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Interlibrary Loan

At times, while have been writing this column, I have suggested books to read that are not in the Westmoreland Library Network countywide collection. This should not deter you from seeking to borrow a copy alternately from the wider lending system that is known as Interlibrary Loan or ILL.

For example, one that I previously mentioned is Stillman Drake's "Galileo at Work: His Scientific Biography" (Dover 1978); it is not in the WLN collection. Another is David Diringer's "The Book Before Printing: Ancient, Medieval and Oriental" (Dover 1982). These might be seen as too esoteric for individual small town Library collections, and therefore for the collective WLN catalogue, but they can still be borrowed usually from elsewhere, including from outside of the state, through your home Library.

The limitation with a shared collection among individual Libraries in a county and Library District such as the WLN is that the county is nowhere densely populated with a single large urban area. It does not have a Pittsburgh, and therefore it does not have a dominant center such as the Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh. It has several modestly sized collections such as in Greensburg Hempfield Area Library and Murrysville Community Library, but no single one that is very large, and many that are quite small. So, each is even forced periodically to weed to be able to house a core collection in limited space, as may not be imagined for a larger Library that serves as an archivist. That is how the WLN works within its own boundaries, but there is the access to a larger population of books too.

The PA Department of Education's Office of Commonwealth Libraries has Pennsylvania Interlibrary Loan Guidelines that provide guidance for the exchange of materials among Libraries not under the same administration, Library System or school district. The Guidelines have been revised and kept up to date periodically by an Interlibrary Loan Code Committee and an Interlibrary Loan Resources Committee. Guidelines have been updated on a periodic basis "to allow for technological advancements as well as changing relationships among libraries within the Commonwealth."

The purpose of the ILL is defined in this way: "Interlibrary Loan is a form of resource sharing. Resource sharing among libraries in Pennsylvania is in the public's interest and should be encouraged. Interlibrary loan is a privilege and should serve as an adjunct to, not as a substitute for, collection development.

"Interlibrary loan is the process by which a library requests material from, or supplies material to, another library. The interlibrary loan process is initiated by a user who may request items directly into an ILL request system or submit that request to ILL staff who place the request on his/her behalf."

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My message to you is that you should not quit with just a search of the 24/7 WLN on-line catalogue when in quest of a particular book, or CD, or large print item if you do not find it amongst that collection. Please do ask staff about ILL. In the case of the Murrysville Community Library on-line home site, you will see "Request an Interlibrary Loan" under "Services," and you will see all the rules of service and the access link for making your on-line request. It is easy to use, just like the on-line WLN catalogue itself.

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