

Unger Memorial Library

Policies & Procedures

Patron Behavior

(October 11, 2016)

The public library is a house of information. Area residents learn from the materials housed within and can extend that learning from library materials outside the building by borrowing many of our books. Although people can learn—i.e., read (whether a book, a magazine, or a computer screen)—in a variety of environments, the one the public library strives to maintain is the traditionally relatively quiet one. Also, a safe one. To that end, we expect patrons—anyone who walks through the front door—to be quiet, civil, and law-abiding. Those who are not will be asked to comply; if not, they will be asked to leave; if necessary, the police will be called to escort a problem patron from the building, likely resulting in the issuance of a criminal trespass citation which would prohibit their return to the library.

Following User and Staff Rights are adopted from Janette Caputo's article *The Assertive Librarian* in the May/June issue of *Public Libraries*:

- **User rights**

- 1) *The right to be treated equally*

This first right is self-evident.

- 2) *The right to request priority service*

Patrons may request special service (e.g., suggesting materials for the collection development; asking for more than an hour on the Internet) but it is up to the staff to determine if these requests are feasible and can be fulfilled without placing undue burden on our resources or having an adverse effect on other patrons, all of which will be explained to the patron in the course of fulfilling (or denying) his request.

- 3) *The right to an opinion about library services*

Patrons are welcome (well, maybe not *encouraged*) to point out shortcomings in library service or, better, to make suggestions for improvements. These will be passed on to the librarian for consideration.

- 4) *The right to dislike libraries*

Library staff will make an effort to explain the organization and workings of the library to patrons in an effort to demystify arcane classification to facilitate finding materials and, too, make a library convert out of him. Perhaps a patron is displeased that the book collection is not arranged to his liking; the staff can show him how to use the automated catalog to find materials he seeks. We can help patrons find materials regardless of their disdain (or love) for the library itself.

Of course, there are staff rights, too, which necessarily include several “will not be tolerated” statements.

- **Staff rights**

- 1) *The right to evaluate patrons' requests*

Patron requests for information are tremendously varied. Questions range from “Where’s the bathroom?” to “Can you help me write my school report?” Reference skills of the clerical staff are necessarily limited but aides nevertheless are instructed in the use of basic reference tools such as our encyclopedias, dictionaries (English and foreign language), *Value Line*, *Masterplots* series, biographical resources, etc., as well as online resources such as Google and Wikipedia to help point patrons in the right direction for answers to their queries. More sophisticated reference questions need to be directed by the staff to the librarian for evaluation.

2) *The right to deny out-of-scope requests*

Requests beyond our scope—e.g., high end science, legal and medical issues—might be filled through interlibrary loan requests for books or articles or may simply be beyond our limited resources and will be returned to the patron to seek solutions elsewhere.

3) *The right to respect library property*

Deliberate damage to library property will not be tolerated

4) *The right to be assertive*

In the fulfillment of their duties in the public service realm of library service, library staff may need to stand their ground whether defending library policy (the librarian is always on call for questions regarding policy) or ensuring that patrons are orderly. Reasonable efforts by the staff to maintain order will always be defended as will staff requests to have the librarian (or, if extreme, the police) resolve conflicts with patrons.

5) *The right to work in a safe environment and not be harassed*

The right to work in a safe, harassment-free environment is the most important. Disruptive patron behavior will not be tolerated and every effort will be made to ensure safety for library staff as well as for patrons.

- **Setting off the security system**

Any patron who sets off our security system (without prior approval from the library staff—some interlibrary loan books will be pre-approved but there may be other special circumstances such as the librarian’s allowing a patron to borrow an Unger reference or genealogy book) on the way out of the building will be asked to return to the Information Desk to have staff assess the situation; in fact, the flashing light that accompanies the audible alarm says “Stop: Please return to desk.” For simple staff errors such as improperly checking out library materials, we will correct the error, offer an apology, and send the patron on his way. For other circumstances, the librarian will be notified to determine the cause for alarm. Unsatisfactory determination of the cause for alarm may result in contacting the police department for further interview and investigation.

- **Disruptive behavior (including complaints; smoking, food, drinks, cell phones; noise)**

It is a patron's responsibility to maintain necessary and proper standards of behavior in order to protect his/her individual rights and the rights and privileges of other patrons. If a patron creates a public nuisance, that patron may be restricted from the Library and from the use of the library facilities. Those who are unwilling to leave or do not leave within a reasonable amount of time, after being instructed to do so by the staff, will be subject to the law.

Rules of Conduct:

- Comply with staff requests
- Be responsible for the conduct of children in your care
- Do not leave children under the age of twelve unsupervised
- No smoking, eating or drinking is allowed in the library
- Set your cell phone on silent or vibrate
- Do not speak on your cell phone (texting is permitted)

- Respect other fellow library users: do not disturb, intimidate or harass them
- Treat others the way you want to be treated

- **Unattended children**

The Unger Memorial Library encourages visits by young children and it is our desire to make this important visit both memorable and enjoyable for the child. Library staff is not expected to assume responsibility for the care of unsupervised children in the library.

Therefore, it is library policy that all children under age twelve must be accompanied by a parent or designated responsible adult while in the library. Also, if the young child is attending a library program, we require the parent/responsible adult to remain in the library throughout the program.

- **Disruptive children**

Children of all ages are encouraged to use the library for homework, recreational reading, and program attendance. The library staff realizes that the library will be noisier at busy times and that children by nature can cause more commotion. However, children (whether with parents or not) who are being continually disruptive will be given a warning that he/she must settle down or will be asked to leave the library. If after a second warning the child continues to be disruptive, he/she will be asked to leave the library with the accompanying supervising adult.