

Amsterdam Free Library Policy Handbook

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Introduction

The Amsterdam Free Library is a private, 501c(3) not for profit corporation, chartered by the New York State Education Department as Free Association Library. Amsterdam Free Library serves nearly 25,000 people in the City and Town of Amsterdam and its surrounding rural area. The mission of the Amsterdam Free Library is to inspire lifelong learning, advance knowledge, and strengthen our Greater Amsterdam Community.

EXTERNAL

I. Circulation

A. Hours

The Amsterdam Free Library serves the community through open hours year round in addition to a virtual presence. The library observes most federal and state holidays; specific hours are posted in the building and on the website.

B. Patron Confidentiality

The AFL ensures patron confidentiality by protecting transaction records and other private information, within the limits of state and federal laws. The New York State Civil Practice Law & Rules Section 4509 states:

"Library records, which contain names or other personally identifying details regarding the patrons of public, free association, school, college and university libraries and library systems of this state, including but not limited to records related to the circulation of library materials, computer database searches, interlibrary loan transactions, reference queries, requests for photocopies of library materials, title reserve requests, or the use of audio visual materials, films or records, shall be confidential and shall not be disclosed except that such records may be disclosed to the extent necessary for the proper operation of such library and shall be disclosed upon request or consent of the patron or pursuant to subpoena, court order, or where otherwise required by statute."
<http://codes.findlaw.com/ny/civil-practice-law-and-rules/cvp-sect-4509.html>

C. Registration

Registration for library privileges is open to all. A photo identification is required at time of application, as well as an item indicating place of residence. The Library Director has the right to approve, decline, or rescind membership privileges as the situation requires.

Library cards are issued free of charge with a fee charged if the card is lost or stolen.

New patrons - New patrons are allowed to borrow a limited number of materials until the three-month probationary period is ended.

Minors - A parent or legal guardian must sign the application form for their child who is under the age of 18. Parents/guardians are responsible for their minor children's use of library materials, including payment of and fees/charges incurred by their children. When minor patrons reach 18 years of age, they must present their own valid photo ID to remove a parent/guardian's ID from the account.

D. Materials Lending

AFL lends books, DVD, audio books, magazines, e-content to patrons with a current AFL or MVLS card. Lending periods for various formats and types of materials may be different due to popularity or item cost.

E. Fees and Charges

Fees are charged for overdue materials. Patrons with fees exceeding \$5.00 are not permitted to check out/renew items or use the public computers until their account reaches the \$5.00 minimum.

Fines are charged if library materials are lost or damaged to the extent of being unsuitable for the library collection. The borrower must pay for the item at the replacement cost of the material in its original condition.

F. InterLibrary Loan

Materials not available at the AFL may be available at other libraries. Patron account must be in good standing to participate in this service and all materials are subject to the loaning institutions policy.

II. Collection

A. Collection Development

The Amsterdam Free Library is a popular library with the majority of the collection geared toward currently popular materials. Although every effort is made to have up-to-date nonfiction materials, the library is not a research facility and therefore does not hold significant academic materials.

Final responsibility for materials selection rests with the library director as delegated by the library board. Under the supervision of the director, other library staff members, who are qualified by reason of education, training, and/or experience, may aid in the material selection process as requested.

Standard aids such as book reviews, trade journals, bibliographic publications, and publishers' information may be used to help the librarian in materials selection. Popular demand will be considered valid criteria for selection as long as the materials fit into the general criteria for acquisition. Selection of materials may be influenced by many factors, including but not limited to the following:

- budgetary consideration, physical limitations of the library building
- present and potential relevance to community needs
- suitability of the format and construction
- the need for added materials in subject area
- availability of material through interlibrary loan

Gifts are accepted according to collection development policies. The library director has the discretion to accept or decline gifted materials.

B. Collection Review/Weeding

To maintain the quality of the library collection, materials may be repaired, replaced, or withdrawn from the collection. Materials may be withdrawn from the collection for the following reasons: the information is outdated, the library owns more copies than it currently needs, the material is rarely used, and the physical condition of the material is poor.

Discarded materials are given to the Friends of the Library & Amsterdam Reads for their periodic book sales, as are donated items that are not being added to the collection. Withdrawn materials can be recycled at the discretion of the library director.

Each section of the library's collection will be evaluated every three (3) years on a rotating schedule as considered appropriate by the library director.

C. Censorship

Ultimately, the responsibility for the collection rests with the Library Board. The responsibility for selection of materials rests with the Director, who delegates this task to qualified professional staff. This policy defends the principles of freedom to read, view, or hear.

It is recognized that some materials may be controversial. Selection decisions are not made on the anticipated approval or disapproval, but are made on the merits of the work in relation to the collection and to the needs and interests of the community.

Censorship is a purely individual matter. Responsibility for the reading, viewing, or listening material of children and adolescents rests with their parent or legal guardian. The responsibility for children's use of library material rests with their parents or legal guardians. The library does not stand in loco parentis. The selection of materials intended for use by adults will not be inhibited by the possibility that they are accessible to use by children.

No material shall be removed from the collection save under the policy articulated in the section "Challenge/Reconsideration of Library Materials."

D. Challenge/Reconsideration of Library Materials

The Amsterdam Free Library operates as a forum for the creation and exchange of information and ideas in support of lifelong learning in support of a thriving community. In so doing, it embraces the following American Library Association Policies:

- Library Bill of Rights - <http://www.ala.org/advocacy/sites/ala.org.advocacy/files/content/intfreedom/librarybill/lbor.pdf>
- Freedom to Read - <http://www.ala.org/advocacy/intfreedom/freedomreadstatement>
- Freedom to View - <http://www.ala.org/rt/vrt/professionalresources/vrtresources/freedomtoview>

If a patron questions the inclusion of any material in the Library's collection, they will be offered a copy of the Collection Development Policy and given a copy of the library's Challenge/Reconsideration of Library Material form (based on the American Library Association's form). The policy and copy of the form will be available at the Circulation Desk.

The completed form can be turned in at the front desk; the Library Director will discuss with other library professionals the appropriate measures to address patron concern. Then Library Director will then contact the patron to seek a resolution.

If the patron wishes to pursue a materials challenge, the Library Director shall appoint a review committee of library professionals and an equivalent number of willing Board of Trustee members.

Within 30 working days of receiving the form, the committee will respond by letter citing reviews and pertinent sections of the Collection Development Policy to support the Library's position. A copy of this letter will be reviewed and signed by the Library Director prior to being sent.

If the patron requests further review, the matter will be presented by the Director to the full Board of Trustees for placement on the agenda. At that time, the patron will be given an opportunity to express his/her opinion before the Board under the rule of order. The patron must follow the above prescribed procedures in order for his/her request to be considered before the Board. The patron will be notified in writing of the Library Board's final decision.

E. Copiers & Copyright

Copyright is a form of protection provided by the laws of the United States (title 17, U.S. Code) to the authors of "original works of authorship." Section 108(f)(1) of the copyright act gives libraries protection from copyright infringement when a library user uses unsupervised "reproducing equipment" in the library, as long as the library displays a notice that the making of a copy may be subject to copyright law. The user of the machine is responsible for any infringement.

The following notice will be placed near all library photocopy machines:

The copyright law of the United States (Title 17, U.S. Code) governs the making of photocopies or other reproductions of copyrighted material. The person using this equipment is responsible for any infringement.

III. Public Space/Library Use

A. Accessibility/ADA Statement

The Library provides reasonable accommodations for qualified individuals with disabilities unless they pose an “undue hardship” on operations. Patrons with concerns regarding this policy should utilize the **Accessibility Comment Form** located at the Circulation Desk.

B. Exhibit/Posting

As part of its mission, the library provides information through both displays and exhibits with materials from the library's own collections and/or services or through those of not for profit community groups. This use is intended to increase public awareness of the range of information and opportunity available in the library and the community.

Flyers, brochures and posters for non-library activities and information dissemination must be approved by the Library Director or designee prior to displaying in the library.

C. Meeting Space/Equipment

The North/South General Use Rooms and the small classroom on the second floor are designed primarily for use in library-related activities. These meeting rooms are also available for use by other groups, subject to the following policies established by the Library Board of Trustees.

Meeting rooms may be used for programs sponsored by non-profit, government, educational, community service and cultural organizations, and other responsible groups with the library director or supervising delegate’s approval.

The North & South General Use Rooms can accommodate twenty-five people each. The second floor classroom can accommodate 15 people. Chairs and tables may be arranged as desired, but must be returned to their original placement. The room may not be used for preparing food. Use of alcoholic beverages and smoking are prohibited. The group representative is responsible for the condition and the contents of the room, turning off the lights, securing the door.

Scheduling for all meetings must be done at least 7-days in advance. If a meeting is scheduled during hours that the library is closed, the representative must make arrangements at least 30-days in advance of planned event to obtain approval from the Library director.

D. Patron Behavior/Code of Conduct

It is the policy of the Board of Trustees that patrons of the Amsterdam Free Library have the right to use the library materials and services without being unduly disturbed or impeded by other library users, and that patrons and staff have the right to a secure and productive environment. These behaviors/conducts include, but are not limited to:

- Patrons creating a public nuisance, such as destruction of property, disturbing other patrons (offensive language, odor), inappropriate sexual behavior, alcohol or drug abuse, violence, will be asked to leave. Failure to do so will be subject to the law.
- Any behavior that disrupts or hinders public use of the library is prohibited on library property. This includes, but is not limited to, loud or boisterous behavior, running, fighting, verbal or physical harassment, and intoxication.
- Weapons - The Library prohibits all persons who enter library property from carrying a handgun, firearm, knife, or other weapon of any kind regardless of whether the person is licensed to carry the weapon or not.
- Consumption of alcoholic beverages is not permitted on library property, except by board approval. Smoking or chewing tobacco is not permitted in the library. Selling products or services, or soliciting donations, is not permitted in the library, except as part of a library-sponsored program.
- Circulating petitions, distributing leaflets, taking surveys, and other similar activities are permitted in the library only when authorized by the Library Administration.
- Animals which aid persons with disabilities or service animals are permitted in the library, as well as animals which are part of a library-sponsored program. All animals should have proof of current vaccinations. Animals may not be left unattended on the library property.
- The Library is not responsible for personal belongings left unattended.
- Parents or other legal guardians are responsible for the behavior of their minor children in the library.
- Theft, vandalism, and mutilation of library property are criminal offenses and may be prosecuted. The library reserves the right to inspect all bags, briefcases, backpacks, and other such items when the staff has reason to believe this rule has been violated.
- The violation of federal or state laws or local ordinances will not be permitted on Library property.

Failure to comply with these rules may result in the loss of library privileges. Anyone violating this policy will be given one verbal warning. A second violation will result in the individual being banned from Amsterdam Free Library for one month. A third violation will result in being banned from the library for a period of six months. When an individual is banned they will receive written notification which will be shared with the Amsterdam Police Department, the Library Board and the parent of the offender, if a minor. Should an individual who has been banned come to the library in violation of the ban, the Amsterdam Police Department will be contacted.

E. Patron Complaints/Incidents

While the Amsterdam Free Library endeavors to provide the highest levels of satisfaction and library services to its patrons, we recognize that occasionally, patrons may wish to raise a complaint pertaining to an issue which interferes with their use and enjoyment of the Library.

A Library patron initially may choose to raise his or her complaint on an informal, verbal basis with the Library's staff or Director. In the event that the patron elects not to do so, or that the complaint proves not susceptible to informal resolution, the patron should request and complete a **Patron Complaint Form**. The Library Director will review promptly all completed Complaint Forms, and where appropriate, attempt to resolve the complaint directly.

If the patron is not satisfied with the response provided, and/or if the Director identifies the situation as one in which Board input is warranted, either or both parties may bring the written complaint to the attention of the Board of Trustees. Patrons desiring to do so may also request an opportunity to address the Board at one of its monthly meetings.

The Board will promptly review all complaints presented to it, provide a verbal and/or a written response to the complainant, and take any further remedial action warranted by the particular circumstances.

The decision of the Board of Trustees with respect to a complaint shall be final.

F. Programming

The AFL presents programs that offer information, education, and recreation to citizens of the City and Town of Amsterdam and its surrounding area. Programs will be planned to meet the interests and needs of community members and will represent the wide range of ideas and views. They will represent the Library's philosophy of free access to information.

G. Unattended Children

The Amsterdam Free Library welcomes children of all ages to use its facilities and services. In an effort to ensure the safety and well-being of the children and maintain an atmosphere of constructive library use, the following policy regarding appropriate use of the library by children and their caregivers is adopted.

Responsibility for the welfare and the behavior of children using the library rests with the parent/guardian or an assigned chaperone. Though the staff will respond with care and concern, they cannot assume responsibility for children's safety and comfort when they are unattended. Staff may need to contact authorities such as the police either to assist with the enforcement of discipline in the library or to ensure the safety of an unattended child.

Young children should be attended and adequately supervised by a parent, guardian or caregiver who is a responsible person of at least 14 years of age.

Older children of at least 14 years of age may use the library unattended provided they are able to maintain proper library behavior.

Truancy among children enrolled in public school will not be supported by the Amsterdam Free Library. Any public school student found in the library when school is in session is subject to being reported to the proper authorities.

H. Inclement Weather and Holidays

On occasion it may be necessary for the library to close, open late, or close early due to inclement weather, a power failure, or other unforeseen circumstances. It is the Library Director's responsibility to determine what action is most appropriate. This decision will be made in consult with a designated Board of Trustee member. Every effort will be made to keep these closings to a minimum.

IV. Technology

A. Computer Workstations

Amsterdam Free Library provides public access to unfiltered Internet workstations as an informational and educational resource. All use of electronic information must be responsible, ethical, and consistent with the purpose for which the resource is provided. The internet is a vast network of information and resources. The library assumes no responsibility for content found on the internet.

Mohawk Valley/Southern Adirondack Library System library card holders may access the library's public internet computers. Access can be denied per library policy.

Adults who live outside the MVLS/SALS area will need to present a photo ID to library staff to receive a guest pass, maximum of 3 passes lifetime. An internet only library card can also be issued.

Juvenile library cards issued to patrons under 18 years old will have a stop/note on their account if the parent/guardian does not authorize internet access.

Patrons under 18 who do not have an MVLS/SALS library card will need a parent/guardian present to authorize them for internet access.

30 minutes of computer access time is allowed per sign-in for juveniles and 60 minutes for adults.

Library staff reserve the right to monitor internet use to ensure compliance with this policy.

B. Wireless

Wireless Internet access is available within Amsterdam Free Library for use by library patrons.

Use of the wireless network is subject to the following guidelines:

- The library does not filter any content and cannot control information accessed through the Internet.
- The library assumes no responsibility for the independent use of the wireless network by children. Parents are responsible for the independent use of the wireless network, and the Internet, by their children under the age of 18..

- The library does not guarantee the availability of the wireless network. The network may not be available during times of high use or during technical problems. Signal strength and performance may vary within the building. Some areas may not have service or may experience slower service.
- The library expects patrons to configure their own equipment to access the wireless network and is not responsible for any damage resulting to personal equipment from improper configurations. Additionally, if assistance is required, the library holds no responsibility for technical problems resulting from services rendered.
- Wireless networks are not necessarily secure and the library does not guarantee the security of its wireless network. Information is not protected except when connected to web pages that employ encryption technology.

C. Appropriate/Inappropriate Use

The library provides technology resources as a public service. Inappropriate use may result in denial of access to the library's technology resources.

The library's networks may not be used for any unauthorized, illegal, or unethical purposes.

The library prohibits use of the networks to access material that is obscene, pornographic, or adjudged to be harmful to minors.

The library's wireless network is not intended to be a source of Internet service for any residence or business location.

Excessive bandwidth use is not permitted.

Other Inappropriate use includes, but is not limited to:

- Profane text and graphics, sending/receiving information offensive to the general public as construed by the library staff,
- Lack of respect for the privacy of others; misrepresenting oneself as another user; attempting to modify or gain access to files, passwords, or data belonging to others; seeking unauthorized access to any computer system or damaging or altering software components of networks and databases; using the Internet for illegal, unethical or unauthorized purpose,
- Unauthorized copying of licensed software, data & other copyrighted materials.