



AT THE LIBRARY

By Julie Winkelstein
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“LINK + is a union catalog of contributed holdings from participating libraries in California and Nevada.”

-From “What is LINK+”
(<http://csul.iii.com/screens/whatislink.html>)

In a recent column I talked about some of the lesser-known resources we offer at my library. These had to do with articles available through our website, either at home or at the library. But we also have some lesser-known resources that actually have to do with books.

One of these is usually referred to as placing a hold or requesting an item. Since the Alameda County Library system has 11 branches, requesting an item means that if one of our branches owns something – a book or a DVD or a CD – it is possible to ask that library to send it to your closest branch. For instance, say you recently joined a book group and this month you are all reading Jamison’s *An Unquiet Mind* (a book I recently finished and loved). But your local branch doesn’t own it. So, when you search the catalog, you see that another branch does. At that point, you can simply click on the option to “request” and by following the directions on the

screen, the book will be sent to your library and you will be notified when it has arrived. If the book is actually available at the other library – that is, not checked out to someone else – it takes about a week or less for this transaction.

In case computers make you nervous, you could instead ask a librarian to either request it for you or show you to how to do it. Some version of this process is used at most public libraries that have branches. Some places charge for the service, some don’t – Alameda County doesn’t, for instance.

Many of you may already know about this and are already happily requesting books, music and movies from all over Alameda and Contra Costa County. However, did you know about LINK+? LINK+ is an incredible resource, especially for textbooks or more academic subjects. I used it extensively when I was in library school; in fact, I only bought one textbook during the

2 1/2 years I was in graduate school – the rest of the books I borrowed (for free) from various libraries in California and Nevada, through LINK+.

Here’s how it works: Say you have decided to pursue your interest in storytelling and you heard that Margaret Read MacDonald has a new book out called *Ten Traditional Tellers*. So, you go to your library’s website – either from home or at the library – and you search for that title. Unfortunately, it turns out it isn’t available at any of the public libraries where you have a card: Contra Costa County, Berkeley, Oakland and Alameda County. You can’t believe it – it sounds like the perfect book. But you aren’t ready to give up yet, because you can still search LINK+.

You are still on the Alameda County Library website and you see the familiar blue “Search LINK+” box near the top of the screen. You click on that and yes, there it is – four

LINK+ libraries own it: Claremont, CSU Fullerton, UC Riverside and the University of Nevada Reno. When you look at the request status for these libraries, you see there are three copies available, so you click on “request this item.” You get a screen that asks for your name, your library card number and where you want to pick up the book. You answer all the questions and four days later (or less), the book arrives at your local branch, where you check it out using your Alameda County Library card. Amazing!