traditional consortium borrowing by connecting WRLC libraries to a broader national network of partner institutions, while maintaining a single, integrated workflow for discovery, requesting, lending, and returns.

Unlike legacy interlibrary loan systems that rely on external brokers or multiple platforms, P2P resource sharing operates entirely within Alma. Requests are placed by patrons through Primo, WRLC's discovery interface, and are automatically routed by Alma to eligible lending partners based on predefined lending agreements and availability rules.

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## History and Development at WRLC

WRLC's engagement with Peer-to-Peer resource sharing began in 2020 as part of a Resource Sharing Committee (RSC) initiative to explore scalable, cost-effective ways to expand access to collections beyond the consortium. Three WRLC member libraries, George Washington University, American University, and Marymount University, participated in an initial pilot with the State University of New York (SUNY).

Although the formal pilot concluded, the partnerships it established continued to grow. These collaborations evolved into what is now known as Libraries Optimizing Alma Networks (LOAN), a multi-consortial peer-to-peer lending community comprised of nearly 100 academic libraries. The LOAN network includes institutions from regional and statewide consortia such as the Partnership Among South Carolina Academic Libraries (PASCAL), the Florida Virtual Campus (FLVC), the Independent Colleges and Universities of Florida (ICUF), the Virtual Library of Virginia (VIVA), and others.

Through LOAN, WRLC libraries participate in a distributed lending ecosystem that extends well beyond local and regional boundaries while preserving shared expectations around loan policies and service levels.

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## How Peer-to-Peer Resource Sharing Works

From a patron perspective, Peer-to-Peer resource sharing is largely invisible. Users submit a standard request through Primo without selecting a specific fulfillment pathway. Alma automatically evaluates the request and attempts fulfillment in the following order:

1. WRLC consortium partners
2. Peer-to-Peer (LOAN) partners
3. Traditional interlibrary loan systems, such as ILLiad, if configured as a lender of last resort

For staff, P2P lending uses the same Alma fulfillment workflows as local and consortium lending. Items appear in pick lists, circulate like local materials, and require no separate systems. Alma verifies lender eligibility and item loanability before routing requests, reducing manual triage and staff mediation.

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## **Benefits to Libraries and Patrons**

### **Expanded Access to Collections**

Peer-to-Peer resource sharing significantly increases the pool of available materials by extending borrowing access to nearly 100 partner libraries beyond WRLC. This improves the likelihood of successful fulfillment, particularly for specialized or low-circulation titles.

### **Faster and More Efficient Fulfillment**

Large lending rotas allow requests to roll automatically between partners, minimizing delays caused by staff intervention. Libraries report faster turnaround times compared to traditional interlibrary loan workflows.

### **Reduced Staff Burden**

Because P2P operates entirely within Alma, staff avoid maintaining parallel systems or manually routing requests. The streamlined workflow supports efficient processing by both permanent staff and student workers.

### **Cost Containment**

Peer-to-Peer lending does not carry per-transaction fees. Participating libraries incur only shipping costs, reducing reliance on paid interlibrary loan services and supporting long-term sustainability, particularly as some institutions move away from OCLC-based systems.

### **Improved Transparency**

Borrowers benefit from clearer request statuses and shipment visibility, often with more transparency than traditional consortium borrowing models.

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## **Strategic Value for WRLC**

Peer-to-Peer resource sharing directly supports WRLC's strategic priority to maximize access to collections through innovative, cost-effective mechanisms. By leveraging existing Alma infrastructure and staff expertise, WRLC libraries scale resource sharing without introducing new platforms or long-term financial commitments.

P2P also complements broader cooperative initiatives pursued by WRLC committees such as the Coordinated Collections Committee (CCC). A stronger, more reliable borrowing network enhances the practical impact of shared collection strategies by increasing borrowing options, reducing dead ends, and reinforcing policy alignment across partner institutions.

Additionally, P2P serves as a flexible bridge toward more advanced resource sharing models, such as Rapido, without requiring immediate adoption or additional cost.

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## **Relationship to Other Resource Sharing Models**

Peer-to-Peer resource sharing at WRLC is distinct from both traditional consortium borrowing and Rapido-based networks. While some LOAN partners use Rapido, participation in P2P does not require it. Instead, WRLC libraries use Alma's native resource sharing functionality, maintaining compatibility with a diverse set of partners and workflows.

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