

# Borrowing and Lending Tools

## The Materiality of X-Lending Libraries

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This thesis investigates lending and borrowing of materials in the setting of the local, physical library. The research problem area is found in the broadening of what types of materials libraries offer, and contradictions in current notions of what libraries are supposed to provide. The concept of *x-lending library* is introduced for abstracting the library as a method for providing expanding varieties of materials, x, and the practice of naming the services accordingly. The aim of this thesis is to provide a deepened understanding of x-lending libraries through a case study of tool lending libraries.

Four papers comprise the body of the work. A theoretical paper reviews the problematic downplay of physical collections in contemporary research on the social and societal role of libraries. A renewed focus on local collections from a community perspective is proposed. Three empirical papers investigate tool lending libraries from different perspectives: why patrons borrow tools from the library, the role of tool lending libraries in the communities they serve from the perspective of staff and managers, and patrons' perspective on the tool lending library itself.

Results indicate that patrons borrow tools to solve immediate and practical needs: they relate their tool borrowing mainly to social and economic impact and value on a local level. Staff and managers share much the same perspective: the tool lending library is motivated by its value and usefulness to the specific community where it is at. Further, the tool lending library was observed to be a socially intense place where patrons and staff actively engaged with each other and materials. Participants experience the tool lending library as more social than other libraries. Patrons rely on staff to advise which tools to borrow and how to use them. Staff inquire into the needs of patrons to an extent that might not be suitable in other library settings. The materiality of the library seemingly plays an important role; what is borrowed and lent matters. Lending tools require different types of skills and knowledge than lending books, and also a different type of interaction in some regards.

The thesis concludes with a discussion on its theoretical contributions by, first, suggesting a number of materialities that seemingly play into understanding x-lending libraries. Second, a case is made for approaching the materials of x-lending libraries as part of documentary practices rather than as documents. Third, the theoretical concept of *library community value chains* is proposed as a scalable, analytical tool for understanding how library borrowing and lending can be related to value in the community context.

**Keywords:** borrowing, community, documentary practices, lending, materiality, tool lending libraries, value, x-lending libraries