



ASSOCIATION OF SOUTHEASTERN RESEARCH LIBRARIES

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ASERL Publishes “Future Thinking” Resource Guide to Controlled Digital Lending for Research Libraries

February 24, 2021 – ATLANTA – Today the Association of Southeastern Research Libraries (ASERL) published “Future Thinking: ASERL’s Guide to Controlled Digital Lending for Research Libraries.” The publication offers a high-level view of the benefits and risks for libraries that may be considering implementation of a Controlled Digital Lending (CDL) program.

Controlled Digital Lending as a concept has been circulating in the library profession for more than a decade, although few libraries implemented a CDL program that long ago. Many librarians believe CDL is a natural extension of the First Sale and Fair Use doctrines which have enabled US-based libraries to share books for decades.

“Libraries want to be able to digitize and lend copies of the print books they own, under the right controls, to allow remote and print-disabled library patrons the ability to use our collections,” commented Jan Lewis, Director of Academic Library Services at East Carolina University and President of ASERL’s Board of Directors for 2020-2021. “For these programs to be successful and remain within the bounds of the law, the most important part of CDL is the word ‘controlled.’”

Despite opposition from some publishing and author groups, a few libraries have experimented with small-scale CDL programs recently -- typically for remote, internal audiences under very restricted circumstances. “Future Thinking” provides ASERL libraries with an overview of the legal rationale for CDL, discusses the different levels of risk tolerance a library might want to consider, and highlights some emerging technology options that a library might want to explore if they wish to consider implementing such a program.

“We realize there is some uncertainty and concern about Controlled Digital Lending. Lawsuits often have that effect,” commented Tim Pyatt, Dean of Z. Smith Reynolds Library at Wake Forest University and ASERL’s President-Elect. “ASERL wants our member libraries to be fully informed of the risks and opportunities that are available to them if they choose this path forward.”

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About ASERL

Founded in 1956, ASERL is one of the largest regional research library consortia in the United States, serving 38 institutional members in 11 states. ASERL cultivates important conversations and nurtures relationships among library leaders in the Southeast. By working together, ASERL members provide and maintain top-quality resources and services for the students, faculty, and citizens of their respective communities. ASERL is housed in the Robert W. Woodruff Library at Emory University in Atlanta, Georgia. See www.aserl.org for more information.

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