

Zip Books Project FAQ

Thank you for your interest in the Zip Books Project! This FAQ provides an overview of the program and is intended for libraries who are not already participating. If you have additional questions or are interested in becoming a Zip Book Library, please contact the Project Coordinator.

1. What is the Zip Books Project?

The Zip Books Project is an alternative model for interlibrary loan service that bridges the gaps between a library's patron request service, a normal acquisitions process, and an outreach/home delivery service.

It is based on the pilot project, "Zip Books—Digital Library of Northern California," conducted by the Butte, Shasta and Humboldt County Libraries under a FY 2011/12 LSTA grant from the California State Library. The purpose was to identify and test efficient, cost-effective alternatives to traditional interlibrary loan delivery practices. One method tested was a "buy vs. borrow" model, where used books were ordered through Amazon, rather than requested through interlibrary loan, and shipped directly to patrons in good standing using the free Amazon Prime two-day delivery service whenever possible. Services were tracked, and the patrons were responsible for returning the books to the library when finished. The libraries would then decide whether to add the books to their collections or dispose of them in some other way (offering it to other Zip libraries, library book sale, etc.).

Zip Books is extremely popular with both libraries and patrons. It provides patrons with speedy access to materials they might not otherwise be able to get through the library, without the long wait often associated with ILL requests. It is easy for library staff to administer. And since Amazon ships materials directly to the patron, it saves the effort and cost of packaging and mailing materials, or the need to require patrons to return to the library to pick up their requested materials. It adds a patron-driven collection development approach to a library's usual process, resulting in a collection more closely attuned to the needs of the local community. And it exposes library staff to patrons and materials they might not otherwise encounter, improving their ability to market library services and serve their communities.

2. Who manages the project, and what does it entail?

This project is managed by the NorthNet Library System (NLS), in partnership with the California State Library. Each participating library is to support the project goals; to provide statistics throughout the grant period; to adhere to the project's policies, procedures and guidelines as established by NLS and the State Library; to complete and submit any requested documents; and to regularly monitor its program spending to stay within its allocated funds. The library director will be required to sign a form certifying the library's commitment to these points.

3. Can we order from vendors other than Amazon?

Not at this time. This may be an option in the future.

4. Can we have the materials delivered to our library for cataloging/inventory first?

One of the most attractive things about this model is the speed with which patrons receive service over traditional ILL. Having the materials delivered to your library for cataloging first would take the "zip" out of Zip Books. The policy is to have the items delivered directly to requesting patrons at the



point of ordering. Procedures and guidelines can be put in place to minimize problems that might occur (patrons not returning books, etc.). The pilot project participants did not experience any problems with patrons returning the “zip books” to their libraries, such as requiring patrons to be in “good standing” in order to participate in the program. In special cases or areas where theft is a concern, arrangements can be made to have items delivered to an Amazon Locker, PO Box, or to the library for pick-up by the patron.

5. Will we have to do all of our ILL through Zip Books?

No. Obviously there are some things that will be requested that won’t be available through Amazon, which participants will have to obtain through traditional ILL processes.

6. How will we handle the issue of tracking purchases and items?

Participating libraries will develop and implement their own procedures for the most part. Other participating libraries’ procedures will be made available through our program toolkits. Guidance on this can also be provided by the Project Coordinator or by staff from other participating libraries, who can be reached via the Zip Books listserv.

7. Will there be any restrictions imposed on the type of materials that we can order through this service?

The materials that can be ordered through this service are limited to **books** in tangible formats: print, large-print, and audio. E-books and DVDs are not included, and we have no plans to do so at this point. Textbooks and Study Guides are an allowable purchase if appropriate for your library collection and general enough in nature to appeal to a broad audience. Zip Books is to be used only for items specifically requested by patrons that your library does not already own or whose status is listed as LOST in your system. Items accessible through a shared system, but that are not owned by your individual library jurisdiction, can still be purchased using Zip Books funds.

8. Who are the contacts for this project?

The primary contact for this project is Mercy Nuesca, Zip Books Project Coordinator working with the NorthNet Library System and Pacific Library Partnership. Her contact information is:

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The grant monitor for this project at the California State Library is Rebecca Wendt:

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