

## **Media and Public Relations Policy Western Allegheny Community Library**

### **Library Spokesperson**

The Western Allegheny Community Library seeks to proactively ensure that the public is informed about the library's mission and receives consistent and accurate information about library policies, programs, resources and services to foster a positive public image and maximize community satisfaction, and support. Newsletters, brochures, press releases and other promotional materials shall be produced and distributed through approved channels and must receive the approval of the Library Director prior to distribution.

All contact with news media must be approved through the Library Director, or Board President who will be the authorized spokespersons to provide the most current and consistent information about the library. At times those individuals may refer the media to specific staff members, although staff must report all inquiries from reporters or other media persons immediately to the Library Director. No staff member is permitted to speak to the media unless authorized to do so by the Library Director. The Library Board President is the spokesperson for the Library Board.

Employees who are asked to respond to media questions in their areas of expertise should avoid speculation and refrain from offering personal opinions about library policies or programs, even when asked to do so by a reporter.

All questions from the public regarding the general operations, library budget, direction or strategic plan of the library should be referred to the Director. This includes Inquiries related to the underlying principles of a policy that are open to interpretation from a political, constitutional, and/or legal perspective. Examples of such policies include but are not limited to those covering Internet Access, Filtering, Freedom to Read, Intellectual Freedom and Requests for Material Reconsideration.

### **Newsgathering in the Library**

Members of the media who wish to conduct newsgathering in the library in any manner disruptive to, or interfering with, the operation of the library or its use by other customers or be inconsistent with its mission, must receive the approval of the Library Director or the staff member in charge of the building in the Director's absence. Examples of behavior that can be disruptive, or interfere with, the operation of the library or its use by other customers or be inconsistent with the library's mission, include (but are not limited to):

- interviewing at other than normal conversational voice level
- photographing or making video or audio recordings of customers and staff  
(See **Photography or recording by members of the public or media** below.)

Staff members witnessing members of the media engaged in such activity must inform them of the policy and ask that they request and gain permission from the Director before further conducting newsgathering in the library. This policy does not apply to a member of the media in his or her capacity as a patron using the library's resources.

## **Photography and Video or Audio Recording in the Library**

### **Photography or recording by the Library**

WACL staff has the right to photograph, film, and record Library events and customers for promotional use. Visitors to the library, or participants in any library event being captured on film or by photograph, will be advised in advance, verbally or through signage, that their participation in the event acts as consent to being photographed, filmed or recorded, unless they otherwise clearly indicate that they are denying Library staff permission to do so. To ensure the privacy of all individuals, their images will not be identified using full names or personal identifying information without written approval from the photographed subject, parent, or legal guardian.

The above policy applies only to open, public events. Closed events such as class visits would require releases and/or permissions from the supervisor of the visiting organization.

### **Photography or recording by members of the public or the media**

While our library is a public place, it is considered a "limited public forum" under federal law. Public libraries may reasonably restrict the exercise of free speech rights in their buildings, particularly when the conduct would be disruptive to, or interfere with, the other customers or staff or be inconsistent with the library's mission.

Subject to the preceding paragraph: photography and video or audio recording by visitors to the library are generally permitted if it is strictly for personal use. Casual amateur photography is permitted for patrons and visitors provided it does not interfere with the operations of the library or capture any identifiable likenesses of individuals without their permission. Photographers are responsible for securing the necessary releases.

Photography and video or audio recording for commercial purposes are permitted only if the activity has been expressly approved by the Library Director. In order to ensure that such activity would not be disruptive to, or interfere with, the library staff or customers, or be inconsistent with the library's mission, all individuals proposing to engage in such commercial activities must request approval in writing and in advance.

All requests to use a library facility as a setting for photography, video or audio recording are to be referred to the Library Director, who has the responsibility and

authority to evaluate the requests and to monitor the recording. Requests will be evaluated in terms of their impact on library operations and services. The Library Director will notify specific library departments and personnel in advance of the approved photography or recording.

To protect the rights of individual patrons and to prevent disruptions, or interference with, staff or patrons, or conduct inconsistent with the library's mission, photographing and video or audio recording on Library property are restricted as follows:

- Under no circumstances may the public, members of the media, or Library staff take photographs or record video or audio without the express permission of any Library customer or staff member who would be included within the composition. In the case of minors, permission must come from the parent or legal guardian.
- Media are subject to the provisions of the Code of Conduct policy and may not disturb the normal operations of the library.
- In the event of a critical incident or emergency requiring police or fire response, public and media access may be limited to allow emergency personnel to ensure safety and security.

The terms above apply to the media as well as to amateur photographers and audio/video creators.