

## READS Roundtable: Policy in practice

Monday, April 01, 2019

9:30 AM - 12:00 PM

Hooksett Public Library 31 Mount St Mary's Way Hooksett NH

*Librarians create policies with the best of intentions. What happens when the policies run up against daily life in the library? The discussion will touch on things like:*

- *Staff who always forgive fines, and those that don't*
- *Patrons who test boundaries*
- *Explaining privacy law to the mother of a six year old*
- *Consistently interpreting policies*
- *Who decides what is disruptive behavior*
- *Changing old norms*

*Bring your (constructive) horror stories and be prepared to (kindly) offer your opinion.*

- Circulation Desk
  - Picking up holds
    - Who is allowed to, and how often do you bend the rule to keep the peace
      - Ex: former trustee who is used to husband being able to pick up holds, but a new staff member enforced a rule, and was upset by the pushback
    - Tips for it to go better
      - Can only pick up with physical card?
        - Laconia instituted approved borrower notes on patron accounts
        - Nashua calls the phone number on the patron's account to ask for permission
        - Family cards – have both spouses listed on the card
        - A note “mom may not use card”
        - Each community is different, and varies widely. 6-8 months ago Bristol put out a question on NHAIS with a similar question. She shared responses to the list.
  - Bristol meets one on one with staff to find common ground for new policies
- RSA – parent of small children
  - Workaround? Online account, or mailed home letter
    - Question: Would an email address be against the law because it's going directly to the parent, instead of the parent violating the child's privacy by going into their account or opening their mail?
  - “The reason we have this law is because...” helps
  - Hand out copy of RSA to parents with a child card at sign up
  - Have the RSA on the library application form
  - Tell patrons it's a state law
  - Tell the child before they fill out the application, make parent aware when applying for a child card
  - Make sure child is there and asking them for permission
- When do you sign up kids without a parent?

- Most say, about 12
  - 12-17, on a YA card with no late fees
    - Parents need to provide proof of address with photo ID if child doesn't have a school ID with a photo
  - High School card, fine free card, but sends a bill for lost books
- What is your policy for parents who have fines and use the child's card, then the next child's card, etc
  - If one card is suspended, all family member cards are suspended. Cards linked in system.
  - If child has parent with suspended card, they are blocked, but library offers a free book from the sale table
  - Ask to renew items if call about overdues, instead of phrasing it like punishment for being overdue
  - How to prevent parents from abusing child's card?
    - Adults can't use child card
    - "we want to protect the child's card"
  - Child too young to say no to parents?
    - Give a library tour, explain to the child not to let anyone use their card, or their books
- Patrons using someone else's account
  - Card or ID is required to check out
  - Ask for library card at transaction even if you'll accept that you know them anyway – just to plant the idea that they should have their card
  - Older adults with habits that lead to pushback when policy is enforced?
    - "I know you, but it might not be me on the desk next time"
  - Check out as long as they have that other person's card
  - Use the trustees as "fall-guys"
    - Most people don't really want you to get in trouble with your employer
  - "you wouldn't want someone to use your account"
  - Remind of human error, we could type the wrong name, etc,
    - It's free, but there is a financial responsibility
  - Make it easier for them to have their card
    - Download card onto cellphone
      - Keyring app
    - Accept a photo of a card
- Renewal of cards – do you require a picture ID?
  - Present ID to get a card, and current address (if not on ID)
  - Renew over the phone, confirm address
  - Renew over the phone, but only for 3 weeks to give time to come in, with proof of address
  - Use voter check list or accessing database to verify address
  - Require address to get a card, and at renewal. Renew for 3 weeks if don't have it with them.
  - Concord has a post card as a last resort. Patron can fill it out with their address, and the library will mail it to them. If they bring that post card back it, that is accepted as proof of address.
- Since everyone is entitled to a card, is it legal to block someone if someone else has a block but not them?
  - State law provides baseline, can make requirements stricter
- Can you deny someone without photo ID? Is that a barrier, since IDs and documentation costs money?
  - Bring in a bill statement
  - A letter of informal rental agreement
  - Many libraries require photo ID

- Dover requires two forms, an ID and a bill with current address. IDs last for years, and people move without getting their ID changed.
- Can bring up a bank statement or rental agreement on their phone or the library's computers
- Car registration
- Homeless that don't have documentation but have *need* of the library's resources?
  - Are policies inclusive
  - What about accessibility
  - Concord accept letters from shelters or halfway houses or witness protection
  - Prison ID accepted
  - Library gives a courtesy card
  - How do you give someone access if they barely have food or shelter? IDs cost money.
  - There is a passport form that someone with an ID can come in and vouch for a person without. Would a library accept that?
  - Temporary card, 3 items at a time for 3 month expiration period
  - MCL – halfway house letter, card for 1 month, but can bring in another letter and renew for another month
- How do you ensure when working with individuals one on one in the above situations, how do you remain consistent between staff?
  - Establish with staff
    - What level employee can make what decision
    - If grey area, move up a level
  - Keep a staff blog of “this person came in and x” google doc. Read when first get on the desk
  - Use patron's account to make note “this happened, and the decision was x”
  - When an item gets to lost after 4 notices – note on account until patron talks to director or assistant director. Rest of staff knows not to do anything at that point
  - Be really specific with staff
    - “do you realize when you do that, it makes other staff look bad”
- Policies
  - Try to be positive within policy
  - Writing a policy – approved by board, essentially library law
    - Should give the ability to work with it
    - Guidelines and procedures have more flexibility to work within them than policy
  - How do you make sure staff are doing it properly
    - Educate staff
    - Trust them
    - If something goes wrong, reeducate staff
    - Trust again
    - Staff person on the desk has to know that the director has their back
    - The director has to know that staff will follow policy
  - Weekly email updates of what's going on, monthly staff meetings
  - Get input on new policy and procedures
  - Bristol looks at policy every year, gives every staff member a chance to respond and say what's not working, and recommend an alternative or suggestion
    - Gives a chance to see why people are not following
    - Opportunity to come up with phrase to use in situations
  - When someone says something they maybe shouldn't have, bring them aside “I know why you said x but y might be better next time”
  - Go back to the mission, why are we here

- Refer staff to who is in charge of what
  - Give the business card of the circ supervisor. You can't do anything now, but patron can call in the morning. Gives staff a chance to email and explain, or give a heads up, and gives patron time to cool down emotionally. Then they can work together to get something to work
- Try to word things as if you have someone evaluating you over your shoulder
- What do you do if someone is using your room for tutoring? There is a policy against making money by using the room, and the tutor is paid. But the child is a town resident and has a right to use the space. Don't want to say no to tutoring if it is needed.
  - Should an adult be allowed in a room with a child that is not their child
  - Can they move to a table in an open area
- Emotional support animals – how to handle?
  - Only 2 questions you can legally ask
    - What is the dog trained to do
    - In situations where it is not obvious that the dog is a service animal, staff may ask only two specific questions: (1) is the dog a service animal required because of a disability? and (2) what work or task has the dog been trained to perform?
  - If the dog is causing disruptions, you can ask to leave, even if a service dog
  - Service dog is a legal person and has rights
  - If allergies, find a workaround
  - ADA laws are very clear how to handle service animals
  - Service animals come in more sizes and jobs/roles than they used to
    - Was just "4 on the floor" seeing eye down
    - Now have smaller dogs for detecting seizures, or blood sugar drops
    - These are still trained service animals
  - Emotional support animals are not technically service animals
  - If behaving like service animal, assume service animal
  - Get police chief to discuss with staff
  - Therapy dog, library has a policy to allow as part of a program. Staff member brings therapy dog, and library turned it into a program. It helps. Patrons come regularly, staff appreciate the calming
- NH open carry law
  - What ways are there to help staff who are uncomfortable but the patron is doing nothing illegal, threatening, or wrong?
    - Have police come for training
    - It's a public service job, if they are still uncomfortable, "is this the right place for you?"
    - Talk to HR or town manager for accommodations
    - Talk about behaviors and appropriate reactions
      - Role-play
    - Active shooter training
    - Have a conversation, when is it appropriate to call the police
      - Work together with the police
    - Trust your instincts
    - We are *not* to act as police officers
- How do you handle a patron who comes over says there's someone looking at "stuff" on the computer?
  - Ask patron to be aware that there are children who could walk by at any time and to keep their viewing appropriate

- If staff is shy, send a message through computer system to their computer, word it like it's coming from the computer as a system message
- Have staff training and try to hire staff that can handle tense situations
  - Have staff know director has their back
  - If too much, approach trustees for advice
  - Important that your staff feels heard
- Do you call the police when a young patron does inappropriate things?
  - Almost all say yes
    - And not just young patrons.
    - Call the police, you never know what else they're capable of if they're already doing one illegal thing (exposure)
- Explain why, and think for yourself, why it's important to allow patrons to use our resources
  - Too likely to build policy or procedure around one situation
- If a patron has familiarity with a certain staff, or goes directly to director for everything, how do you handle getting them to go to a more appropriate person instead?
  - If staff is uncomfortable, go up the chain
  - "Is there something I can help you with?"
  - "They're not available, but I can help"
  - "Can you tell me more of what you're looking for, so I can match you with the right person to help?"
- Do other libraries have supervised visits? Do you have a policy?
  - Risk management issue?
  - MCL doesn't allow visits
    - There was no communication from DCYF, and still isn't, about what to do
    - They're coming to libraries instead, after changes within DCYF
  - How do you know it's a visit, and not a regular family
  - Are we allowed to deny access
    - Do we have the authority, or does it have to go to the mayor?
  - It's not about the visit, but about the behavior
  - One library asked Primex: "should there be a policy" Primex said "had no grounds to stand on to restrict them"
  - because it's a public building, can't restrict until it becomes a behavior policy issue, which applies to everyone
  - not allowed to ban anyone for life, without due process
    - Concord police will only issue a ban for 1 year max
- How do you put together policies that work, and will stand up in court, and is proper/reasonable?
  - Ask a lawyer or town council
  - Ask state library
- Every library is different in structure, and every community is different in its needs

READS award of excellence nominations are open until June 1<sup>st</sup>. Nominate someone who provides the type of service you want to see.

Don't forget to take the survey for the roundtable to provide the READS planning committee with valuable feedback.