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*Peer Reviewed Article*

## SILLVR: Streaming Interlibrary Loan Video Resources

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### Abstract

This paper is an overview of SILLVR (Streaming Interlibrary Loan Video Resources), an innovative, collaborative pilot project that facilitates interlibrary loan (ILL) for streaming video. Conceived of by Auraria Library staff, SILLVR leverages partnerships with streaming video vendors and the Colorado Alliance for Research Libraries to enable library-to-library borrowing of streaming video media. This paper begins by briefly investigating the history and landscape of interlibrary loan, the loaning of electronic and “new” media, as well as how libraries collaboratively work towards increased ILL access and how this work supports equity. The second half of the paper details the creation of SILLVR, from its conception to the partnerships it has engendered and the workflows that will make it a reality.

Keywords: interlibrary loan, resource sharing, streaming video

### Introduction

In January 2017, Auraria Library moved the Interlibrary Loan (ILL) unit from the Access and

Public Services (APS) department into the Acquisitions unit in the Technical Services division. This merger brought to light the similarities that exist around acquiring resources whether pur-



chased or subscribed to from vendors and publishers or borrowed from other libraries. For Auraria this reorganization provided opportunities to implement new services that the Library had not offered before. It also offered a closer view into the licensing of certain collections, which revealed their differing permissions, specifically streaming video. These restrictive licenses, coupled with a growing percentage of the budget devoted to streaming video resources, encouraged the authors to investigate the possibility of ILL for streaming video and so the Streaming Interlibrary Loan Video Resources (SILLVR) project team formed. It is important to note that many managers at this point would have shut down the idea of attempting to obtain ILL permissions for streaming video thinking it too unlikely. The leadership in Technical Services at Auraria Library believed in giving the “unlikely” project a chance. Without that support and willingness SILLVR would not have come to life.

Auraria Library serves three institutions of higher education on one campus: University of Colorado Denver (CU Denver), Metropolitan State University of Denver (MSU Denver), and Community College of Denver (CCD). The authors would like to acknowledge that in order to create the Auraria campus in the early 1970s, people, families, homes, and businesses were displaced.<sup>1</sup> Most of the families living in the area at the time were Hispanic/Latinx and protested their forced relocation.<sup>2</sup> However, the city of Denver enacted eminent domain to remove hundreds of families and tear down their homes to develop the Auraria campus. Several of the historic homes were saved and are now used as offices or for other campus functions. The three institutions also offer free tuition to the displaced families, and their children and grandchildren.<sup>3</sup> The vision of Auraria was one of consolidation and collaboration; a place where a student could attend community college, transfer to a four-

year college, and go on to earn a graduate degree all on the same campus. While that vision has changed over the years and each of the institutions has worked to carve out its own identity, the library continues to be one of the few shared resources and services. Auraria Library serves a diverse population, offering resources and services that support curricula from certificates in dental hygiene to PhDs in Public Health. The campus’s full time enrollment (FTE) is approximately 32,000. MSU Denver & CCD are Hispanic Serving Institutions (HSIs) and 48% of CU Denver’s students identify as students of color. As a commuter campus with growing online degree programs, it is especially important that library resources are accessible 24/7 from off campus and so in turn, 90% of the library’s collections budget is spent on electronic resources.

#### **A Brief History of ILL**

Sharing materials between libraries has been practiced in various forms throughout the world for at least several centuries.<sup>4</sup> Monasteries and convents during the middle ages were known for their extensive collections of manuscripts, which allowed for lending of materials among these institutions. In 1212, at the Council of Paris, monks were encouraged to create separate collections of materials specifically for loan, which at the time was considered a great act of mercy to the poor – a view that can be seen as a precursor to modern libraries’ emphasis on equity and social justice in their lending practices. During this same time in the Islamic world the exchange of materials between libraries was also commonplace.<sup>5</sup>

In Western Europe during the Renaissance, and around the same time in China, scholars began to call for formal lending agreements between libraries and manuscript collectors.<sup>6</sup> Despite these encouragements by scholars, the first major developments in formalized ILL came well over 200 years later. In 1876, the librarian at Worcester Free Public Library in Massachusetts, Samuel



S. Green, called for cooperation among libraries for ILL, writing to the *Library Journal*, "It would add greatly to the usefulness of our reference libraries if an agreement should be made to lend books to each other for short periods of time."<sup>7</sup> In 1890 Joseph C. Rowell, the librarian at the University of California Berkeley, started an ILL system with University of California campuses and other libraries, stating "the growing demands of scholars, incapable of satisfaction by any one library, and the economical management of library finances, unitedly prompt a closer relation, a vital union, between the larger libraries of our country."<sup>8</sup> The system he put in place had numerous requirements, including that borrowing libraries were responsible for materials borrowed and they paid for the shipment of the material, that libraries must keep track of patron usage of these materials, and that highly-used or rare texts only be loaned with the approval of the institution's librarian, many of which have become standard practices.<sup>9</sup>

The American Library Association (ALA) adopted its first ILL code in 1917 formalizing the practice for North American libraries. In creating this code, the ALA's stated intention was "to aid research calculated to advance the boundaries of knowledge" and "to augment the supply of the average book to the average reader." Developments in ILL continued at an exponential pace throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>10</sup> Some of the most notable developments included the institution of fees to borrow materials at the University of California, Stanford University, and the University of Nebraska; the continued development of catalogs for discovery such as The Union Catalog of the Library of Congress in 1936; and the development of the Association of College and Reference Libraries code for ILL in the 1940s which helped to define the purpose and intent of ILL among universities. During the mid-1950s, a standard ALA ILL request form was developed, and through the years, the ALA continued to revise its ILL code.<sup>11</sup> In 1967, the Online

Computer Library Center (OCLC) formed, and in 1979, their ILL subsystem was created.<sup>12</sup> This allowed libraries to process requests electronically and significantly reduced the time required to process ILL transactions. The amount of growth in the use of ILL services since then is staggering. OCLC, which maintains WorldCat, the largest online catalog of library holdings worldwide, reports that since the organization began in 1967, it has processed over 280 million requests. In 1981 OCLC reported processing 70,601 ILL requests.<sup>13</sup> By 2018, the number of annual requests processed had grown to 6.9 million.<sup>14</sup>

### ILL Today

The current ALA ILL code states how vital a service ILL is to libraries: "In the interest of providing quality service, libraries have an obligation to obtain material to meet the informational needs of users when local resources do not meet those needs. Interlibrary loan (ILL), a mechanism for obtaining material, is essential to the vitality of all libraries."<sup>15</sup> Despite this language, and the importance of the practice to libraries, ILL has not transformed at the same pace as technology in libraries. The ALA code includes little to no mention of electronic resources and born digital content. Additionally, there are barriers in the form of restrictive license agreements from vendors and publishers and in the current technology for electronic resources, which need to be overcome to allow greater lending and borrowing between libraries in a way that benefits library patrons and protects the rights and interests of content providers. In *Resources Anytime, Anywhere: How Interlibrary Loan Becomes Resource Sharing*, Ryan Litsey mentions three new types of resources that might be on the horizon for ILL or resource sharing: eBooks, datasets, and 3-D objects, but does not mention streaming media.<sup>16</sup> However, streaming media is a growing collection format in libraries. By 2020, it is estimated that streaming video viewing in libraries will be the equivalent of 7.2 billion DVDs



per month.<sup>17</sup> Jennifer A. Dixon reported on a *Library Journal* survey in 2017 that 92% of students were using streaming video for classes.<sup>18</sup> Julia E. Seaman and Jeff Seaman found in 2018 that 28% of teaching faculty were assigning video for coursework.<sup>19</sup>

The main system that libraries use for ILL is OCLC's ILLiad system. OCLC created a cloud-based system in 2017 called Tipasa to which a small number of libraries have migrated. Neither ILLiad nor Tipasa explicitly allows for eBook ILL, but libraries can create workarounds that let them share eBooks. In recent years libraries have been working together to open up access and build tools and technologies that provide ILL when it does not exist. Two examples include Occam's Reader, which allows ILL for eBooks, and Project ReShare, which is creating a community-driven ILL system.

Occam's Reader was created through a collaboration between the Greater Western Library Association (GWLA), Texas Tech University (TTU), and the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa. Occam's Reader went live in 2014 with around twenty participating libraries, allowing them to share short-term DRM (digital rights management) copies of eBooks. While that number has doubled today, it is still very small compared to the number of academic libraries in North America. Springer was the first publisher to agree to allow ILL via Occam's Reader. Since 2014 adding additional publishers has also been slow going. So, too, has been implementation of changes in the system. A 2014 interview noted that Occam's Reader needed to improve its accessibility and readability for visually impaired patrons.<sup>20</sup> In 2019, Occam's Reader was able to address this concern, implementing a system to create audio files for uploaded eBooks, making books accessible to patrons with visual impairments.<sup>21</sup>

Project ReShare is another example of the library community banding together to build a system

or tool that meets its needs. While there is not necessarily a gap in the availability of ILL tools there is a gap in the capabilities the current tools offer.<sup>22</sup> Project ReShare has not specifically said they are focusing on a workflow for eBooks or other new media types, instead, they are looking for more interoperability and to support open source technology, both of which leave open the possibility of allowing ILL of eBooks and other new resource types.<sup>23</sup>

Other organizations are pushing for expanded ILL eBook permissions. For example, in 2016 the Virtual Library of Virginia (VIVA) negotiated ILL eBook rights with Brill, Oxford, Taylor & Francis, and Wiley.<sup>24</sup> The consortium to which the Auraria Library belongs, the Colorado Alliance of Research Libraries (the Alliance), also negotiated ILL rights for Springer eBooks using its local resource sharing system and union catalog, Prospector.

### Survey Findings

The need for and importance of ILL for streaming video was apparent to the Auraria Library staff, but what about in other libraries with different populations? To answer this question, the SILLVR project team conducted a survey about the need for streaming video ILL in the fall of 2018. Using Qualtrics, the survey (see appendix A) included questions that gathered demographic data, and asked about current ILL practices, the need for ILL for streaming video, and the library's current spending on streaming video. The project team then distributed the survey to various library lists and kept it open for two and a half weeks. The team received 256 responses with most (88%) coming from academic libraries. The lists the project team posted on are geared towards academic libraries, so this survey is not a good reflection of the preferences of public or special libraries. Only five respondents reported they did not currently offer any ILL services.



Eighty-three percent of respondents indicated that their patrons would occasionally, very frequently, or always use ILL for streaming video. This demonstrated to the project team that there was a potential need for this new service and gave them enough encouragement to pursue the pilot. Table 1 shows how librarians responded to

the question about how often they believed their patrons would use such a service.

The vast majority of respondents (204 libraries) said they currently subscribe to streaming video. Table 2 shows how much libraries are spending on streaming video.

**Table 1: Survey results of How often would patrons borrow streaming videos via ILL?**

How often would patrons borrow streaming videos via ILL?	# Respondents	% of Respondents
Never	6	3.06%
Rarely	27	13.78%
Occasionally	96	48.98%
Very frequently	62	31.63%
Always	5	2.55%
Total Responses	196	

**Table 2: Survey results on annual funds spent on Streaming Video**

Annual funds spent on Streaming Video	# Respondents	% of Respondents
\$0	9	4.19%
\$1-\$1,000	3	1.40%
\$1,001-\$15,000	51	23.72%
\$15,001-\$50,000	60	27.91%
\$50,001-\$100,000	23	10.70%
Over \$100,000	9	4.19%
I don't know	60	27.91%
Total	215	

### Support and Partnerships

In order to gauge interest and develop potential partnerships, the SILLVR project team shared their idea at conferences such as the Charleston Library Conference, Electronic Resources & Libraries (ER&L), Colorado ILL Conference, and ALA Annual. The presentations focused on the survey results, delved into licensing restrictions around streaming video, presented possible models and workflows to make SILLVR work, and spoke to the issues of equity and social justice intrinsic in resource sharing. The presentations were met with positive feedback and led to interesting discussions with library staff all over the country. A common concern emerged from these discussions, namely would vendors and

content creators be willing to allow ILL? Ebooks have existed much longer than streaming media, and eBook ILL is still an awkward and labor-intensive process for those that even allow it. It is no secret that library staff and vendors can have opposing viewpoints on acquisition models, eResources licensing, and costs for resources. This is very apparent in the global Open Access (OA) conversation and in collective efforts to change the scholarly publishing landscape so that research is freely available to the public. Meanwhile public libraries in the United States and Canada are battling publishers to expand access to eBooks.<sup>25</sup>

In light of some of these current battles over acquisition models, the SILLVR project team had





reservations that it would find any potential vendor partners. For this reason, it was important to emphasize the benefits ILL provides to vendors. From Auraria Library's experience and research, the team knew that ILL can indirectly generate money and sales for vendors. One startling example was within Auraria Library's own consortium, the Colorado Alliance of Research Libraries. When the Alliance negotiated ILL rights for Springer eBooks, libraries in the Alliance saw patron demand they would not have seen otherwise.<sup>26</sup> Because ILL is not a permanent solution to patron demand, and it takes several days for patrons to receive an eBook, several Alliance libraries chose to begin subscriptions to Springer eBooks based on ILL requests. This example factored heavily into conversations between the SILLVR project team and streaming video vendors, and these conversations resulted in more interest than anticipated. The project team certainly heard many "no's" from streaming video vendors, but for different reasons than expected. Many vendors indicated that they did not have the technology or enough staff to participate. While some vendors were concerned about loss of sales by allowing ILL (the Springer example was not enough!), the biggest hurdle for them was not having the technology to enable resource sharing. However, several of them were willing to build it.

### From Idea to Reality

The SILLVR project team secured two intrepid vendor partners to help make SILLVR a reality: Infobase, also known as Films on Demand (FOD), and Swank Digital Campus. [Infobase](#) provides supplemental educational materials to the school and library markets. Their "Films on Demand Master Academic Video Collection" provides unlimited access to more than 35,000 titles from over 800 international producers. [Swank Digital Campus](#) partners with major movie studios, documentary providers, and independent filmmakers to offer colleges and universities access to a streaming library of over

25,000 films and TV episodes for academic support. One of the restrictions with Swank films is that they are available only to academic libraries because of the licenses they sign with their movie studio partners. This issue creates a small obstacle as the SILLVR project team partners with the Alliance to provide the actual resource sharing software system SILLVR will use.

The Alliance is a consortium of sixteen libraries located in Colorado and Wyoming. [Among other work the Alliance performs for member libraries, it also oversees Prospector](#), a union catalog of about fifty academic, public, and special libraries in Colorado and Wyoming, as well as a resource sharing system between these libraries. This partnership was a natural fit, not only because the Alliance already manages a borrowing and lending technology, but because they are familiar with novel ILL arrangements, such as the Springer eBook ILL project, and they welcome collaboration and sharing.

In conjunction with all of the SILLVR partners, the project team determined the pilot would launch in January 2020. After finalizing the project plans, the project team and vendor partners signed a memorandum of understanding (MOU) that outlined the timeline and details of the project. Next, the vendors went to work creating their own lending technology, the project team identified libraries that wanted to participate as lending libraries (these libraries had to have current subscriptions to Swank and/or FOD content), and both the SILLVR project team and the Alliance began to create the borrowing and lending processes.

### Borrowing and Lending Process for SILLVR

Prospector libraries send their catalogs (in the form of MARC records) to the Prospector system. Items that are available to borrow show as "available" in Prospector. The patron requests the item by clicking a "request" button and then



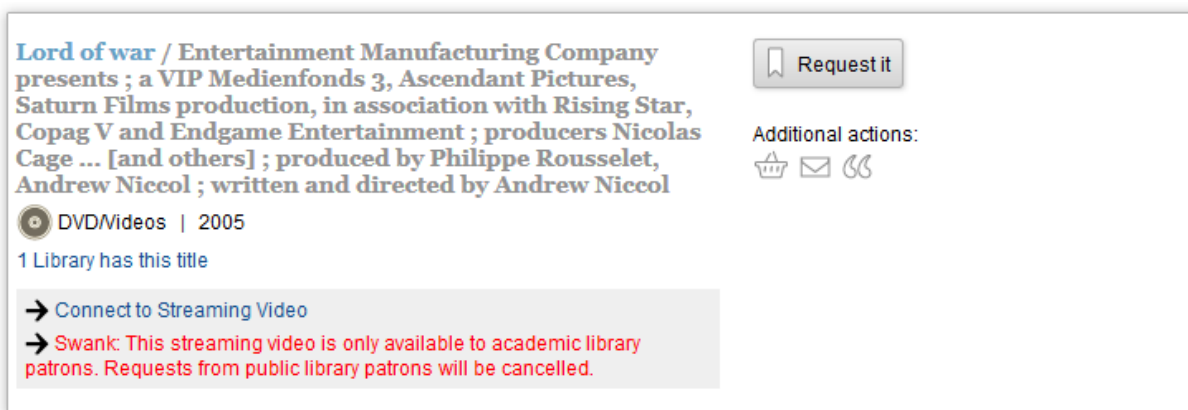


enters their library credentials to finalize the request. Items that cannot be borrowed do not have this “request” button. For the purpose of this project, loaning libraries must update their streaming video MARC records in their integrated library system (ILS) to an “available” status so the “request” button will appear allowing Prospector library patrons to request these streaming videos. Prospector automatically sends the request to the lending library and the lending library fills the request. This usually means putting a slip with the patron’s name in a book or DVD and sending the item to the requesting library via courier. In the case of streaming videos, this works a bit differently as there is no physical item and both FOD and Swank have different methods of allowing ILL.

Swank created an ILL portal for every Prospector library that is able to request a Swank video. The lending library that receives the Prospector

request emails Swank and asks them to add the streaming video to the requesting library’s ILL portal. Swank uploads the video to that particular portal and emails the video link back to the lending library. The lending library then forwards the Swank link to the borrowing patron. In this case, the Swank portal is IP authenticated, meaning that requesting libraries must add the Swank URL to their authentication system (e.g. EZProxy). Swank already had this portal technology in place, though they had to create new portals for the libraries that would be requesting videos. And as mentioned before, the only libraries able to borrow are Prospector’s academic libraries due to Swank’s licenses. The MARC records for these videos were amended with the note shown in Figure 1.

**Figure 1: Swank streaming video “Lord of War” record in Prospector with “Request It” link and 856 note that says: “Swank: This streaming video is only available to academic library patrons. Requests from public library patrons will be cancelled.”**

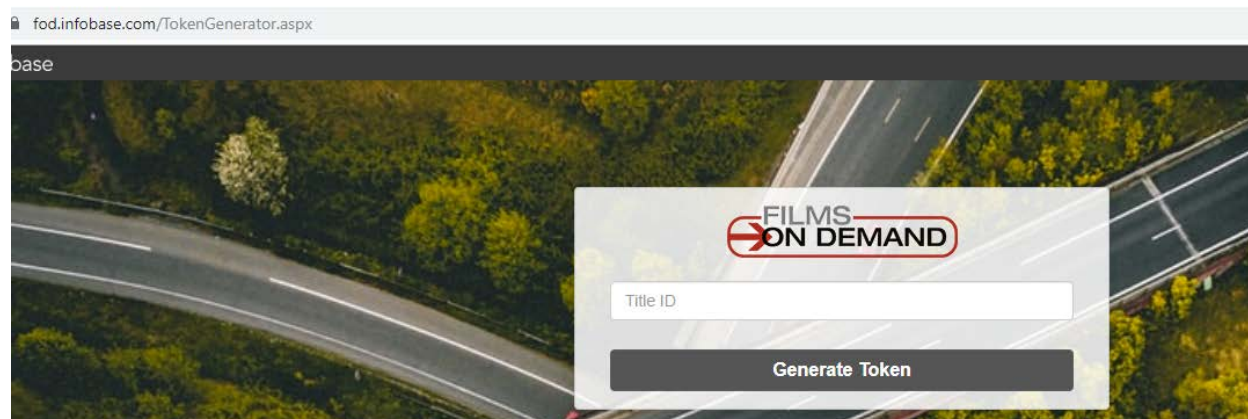


FOD, on the other hand, had to create a new technology for the SILLVR pilot (See Figure 2). With FOD, after the lending library receives the Prospector request, they can create a token URL with the video’s unique Title ID (the Title ID is

assigned by FOD and is an internal cataloging system). The lending library shares this unique token URL with the borrowing library, which then forwards it to the requesting patron. The token technology grants access only to the video

that was requested and prevents the patron from accessing other content on the FOD platform.

**Figure 2: FOD ILL token website.**



For both Swank and FOD, the video can be viewed only for twenty-one days, after which Swank removes the video from the platform and FOD's link expires. Renewals are not granted. If a patron wants to view the video again they must initiate a new request. The lending library also maintains access to the requested video just as they would when lending an article or eBook. Prospector uses a "load table" which ensures that borrowing requests are evenly sent to lending libraries and no library is overwhelmed with requests. For Swank there are three libraries that will be lenders and for FOD there are four.

### Next Steps

The pilot began in January 2020 and will last for one calendar year. During this year, the SILLVR project team will collect data to help assess and determine the success of the pilot. Some of these statistics include which titles are borrowed, the total number of requests and number of requests per title, and the number of borrows and lends per library per month. In addition to quantita-

tive data the team will gather feedback from patrons, participating libraries, and vendors to understand what went well and what needs improvement. All patron data will be kept confidential in line with the ALA ILL code. Other statistics will have to be provided by Swank and FOD themselves such as length of time viewed, number of views per request, and number of links never opened. This data will help inform the SILLVR project team about next steps. The hope is that the data will provide evidence that this is a useful service to both libraries and vendors. This could lead to expanding SILLVR to include more vendors and libraries nationwide. Perhaps the ability to loan streaming video could be integrated into major ILL products like ILLiad, Tipasa, or Project ReShare. There are still many challenges and hopefully this is only the beginning of opening up lending of these important resources.

### Conclusion

Posner said it well, "If, as they say, information is power and sharing is caring, then we can see

that librarians share information because we care about empowerment. This is why, rather than hoarding, hiding, or discounting information... it is the ongoing and eternal mission of librarians to connect people with information by sharing it."<sup>27</sup> The initial survey shows that there is interest across the academic library profession in sharing streaming video content through ILL, and the positive response from vendors shows that they are willing to work with libraries to provide increased access to streaming video.

During a time when we are seeing breakdowns in collaboration between libraries and vendors, SILLVR is an example of vendors working with libraries to provide more access to patrons, even as the landscape of available formats becomes more complex. In order to maintain access and services to patrons, librarians, and vendors/content creators can work together to allow ILL for new formats. Libraries have and continue to advocate for changes that benefit other libraries and users. There are many examples of libraries collaborating to open up access and create the systems or tools needed. SILLVR, even at this early stage, provides a way to expand ILL services in line with new technologies. The pilot will demonstrate the broader necessity of this service and already provides a roadmap for how to work with vendors to improve services to meet modern needs.

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<sup>21</sup> Ryan Litsey. Associate Librarian at Texas Tech University Libraries. Email on Occam's Reader listserv "Announcing a New Feature for Occam's Reader", December 4, 2019

<sup>22</sup> Nora Dethloff and Sebastian Hammer, "Project ReShare," presentation at CO ILL Conference, Westminster, CO, April 25, 2019, <https://ill.cvlites.org/2019-presentations/>.

<sup>23</sup> Dethloff, "Project ReShare."

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## Appendix A: ILL for Streaming Video Survey Questions

Which category best describes your institution? (check all that apply)

Community College Library

4 year College Library

MA/PHD granting College Library

Research University Library

Public Library

Law Library

Special Library

Government Library

Rural Library

Tribal Library

Museum

Publisher

Vendor

Other





Do you currently offer ILL services to your patrons?

Yes

No

I don't know



If yes, which materials do you loan? (check all that apply)

Print books

Ebooks

Articles

DVDs/CDs

Streaming media

Other

I don't know



If yes, which materials do you borrow? (check all that apply)

Print books

Ebooks

Articles

DVDs/CDs

Streaming media

Other

I don't know

Does your library currently subscribe to or purchase streaming videos?

Yes

No

I don't know



How much did your library spend on streaming videos last fiscal year?

\$0

\$1-\$1,000

\$1,001-\$15,000

\$15,001-\$50,000

\$50,001-\$100,000

Over \$100,000

I don't know



Does your library negotiate for ILL rights in licenses for electronic resources (other than streaming video)?

Yes

No

I don't know



Has your library ever negotiated for ILL rights in streaming video licenses?

Yes

No

I don't know



If you have tried to negotiate ILL rights for streaming video what was the outcome?

If your patrons could borrow streaming videos from other libraries via ILL how often do you think they would use this service?

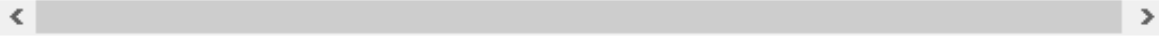
Never

Rarely

Occasionally

Very frequently

Always



Any other comments?

If you are interested in this topic and would be willing to discuss it further with us, please provide your email address.