

PPLC Public Services Policies

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Purpose:

In accordance with the Library Interlocal Agreement, the Pinellas Public Library Cooperative (PPLC), is designed to extend access and improve public library service in Pinellas County. The foundation of this service is consistent policies to guide the issuance of library cards and the use of library resources recognized by every member library.

Although each member library is operated by a separate local governmental unit or board which retains authority over any policy decisions for internal operations and the handling of local funds, member libraries have agreed, wherever possible, to work together to establish consistent public service policies. In keeping with the intent of the Interlocal Agreement, which supports member libraries' autonomy, individual libraries may establish additional service policies. Therefore, variations in official policies and procedures may exist between libraries.

To manage the accounts, records, and transactions associated with registration and circulation-related functions, PPLC member libraries utilize a shared integrated library system (ILS). Maintenance of the ILS is administered by the PPLC Executive Director in conjunction with the PPLC Technology Coordinator, with input from PPLC's ILS SIG Committee. Fiscal decision-making authority for ILS selection and some settings is vested in the Library Directors Advisory Council (LDAC). Additional ILS guidelines are outlined in PPLC's ILS Policy.

Policy Review Statement:

LDAC shall review this policy document annually. Policies may be changed, added or deleted at any time during the year by a formal LDAC vote. Any and all policy changes desired by individual libraries, including global patron modifications, must be vetted through this process. Some custom changes may not be supported by the ILS or may result in additional costs for the individual library requesting the customization.

Additional service policies beyond the functions currently covered may be mutually adopted to expand the scope of this document if voted upon by member libraries. Copies of these policies will be distributed to member libraries upon adoption by the LDAC and posted to PPLC's web page.

Public Service Policies

The following statements are those policies which were approved by a majority of member libraries and adhered to by all. The basis for PPLC policies shall be the Library Interlocal Agreement and Articles of Incorporation.

No identification or account is needed to visit a member library, to obtain basic reference service, to participate in programming activities, or to use a library's physical collections while within a library building. A library card is required when individuals wish to take materials from the library or to access online resources and digital collections.

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1. Library Accounts – Registration Policies

All applicants for library accounts must complete a library card application and present photo identification. When the applicant's current address is not listed on the ID provided, other documentation that verifies place of residency is required. Unless prohibited by local authority, applicants age 16 and older will be registered as adults. Applicants under age 16 will be registered as juvenile and must have a parent or guardian co-sign their application(s). Any exceptions are detailed in the following listing of card types.

1A. Card Types Issued

- i. **Standard PPLC Card** (blue plastic) - Member libraries will issue a free three- year PPLC library card when one of the following criteria is met:
 - The applicant lives in those areas participating in the Pinellas Public Library Cooperative, or within the unincorporated areas of Pinellas County; or, the applicant owns a property or business within these areas.Member libraries may occasionally issue specially designed **commemorative cards** with a different appearance. These cards carry the same privileges as a standard PPLC card unless otherwise noted on the card.
- ii. **PPLC Fee Card** (white plastic) – The municipalities of Belleair, Belleair Beach, Belleair Bluffs, Belleair Shore, Indian Shores, Kenneth City and South Pasadena have elected not to join the PPLC service area. Residents of these cities can purchase a one-year term fee card(s) for an annual household payment of \$100. Seasonal visitors can also purchase a PPLC fee card(s).
 - Pro-rated fees for those residing in the county less than 6 months per calendar year are as follows:
 - \$25.00 fee for a 3 month card term
 - \$50.00 fee for a 6 month card term
- iii. **Special Circumstances Cards** - Special circumstances cards may be issued to accommodate extenuating circumstances impacting an individual's ability to meet registration guidelines. The terms of special circumstances cards will vary, in correlation with the documentation provided by the applicant.
 - a. **Abbreviated Term PPLC Card** - Temporary accommodations may be made for persons establishing Pinellas County residency with local, state, or federal assistance. Those falling under the umbrella of homelessness can present documentation from a shelter or other assisting agency listing a current timeframe of service, and the expiration date of the card will be set according to the documentation.
 - b. **3 For Me Card** – In an effort to promote reading and reduce barriers to youth's access to books, most PPLC member libraries offer a 3 For Me card to children without identification, residency verification, or adult involvement. Requests and AV materials are not permitted.
 - A youth is eligible for this card even if they have been issued another type of card previously. These cards can be issued to children under age 18 and allow the youth to borrow a total of three books at any given time without an obligation to pay billed item charges. Should a youth fail to return a book borrowed on the 3 For Me card, their checkout limit is reduced by the number of unreturned books on the account.
 - Should the youth's 3 For Me card become delinquent, they still remain eligible for another type of card if a second account does not already exist for them, although a parent or guardian will be required to co-sign on the second account.
 - c. Individual libraries may pursue other special circumstances cards to support local

- iv. community needs, pilot programs, or initiatives with approval by an LDAC vote.
- iv. **Juvenile - NO DVD Card** - Some libraries give parents the choice to restrict their children's account privileges to prevent them from borrowing DVDs and Blu-Rays. This restriction may only be applied to accounts of those 16 years old and younger. Not all libraries offer this option, but all honor the restriction. Otherwise, the card looks the same and carries the same conditions and privileges associated with other cards in its group.
- v. **Computer-Use Only Card** – Libraries may issue a card valid only for use of basic computing resources. Circulation privileges and access to digital resources are not included with this card type.
- vi. **Local Library Visitor Card** - Libraries may elect to issue a Visitor Card to non-residents who are ineligible for any other type of card. The terms, fee structure, and appearance of these cards will vary by library, and borrowing privileges will be restricted to the issuing library.

1B. Reciprocal Borrowing Privileges

Reciprocal borrowing agreements allow cardholders from different service areas to gain basic borrowing privileges at other libraries. Access to online resources and digital collections is excluded.

- i. **In-County Reciprocal Borrowing** – The following will be recognized for reciprocal borrowing privileges at any member library:
 - **Indian Rocks Beach Library** card, based on that municipality's qualification for and receipt of operating grants through the State Aid to Libraries Grant program from the State of Florida.
 - **St. Petersburg College** student IDs, based on the college's agreement to Tampa Bay Library Consortium (TBLC)'s Reciprocal Borrowing Agreement.
- ii. **Out-of-County Reciprocal Borrowing** - Cardholders from libraries who have joined TBLC's Reciprocal Borrowing Agreement can present their existing library card and complete the basic registration process at any member library. *A PPLC card will not be issued to reciprocal borrowers.* In turn, PPLC cardholders can register for privileges at listed reciprocal libraries upon presenting their PPLC card.

1C. Confidentiality of Cardholder Records

All cardholder account records are accessible to all member libraries. Any member library can make appropriate changes to individual cardholder account records based on changes to a cardholder's residence, activity patterns, or preferences. Global patron modifications must be vetted through the LDAC. Any member library may contact cardholders in the course of conducting library business.

In accordance with FL Statute 257.261 (B.2), library staff hold all registration and circulation records confidential and will not surrender them or make them available to the public except by a properly executed court order, although circulation information may be disclosed to the parent or guardian of a cardholder under age 16 only for the purpose of collecting fines or recovering overdue library materials. Those inquiring about a child's records or pursuing their own account information by phone or e-mail will be asked to provide additional information to verify their identity.

1D. Loss of Library Card

Cardholders who have lost their card can obtain a replacement card for \$1.00. Cardholders are expected to report the loss of a library card to prevent fraudulent use. All member libraries will accept a driver's license or scan/photo of a library card to obtain service; some locations may refuse service if a cardholder fails to recover or replace a missing library card in a reasonable timeframe.

1E. Registration Renewal Terms

Once the term of any card expires, a cardholder's residency information must be re-verified and updated if needed. All fines and fees on an expired account must be cleared in order to renew an account and to extend borrowing privileges for a new term. Cardholders issued any type of fee card must also pay said fee at the time of renewal.

1F. Purging of Library Registration Records

Cardholder accounts will be purged after 5 years of inactivity unless there are billed item fees on the account. All accounts, including delinquent accounts with billed item or collection referral fees, will be purged after 7 years of inactivity. Libraries follow the Florida Department of State's *General Records Schedule for Public Libraries* when reviewing records eligible for purging.

2. Inter-Library Loan Services

Inter-library loan (ILL) facilitates access to materials not owned by any member libraries. Not all member libraries offer this service. Each library that participates in ILL service may establish their own ILL policies. Additional details about ILL are covered in the Circulation section.

3. Circulation Policies

With the exception of Local Library Visitor Cards, all cards detailed in Sections 1A and 1B are valid at all member libraries. The countywide ILS facilitates a fluid environment for conducting business between multiple libraries.

Under normal circumstances, the system updates cardholder account records and item records as soon as staff complete data entry, with all records being accessible to all other member libraries. As a result, cardholders are able to make account inquiries and receive account assistance from any member library.

3A. Loan Periods

The following common loan periods have been established by all member libraries:

- 28 days: General Book Collection
- 14 days: New/Best Seller/High Demand Books; Music CDs; Magazines
- 7 days: DVD and Blu-ray movies

Loan periods for the same title may not always be consistent between member libraries. Loan periods for special collections are set at individual libraries in accordance with collection size and community needs. Reference materials and some special collections may not be loaned.

3B. Requests and Holds

Based on the card type issued, the ILS enables cardholders to place requests to hold materials throughout the system. The holds queue is a prioritized list of requests in chronological order by date and owning library pick-up location.

Each member library strives to follow a 1:4 purchasing ratio for print materials, meaning that one copy of each title will be purchased for every four requests at a library. The ratio for audio-visual materials is 1:8. This helps to maintain consistent wait times for holds at all locations.

Users can choose to suspend a request, which will deactivate their request. When a suspended hold request is re-activated, it resumes its position on the list according to its original entry date.

Cardholders have the choice to receive automated hold notifications via e-mail, telephone, or text. Mail notification is not an option at most libraries. Cardholders can also access their accounts online to monitor the status of requests. Requested materials will be held for 7 days before the request status automatically changes to “unclaimed”, at which time the request will be canceled, and the material will be routed to its next delivery point.

Cardholders can place up to 25 requests for items; all items requested count toward the 25-item limit.

Item Types with Lower Hold Limits:

Inter-library Loans from outside Pinellas County (ILL): **limit of 5**

Some individual libraries offer unique collections with holds restrictions.

3C. Renewals

All* items in the ILS may be renewed up to three (3) times unless there are outstanding requests by others. As a courtesy, when there are no outstanding requests, the two renewals will be performed automatically. The due date of a renewed item is extended from the date the renewal is made and is extended by the item’s standard loan period.

*Renewals vary on Inter-library Loan (ILL) materials, per the owning library’s policy.

3D. Overdue and Unreturned Materials

In addition to the original checkout receipt and online account access available to cardholders, member libraries make reasonable efforts to notify individuals of overdue materials using cost-effective and customer-friendly techniques. Failure to return materials by the due date will affect circulation privileges at all member libraries, including suspension of borrowing privileges and assessment of fees if items are not returned within 10 days.

Overdue notifications are most often delivered via email or telephone; few libraries send notices through traditional mailings. Depending upon an individual’s notification preferences, an individual may receive 2 or more of the notifications below, generated at the intervals listed:

- Due Date Reminder – 2 days prior to due date, email only
- Overdue notice – 5 days past due date
- Bill – 10 days past due date
- Collections Referral – The owning library of any unresolved billed item may opt to turn an account over to a collection agency, which may result in additional contacts.

Failure to receive an overdue notification does not absolve a cardholder of responsibility for returning materials and resolving billed item fees.

3E. Missing Parts or Other Damage to Materials

Member libraries take care to inspect the condition of materials before and after they are borrowed, and all staff have the ability to note condition issues on any item record.

Borrowers are encouraged to inspect materials at checkout and to alert staff to any concerns with the condition of materials as soon as possible.

- In the event that an item is returned with damage or missing part(s), it will not be checked in and an alert will be added to the cardholder’s account. Staff at the receiving library will make

timely and reasonable efforts to notify the cardholder of the issue so that it can be resolved, and the item made whole before the overdue notification process activates.

- If the receiving library is unable to obtain a response from the cardholder regarding an item that has damage or missing part(s), the material will be routed to the owning library for the determination of any fees. The owning library will then assume responsibility for communicating with the cardholder.
- Member library staff work together to facilitate communication between libraries and cardholders so that issues can be resolved efficiently.

3F. Circulation-Related Fees

Definitions:

Fines: Money owed for overdue materials

Fees: Cost for replacement of lost or damaged materials or collection agency fee

Fine Free:

PPLC member libraries are fine free effective October 1, 2021. Some libraries assess fines on specialty items due to limited availability and popularity. Fines on accounts prior to October 1, 2021 are eliminated.

- Charges for lost and damaged items will remain. If items are not returned by the ten-day grace period, borrowing privileges are locked until items are returned.
- Accounts are locked when \$5.00 is owed. When accounts are locked, outstanding items are billed. Patrons with locked accounts are not able to check out additional library materials, including electronic items via Libby/Overdrive, and cannot place new holds, renew their library card or renew items already checked out. When items are returned in acceptable condition, accounts are unlocked, and charges are removed, and borrowing can occur. Public computers can be used if accounts are locked.

i. Damaged/Billed Item Fees local library option

The member library that owns any unreturned or damaged item determines the amount to assess for billing. The owning library reserves the right to determine if it will repurchase the same item or another title. Some libraries may accept an exact replacement copy in new or like-new condition; the cardholder must get prior approval from the owning library and the item must meet the specifications agreed upon, such as a matching ISBN.

ii. Item Processing Fees up to \$6.00 per item

Preparing materials for library use requires extra personnel time and materials. A \$6.00 processing fee is automatically assessed with billed item fees to recoup these costs for lost materials.

iii. Collection Referral Fee local library option, \$12 per referral

The member library that owns any unresolved billed item may contract with a collection agency to pursue the return of materials and/or payment of fees. It is possible that multiple libraries could submit the same account to collections during the same time period, resulting in multiple collection fees. Any portion of a collection referral fee left unresolved on an account keeps the cardholder in active collections status, which interrupts borrowing privileges.

Payments for fees are accepted at any member library. Funds collected are retained by the library accepting payment with the following exceptions:

- All payments for collection fees, whether full or partial, will always be transferred to the referring library. Only the referring library can waive its collection fee.
- Payments made in a single transaction for damage or billed item fees totaling \$50 or more that are owned by any single member library will be transferred to the owning library (or libraries).

3G. Damage Caused by Pest Infestation or Exposure

When addressing damage to library materials caused by pest infestation or exposure, member libraries will follow the “Collection Materials Policy and Procedures for Potentially Pest-Infested Materials.”

When materials undergo localized treatment for pest exposure, residual damage may require additional attention. The owning library may assess damage fees to clean materials and also reserves the right to assess billed item charges if the damage cannot be adequately remedied to maintain the item in the collection. Member libraries also reserve the right to suspend the borrowing privileges of a cardholder who returns materials damaged by infestation at a high rate or volume until reassured that the cause of damage has been adequately addressed.

3H. Claims Returned

The “claims returned” option is applied when, in good faith, neither the cardholder nor the library can locate a disputed item for which the claim is made. Any member staff has the authority to mark an item claimed, regardless of the owning library. The ILS will allow a maximum of 9 item claims; additional claims are not accepted. Cardholders who cannot account for additional borrowed materials must speak to supervisory staff; payment toward unaccounted items may be required to maintain circulation privileges.

Staff will manually adjust the claim count if the status is determined to be a result of library error.

3I. Summary of Circulation Rules for Most Common Items

Material Type	Checkout Limit*	Loan Period	Renewals **	Hold Request Limit***
Audiobooks	25	28 days	3	25
Blu-rays	25	7 days	3	25
Books-most	50	28 days	3	25
Books - NEW	50	14 days	3	25
DVDs	25	7 days	3	25
Electronic Games	5	7 days	3	25
Inter-Library Loans (ILL)	Varies	Varies	Varies	Varies
Magazines	50	14 days	3	0
Music CDs	25	14 days	3	25

* Checkout Limits: Individual accounts are limited to a cumulative total of 50 items.

**Renewals will not be granted if outstanding requests are pending for a title.

***Hold Request Limit: Individual accounts are limited to a cumulative total of 25 pending requests.

Some individual libraries offer unique collections of items with different loan periods, holds

restrictions, and /or fine structures.

4. Electronic Books, Magazines, and Audio Books

Items borrowed from Overdrive/Libby are due within a 7 or 14-day period (depending on user selection). 7 holds may be placed. Some libraries offer additional eContent platforms with varied parameters.

5. In House Use of Technology and Equipment Services

Each member library determines local policies for in-house use of wireless Internet, public PCs, faxing services, scanning services, Makerspace equipment and other tools and services in this category. The cost of printing varies between libraries as does the type of equipment available.