

PHYSICAL DELIVERY STUDY

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

MLS Executive Director Sarah Sogigian conducted a series of on-site and virtual visits to organizations that offer physical delivery between multiple locations. The purpose of these visits was to learn about the various models of delivery, the pros and challenges of the service, and learn about the funding that provides the service.

Staff at the New Hampshire State Library, the Beaufort County Library System (SC), the Utah State Library, the Salt Lake County Library System (UT), the RAILS Consortium (IL) and the Lee County Library System (FL) were interviewed for this project.

Of the interviewed locations

- all report having access to a service that links them to other libraries, but the service doesn't always cover the whole state.
- many saw cost increases post-pandemic, mostly due to increased usage and staffing challenges.
- funding delivery is a priority concern for all, as it is ranked at the top of the service list for all interviewees.

Related, the Physical Delivery Interest Group of the Reference and User's Section (RUSA) of the American Library Association (ALA) conducted their first [national survey of physical delivery](#) post-COVID. As their report provides meaningful information for this project, their report is referenced.

Key Learnings

While several cases have a semi or partially statewide service, none offer a "one service model" that covers the whole state.

Most of the respondents experienced cost increases since 2019, according to the RUSA study. More than 60% of respondents say costs are the same or somewhat higher.

Cost per item remains significantly lower for those libraries that use bin and van delivery systems.

Almost ALL cases reported that should funding physical delivery become an issue, other services would be cut or eliminated in favor of delivery sustainability.

There are a great number of places in the U.S. that do not have access to materials outside of their state, their network, or their home library.

MLS DELIVERY



555
participating libraries



104,052 stops



11,350,000
items processed



covers 10,565 mi²



\$5.3M budget



If MLS used a mailing or shipping service to manage delivery, based solely on shipping costs (using USPS' Library Rate of \$3.32 per pound), the service would cost a minimum of \$46M a year for 14 million items, and would take 7-10 days to arrive.

FY22 statistics

www.masslibsystem.org
guides.masslibsystem.org/mlsdelivery