

LP 113 Patron Comfort Policy

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1. Principle:

All Library staff shall make every effort to acknowledge each patron who enters the library.

2. Policy:

All Library staff shall create a welcoming environment, demonstrate your approachability and be aware of all patrons in your working area.

3. Procedure:

3.1 Acknowledging Patrons

Eye contact is the best practice. A warm smile and a friendly “hello” are always appreciated. This will also assist to circumvent patrons doing anything untoward.

3.2 Recognizing Patrons Requiring Assistance

Watch for patrons who seem to be wandering about, looking confused, or searching up and down for something. Most people will ask for assistance if they need it, but there are some who will not. If you gently inquire as to how you may help them, you will often find patrons are more than pleased and relieved to have you take over the search for them (or at least point them in the right direction!)

3.3 Keep Line-ups and Wait Times at Circulation Desk to a Minimum

Proper courtesy and efficient service dictates getting to each patron as quickly as possible.

If you are working alone in your area and a line-up begins to form, or if someone presents you with a reference question that is going to take some time to research, take a moment to call another staff member for assistance.

3.4 New Members

As well as giving new patrons a membership card, offer them any helpful information you think is relevant. New members are often new to the community, and many are even new to library use in general.

Briefly inform the new member of where in the library various materials and departments may be found, as well as which services are available. For example: free internet access, computer tutorials, ILLO, book clubs, senior services, on-line new book lists, other county branches, etc. Use your own discretion as to what information may be applicable. You will likely mention something of which the new member was previously unaware!

3.5 No Inappropriate Language

Swearing, racism, and vulgar comments offend many people.

The library needs to be a comfortable place for people of all ages.

Use the two (2) strike rule. If someone uses inappropriate language, let them know that is unacceptable and if they do it again they will be asked to leave.

3.6 Elevator Use

Ensure that the elevator does not become the latest ride attraction.

Noise level can rise substantially when two (2) or more youths start congregating in the elevator and riding it up and down. The doors themselves are also not without some noise level.

It is okay for patrons to come up on the elevator, step out, and go wherever they had planned to go, but be aware of the same person(s) riding up and down with no apparent reason except boredom. Politely suggest that they could perhaps use the stairs, thus freeing the elevator for use by the elderly and handicapped patrons who need it. (Use your own discretion as to what to say, but remember to be friendly and courteous about it!)

3.7 Food or Beverages

No food or drink near the computers.

Technically food and drink is not allowed in the library to begin with. No one wants to use a sticky keyboard with food on it. Drinks can be spilled and that has the potential to destroy a computer.

This goes for staff as well, because it is important for staff members to model good behaviour, and because it is easier to implement a rule you follow yourself.

Again this needs to be enforced promptly. Tell people when they come in that they can't have food and drink in the computer lab and that they can leave it on the table next to the staff desk or they can finish eating in the designated area of the teen room. Everyone understands the reasoning behind this and may just need to be reminded.

3.8 Adult Department

3.8.1 Log Patrons On & Off Computers Immediately

To ensure that one (1) hour time limit can be kept, in the event that others are waiting to use the computers and to give you an accurate answer as when the next computer will be available. Also, it enables downstairs staff to check Multilis for available computers.

If at all possible, log patrons on immediately. If you are busy at the moment and cannot check them in right away, take a second to jot the time down on a piece of paper, then log them on at your earliest opportunity. (Bear in mind, in these instances, that the patron's check-out time will be one hour from the time they arrived, not from the time you logged them in.) Remember to check the patron out when they leave. (Note: if no one is waiting to use the computers, then one (1) hour time limit may be extended.)

3.8.2 Reserve Upstairs Computers for Adult Use Only

It is only fair to our adult patrons, since there are other computers designated for - and available to - the children and teens. Also, young people seldom travel alone and even two can easily become a distraction to others in the adult department (it is a quiet area, after all).

The exception to this action is that teenagers (high school age) may use the upstairs computers ONLY if no other machine is available downstairs, and only if they are doing homework, research, or briefly checking e-mail. Chatting, MSN, and playing games is not permitted, nor is having any more than one person at the computer at a time. Elementary school aged children should not use upstairs computers at all. In every instance, politely and respectfully inform young patrons of library policy and encourage them to check downstairs for the next available computer . . . or maybe you could even check for them with a quick phone call.

3.8.3 Ensure Front Steps at Door is Kept Clear of Bodies & Items

It is unsafe for patrons, especially elderly ones, to have to climb over and around people in order to get in the front door. This may also be a deterrent for some who will pass by and not enter the library at all.

In a polite and courteous manner, inform the individuals of our need to keep the stairway clear and let them know that they are welcome to come and sit inside the library. Again, we want to make every effort to remain friendly and welcoming, even while enforcing a few necessary guidelines.

3.9 Children's Room

3.9.1 Behaviour

Talk to patrons about behaviour in the children's room when their conduct is not appropriate. For example: noise level too high, running, bullying of other patrons, usage of furniture etc.

This action is taken to ensure that the patrons know how they should behave when visiting the library.

Take the offending patron aside and explain in a non threatening way, why they are being talked to, and how they can remedy the situation.

NOTE: Signage regarding behavioural conduct should be displayed.

3.10 Computer Lab

3.10.1 One Patron at One Computer

Only allowing one person at a computer and only allowing those who are on the computers in the computer lab. (No one standing in the computer lab talking to their friends.)

Privacy is Key. While one person may not mind having their friend watch what they are doing on the computer, the person next to them may not like having a stranger standing over them. If you let one person do it, then everyone has the right to do it.

Noise levels almost always tend to rise beyond acceptable limits with more people than computers in the computer lab.

3.10.2 Too Many Patrons in the Computer Lab

Having too many people in the computer lab becomes a safety risk.

It is important for anyone covering the computer lab to promptly enforce this procedure before it gets out of hand. If you find patrons standing around computers or in the computer lab ask them nicely to leave. If necessary give one of the reasons above. They can come in and talk to their friends quickly as long as they are not frequently running in and out of the lab.

A common excuse given is group project work or needing to give a friend assistance. If a patron needs help, library staff can assist or

they can schedule a tutorial. If they do need to both work on the same computer, try and get them one in the teen room or upstairs.

3.11 Seniors Department

3.11.1 Acknowledge the Senior Patron

Let the patrons know that you are available to assist them, speaking clearly (often a little louder is necessary), maintaining eye contact and providing a warm and friendly manner.

Seniors often require, and would like additional attention. It is important to offer this, backing this up with specific offers of assistances and book selections. Join them as quickly as possible to offer ideas. The idea is not to force ourselves onto them, as much as to let them know that we are ready to help. Seniors in general, will not typically ask for help without gentle encouragement.

3.11.2 Large Print Area

The Large Print Room doubles as a book room and as access to the elevator; hence, it is important to ask the younger patrons not to loiter in the large print room.

Seniors require a place of their own that is quiet and accessible. The large print room offers comfortable chairs for their use. Teens and children are provided with their own rooms; therefore, it is unnecessary for younger patrons to loiter in this area. If the perception becomes that older patrons must force their way through others loitering, they will cease to attend the library. Also, it is important that people who require the elevator have clear and easy access to it.

Ask the younger patrons to move into their respective room. Explain to them that older patrons require a comfortable area that they can call their own (much like the teen or children room!), and also how important it is to keep the area clear for elevator use.

3.12 Teen Room

3.12.1 Loitering in the Adjoining Areas

Ask patrons not to sit or stand in the hallway outside the Teen Room.

The hallway is a high traffic area and any noise made there can be heard in many areas of the library.

Ask the patrons to move into the Teen Room because it's too crowded to hang out in the hall. Surprisingly often, they're sitting at the hall table because they wanted to look at the globe or flip through the atlas. Tell them that they are most welcome to take anything of interest from the reference room into the Teen Room!

3.12.2 Identifying Teen Patrons

Learn as many first names (and last) as you can. If you're only covering the Teen Room occasionally, then ask for names as often as possible.

This gives you an 'in' with them so that when you address them, they'll listen more willingly because you cared enough to call them by name. Everyone likes to hear their own name, after all. This makes them feel that you accept them and welcome them, even if you need to tell them that they're not meeting the library's behaviour expectations.

"No need to salvage this one!", but do give it a try. You might be surprised by how friendly some of the surliest looking teens can be if you just let them know that they're welcome.

3.12.3 **Noise Level**

Maintain an appropriate noise level.

Although the parts of the lower level allow a higher noise level than upstairs, we need to make sure that no space becomes loud enough to hamper anyone's enjoyment of the space.

This is a hard one as we don't have a way to measure the noise level. If you're not sure if it's getting too loud, step into the Computer Lab, hallway or kids room and see if the Teen Room is too noisy from there. Or, ask someone else for their opinion.

If you decide that it is too loud, ask the loud folks, in a friendly fashion, to lower the level. After that, I use a variation on the two strike rule because they'll likely get loud again. If they do, let them know – respectfully – that they're getting loud again and tell them that you don't want to keep asking them. So, if the noise level gets too high for a third time, you're going to ask everyone (who is participating in the noisy group) to leave for the day.

Because noise level is immeasurable in the library, before you ask a group to be quiet, please take a second to evaluate whether or not they're being too loud or you're wishing for a quieter environment. I find that if I'm trying to focus on a job that takes creativity, such as writing this document, I don't tolerate noise – even at an acceptable level – very well. That is not a reason to ask them to be quiet; it's a reason to either find another task to work on or to ask another staff member to trade areas with you so that you can finish your task in a quieter environment.

3.12.4 **Acknowledgement**

Pay attention to everyone in the room.

This means that after school and at other busy times, you may not be able to get immersed in any other work. Busy times provide good opportunities to socialize with the teens so you know each other or accomplish those brainless tasks that are always being put off like chopping scrap paper.

If you're paying attention to the whole room, you will know when someone needs help looking for a book or you'll be able to suggest something more productive to do to someone who's getting rowdy out of boredom.

Possibly the most important reason to pay attention to everyone in the room is because that way, you won't miss the opportunity to show someone that they are supported, appreciated, and accepted. You have the opportunity to be the only positive adult interaction they've had today!