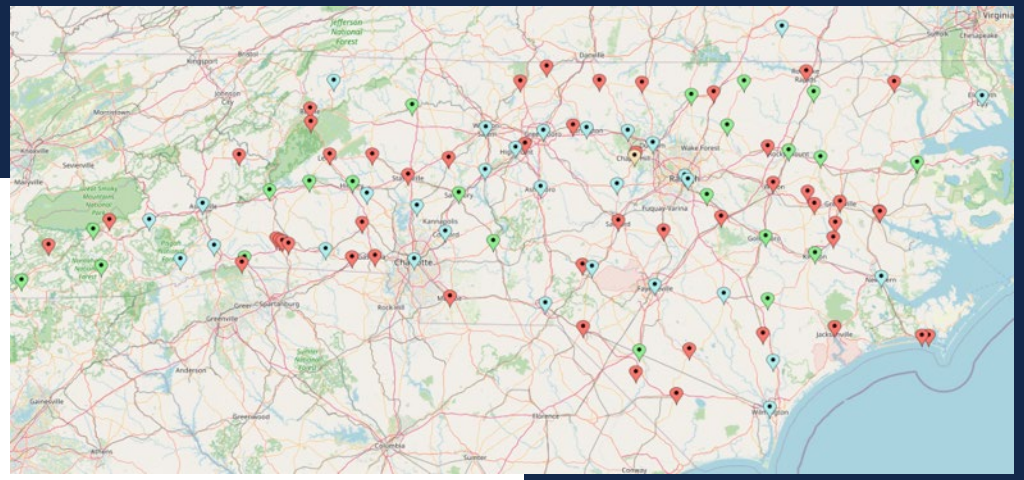
University Library



Return to Sender

Subsidized shipping and increased resource sharing engagement with North Carolina public libraries

Renée Bosman, Head of Interlibrary Services, University Library, UNC-Chapel Hill

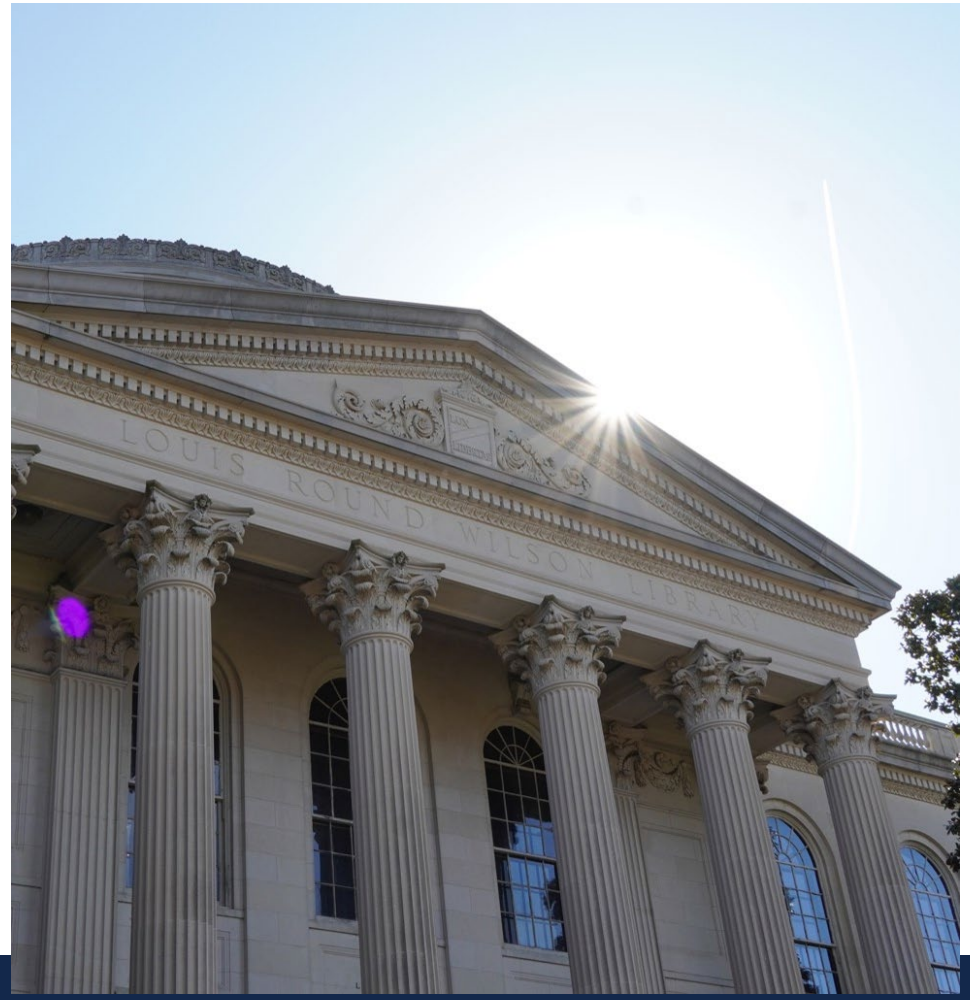
October 22, 2026

Purpose and Guiding Questions

Our collections are freely available to libraries across the state through interlibrary loan (ILL) – is this service utilized to its fullest extent?

If not, why?

How can we better support North Carolina public libraries and their patrons, especially in rural communities?



Why are we asking?

- **Carolina's mission** of "extend[ing] knowledge-based services and other resources of the University to the citizens of North Carolina and their institutions to enhance the quality of life for all people in the State." (https://www.unc.edu/about/mission/)

- **The Library's mission** of "accelerat[ing] learning, discovery, creativity, and informed citizenship for the University and the state through dynamic collections, expert staff, and welcoming spaces." (https://library.unc.edu/about/strategic-framework/)

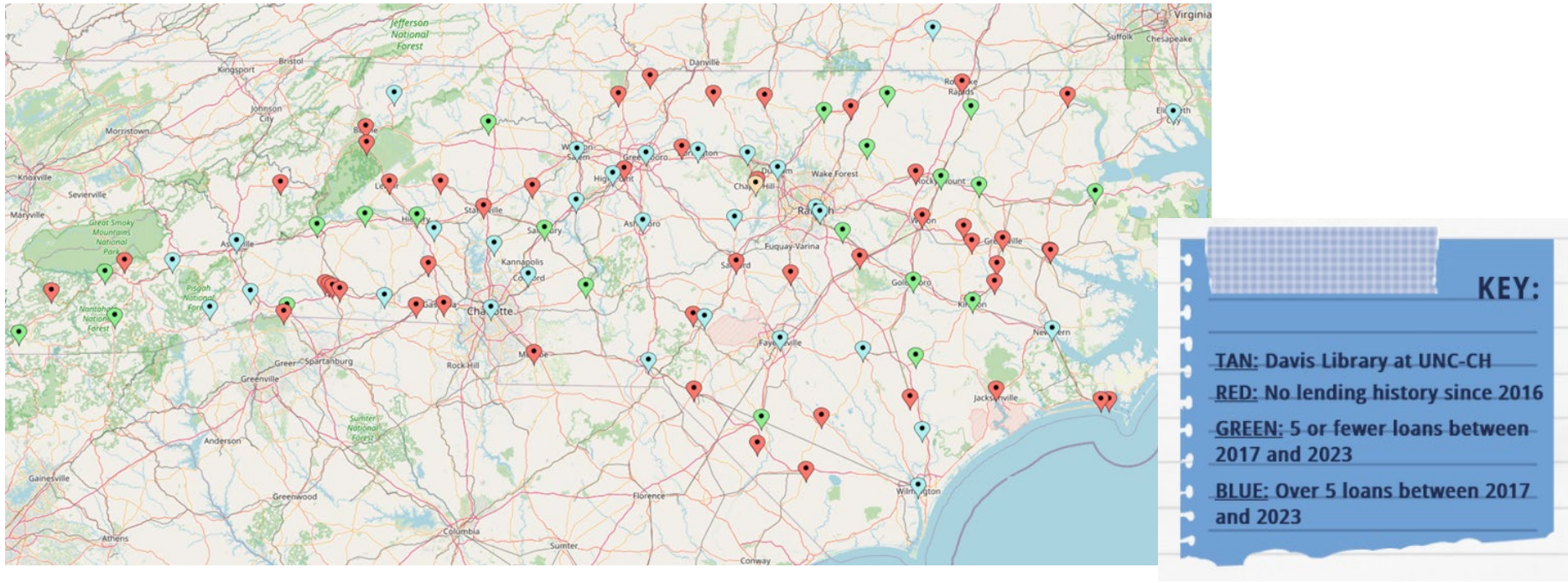


University Library

Phase 1: Gathering Data

Current Lending to public libraries: our baseline

We **reviewed request data for each NC public library to get a sense of existing resource sharing relationships.**



We looked at **proximity** and **urban/rural** census designations as factors that might affect lending activity.

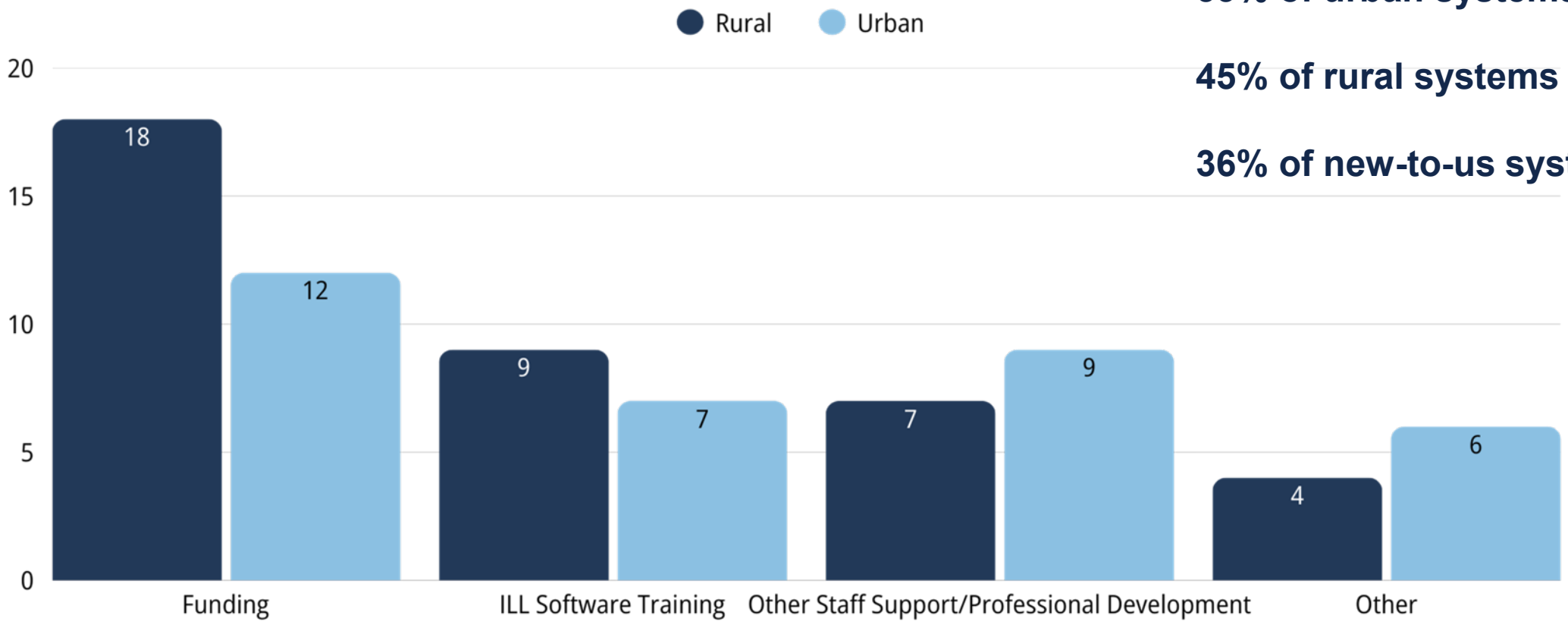
Survey of NC Public Libraries

Total Responses: 86

53% of urban systems

45% of rural systems

36% of new-to-us systems

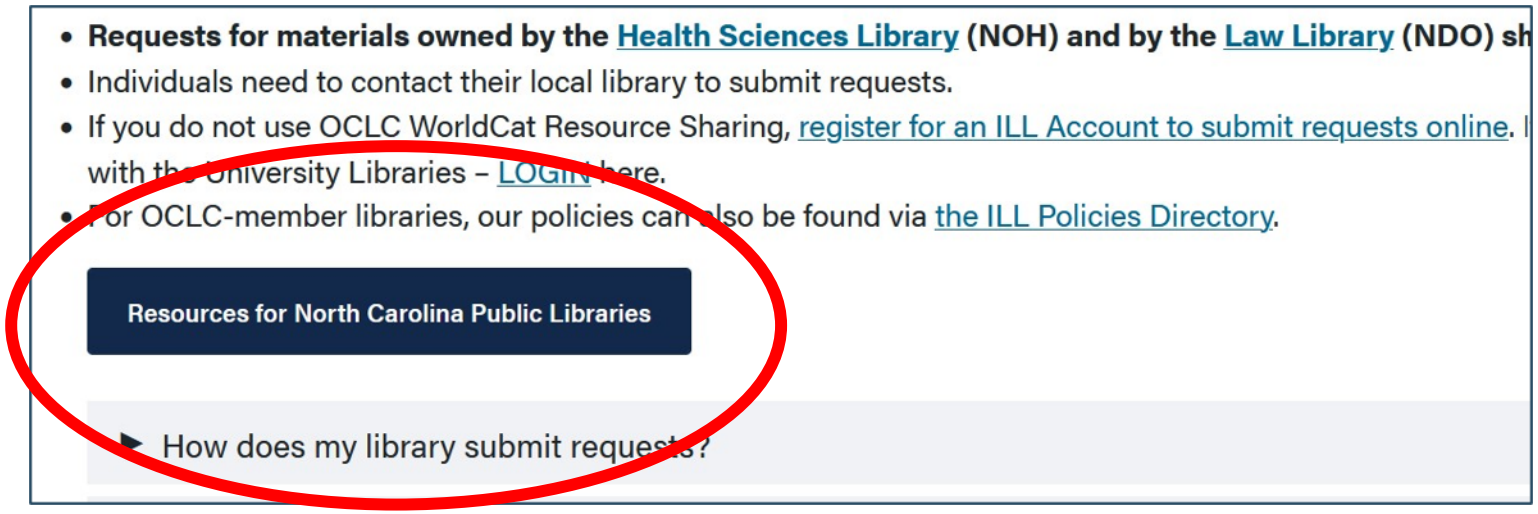




University Library

Phase 2: Deliverables

Training and Marketing Materials



https://library.unc.edu/borrow/carolina-blu/information-for-borrowing-libraries/resources-for-north-carolina-public-libraries/

Resources for NC Public Libraries (our website)

In addition to our Information for Borrowing Libraries, this page offers additional resources specifically for North Carolina public libraries. Do you have a question not answered below or in our FAQs? Reach out to us at nocill@email.unc.edu.

Subsidized Return Shipping

In the summer of 2025, we piloted a subsidized return shipping initiative in which materials were mailed with return shipping labels, removing the hassle and fees of returns.

As of August 2025, this return shipping program is available to all North Carolina public libraries. NCPLs must opt in to this program via email before they can receive the pre-paid return envelopes.

For more information on the project, to see if your library is eligible, and how to opt in, view the North Carolina Public Libraries Return Shipping Project documentation (PDF).

Download ILL Software Training Materials

UNC-CH ILL Request Form (PDF)

For libraries that aren't OCLC members, the ILL Request Form creates a unique borrower account via the University Libraries' website and allows your library to directly request material from the University Libraries.

OCLC WorldShare Documentation (PDF)

For libraries that are OCLC members and use WorldShare for resource sharing.

ILLiad Documentation (PDF)

For libraries that are OCLC members and use ILLiad for resource sharing.

Download Marketing Materials

These include letter-sized flyers, A5-sized flyers, bookmarks, and social media posts in 3 different colorways. Designed to be "(almost) ready to print", meaning that most of the information is included but some documents need library contact information. Additionally, all materials are editable and can be adapted as needed.

Download editable marketing marketing materials (DOCX)

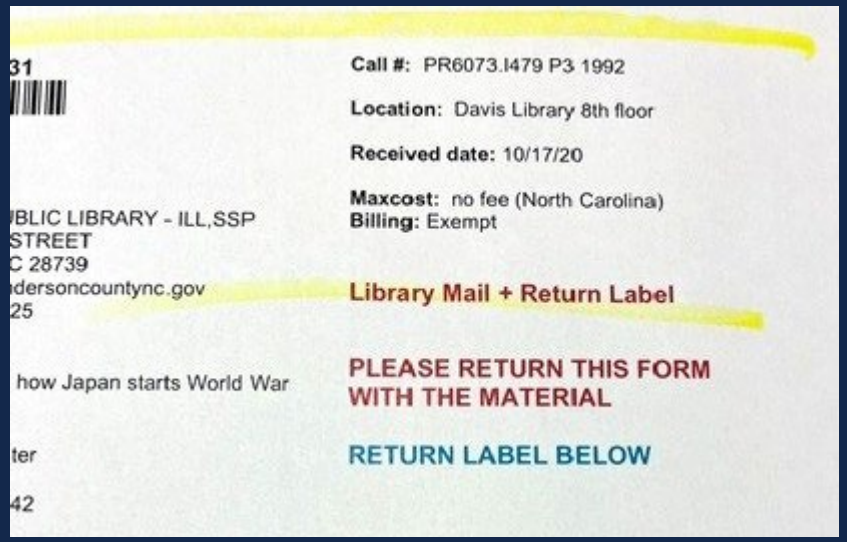
Subsidized Return Shipping

- In fall 2025, we launched a subsidized return shipping initiative in which materials are mailed with reusable envelopes and return shipping labels, removing the hassle and fees of returns.

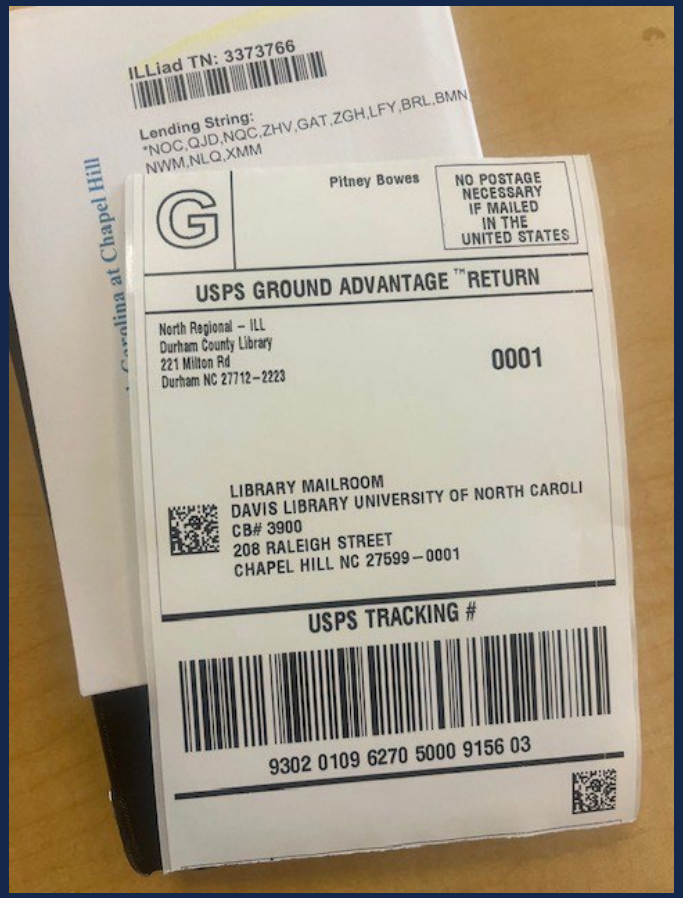
- This program is available to **all North Carolina public libraries,** regardless of whether they use NC Cardinal or other resource sharing platforms. Libraries must opt in to this program to receive the pre-paid return labels.



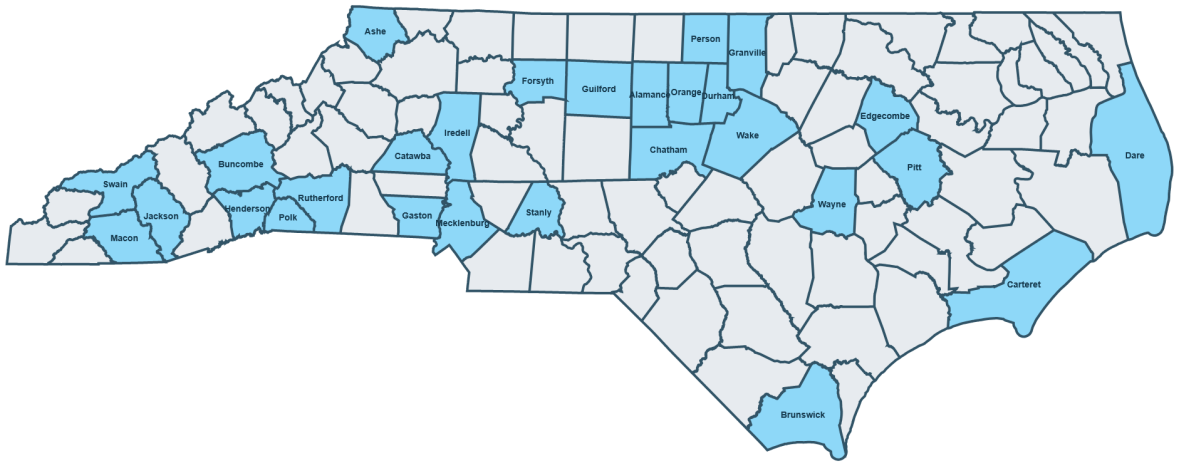
Workflows



Libraries in the program have a designated shipping method in ILLiad to flag the requests for special handling.



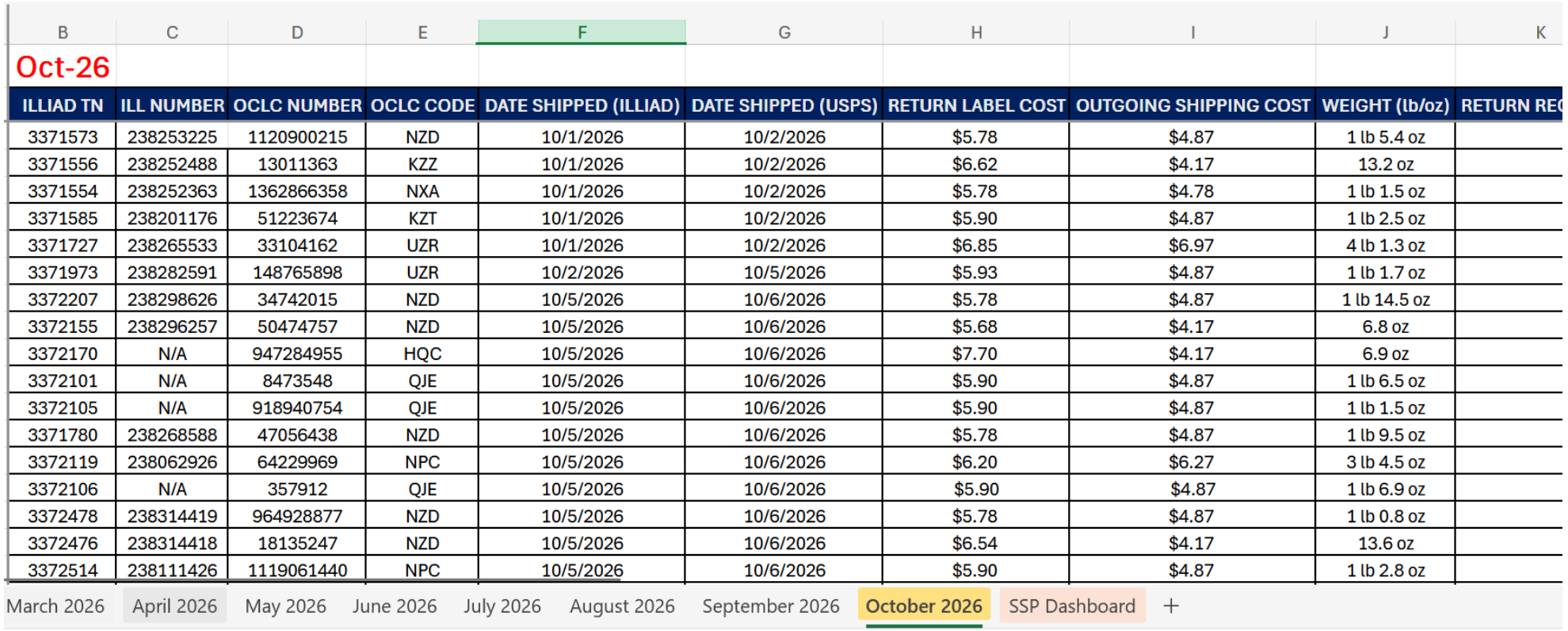
Books going to these libraries are packaged individually and sent with a return label based on the weight of that book.



Subsidized Return Shipping

- With **return shipping costs now waived**, 28 NC public library systems no longer have direct costs associated with ILL participation.

Tracking costs: spreadsheets!



B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K
Oct-26									
ILLIAD TN	ILL NUMBER	OCLC NUMBER	OCLC CODE	DATE SHIPPED (ILLIAD)	DATE SHIPPED (USPS)	RETURN LABEL COST	OUTGOING SHIPPING COST	WEIGHT (lb/oz)	RETURN REC
3371573	238253225	1120900215	NZD	10/1/2026	10/2/2026	$5.78	$4.87	1 lb 5.4 oz	
3371556	238252488	13011363	KZZ	10/1/2026	10/2/2026	$6.62	$4.17	13.2 oz	
3371554	238252363	1362866358	NXA	10/1/2026	10/2/2026	$5.78	$4.78	1 lb 1.5 oz	
3371585	238201176	51223674	KZT	10/1/2026	10/2/2026	$5.90	$4.87	1 lb 2.5 oz	
3371727	238265533	33104162	UZR	10/1/2026	10/2/2026	$6.85	$6.97	4 lb 1.3 oz	
3371973	238282591	148765898	UZR	10/2/2026	10/5/2026	$5.93	$4.87	1 lb 1.7 oz	
3372207	238298626	34742015	NZD	10/5/2026	10/6/2026	$5.78	$4.87	1 lb 14.5 oz	
3372155	238296257	50474757	NZD	10/5/2026	10/6/2026	$5.68	$4.17	6.8 oz	
3372170	N/A	947284955	HQC	10/5/2026	10/6/2026	$7.70	$4.17	6.9 oz	
3372101	N/A	8473548	QJE	10/5/2026	10/6/2026	$5.90	$4.87	1 lb 6.5 oz	
3372105	N/A	918940754	QJE	10/5/2026	10/6/2026	$5.90	$4.87	1 lb 1.5 oz	
3371780	238268588	47056438	NZD	10/5/2026	10/6/2026	$5.78	$4.87	1 lb 9.5 oz	
3372119	238062926	64229969	NPC	10/5/2026	10/6/2026	$6.20	$6.27	3 lb 4.5 oz	
3372106	N/A	357912	QJE	10/5/2026	10/6/2026	$5.90	$4.87	1 lb 6.9 oz	
3372478	238314419	964928877	NZD	10/5/2026	10/6/2026	$5.78	$4.87	1 lb 0.8 oz	
3372476	238314418	18135247	NZD	10/5/2026	10/6/2026	$6.54	$4.17	13.6 oz	
3372514	238111426	1119061440	NPC	10/5/2026	10/6/2026	$5.90	$4.87	1 lb 2.8 oz	

March 2026 | April 2026 | May 2026 | June 2026 | July 2026 | August 2026 | September 2026 | October 2026 | SSP Dashboard | +

Tracking Costs: central data dashboard

Total Requests
1196
Total Pre-Paid Return Label Spend Since May 2025
$7,507.33

Average Cost of Pre-Paid Label
$6.28

NCPL Name in order of opt-in	Code	SSP Requests	% of Total	Est. Cost Share	ADDITIONAL INFORMATION FOR REFERENCE	No. Branches	NC Cardinal	County Class	24 Requests	Borrowing Difference Since 2024
Orange County Public Library	QJE	286	23.91%	$1,795.23		3	NO	Rural	65	340.00%
Mooresville Public Library	UQK	35	2.93%	$219.70		1	NO	Urban (Metro)	21	66.67%
Charlotte Mecklenburg	NPC	167	13.96%	$1,048.26		20	NO	Urban (Metro)	203	-17.73%
Alamance County Public Librarie	KZZ	82	6.86%	$514.72		4	NO	Urban (Metro)	10	720.00%
Chatham County Public Libraries	NCCPL	12	1.00%	$75.32		3	NO	Urban (Metro)	4	200.00%
Durham County Library	NZD	439	36.71%	$2,755.62		7	NO	Urban (Metro)	101	334.65%
Edgecombe County Memorial Li	NQV	3	0.25%	$18.83		2	NO	Rural	2	50.00%
Fontana Regional Library	QJC/QJ	0	0.00%	$0.00		6	YES	Rural	3	-100.00%
Gaston County Public Library	QJD	0	0.00%	$0.00		10	NO	Urban (Metro)	0	0.00%
Hickory Public Library	UZV	8	0.67%	$50.22		2	NO	Rural	13	-38.46%
Person County Public Library	PC3	0	0.00%	$0.00		1	YES	Rural	0	0.00%
Polk County Public Libraries	NZR	3	0.25%	$18.83		2	YES	Rural	6	-50.00%
Buncombe County Public Library	UZR	65	5.43%	$408.01		13	YES	Urban (Metro)	29	124.14%
Granville County Library System	UQB	1	0.08%	$6.28		4	YES	Rural	0	100.00%
Henderson County Public Library	HQC	34	2.84%	$213.42		6	YES	Urban (Metro)	0	########
Nantahala Public Library	KQR	0	0.00%	$0.00		5	YES	Rural	0	0.00%
Brunswick County Library	UZQ	0	0.00%	$0.00		5	NO	Rural	1	-100.00%

What are people borrowing?



Subject Borrowing Trends

- **History and Biography: ~25-30%**
- **Literature and Literary Studies: ~25-30%**
- Religion, Theology, and Philosophy: ~15%
- Social Sciences and Sociology: ~10-15%
- Art, Photography, and Architecture: ~10%
- Science, Technology, and Computing: ~5%
- Business, Economics, and Government: ~5%

History and Literature highlights

*American and North Carolina history
*20th century fiction (mysteries!)
*Foreign literature

A few popular* authors and titles

Hilaire Belloc	**Lives of the saints : a novel**
Agatha Christie	**Poirot investigates**
Jonathan Kellerman	**Sigmund Freud and the Jewish mystical tradition**
John McPhee	**Strange victory : Hiler's conquest of France**
Dugald Steer	**The soul of a business : managing for profit and the common good**

***A handful of times qualifies as "popular."**

Foreign Language Material

- Works originally in English make up the majority (~80%) of transactions from May 2025 to August 2026.
- Most of the non-English materials belong to world literature and translated fiction (70-80%).

Languages borrowed

French (52.94% of total foreign language titles)
Spanish (11.76%)
Italian
Japanese
Korean
Icelandic
Russian
Czech

Ongoing Work



Get In Touch!



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