



Smarter resource sharing. Faster access.

Reframing access for today's academic library

Academic libraries are under increasing pressure to deliver fast, seamless access to an expanding universe of scholarly content. Users expect to discover, request and receive materials through a single, intuitive experience, yet many resource sharing models were designed for a different era. Fragmented systems, manual workflows and limited visibility into availability can introduce friction at the point of request, making it harder for libraries to meet these expectations consistently and at scale.

At the same time, signals that once guided resource sharing strategy are becoming less reliable. In some environments, interlibrary loan request volumes have declined. Rather than indicating reduced demand, this trend may reflect barriers within the request process itself. When requesting is complex or opaque, users may abandon the process before completing it, masking unmet need and limiting engagement and resource usage.

In response, libraries are rethinking resource sharing as an integrated part of the discovery and access experience. Institutions including the **University of Arizona Libraries**, **Virginia Commonwealth University** and the **University of Central Florida** are embedding requesting directly into discovery workflows, increasing transparency around fulfillment and automating routine transactions. This shift is reducing friction while improving outcomes for both users and staff.

Emerging approaches, including the Rapido resource sharing solution, reflect this evolution. By connecting discovery, requesting and fulfillment within a unified framework and leveraging network-level automation, these models enable faster delivery, higher engagement and more sustainable resource sharing at scale. Students and researchers gain a stress-free process with transparent (and surprisingly fast) delivery times.

"With Rapido, requests are embedded directly into Primo creating a much more seamless experience for our patrons, while increased automation allows staff to focus more on complex requests and higher-level problem solving instead of repetitive transactional work."

Loftan Hooker, Head of Access Services, Virginia Commonwealth University

A hidden problem: demand suppressed by friction

At first glance, declining interlibrary loan request volumes suggest a straightforward conclusion: users need less from resource sharing. But a closer look tells a more complex story.

The **University of Arizona Libraries** and **Virginia Commonwealth University** have found that lower request counts do not necessarily reflect reduced demand. Instead, they often reflect barriers embedded in the request process itself. Resource sharing that is treated as a separate pathway to access, requiring users to move between systems, complete additional forms or navigate unfamiliar workflows, introduces friction at each additional step or click.

ILL has traditionally been a separate entry point to users. Users may not know they can request materials from outside the library or where to start. When users cannot easily see availability, delivery timelines or how to complete a request, some simply stop trying. The absence of a request does not signal satisfaction. It signals abandonment.

Rapido brings discovery and request together in one experience, removing these barriers and changing user behavior. At the **University of Arizona Libraries, Ellen Knight, Library Services Manager for Resource Sharing**, linked increased activity directly to a simpler experience: "a lot of that can be attributed to how easy it is for users to locate what they need. They can submit a request from Primo or from a database, wherever they find the item."

This pattern reframes how libraries interpret their data. Instead of asking why demand has declined, a more useful question emerges: how much demand is currently hidden by friction? At institutions that have reduced those barriers, engagement has increased, revealing demand that had previously gone unmet.

Approaches that embed requesting directly into discovery and automate request routing make it easier for users to move from interest to action in a single flow. In doing so, they provide a more accurate picture of user need and a more effective path to meeting it.

From back-end service to front-end experience

"The main consideration in making the change to Rapido was the ease of submitting requests and being able to see the progress of a request from the user account. It helps us achieve our goal of improving the user experience."

Ellen Knight, Library Services Manager for Resource Sharing, University of Arizona Libraries

For decades, resource sharing operated outside the primary user journey. A patron would search for an item, encounter a dead end and then move into a separate process to request it. This positioned resource sharing as a fallback rather than a core access pathway.

At **Virginia Commonwealth University**, this was a central challenge. Reflecting on their transition to Rapido, **Loftan Hooker, Head of Access Services**, described how integration reshaped the experience: "with Rapido, the requesting process is embedded directly into Primo, so patrons no longer have to leave the discovery environment to place a request."

This change is more than a technical improvement. It alters how users behave. The process becomes continuous, removing the need to switch systems or re-enter information.

"Users search, they find an item, they can request it right there in the same interface."

Loftan Hooker, Head of Access Services, Virginia Commonwealth University

VCU James Branch Cabell Library by Jay Paul



At the **University of Central Florida**, **Kristine Shrauger**, **Head of Document Delivery and Resource Sharing**, emphasized the impact of transparency. When delivery timelines and lending conditions are visible at the point of request, “it really does tell the patron exactly what the expectation is.” This visibility has reduced status inquiries and increased user confidence in the process.

"There's transparency through the whole request process. The patron can see exactly what's going on. So we've had less phone calls, less emails asking 'what's the status of my request?'"

Kristine Shrauger, Head of Document Delivery and Resource Sharing, University of Central Florida

These changes highlight an important shift. Improving resource sharing is not only about speeding up fulfillment. It is about aligning the experience with how users expect to interact with digital systems. **Search, discovery and access need to feel like parts of the same process.**

When resource sharing is embedded into discovery, it no longer feels like a separate service. It becomes a natural extension of access, reducing friction and increasing engagement while aligning with familiar user expectations.

"They are used to this in their own lives at Starbucks and their Dunkin' Donuts orders. They are used to knowing what's going on. So, most of the comments we received have just focused on how easy and streamlined the experience feels."

Loftan Hooker, Head of Access Services, Virginia Commonwealth University



Automation and policy: scaling without adding burden

"What has changed at VCU is not that staff expertise is less important. If anything, it's made that expertise more visible and more valuable, because before Rapido, staff time was often consumed by repetitive, transactional work."

Loftan Hooker, Head of Access Services, Virginia Commonwealth University

As resource sharing becomes more integrated, the operational model is also evolving. Automation changes how staff time is used. With many routine requests handled automatically, staff can focus on work that requires judgment and experience. This includes resolving incomplete citations, locating hard-to-find materials and managing complex requests. The result is a shift from reactive processing to more intentional work.

Following the Rapido implementation at the University of Arizona Libraries, borrowing volume increased by about 50 percent. At the same time, the share of unmediated requests rose significantly, from roughly 60 percent to 80 percent. This means **more requests moved through the system without manual intervention, even as total volume increased.**

Virginia Commonwealth University saw comparable trends, with borrowing requests increasing by more than 50 percent and document delivery requests by more than 30 percent within the first year. Despite this growth, fulfillment rates remained strong and turnaround times improved, particularly for digital materials.

These outcomes highlight a key point. **Removing barriers to requesting can increase demand, but automation and policy design can ensure that this increase is sustainable.** By capturing more complete metadata at the point of request and defining what materials are eligible for lending, **libraries reduce unnecessary effort and improve routing productivity.**

At the University of Arizona Libraries, this approach contributed to lending fill rates approaching 90 percent. Requests are more likely to be fulfilled because they are better structured from the start.

In this model, automation is not just about speed. It is about enabling scale without overwhelming staff, ensuring that increased engagement does not come at the cost of sustainability.

"With Rapido and Alma, there is no longer a need to log into two systems. Plus, we can respond to many user questions at the point of contact, rather than referring them to resource sharing staff."

Ellen Knight, Library Services Manager for Resource Sharing, University of Arizona Libraries

Resource sharing as a strategic access layer

As resource sharing becomes more integrated and efficient, its role within the academic library is expanding. It is no longer a discrete service. It is **becoming part of the broader access strategy that connects discovery, collections and delivery.**

At the **University of Central Florida**, this shift is already changing how resource sharing is viewed. **Kristine Shrauger** emphasized the need to **“rethink what resource sharing is and can be in the future,”** reflecting a move beyond traditional workflows toward a more flexible, user-centered model.

When requesting is embedded into discovery and supported by network-level fulfillment, the boundary between locally held and externally sourced materials becomes less visible. Materials beyond the local collection are still presented as accessible, extending the effective reach of the library. Access is defined not only by ownership, but by what can be delivered reliably.

This shift also has implications for decision making. Resource sharing activity can inform collection strategies, particularly as libraries evaluate the balance between borrowing and purchasing. Patterns of demand, especially for digital materials, provide insight into where investment may be most effective.

At the same time, resource sharing systems are becoming more networked. Libraries are not only exchanging materials, but participating in shared frameworks that allow them to define lending policies, prioritize partners and coordinate fulfillment more effectively. As these networks grow, the ability to deliver access at scale increases.

"One thing we have appreciated tremendously is participating in the Alma Hybrid pods. That community has been just so incredibly generous with their knowledge and support."

Loftan Hooker, Head of Access Services, Virginia Commonwealth University

Solutions such as Rapido support this model by connecting discovery, requesting, policy and fulfillment within a shared environment. In doing so, they enable libraries to deliver access in ways that align with how users search for and engage with content today.

Resource sharing, in this context, is no longer just a service that supports access. It is part of the infrastructure that defines it.

Unlocking access through better design

"We felt the benefits of moving toward a more integrated and patron-centered resource-sharing environment clearly outweighed the challenges of change."

Loftan Hooker, Head of Access Services, Virginia Commonwealth University

The experiences of the **University of Arizona Libraries**, **Virginia Commonwealth University** and the **University of Central Florida** point to a consistent conclusion. When libraries redesign resource sharing to be more integrated, transparent and automated, they uncover and meet user demand more effectively. Embedding requesting into discovery, improving visibility and streamlining workflows leads to increased engagement, faster delivery and more sustainable operations.

These changes do more than improve productivity. They expand the library's ability to deliver access at scale. Resource sharing becomes part of a broader strategy that extends collections through networks and aligns systems around user needs.

Libraries that have already made this shift demonstrate what is possible. Their experiences show that when barriers are removed and workflows are designed around the user, resource sharing becomes more than a supporting function. It becomes a core capability.

Modernizing resource sharing is not simply a technical upgrade. It is an investment in how libraries deliver access now and in the future.

Would you like to see how you can improve resource sharing workflows and deliver faster access also for your users?

[Schedule your personalised demo here!](#)

© 2026 Clarivate. Clarivate and its logo, as well as other trademarks used herein are trademarks of their respective owners and used under license.

