

Policy for the Care and Handling of Library Materials

Approved 2/9/2014

I. Scope of the Policy

This policy outlines the care and handling of materials as agreed upon when signing for a library card. Library materials are public property. Customers are responsible for the care and return of items checked out on their accounts and will be charged for lost or damaged items. Borrowing privileges will be restricted on accounts with fines or charges in excess of \$20.00, per the Reedsburg Public Library Circulation Policy. Borrowing privileges may also be restricted on accounts upon which a pattern of damage or abuse has been demonstrated. Such restrictions will be in place until fines are under the required threshold and/or until the pattern of damage or abuse responsible for flagging the account has been remedied.

II. Definitions

- A. Lost Materials** - Materials that are checked out on a customer's account and not returned will be declared lost 29 days after the due date or when declared lost by the customer.

- B. Damaged Materials** are those items that require repair for damages in excess of expected wear and tear through normal usage, as well as materials that are damaged beyond repair and can no longer circulate. Examples of damage include, but are not limited to: offensive odors, water damage, stains, torn pages or covers, insect damage, scratched or broken media items, missing parts of sets, etc.

- C. Evaluation of Materials** - Library staff will assess the condition of materials upon return. When materials are loaned from other libraries, in the South Central Library System or beyond, the owning library is responsible for evaluation of damages and assessment of charges. Items will remain on patron's card until owning library evaluates condition.

II. Charges for Lost or Damaged Materials

- A.** The charge placed on the account is based on the retail cost for the item as entered in the library's catalog record.
 - a. If items marked as lost are returned in good condition, the replacement charges will be waived and only the appropriate overdue fees and charges will apply to the account.
 - b. Lost items paid for and subsequently returned are subject to the refund terms of the circulation and payment policies of the owning library.

- B.** Payment for a lost or damaged item is reimbursement for the lost or damaged material. The library will make any decision regarding replacement of lost or withdrawn materials based on the library's selection policy.

- C. The customer may be charged for the replacement of the entire item if single parts cannot be replaced.
 - a. If it is possible to replace the damaged parts, the customer will only be charged for the replacement. Replacement depends on the vendor and availability of the item.
 - b. Circulation staff will explain that we must determine whether replacement costs are an option and explain the charge will be placed on their account when it is determined.

- D. The Library may accept replacement copies of lost or damaged items in lieu of payment for lost items owned by the Reedsburg Public Library.
 - a. A request to provide replacement copies must be approved in advance by the Circulation Supervisor or Library Director.
 - b. The replacement copy must be a new or like-new item of identical title and edition. A \$2.50 processing fee will apply for each item.
 - c. The replacement item becomes the property of the library and is not returned to the customer in the event the lost item is found. Processing fees are not refunded.

- E. A receipt for payment will be provided upon request. In most cases customers may keep the damaged item. The request for the item must be made at the time of payment.
 - a. Items withdrawn due to biological contamination, mold, insect activity or other potential hazards may be discarded upon evaluation. If library staff determine that materials may not be stored due to biological contamination, mold, insect activity or other potential hazards, the damaged materials will be photographed and destroyed.
 - b. For items not owned by the Reedsburg Public Library, the owning library's policies regarding evaluation, storage and return of materials will apply.

III. Notification

- A. Library staff will place a note in the circulation record regarding the missing parts or reported damage.

- B. Library staff will use the contact information provided in the library record to notify patrons of missing parts.

- C. Individuals will be notified in writing of charges for damaged items or missing parts.
 - a. Notification may occur via email or postal mail.
 - b. In cases in which damage is reported in-person and acknowledgement is made of pending charges, no print notification will be made.

- D. For ongoing concerns, patrons will be notified in writing, given information for appropriate care of materials and advised that future instances of damage may result in restriction or suspension of borrowing privileges as appropriate.

IV. Borrowing Restriction – The Library and staff are committed to serving all patrons on an equitable basis. At times balancing the rights of the individual with the protection of the collections and other library users may require restriction of borrowing privileges.

- A. If a customer has been notified of a concern and the pattern of damage or abuse continues, borrowing privileges may be restricted.
- B. In cases in which the damages present a risk to library collections, staff or to other users, such as materials returned with biological contamination or evidence of insect activity, borrowing privileges may be suspended until such a time that the patron can provide evidence that the concern has been corrected.

V. Right to Appeal – Patrons who wish to appeal charges or borrowing restrictions incurred at the Reedsburg Public Library may do so by notifying the Library Director in writing. The appeal will be placed on the agenda for the next regular meeting of the Library Board of Trustees.

Recommendation for Use of Library materials

All library users can help to extend the life of the Reedsburg Public Library collections by following these guidelines:

- Protect borrowed materials from rain, dampness, sun, heat, pets, and smoking and tobacco products.
- Handle books carefully.
- Mark your place with a bookmark; do not bend corners of pages or use tape, Post-It notes, paper clips, or other objects.
- Take notes on a separate piece of paper rather than using highlighters, underlining, or writing in the margins of the Libraries' books and periodicals.
- Avoid eating snacks and drinking beverages while handling or working around library materials.

Please notify the library staff at any service desk if you discover a book that needs repair.