

# MERCER COUNTY LIBRARY SYSTEM POLICIES

Reviewed and Updated April 2015

## 1. MISSION

The Mercer County Library System (MCLS) recognizes that access to information empowers individuals with knowledge and opportunity. The Library is committed to providing the materials and services that satisfy the educational, informational, recreational, and cultural needs of our diverse community, and strives to encourage a lifelong interest in reading.

## 2. USE OF THE LIBRARY FACILITIES

The facilities of the Mercer County Library System are supported by County member municipalities, which include: East Windsor, Ewing, Hightstown, Hopewell Township, Lawrence, Robbinsville, and West Windsor. Library services will not be denied because of age, race, religion, social or economic status, political affiliation or any other discriminatory criterion.

Library privileges may be revoked or temporarily suspended due to activity or behavior that infringes on others' use of the library or on library employees' ability to perform their public service.

## 3. AMERICANS WITH DISABILITIES ACT

The Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (revised 2009) prohibits discrimination on the basis of disability in employment, state and local government, public accommodations, commercial facilities, transportation, and telecommunications. To be protected by the ADA, one must have a disability or have a relationship or association with an individual with a disability. An individual is defined by the ADA as a person who:

- Has a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities of such individual;
- Has a record of such an impairment; or
- Is being regarded by others as having such an impairment

Transitory impairments with an actual or expected duration of 6 months or less do not meet the requirement of "being regarded as having such an impairment."

Title II (State and Local Government Activities), requires that State and local governments give people with disabilities an equal opportunity to benefit from all of their programs, services, and activities.

(Information reproduced from [www.ada.gov](http://www.ada.gov))

Mercer County Library encourages full participation in library programs and services. Please submit any requests for accommodation for people with disabilities to your local branch library. People who are deaf, hard of hearing and/or speech impaired can

access call the New Jersey Relay Service at 1-800-852-7899. New Jersey State Library Talking Book and Braille Center (TBBC) provides a variety of services for persons with disabilities. For more information individuals may call 800-792-8322.

#### **4. APPLYING FOR A LIBRARY CARD**

**Resident Cards:** Anyone age 18 or over who lives or owns property within the boundaries of East Windsor, Ewing, Hightstown, Hopewell Township, Lawrence, Robbinsville, or West Windsor townships may obtain a free library card. Resident students age 14-17 may obtain a card upon presentation of a valid, current student ID, without a parent or guardian signature. Children under the age of 14 may obtain a card with a parent or guardian signature. (Verification of court appointed legal guardianship will be required when issuing a minor resident card.) It is required that the parent or guardian who is accepting responsibility for a minor's library card be in good standing with the library themselves. Patrons who are barred or who have library accounts that are suspended may not sign for a minor-card until their own library account is resolved. Please see Section 5 for specific requirements.

**Non-Resident Cards:** Any non-resident (defined as a person who does not live, own property, work or attend school within the boundaries of East Windsor, Ewing, Hightstown, Hopewell Township, Lawrence, Robbinsville or West Windsor townships) may purchase a library card for \$75 per year. Senior citizens, 62 years or older, who live in Mercer County, but not in a participating municipality, may purchase a library card for \$10 per year.

**Business Cards:** Business cards are available to individuals who work or own a business in one of the member municipalities of the Mercer County Library System, listed in Section 2. Use of a business library card is limited specifically to the individual cardholder. Cards cannot be issued to a business entity for use by officers or employees of the business. Business cards are issued for a term of one year. The process for applying for, and renewing, a business card is discussed in Section 5.

**Students:** Students who do not reside in a member municipality, but attend public or private schools in a member municipality, or who temporarily reside in a member municipality in order to attend school may be issued a card, free of charge. Student cards are issued for a period of one school year and are renewable after August 15 of each year. The process for applying for a student card is discussed in Section 5.

**Internet-Only Cards:** Individuals who are not eligible for a free library card and do not wish to purchase a non-resident card, may purchase an internet-only card with the presentation of a valid photographic identification, including address, and payment of a fee of \$2.00. These cards will only allow the patron to use the internet stations and not to check out library materials.

**Guest Internet Passes:** Individuals who are visiting the library to use our PC or internet stations for a one-time visit may obtain a guest internet pass. Registration will require some form of photographic identification, such as a driver's license or school identification card.

**Temporary Cards:** Temporary cards may be issued to a person who has no permanent address but does have a temporary address in a member municipality. Persons who have identifying letters from social service agencies in participating municipalities may also be issued temporary cards. Temporary cards must be re-verified after three months. Temporary cardholders may not place holds on more than two items or check out more than two items at one time.

## 5. HOW TO OBTAIN A LIBRARY CARD

A resident of a member municipality is issued a free library card upon completion of an application, to include a social security number or active driver's license number, presentation of photographic identification, and proof of residency.

The following will be accepted as proof of residency:

- Valid New Jersey Driver's License
- Valid New Jersey Motor Vehicle registration
- A current bank statement that verifies the name and address
- Current rental lease, receipt or deed
- A current utility bill addressed to the individual
- Current High School identification card and/or a current tuition bill\*
- Dated letter from a social services agency

The following will not be accepted as proof of residency:

- Post Office Box
- General Delivery addresses
- Business calling card

A **non-resident** card or an **internet-only** card is issued upon completion of an application, presentation of current, valid photographic identification, proof of address and payment of the processing fee/or annual fee.

A **business library card account** is issued upon completion of an application, presentation of current, valid proof of employment, such as a recent pay stub showing an eligible address, dated work identification showing an eligible address or letter of eligibility from an employer, and a valid photographic identification that includes an address.\* A printed business "calling" card may not be accepted to either initially activate a business card library account or to renew a business card library account. Business library card accounts are renewable annually at no cost, providing the patron can verify their current eligibility by providing the information specified in this paragraph.

A **student card** will be issued upon completion of an application, and presentation of a current, valid student photographic identification, along with a current school year class schedule or current school year tuition bill.\* These cards are renewable annually upon presentation of appropriate verification as specified in this paragraph.

\*Photographic proof of identity (i.e. driver's license) will only be accepted in paper, not electronic format. Proof of employment, proof of student status or use of a bill (i.e. tuition, school schedule, utility) will be accepted if presented in electronic form, as long as the proof is properly dated (i.e. a school schedule must indicate the current school year.)

## **6. MAINTAINING A LIBRARY CARD**

Resident library cards are issued for a term of three years. At the conclusion of each term resident card holders will be asked to verify their current address as indicated in Section 5, above. Non-resident library cards are issued for a term of one year. Non-resident cards may be renewed upon verification of address and either payment of the appropriate annual fee or presentation of proof of eligibility for an exemption of the annual fee.

All patrons must notify the library immediately upon loss or theft of a library card. The patron is liable for all materials checked out to his / her card prior to the date of notification. The charge for replacing lost or damaged cards is \$2.00.

## **7. RECIPROCAL BORROWING PRIVILEGE WITH PLAINSBORO PUBLIC LIBRARY**

Borrowing privileges are extended to Plainsboro Public Library cardholders according to the reciprocal borrowing agreement of 1993 (amended 1994), between Mercer County Library and Plainsboro Public Library. An MCLS library card is issued to Plainsboro Public Library cardholders upon completion of an application, presentation of a valid Plainsboro Public Library card, and current photographic identification to include an address.

## **8. RECIPROCAL BORROWING WITH MERCER COUNTY COMMUNITY COLLEGE**

The Mercer County Library System has a reciprocal borrowing agreement with the Mercer County Community College Library (MCCC). Most circulating materials owned by the MCCC library may be placed on hold by Mercer County Library System cardholders for pick-up at any Mercer County Library System branch. The procedure for placing materials owned by MCCC on hold is the same as if the Mercer County Library System owned the item. The MCLS loan period, fees, and extended use fee schedule applies to all college materials borrowed through MCLS. College materials checked out at an MCLS branch must be returned to a Mercer County Library System branch; MCLS will record the item as being returned and forward the item to the community college library.

## **9. LITERACY VOLUNTEERS OF AMERICA COURTESY CARDS**

The Mercer County Library System is part of the Literacy Volunteers of America, Mercer County Chapter, which is coordinated by LVA. Tutors and students who live outside of our borrowing area may apply for a complimentary library card because of their participation in the Mercer County LVA Program. Staff will issue an LVA card,

which is renewable annually. The student or tutor must verify their current participation in the Mercer County LVA Program. If staff suspects abuse of the privilege or there are significant fines or fees associated with the borrowing of materials, the library will seek resolution with the Mercer County LVA Coordinator and may suspend library privileges to particular individuals. LVA tutors working with students may use a library copier free of charge exclusively to reproduce study materials. This privilege is not extended to any other persons, groups, or organizations using the library, regardless of whether they are involved in tutoring or other educational services. Tutors must contact the Branch Manager or their designee to reserve the community room for tutoring sessions. Tutors and students are responsible for contacting each other directly regarding cancellation of a session.

## **10. STANDARDS FOR PATRON CONDUCT**

All patrons are expected to observe and maintain a standard of acceptable behavior, as set forth below and to respect the rights of other patrons and library staff.

The following behaviors are not permitted in the library and are set forth as reasonable rules and regulations for patron conduct:

- Food and drink are not permitted near the PCs at any time.
  - Covered beverages and light, dry snacks are permitted in most areas of the library.
  - Please note that noisy, messy and strong smelling foods are prohibited.
  - It is expected that patrons will throw away trash and leave an area clean.
- Smoking (NJSA 2C:3D-38 Smoking in a public place)
- Improper attire, including bare feet or chests.
- Consumption of alcohol or use of illegal substances
- Intoxication (NJSA 2C:33-2 Disorderly Conduct)
- Carrying a weapon into the library unless otherwise authorized by law. Any patron authorized to carry a weapon must notify library staff upon entry that he/she is carrying a weapon into the library. (NJSA 2C:39-5)
- Bringing animals into the library unless they are being trained by a recognized companion-animal training agency or school or are accompanying a person with vision, hearing, or mobility impairment as a companion-animal or unless they are part of a preapproved educational program being sponsored by the library. (NJSA 10:5-29 Blind or partially Blind person accompanied by a guide dog)
- Misusing the restrooms (i.e. using as a laundry or washing facility). (NJSA 2C:33-12 Maintaining a nuisance)
- Personal hygiene shall conform to the standard of the community for public places. This will include the repair or cleanliness of garments. Patrons whose bodily hygiene is offensive so as to cause a nuisance to others shall be required to leave the building. Patrons are expected to wear appropriate clothing while using library facilities, including shirts and shoes.
- Failure to observe the indications for supervision and/or accompaniment of children within the library as set forth in Section 11, "Parental/Guardian Supervisory Responsibilities."

- Talking loudly, making noise or engaging in disruptive behavior, including the use of loud or offensively coarse or abusive language.
- Playing of audio equipment so that others can hear it.
- Interfering with another person's use of the library or with the library personnel's performance of their duties.
- Running or standing on furniture. Skateboarding, jumping, and throwing objects, playing on steps or in entrances. Riding scooters or bikes on the steps, ramps or in entrances is also not permitted.
- Panhandling or soliciting.
- Damaging library property, including, but not limited to, damaging restrooms, defacing furniture and walls, damaging computer equipment, removing pages from books, destroying landscaping or outdoor fixtures. (NJSA 2C: 17-3 Criminal mischief)
- Stealing library materials. (NJSA 2C:20-12,13,14 Theft of Library Materials)
- Threatening or physically harming staff or patrons.
- Striking, kicking, shoving or other offensive touching or threats to do so. (NJSA 2C:33-4 Harassment)
- Other behavior that is deemed inappropriate or disruptive by the Library Staff. (Revised 5/2014)

Library privileges may be terminated for repeated violation of any of the above standards and immediately for the following reasons: damaging or vandalizing library property; stealing library materials; threatening or physically harming staff or patrons.

Acts of assault, harassment, criminal mischief, child abandonment, theft, threatening or physically harming staff or patrons, behaving in a disorderly manner, public communication of obscenity, criminal trespass, loitering and vandalism, or other misdemeanors or criminal offenses not otherwise specified herein, shall render any person so acting liable to criminal prosecution to the fullest extent of the law.

#### **10. a. Cell Phone Usage**

Cell phone usage that disturbs other patrons or staff is not permitted in the library. We request that patrons turn cell phones to silent or vibrate when in the library, and be considerate of those around you by speaking quietly for brief periods of time. Phone calls that require more extended periods of time will be limited to the lobby, vestibule or outside areas of the buildings. Please do not use cell phones at the patron service desks.

#### **11. PARENTAL/GUARDIAN SUPERVISORY RESPONSIBILITIES**

The Mercer County Library System welcomes children of all ages. We strive to be a doorway through which a life-long interest in learning and reading takes place. The public library is, however, just that, a public building. As such, anyone can come into it, law-abiding or otherwise.

Library staff have many duties to perform in order to serve the patrons of the library system and cannot monitor the behavior or whereabouts of each patron, including children. Staff does not take over parental responsibilities for children who come into the library. A parent or caregiver must provide continuous supervision for children to ensure their safety. A child could be tempted to go off with a stranger, become ill, or become lost. Any of these emergencies could take place in a public building. Because of these and other emergencies that could take place, the following policy has been adopted:

**Children Six Years of Age and Under:** Children six years of age and younger may not be left unattended in the library. They must be in direct supervision of a parent or other adult when in the library, which means that the adult must remain with the child during the entire library visit. This includes the circumstances of a child who may be playing a computer game or playing in the Children's Area. Exceptions to this policy occur when programming requires children to attend on their own; however parents are required to remain in the building when children are attending a program on their own. At these times, children should be brought to the activity prior to the program and be met outside the door of the Activity Room at its conclusion. If parents are expected to be busy in the library, for example, using a computer, photocopier or attending a meeting, plan to leave your child home or bring an adult caregiver with you to the library. Do not expect one child to supervise another.

**Children Ages 7-13:** Children seven to thirteen years of age should not be left without the presence of a parent or guardian somewhere in the library building. Children under the age of 14 who are left unattended at the close of business will be considered stranded. Staff will be instructed to wait approximately 20 minutes with the child and then contact the local Police Department.

Parents are responsible for the conduct of minor children, under 18 years of age, in the library or on library grounds, regardless of whether they are in the company of their child or not.

## **12. CIRCULATION POLICIES**

The Mercer County Library System collects, organizes and circulates books and other library materials to children, young adults and adult patrons. Selection of these materials is made to meet the informational, educational, cultural and recreational needs of all residents of the library service area.

Any valid cardholder may borrow and return materials at any branch of the Mercer County Library System. The cardholder is responsible for the materials borrowed or charges incurred against his / her library card.

**Check Out Without Presenting A Library Card:** The Mercer County Library System issues a library card to eligible users, which entitles them to utilize all library services. This card is a positive form of identification and ensures the reliability,

confidentiality, and integrity of a patron's record. All patrons are required to present their card when checking out materials and when placing items on reserve.

In the event that the patron does not have his/her card in their immediate possession, he/she will be asked for an alternative form of identification, such as a driver's license, work or school identification. A note will be placed on the patron's record indicating non-presentation of library card, and the patron will be expected to bring his/her card on the next visit or purchase a replacement card for a cost of \$2.00. Staff will only allow a patron to check out without presentation of a library card once in a three-month period. After that it will be assumed that the patron has lost the original card and will be issued a new card for the replacement cost of \$2.00.

**PC Use Without a Library Card:** Patrons are required to have in their possession a current library card in order to use the public access PCs in the library. In the event that the patron does not have his/her library card or internet-only card in their immediate possession and would like to use the public PCs, he/she will be asked for an alternative form of identification, such as a driver's license, work or school ID. This will be done as a courtesy to our PC users. A note will be placed on the patron's record stating that the patron did not have a library card with them and we will expect that they will have their card next time. After a three-month time period it will be assumed that the original card has been lost or misplaced and the patron will be issued a replacement card for the cost of \$2.00.

**Card Holders** who wish to allow other persons or family members to pick up items placed on hold are responsible for informing the library, in person, of the identity of any person or persons to whom such permission will be granted. A message will be placed on the patron's record, stating that permission has been granted. The person picking up the requested item(s) must present the patron's library card when retrieving the item(s), and may not use the card to check out items other than those on hold. The patron issued the card is fully responsible for materials borrowed and charges incurred on the card.

**Resident Minor Card Holders:** Children under the age of 14 may obtain a library card with the permission of a parent or guardian, as indicated by the presentation of an application signed by such parent or guardian. Issuance of a card under the provisions of this section entitles the signing parent or guardian the privilege of using their minor child's card on the same basis as the minor. This privilege expires when the child reaches age 18. During the application process, a message will be placed on the minor child's record indicating that the authorizing parent or guardian may use the card and have access to the account. Patrons are reminded that only the authorizing individual(s) will be allowed this privilege; if both parents / guardians will wish to use the minor's card, both must sign the application. This privilege only extends to the authorizing parent(s) or guardian(s) and not to other members of the family.

Minors ages 14-17 may obtain a card without the signature of a parent or guardian.

Minor card holders may also verbally authorize a parent or guardian to have access to library account information for the purposes of resolving fines and fees; however,

verbal authorization of the disclosure of account details does not include use of the library card. See above for procedure regarding use of a minor's library card by a parent or guardian.

In all cases the physical library card must be present for check-out. Electronic formats of library cards will not be accepted.

**Non-Resident Cards:** As a courtesy to our non-resident patrons who pay for their library privileges, the library will issue courtesy cards to a spouse or **minor** child(ren) living in the household. The library will not issue a free library card to any other adult living in the household.

**Senior Cards:** As a courtesy to our non-resident senior citizen patrons who pay for their library privileges, the library will issue courtesy cards to a senior spouse (over the age of 62) and any minor child(ren) living in the household. The library will not issue a free library card to any other adult living in the household.

**Student & Business Cards:** These types of cards are issued as a courtesy for specific use by the patron to whom the card is issued. Permission to use these courtesy cards by persons other than the specific patron will not be granted. Family members of student and business card holders may purchase a card if they wish to do so.

### **13. LOAN PERIODS, ITEM LIMITS, EXTENDED USE FEES, AND OTHER FEES**

Loan periods, item limits, extended use fees, and other fees vary by type of material and item demand (see Attachment A). Loan limits are placed on books in a particular category when there is a school project that will require many students to use the books available or at the discretion of the Branch Manager or their designee.

- A. Holds / Reserves:** A hold can be placed on any circulating material, with the exception of periodicals. If not filled, a hold will be cancelled after twelve months. The patron will be notified when cancellation occurs. When a reserved item is checked in at a branch library, it will be held for a patron for five working days from the check in date. If a hold item is not picked up within five working days, the hold is automatically cancelled and the item is either sent to the next patron or returned to its home location.
- B. Renewals:** Circulating materials may be renewed four times in person, by phone, by using the public online catalog in the library, or via [www.mcl.org](http://www.mcl.org) using the online catalog, with the following exceptions:
- **ILL / OCLC Materials** are not automatically renewable; however, such items may be able to be renewed in accordance with the procedure described in Section 15a.
  - **Items on Hold** for another patron cannot be renewed.

If a patron requires the continued use of an item after the item has exceeded maximum renewals the patron must present the item in person.

The item must be checked-in and can be immediately checked back out to the patron in the following circumstances:

- The item is not on reserve for another patron
- The item is not designated as a new item. For example, the item has an item type of "new," there is colored tape on the item designating it as new, or the item is stamped with an addition date of less than six months.
- There is at least one other copy, which is in a "checked-in" status, available in the library system
- ILL / OCLC materials can only be renewed with authorization of and by the ILL staff.
- Staff are not able to override the maximum renewal – the item must be present and checked-in and then checked back out on the patron's library account

**C. Lost Material:** When an item has been overdue for 90 days it is considered lost and the patron is responsible for replacing or paying for the item. There is a \$2.00 processing fee that will be added to each lost or replaced item. A patron wishing to replace the item must obtain permission to do so from the Branch Manager or their designee. If approved, the replacement item must be an exact duplicate of the item, in excellent condition. A refund will be issued only in the event that a lost and paid for item is returned within a 14 (fourteen) day period. The refund will not include any overdue fines or reprocessing fees, which may apply.

**D. If a patron believes they have returned an item that is on their library record:** If a patron believes that an item has been returned, the patron will be advised to search further for the item. The library staff will search for the item also. The status of items not recovered in the 90-day period of the search will automatically be converted to "lost". The patron will be responsible for the lost item charges.

**E. Damaged Material:** Patrons are responsible for replacement or payment of damaged materials, as these items cannot be circulated due to the damage. A \$2.00 processing fee will be attached to damaged materials.

**F. Barred Status:**

1) A patron will be blocked from borrowing materials when the total of all fines and/or lost materials charges on a patron's card reaches \$25.00. If a patron whose borrowing privileges are blocked does not bring the total of fines and charges below \$25.00 by the end of the calendar month in which the total is reached, the patron will be deemed barred. Once a patron has been designated as barred, borrowing privileges will be suspended until all overdue materials are returned and the patron's delinquent balance is paid in full.

2) A patron with outstanding Interlibrary Loan materials that are overdue will be designated as barred, and all borrowing privileges will be suspended, regardless of the total of fines and other charges against the patron's account. When the ILL materials are returned and all charges associated with the loan of ILL materials are resolved, borrowing privileges will be reinstated.

**G. Bank Returned Checks:** There will be a \$20.00 bank fee for any returned check. When the bank returns a check to the library, library staff

will freeze the account until payment is made on the amount of the returned check and the \$20 surcharge. Payment must be made in cash, money order or certified check, at any branch of the library system.

**H. Fee Policy:** The Mercer County Library System believes in promoting access to resources and services. Services and resources developed in accordance with the library's Mission and Roles statements are provided without fee to the library's constituency. Fees may be imposed for auxiliary services beyond the library's accepted roles, and/or as a measure for preserving services equity, curtailing excessive individual demand detrimental to the constituency at large. Fees are set periodically. Please see the Extended Use & Fees Schedule for a complete list.

- Non-Resident Fee \$75.00 annually
- Non-Contributing Mercer County Senior Fee \$10.00 annually
- Lost or replacement card fee \$ 2.00
- Internet Only Card \$ 2.00
- Photocopies
  - Black and white \$ .10 per page
  - Color \$ .50 per page
- Computer Printouts
  - Black and white \$ .10 per page
  - Color \$ .50 per page
- Photocopies and faxed materials sent from other branches, to include certain ILL faxes and photocopies \$ .10 per page
- Audiovisual material returned in the bookdrop \$ 1.00

**I. Damage to a Patron's AV or Automobile Equipment:** Mercer County Library System assumes no responsibility for the consequences, including damage or other malfunction, to home, business, or personal electronic equipment of any type, as a result of using physical or electronic material obtained through the Mercer County Library System.

**14. CONFIDENTIALITY OF PATRON RECORDS**

**N.J.S.A.**

**18A:73-43.2. Confidentiality of library users' records**

Library records which contain the names or other personally identifying details regarding the users of libraries are confidential and shall not be disclosed except in the following circumstances:

- a. The records are necessary for the proper operation of the library;
- b. Disclosure is requested by the user; or
- c. Disclosure is required pursuant to a subpoena issued by a court or court order.

L. 1985, c. 172 § 2.

For purposes of this section, and without limitation, circulation records, including name, address, status of the borrower, titles of materials currently on loan, dates of transactions, PC registration data, and reserve files, of the Mercer County Library

System are deemed to be confidential for purposes of NJSA 18A: 73-43.2 and any ancillary provisions pertinent to that section of the law.

The Mercer County Library System is committed to the confidentiality of our patrons' records in accordance with New Jersey's Confidentiality of Library Records Law, NJSA 18A:73-43.2. The library system will comply with all State of New Jersey laws, regulations and administrative directives concerning the maintenance of library records, including internet usage registration records.

Any request for disclosure that does not fall under subsections (a) or (b) of NJSA 18A:73-43.2 shall be referred to the Mercer County Counsel's Office for review, which office will render a decision as to form, legality and scope of any court-issued subpoena or court order.

Library staff are bound by federal and state law in the matter of patron record confidentiality, and are not permitted to exercise discretion in releasing information. Any dispute regarding the right of access to a patron record will be referred to MCLS Administration for determination. Persistent or repeated demands for unauthorized access to patron records will be referred to the Office of Mercer County Counsel for appropriate action.

Parents or legal guardians are entitled to information relating to the use of a minor's card in certain situations, as this is deemed as essential to the library's operation. However, only the parent(s) or guardian(s) whose signature appears on the registration card will be allowed access to the library account in order to ensure confidentiality of the record. The library will not discuss a minor's account with any person other than the person whose name appears on the back of the registration card and the minor themselves. If more than one parent or guardian wishes to access a minor child's card, they must individually sign the registration card. If no parent/guardian signature appears (as in the case with a child 14 years or older who may apply for the card themselves,) the library will not disclose information regarding the account with anyone other than the patron unless that patron authorizes such disclosure, or the parent/guardian signs the registration card assuming responsibility for the account. Verification of relationship will be required. This process must be completed at the branch where the account was first opened.

## **15. REFERENCE SERVICES**

Accurate and efficient reference service is provided in person, by telephone, and via e-mail (e-ref), to library users by professional librarians and trained paraprofessionals.

The Lawrence Headquarters Branch maintains an extensive reference collection. Its reference department is staffed by reference librarians to assist in-house patrons, answer phone questions and provide reference support services to reference staff in the branches. The Headquarters reference collection includes New Jersey specific materials, business, genealogy and local history items. The Township of Lawrence Historian's Office also maintains a small room at the HQ Branch. When the resources of the library cannot satisfy a request for information, it may be referred to other libraries throughout the state through library networking. Users are also referred

directly to appropriate agencies; however, the reference staff does not mediate between users and these agencies.

Priority is given to in-person requests over telephone requests. E-ref requests are answered within 24 hours of the submission of the request. Staff assists users in looking up desired materials, using the computer catalog and in locating these items on the shelves. If the Mercer County Library System does not own the requested material, an attempt will be made to obtain the material through Interlibrary Loan (see section on ILL).

Staff provide answers to “ready reference” types of inquiries, including directions, general information concerning library services, and questions involving specific facts, which can be readily determined from standard sources. For inquiries that require longer, more detailed answers, or extensive searching or interpretation of materials, the staff assists the user in selecting the most appropriate sources and offers instruction in the use of these sources selected for the search.

The amount of time that a staff member can spend assisting individual users is necessarily limited by the needs of other users. Time limits vary according to the complexity of materials to be used, library experience of the user, the number of other users needing assistance and the number of staff available to help users.

Branch staff will assist users within the confines of the branch’s collection. Staff will call or refer patrons to the Lawrence Headquarters for more extensive reference assistance.

Staff cannot offer appraisals of rare books, coins, stamps, antiques, etc. Nor can they recommend specific titles for purchase on a given topic. A staff member will help the user locate printed sources, reviews and evaluations. Users are urged to inspect each title personally to determine if it meets their individual needs.

Staff can provide short, factual information to answer medical, financial, or consumer review questions or provide specific citations regarding legal questions and direct patrons to tax information in the library’s resources. Advice, interpretations and opinions cannot be provided. The staff assists users in locating and using items in the library collection, but cannot engage in genealogical research for users. Staff can provide answers to trivia, game and contest questions that require simple factual information from a standard source. However, those users who require lengthy searches are offered guidance in locating likely sources for their answers.

Staff provide users needing translations with appropriate dictionaries as available in the collection. They will assist users in locating translators by request.

Staff can provide limited instruction on the use of personal computers and electronic devices, but cannot offer advice on repairs, software installation, or product recommendations. The information and instruction offered by library staff is exclusively demonstrative in nature, and is intended to solely acquaint patrons with the operation of electronic devices in general, or the installation and use of applications, programs and related software. Actual implementation, modification, or

use of any device, application, program, or other software shall be undertaken by the patron on the patron's own initiative, who shall be solely responsible for the consequences of any such use, modification or installation. The library system and its staff assume no responsibility for the functioning or consequences of any application, program, or other software installed or utilized by any patron, or for the interaction of such material with any electronic device.

School assignments are often designed to teach students to locate and interpret information. The staff provides guidance in locating and instruction in using, sources of information. Short, factual answers such as names, dates, or the spelling of a word are provided unless it appears that the intent of the assignment is to train students in the use of reference sources.

- **Telephone Reference Service:** As part of its service to the public, the staff takes requests for information by telephone and responds as time permits. As stated above, the staff gives priority to in-person requests over telephone requests. Telephone reference may be limited to three inquiries per day.
  - a. **Search Parameters:** The staff provides telephone reference service for short, factual inquiries that do not require extensive searches, interpretations, or the reading of long passages over the telephone. Sources consulted are cited. If research and interpretation is needed, the librarians will cite sources of information and invite users to come to the library to examine the materials.
  - b. **Holds:** Holds are limited to three per caller.
  - c. **Medical Questions:** Telephone reference for medical or drug questions are limited to those which require only a short definition or description that can be quoted verbatim without interpretation by the librarian.
  - d. **Legal Questions:** Telephone reference service for legal questions is limited to reading specific short citations or definitions.
  - e. **Street Address Directory:** Street address inquiries are limited to three per caller.
  - f. **Stock Quotes:** Stock quotes are limited to three per caller.
  - g. **Periodical Searches:** The staff will check three issues of a newspaper or magazine for requested information, as time permits.
  - h. **Product Information:** Product rating and recommendations may be given by telephone when a printed source is readily available and brief.
  - i. **School Assignments:** Up to three short factual answers per student can be given over the telephone. Long passages cannot be read.
  
- **E-Reference:** MCLS staff can provide brief answers to factual reference questions and suggest sources to meet your information needs, via the internet. Response time is 24 hours from the time that a request is received, excluding weekend or holiday closings. When appropriate, the reference staff will email attachments in response to a query.

- [www.mcl.org](http://www.mcl.org): The Mercer County Library System views the internet as another opportunity to serve its patrons, offering patrons, through our website, the most up to date information regarding our branches, programs and services, our online catalog and patron account access, and a host of electronic reference resources.

#### 15. a. OTHER RELATED SERVICES

- **Photocopying:** The staff will set aside materials they have located for patrons to copy when they come into the library. Public copiers are conveniently located in all of the branches. Copies are \$.10 per page.
- **Interlibrary Loan:** The Mercer County Library System provides an Interlibrary Loan service for patrons and will borrow materials from libraries outside the system to accommodate the needs of our patrons. In a few instances, there is a fee imposed by the lending library to send a book or article through ILL. The patron is responsible for this fee and may stipulate the maximum he/she is willing to pay. The library's ILL department will always try first to obtain the materials at no cost to the patron or at a low cost. The following regulations apply to the service:
  - The library will accept three ILL requests per patron visit. Up to three ILL requests will be accepted by phone, fax, email or via the online ILL Form, which can be found on the library's website.
  - ILL materials circulate for four (4) weeks and are not automatically renewable. If you would like to renew an ILL you must make an official request through the ILL staff at least three days prior to the due date to determine if a one-time renewal is possible.
  - The fine for an overdue ILL book is \$0.25 per day. A patron with outstanding, overdue ILL material on their account will automatically become barred, regardless of whether or not the fines or fees associated with the outstanding materials exceed or total \$25.00.
  - The patron is responsible for photocopy charges for articles obtained through ILL.
  - The patron is responsible for the replacement cost charged by the lending library for lost ILL materials.
  - Books borrowed through ILL must be returned to a Mercer County Library System branch. We will return the material to the lending library.
  - There is limited availability of audio-visual materials through the Interlibrary Loan process. The library system will not initiate Interlibrary Loan Requests for feature films, music CDs, videocassettes, or video games of any type.
  - Children's materials and paperback materials will not be requested through ILL.
  - Upon review of the request and at the discretion of the library, the library system may decide to purchase the material, rather than fulfill

the request through Interlibrary Loan. If this is the case, the requesting patron will be notified and placed on hold for the item.

- **Home Borrowers Service:** The home borrowers service provides direct delivery service of materials to people who are homebound, by volunteers who select the materials at the library. Anyone who is temporarily or permanently homebound may utilize this service. Patrons may contact the Reference Department at the Lawrence Headquarters Branch for further details.
- **Long Distance Phone Calls:** Patrons who are entitled to a complimentary Mercer County Library System card are so because they reside, work, own property or attend a school in one of the member municipalities. Therefore, these patrons are required to provide a local, Mercer County phone number, either a landline number or a 609 area code cell phone number, or email at which staff can contact them. Patrons who have purchased a card in the amount of either \$75 or \$10 should be reached at their convenience, as they may not necessarily have a local exchange. It is encouraged that staff should first ascertain whether or not a local number is available. In the event that a patron provides a cell phone number as the only number available for contact, staff should encourage the patron to provide a landline number as a back up contact number, as cell phone numbers tend to change quite frequently.
- **E-Mail Notification:** Patrons may request e-mail notification of overdue items or of an item placed on reserve. Those patrons who have requested e-mail notification will also receive courtesy e-mails indicating material will be due soon, and then overdue notification of items that are overdue. Patrons with e-mail notification will also receive card expiration notices.

#### **15. b. CIRCULATION OF REFERENCE MATERIALS:**

In general, reference materials are maintained permanently inside the library building so that the resources will be accessible to as many users as possible while the library is open. Many reference tools cannot be taken from the building without causing a severe inconvenience to other library users. The reference needs of the majority are given priority over the needs of the individual. However, since some reference materials are much less in demand than others, some branches may choose to have select reference materials circulate overnight, one per patron, with permission from the Branch Manager or the Reference staff.

#### **15. c. RESERVE COLLECTION FOR SCHOOL ASSIGNMENTS:**

At the request of the faculty or media specialists in schools in participating municipalities, staff may set aside reserve materials to support assignments involving large numbers of students. The materials will be set-aside for the duration of the assignment and must be used in the library. We encourage communication between local schools and the library system by providing fax, phone or email homework / assignment alert sheets.

## 16. PATRON COMMENTS, COMPLAINTS, SUGGESTIONS

The Mercer County Library System welcomes comments and suggestions from the public. In person / telephone / email comments and concerns will receive immediate attention and acknowledgement by any staff member approached. Any complaints that appear to involve professional judgment will be referred to the Branch Manager or to their designee (i.e. the Circulation Supervisor or Reference Professional on duty at the time). If no supervisor or manager is present at the time, the issue will be referred to the Branch Manager as soon as possible.

If the question relates to administrative policies or any other area that the staff member cannot address, the issue will be referred to the Branch Manager and then, if necessary, to Library Administration for response. All written patron correspondence will be acknowledged or answered in writing as soon as possible. Anonymous complaints will not be considered.

## 17. PATRON COMMENTS ABOUT THE COLLECTION

**If the library does not have an item that the patron wants,** it may have been omitted for any number of reasons, e.g. because the subject is already well covered, because it received unfavorable reviews in the professional journals or because of general collection development guidelines or budget limitations. Resources are available through Interlibrary Loan (ILL). Suggestions for purchase will be considered in accordance with the Mercer County Library System Collection Development Policy, which is available upon request. Suggestions for purchase can be submitted directly to the reference desk, or online via the MCLS website.

**If the library owns an item the patron disapproves of, the comment will be referred to the Branch Manager or the Head of Reference.** The presence of an item in the collection does not signify an endorsement of that particular item. The Mercer County Library System subscribes to the American Library Association's Bill of Rights (see attachment B). If the patron is not satisfied that the item accords with the System Collection Development policy, the patron may complete a request for reconsideration of the library material form (attachment C). Completed forms will be referred to a materials reevaluation committee, which will review the patron's objections, in accordance with the reconsideration policy as noted in the Collection Development Manual. The patron will be informed of the results of the reevaluation committee, in writing.

**Censorship:** The library does not censor materials, including a child's use of library materials. It is the parental or guardian prerogative to determine what a child may or may not read. The library will not attempt to indicate an author's philosophy by using labels or other devices, however, the library will leave attached any rating or label already in place on the material when received by the publisher/vendor.

## **18. DISCARDS AND DONATIONS**

The Mercer County Library System periodically accepts donations of books and media materials in good condition from the public, reserving the right to reject a donated item for any reason. All donations are subject to the following provisions:

1. Donations become the sole property of the Mercer County Library System.
2. The library is under no obligation to add a donated item to the collection or to notify the donor of the disposition of that item.
3. The library system reserves the right to decide the best means of dispersing donated materials and equipment. Donations may be added to the collection at the discretion of designated members of the staff, sold by local friends of the library groups or discarded.
4. Materials that are mildewed, wet, smell strongly of odor, or damaged are not accepted for donation at any branch.
5. Only new textbooks are accepted.
6. Magazines are not generally accepted, unless specific arrangements have been made with the Branch Manager prior to donation.

In response to the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001 and in accordance with the advisement of the federal and state governmental safety recommendations, anonymous donations will not be accepted at any location and will be discarded. Please present donations at the desk. Patrons may be asked to present identification when dropping off donations.

At a patron's request a receipt stating the number of items will be provided. As per the IRS tax laws, the library staff cannot assign a monetary value to donations.

## **19. INTERNET USE**

The Mercer County Library System offers internet access as a part of its mission to be the gateway to the growing universe of information by developing and providing open access to services and resources which are responsive to, and representative of, the diverse recreational, cultural and educational interests of the community. The Mercer County Library System takes pride in offering state-of-the-art information retrieval from all types of media to its patrons.

The internet is a global electronic network. Resources available on the internet supplement and complement the collections of the Mercer County Library System.

### **19. a. Accuracy & Availability of Information**

The internet and its available resources may contain controversial material. The Mercer County Library System has no control over the information accessed through the internet and cannot be held responsible for its content. Library users access the internet at their own discretion and are individually and totally responsible for any access points they reach.

The library staff cannot control the availability of information links, which often change rapidly and unpredictably. Not all sources on the internet provide accurate, complete or current information. Users need to be good information consumers, questioning the validity of the information they find on the internet. Users may seek help from professional librarians to verify information.

As time permits, a brief introduction to the use of the terminal will be provided. Library staff is not available to offer extensive hands-on assistance to each internet user but will attempt to give limited assistance, when possible. The library offers classes and special programs, including one-on-one tutorials, as well as offering an online contact form, for patrons requiring more in-depth help. Patrons may find these classes listed on the library's website, [www.mcl.org](http://www.mcl.org) or the printed branch calendars.

#### **19. b. Child Safety on the Internet**

Parents or guardians are responsible for the internet information selected and/or accessed by their children. Children who use the internet unsupervised may be exposed to inappropriate or disturbing information and images. Parents are encouraged to discuss the use of the internet in relation to family values and boundaries with their children and to monitor their children's use of the internet. To assist parents, the library has available online and in print the pamphlet, Child Safety on the Internet Information Highway, published by the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children. The website for additionally updated information is <http://www.safekids.com/child-safety-on-the-information-highway>. Also, parents may find information on the website of the American Library Association, <http://gws.ala.org/> Great Websites for Kids.

Internet stations are filtered based on the location of the PC. PCs located in the designated Children's sections are filtered using a CIPA (Child Internet Protection Act) compliant filter.

#### **19. c. Rights & Responsibilities of Users**

- Many library computers on which the public can access the internet are located in public areas that must be shared by library users of all ages, backgrounds and sensibilities. Individuals are asked to consider this point when accessing potentially controversial information and images.
- Patrons may request, or be asked to use, privacy screens, or may have their sessions terminated if the content they are viewing is of a private or controversial nature.
- Library personnel do not monitor or supervise the internet access except for length of time of use. If Internet searching results in disruption of library services, or if patron behavior when using Internet resources becomes

inappropriate for a library setting, the library reserves the right to end the session.

- Viewing illegal materials, such as child pornography, or using the internet so as to cause harm to others and/or engage in illegal activity are considered inappropriate uses of our resources. Library patrons observed using the internet and PCs inappropriately will have their internet session terminated. The library reserves the right to revoke or suspend the library privileges or seek legal prosecution of patrons viewing illegal or inappropriate materials.

#### **19. d. Inappropriate Use of the Internet**

Inappropriate use of the internet from computers of the Mercer County Library System includes, but is not limited to:

- Interfering, altering or damaging any library computer program, including disabling electronic filters.
- Use of the internet workstations to gain unauthorized access to the library's computer system or any other network or computer system.
- Violating the security system of the library's computers or any other network computer system.
- Using any library workstation for illegal or criminal purposes.
- Violating copyright laws or software licenses or agreements.
- Employing the library's computers for libel, slander, forgery, and fraud or to transmit threatening or harassing material.
- Displaying, sending, receiving or printing text, images or graphics of obscene material or materials harmful to minors.
- Displaying, sending, receiving or printing text, images or graphics that violate laws relating to child pornography.
- Engaging in activity that is deliberately offensive or creates an intimidating or hostile environment for library staff and patrons.

The library system takes seriously its obligation to provide an environment that is amendable to the information needs of many types of patrons, as well as their confidentiality. Patrons may request the use of a privacy screen at any time, and a screen will be provided by staff contingent upon the availability of a screen. If a staff member, at any time, believes that material displayed on a screen may distract or interfere with other patrons, the staff member may, in his or her sole discretion, direct the patron viewing such material to place a privacy screen on the computer screen. Failure to comply with such a directive may result in termination of a patron's computer session.

Patrons must use their own barcode to log-on. The use of a barcode other than their own will result in a suspension of PC privileges.

#### **19. e. Duration of Usage**

**Library cardholders and Internet-Only cardholders** will be allowed a standard allotment of 120 minutes of PC time per day. Patrons can use their

allotted time all in one session, or in any increments the patron wishes, but patrons must have a minimum of 10 minutes of time remaining in order to log-on.

**Guest Use.** For individuals who are visiting the library to use our PC or internet stations for a one-time visit, Guest passes are available for a standard allotment of 60 minutes of PC time per day.

**Express PCs.** Are available for 20 minute sessions.

**Supplementary Time.** May be granted for users who are approaching the limit of their standard allotment, and need to continue working beyond that limit. Patrons who hold library membership cards, or internet cards may request up to one hour of additional time in addition to their standard allotment, subject to the indications specified below. Individuals using the internet as guests who are approaching the limit of their standard allotment may request up to one hour of additional time in addition to their standard allotment, subject to the indications specified below. Individuals using the Express PCs may request up to 20 minutes of additional time, subject to the indications specified below.

**Limitations on Supplementary Time.** Limitations on supplementary time will be imposed whenever there is a reasonably based risk that supplementary time on the computer would deprive another patron or guest the opportunity to make use of a public access internet computer. If all, or all less one, of the public access computers are occupied at a time when a request for supplementary time is made, staff may decline to grant supplementary time, or limit supplementary time to 15 minute increments, until another computer becomes available.

#### **19. f. Printing and Downloading**

If patrons wish to save a copy of their work, they may bring a flash drive for downloading. Information can be saved to the hard drive temporarily, but will be deleted when the patron logs-off.

Patrons are responsible for logging off properly by using the “end session” button. Failure to do so may result in the temporary retention of personal information. Patrons should ask staff if they are unsure how to properly sign out of a session. To protect privacy, anything saved on the PCs will be deleted once the session ends. This includes files, passwords or website history. The software the library uses does not track internet activity.

Black and white printing cost \$.10 per page. Color printing is \$.50 per page. All printing may be paid at the reference desk.

If a patron experiences difficulty in using a computer they should notify staff immediately. They should not attempt to shut-off or reboot the computer; the PC will automatically reboot when a patron logs-off or their time expires.

Personal email accounts are not offered by the library. Patrons can register on-line for a free account if they wish.

The library reserves the right to terminate an internet session at any time. Staff can only provide limited assistance with internet searching and word processing.

### **19. g. EnvisionWare Registration Software**

EnvisionWare software is a PC and internet registration software product that runs on public access computers in academic and public libraries.

For each computer session, the software prompts the user to type in their library barcode number to uniquely identify themselves. The software validates the barcode number against a database of authorized users.

Internet users will need one of three cards to access the internet:

1. **A Mercer County Library System Library Card** issued in the patron's name.
2. **Internet-Only Card:** Patrons not eligible for a traditional library card, but who would like to purchase an internet only card may do so for a fee of \$2.00. This card will only allow use of PC stations; internet-only cardholders will not be able to check out Library materials. Internet-only cards are valid for one year from date of issuance, and renewable with a valid, ID, with current address.
3. **Guest Pass:** Patrons visiting from out of the area who need access to the internet during a brief stay are issued a guest pass. Valid ID, with a current address, is required.

## **20. LIBRARY PROGRAMS**

The Mercer County Library System plans and conducts activities designed to inform, educate, or culturally enrich the public. These activities utilize the library and/or community resources in order to promote awareness of the library and its offerings, extend the use of various collections, and provide a forum for sharing community information.

The library offers a variety of programs for different ages and interest groups. Library programs allow for the expression of a variety of viewpoints. A Branch Manager or their designee may allow a commercial, for-profit organization to present information to the community through a library sponsored program or event. Examples of such programs might include, but are not limited to, estate planning, college funding, small business seminar, garden lecture series, etc. This is a legitimate

method for the library to offer its public timely information presented by knowledgeable or skilled professionals.

In these cases, the organization may not sell materials or merchandise, charge a fee, solicit contributions, engage in fund-raising projects, conduct profit-making ventures or solicit a client base prior to, or during the program. The branch hosting the program either must advertise the program or must review and approve any advertisement the group may wish to do prior to publication. Promotional material must state that permission to use the community rooms does not imply library sponsorship or endorsement of any group, product or program. The County logo should only be placed on library-initiated advertisement and not on publicity the group itself publishes.

All library programs are open to the public. The library system or branch hosting the program may take registration for library programs. Registration may not be taken by the business or organization itself. The library may require advanced registration in order to limit attendance to a reasonable number or to an appropriate age group. When limited space is available, the library may limit registration to Mercer County Library System cardholders. Registration requirements and program information are publicized in advance.

Unless there is an exceptional reason, the same commercial group should not be presenting the same program for a continuous period of time. This infers use of the community room as an office and monopolizes use of the rooms for other community or not-for-profit groups. Lecture series or theme programs that may continue over a period of several months are not included.

The library staff continuously evaluates program offerings on the basis of their contributions to library service objectives. Attendance statistics, patron evaluation, overall quality and public relations are all valuable considerations for continuing or modifying programs. (See Library Sponsored Informational Seminars, Attachment F)

## **21. LIBRARY OUTREACH**

- a. **Definition of Outreach:** Any library service or program that requires dedicated staff time towards a targeted or specific group of clients or individuals is considered to be a library outreach service event. This may include library tours, story-times, an invitation to a performance program, instruction classes for the library's electronic resources and on-site visits by library staff to schools, organizations or outside meeting places to promote the library's services and collections to its patrons. Additionally, library outreach may consist of participation at outside community fairs and events attended by the public.
- b. **Goal of Outreach:** The library's goal in providing outreach is to promote the library's mission and library services to patrons in the member municipalities of the Mercer County Library System, which include: East Windsor, Ewing, Hightstown, Hopewell Township, Lawrence, Robbinsville, and West Windsor.

- c. **Requests for Outreach:** Requests for outreach from a group or agency should be made to a department head or Branch Manager at the Mercer County Library branch in which the group is physically located. Advanced notice is suggested.
- d. **Approval of Outreach Services:** Several factors may govern the approval of outreach requests. Approval is contingent on availability of staff and/or space accommodation. Priority will be given to groups located in the branch's municipality and those groups that are made up of a majority of individuals who have or can prove eligibility for a resident Mercer County Library card in one of our member municipalities. Proof may be required, such as library card barcode number, or address. Non-profit groups may be given priority. Groups or agencies from non-member municipalities who are requesting outreach may be referred to the library where they are eligible for free library cards. The allocation of staff time and resources dedicated toward outreach will be balanced with all other normal branch services and programming.
- e. **Frequency of Outreach Services:** Frequency of requests may sometimes be limited at the discretion of the branch manager. At some branches, outreach to youth is routinely provided during the school year from September through June as staffing permits. In the summer, staff time and branch resources may be dedicated to providing increased services and programs to meet the demands of the library system's high-volume summer reading program and therefore, outreach to groups may be limited. At some locations, pre-arranged summer outreach may be scheduled. Youth who are part of day-time camps in the summer months are encouraged to take part in the library's summer reading program and its offerings with their families as their schedules permit. Some branches may approve outreach requests to groups, camps or day-cares in the summer based on branch staffing and programming patterns. This is at the discretion of the library system.
- f. **Group use of library community rooms:** The library's community room policy is separate and distinct from outreach. An eligible group wishing to book a community room for meeting use may do so via the community room registration form, available at any branch, or online:  
<http://www.mcl.org/ref/meetroom.html>
- g. **General visit information:** Groups wishing to visit the library for any reason are welcome to do so, observing the normal standards and rules for patron conduct and the internet users' policy. Group leaders are urged to visit the physical setting of a branch before bringing a group in to confirm the necessary seating space around the public areas of the library.
- h. **Group attendance at SRP Programs & Events:** Throughout the summer months, there is often strong interest by groups wishing to attend performance and other programs advertised as part of the summer reading program. Groups or agencies from non-member

municipalities who are requesting to attend these programs may be referred to the library where they are eligible for free library cards.

- i. **Registration processes:** All advertised processes for registration of library programs should be observed by everyone. In some cases, Friends of the Library sponsored programming may be advertised with a space limit, and with presentation of a valid MCLS library card. Some branches may grant permission for groups to attend summer programs as space permits. Frequency of requests may sometimes be limited at the discretion of the Branch Manager.

## **22. EXHIBITS**

As an educational, cultural and informational institution, the library provides space for exhibits initiated by the library or requested by a community group or individual (see Exhibit Reservation Form, Attachment D).

The Branch Manager or their designee in those locations where space permits coordinates exhibits. The library is not responsible for loss or damage to any property and does not provide insurance for any exhibit or display in the library. The owner assumes sole responsibility.

The library reserves the right for approval of materials on display. Prices or price lists and biographical information about the artist or owner may be distributed, however, sales of materials are strictly prohibited in the library. A commercial company may exhibit as long as the primary purpose of the display is aesthetic, informational and/or educational and not of a promotional nature for the company.

The walls of the community rooms and library may be used for displaying artwork wherever feasible, however, no holes are to be made in the walls of either. Exhibits may be displayed for the maximum period of one calendar month unless the Branch Manager or their designee has approved an extended period.

Materials may be accepted for display as long as they do not advocate any political action or promote religious views. Displaying or distributing material does not in any way signify an endorsement by the library of either the content of the literature or the organization from which it comes. Mercer County Library System does not advocate or endorse the viewpoints of exhibits or exhibitors. All exhibitors must provide a description of their exhibit or display to be placed near or on the display in view of the public.

Organizations or individuals not related to the library are not permitted to solicit donations from patrons through receptacles or any other means.

(Revised by County Legal Department, 2/2014)

## **23. COMMUNITY ROOMS**

The Mercer County Library System provides community rooms for the use of eligible groups to hold meetings for the purpose of conducting business or otherwise serving

their membership. The use of these rooms is considered a public service and as such are subject to the following rules and regulations:

### **23. a. Eligibility of Users**

Community rooms of the Mercer County Library System are available without charge to any civic association, study, recreational, social, and cultural or community group, a substantial proportion of whose membership resides in the Mercer County Library System service area. Organizations must not be in violation of any Federal, State, or local law (see [Community Room Registration Form, Attachment E](#)).

### **23. b. Responsibilities of Users**

- **Supervision of Children:** Meetings that are primarily for children must include at least one responsible adult for every 15 children in attendance.
- **Promotion and Advertisement:**
  - Any advertisement must be reviewed by the Branch Manager or their designee before publication.
  - Promotional material must state that permission to use the community rooms does not imply library sponsorship or endorsement of any group or program.
- **Condition of the Room:** The authorized representative is responsible for the condition of the community room. It should be left clean, neat, chairs replaced on racks, lights off, windows closed, and doors locked, if so directed.

### **23. c. Logistics**

- An authorized representative of the organization will arrange scheduling with the Branch Manager or designee. The representative is required to complete a registration form and sign a statement of responsibility.
- Access to the community room is not available prior to opening of the building in the morning.
- Simple refreshments may be served in the community rooms.
- The library is not able to store or provide supplies for any group.
- The library does not provide projectors, laptops, or other multimedia devices.
- The library is not responsible for loss or damage to any group's property or injury to any person occurring during use of the community room. Damage to library property is the responsibility of the authorized representative.

### **23. d. Prohibited Activities**

- Fundraising projects (non-library sponsored) and commercial profit making ventures may not be conducted.
- Private parties (birthdays, showers) are also examples of activities that are not eligible for community room use.
- Fees may not be charged. Meetings must be free and open to the public.
- Contributions may not be solicited.
- Alcoholic beverages or drugs are not permitted.
- Activities that disturb other library patrons will not be tolerated and will result in termination of the meeting by the Branch Manager.

### **23. e. Denial of Future Use**

- Failure to comply with any of the conditions stated above will result in the denial of future use of the community rooms.
- Failure to show up for three consecutive meetings will result in denial of future use.

## **24. BULLETIN BOARDS**

The bulletin boards located in the entranceways or vestibules of the library entrance are meant to serve as a source of community and local information for patrons. The Mercer County Library System reserves the right to screen materials submitted for posting on the bulletin boards.

Materials may be posted providing the following criteria are met:

- The item is not an unattended petition.
- The item does not promote illegal activity.
- Legal announcements are acceptable.
- The item does not require a disproportionate amount of space.
- The item is considered to meet general standards of good taste.
- The library may limit the length of time any item is to be displayed.
- County, municipal agencies and civic associations will receive priority when space is limited.
- The item must be initialed and dated by a library staff member. Initialing in no way implies endorsement of posting.

Inside display of materials is reserved for library, county, state, municipal or related non-profit associations. No other material is accepted for inside display.

Displaying and/or distributing material does not in any way signify an endorsement by the library of either the contents of the literature or of the organization from which it comes.

## **25. PETITIONS**

Unattended petitions may not be circulated or placed in the libraries. However, the library grounds are public property and citizens may solicit signatures on petitions outside of the building. Inclement weather may cause a petitioner to want to come inside the building. The Branch Manager or their designee may accommodate the petitioner in the vestibule of the building, if the petitioner does not block access to the entrance or egress or disrupt the operation of the library or harass the patrons of the library.

## **Attachment B**

### **LIBRARY BILL OF RIGHTS**

The American Library Association affirms that all libraries are forums for information and ideas, and that the following basic policies should guide their services:

- I. Books and other library resources should be provided for the interest, information, and enlightenment of all people of the community the library serves. Materials should not be excluded because of origin, background, or views of those contributing to their creation.
- II. Libraries should provide materials and information presenting all points of view on current historical issues. Materials should not be proscribed or removed because of partisan or doctrinal disapproval.
- III. Libraries should challenge censorship in the fulfillment of their responsibility to provide information and enlightenment.
- IV. Libraries should cooperate with persons and groups concerned with resisting abridgment of free expression and free access to ideas.
- V. A person's right to use a library should not be denied or abridged because of origin, age, background or views.
- VI. Libraries, which make exhibit spaces and meeting rooms available to the public they serve, should make such facilities available on an equitable basis, regardless of the beliefs or affiliations of individuals or groups requesting their use.

Adopted June 18, 1948. Amended February 2, 1961, June 27, 1967 and January 23, 1980. Reaffirmed January 23, 1996 by the ALA Council.

Source: Office of Intellectual Freedom, American Library Association. This document and many others related to Intellectual Freedom are available from the Office of Intellectual Freedom, American Library Association, 50 East Huron Street, Chicago, IL 60611.

**Attachment C**

**PATRON'S REQUEST FOR RECONSIDERATION OF LIBRARY MATERIALS**

**Name:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Telephone:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Address:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Town:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Zip:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Email:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Library Barcode Number:** \_\_\_\_\_

Do you represent an **organization or a group**? If so, please specify:

\_\_\_\_\_

**Title** of item for reconsideration:

\_\_\_\_\_

**Format** (book, DVD, magazine, etc.):

\_\_\_\_\_

**Author** or other creator (director, etc.):

\_\_\_\_\_

**Why have you requested that this title be evaluated for its appropriateness for the library collection?** Is there anything specifically to which you object (please be as specific as you can)?

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Have you read or viewed this item in its entirety?**

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

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**What is your suggestion for the handling of this item?**

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**Thank you very much for your suggestion. We will contact you to let you know the resolution of your request.**

**Attachment D**

**EXHIBIT RESERVATION FORM**

Exhibitor must provide a description of Exhibit or Display to be placed near or on the public display:

Description of Exhibit or Display: \_\_\_\_\_

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Exhibitor or Authorized Representative: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone #: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Dates of Exhibit or Display: \_\_\_\_\_

Branch Manager / Designee Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

The Library is not responsible for loss or damage to any item exhibited. Mercer County Library System does not advocate or endorse the viewpoints of exhibits or exhibitors. Mercer County reserves the right to decline exhibits which they deem offensive or inappropriate.

Signature of Exhibitor or Authorized Representative:

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(Signature)

\*Please note: The area in which art is displayed is an area that may be shared with other library programming and/or events. For example, youth decorations and/or programming may at some point during the exhibit period take place in that shared space.

(Updated by County Administration, 4/2014)

**COUNTY OF MERCER  
MERCER COUNTY LIBRARY SYSTEM  
COMMUNITY ROOM REGISTRATION FORM ATTACHMENT E.**

AGENCY : (State, County)\_\_\_\_\_DEPARTMENT:\_\_\_\_\_

NAME OF GROUP:\_\_\_\_\_

DATE & TIME OF RESERVATION:\_\_\_\_\_

CONTACT PERSON:\_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS:\_\_\_\_\_

PHONE:\_\_\_\_\_EMAIL ADDRESS:\_\_\_\_\_

PURPOSE OF MEETING:\_\_\_\_\_

NUMBER OF PERSONS EXPECTED TO ATTEND:\_\_\_\_\_

DO YOU PLAN TO BE HERE AFTER 9:00 PM?\_\_\_\_\_

ASSIGNED TO ROOM:\_\_\_\_\_

STAFF PERSON TAKING REQUEST:\_\_\_\_\_DATE:\_\_\_\_\_

I hereby:

1. Assume full responsibility for any loss or damage to property of the library, which may occur during the group's use of the library community room and absolve the library of any responsibility for any loss or damage to property of the group or individual or injury to the group or individual while the group is meeting in the library.
2. Although light refreshments are allowed in the community rooms, there are no kitchen facilities provided. Groups will assume responsibility for room set up and clean up.
3. The groups must vacate the inside community rooms by 8:30 pm, Monday through Thursday, 4:30 pm Friday, 4:30 pm Saturday and 4:30 pm on Sunday.
4. Understand that any group who violates any of the Library Community Room policies will not be permitted to reserve a community room again.
5. Agree to limit the size of the group to the capacity of the meeting room, which is\_\_\_\_\_
6. Certify that I have received, read and will abide by the rules relating to the use of the community rooms and that I am over the age of 18.
7. Certify that the organization I represent is not for profit and this meeting is free and open to the public.

<p><b>8. Understand that any advertisement must be reviewed by the Library Branch Manager or their designee for approval. Such advertisements will include the statement; "meeting of an organization at any of the facilities of the Mercer County Library System in no way implies endorsement of its programs."</b></p>
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SIGNED:\_\_\_\_\_DATE:\_\_\_\_\_

