

Title: PROPOSED LIBRARY CARD FOR INTERNET AND COMPUTER ACCESS ONLY

Presented by: Community Led Team

Date: September 2015

Background

The Community Led Team has the stated goal to: “Review Internet access for youth, doing research into policies from other CULC libraries and make recommendations to Executive.”

The team researched library systems of approximately the same size as the Edmonton Public Library, as well as the other Metro Federation libraries, to determine what other libraries require for youth to access a computer and Internet, and how EPL policy can align more closely with common practices and serve the needs of youth in the library.

Youth in group homes can’t access the Internet at EPL because the adults in their lives who would serve as guarantors are generally unwilling to assume the financial risk of signing for a library card. This issue potentially affects approximately 3000 children in the Edmonton region ranging up to the age of 17¹. Many agencies serving these youth actively advise their staff against assuming the responsibility of signing for a library card for youth under their care. Group home staff want kids in their care to have library access but are concerned about the risks inherent in signing for a card.

The team considered creating a card profile for youth similar to the ADU1FR card given to adults without ID or proof of address. After reviewing the loss rates for items taken out on ADU1FR cards we projected that a similar card for juveniles could create a financial risk for EPL. There are also proportionately high loss rates for Independent Juvenile cards. Our conclusion is that creating a card that only provides Internet access and access to our digital collections is the best way to address the information needs of youth in care without creating financial risks for EPL, group home staff, and social workers. This proposed solution does not fully address the missed opportunity for youth in care to build trust, capacity and responsibility by learning how to borrow and return library materials (as outlined by Peter Smyth of Edmonton Region Child and Family Services in Appendix A) however, in the future, EPL and Child and Family Services could work together to help reduce this kind of social exclusion by exploring solutions that do not put the library at a financial risk. This could be addressed with the possibility of an “in-branch borrowing card” which would allow members to place holds and borrow items to use inside the library, reducing barriers for both adults and youth and addressing the issues of inequitable opportunities for children in care as highlighted in Appendix A. An “in-branch” borrowing card is an idea that will require further investigation.

¹ Communicated by Norm Welch from the Office of the Statutory Director, Child & Family Services Division, Alberta Human Services in an email exchange. This number is based on Child and Family Services’ Edmonton service region which includes City of Edmonton, Strathcona, Sturgeon, Parkland, Leduc and Lamont Counties. A more specific number for limited to only youth in the city of Edmonton was not available.

Barriers for youth in group homes:

Community Librarians, group home staff and social workers provided anecdotal evidence of barriers to library access for youth in group homes. Community Librarians from ABB, CAL, JPL, MLW, STR, SPW and WOO indicated through an email discussion that lack of access for youth in group homes has been a significant barrier for youth in their catchments. Staff are unable to issue cards to youth in care because group home workers are very reluctant to act as a guarantor for the cards. Both group home staff and social workers have confirmed that group home staff are instructed **not** to sign for library cards.

“Feedback from case workers has been that they prefer not to be a guarantor for the children or youth in case there are costs involved. This results in an in-care child or youth not having the same opportunity as other children and youth to be able to obtain a library card. While not intentional, it does mean that this becomes an opportunity denied to a child or youth because of their in-care status, and therefore, it is a form of social exclusion.” – Peter Smyth, Specialist for High Risk Youth Services - Edmonton & Area Child & Family Services²

Some workers have previously signed for cards but discontinued the practice after having acquired late fees. In follow up conversations it was determined that in the vast majority of cases the only issue is the cost associated with late fees.

“Basically the message that we need to provide our staff is that we CANNOT be the ones to sign off on our children to obtain a library card. Basically the issue is that our staff cannot be held liable for one of our children/youth losing books etc. Perhaps this is something that will need to be addressed within your organization.” - Todd Weekes, Casework Supervisor, East Neighbourhood Centre - Edmonton Region Child and Family Services Division

EPL currently has a card profile for independent juveniles which would appear to be a solution, but this card is intended for children who do not have an adult in their life to serve as a guarantor. It is also intended for children 15 or older, while children in group homes can be aged anywhere from birth to 18 years. To extend the limits of the independent juvenile card is not a viable solution because there could be cases where youth in care have court orders not to use the Internet. In that case their social workers/parole officers/etc. would not sign for the card and we would want to respect that choice.

“I have had some clients from the Yellowhead Youth Centre in my area who would like to get cards, but because their social workers are hesitant to sign for them, it creates a significant barrier. Because they are living in a juvenile detention centre, they do not qualify for the independent juvenile profile, and many of them just want to be able to visit the library and access the Internet during their free time. Some of

² Taken from an internal memo written by Peter Smyth and shared with EPL. See Appendix A

the clients are allowed to leave the detention centre during the day and the library is often the place they choose to come.” – Christy Travis, Community Librarian

Loss rate: Another reason not to extend the independent juvenile profile to youth without a guarantor willing to sign for the card is the financial risk associated with lost items from card profiles for adults without addresses. Overall, 5.87% of items checked out to those with the ADU1FR profile became lost in 2014; this figure has risen to 7.60% in 2015 YTD. The higher risk of items being lost is consistent across most items types. Given the loss rate and financial risk of the ADU1FR card, we feel that creating a similar card profile for youth is not a good idea.

Percentage of items circulated lost by broad item type (2014)

Item Type	ADU1FR	EPL-ADULT	EPL-JUV
Books	5.33%	0.15%	0.13%
Films	3.65%	0.41%	0.41%
Video Games	15.13%	1.42%	0.63%
Music	7.80%	0.17%	0.22%
Devices	0.00%	0.21%	0.29%
Magazines	13.04%	0.05%	0.23%
Total	5.87%	0.25%	0.21%

Percentage of items circulated lost by broad item type (2015 YTD – April 15)

Item Type	ADU1FR	EPL-ADULT	EPL-JUV
Books	6.70%	0.23%	0.22%
Films	4.38%	0.39%	0.52%
Video Games	26.19%	1.55%	1.09%
Music	7.79%	0.19%	0.28%
Devices	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
Magazines	0.00%	0.08%	0.51%
Total	7.60%	0.29%	0.29%

After excluding instances in which a card was modified to the ADU1FR profile after having had a higher borrowing limit, the total value of items lost in 2014 was \$15,222.45 and \$6,778.74 in 2015.

Item Type	2014	2015
Books	\$5,044.18	\$2,000.66
Films	\$1,849.95	\$888.66
Video Games	\$7,881.00	\$3,772.00
Music	\$426.32	\$117.42
Devices	\$0.00	\$0.00
Magazines	\$21.00	\$0.00
Total	\$15,222.45	\$6,778.74

The ADU1FR card has a high amount of lost items. The library lacks the ability to recover these items and it is more difficult to collect bills because there is no address on file. If we created a similar card for juveniles without guarantors we would likely have the same difficulties collecting bills and recovering material. The creation of the ADU1FR card was designed to address a significant barrier facing people with difficult life circumstances. EPL determined that this risk for the library was commensurate with the barrier we were eliminating.

Creating an Internet Only card addresses a significant barrier for youth in care. This would give youth in group homes (and also youth whose guardians are unwilling to take on the financial risk of borrowing items) access to important information sources, including all of our digital collections, without creating a financial risk for EPL, group home staff, parents, or guardians. Todd Weekes from Child and Family Services consulted with colleagues in his office and confirmed that caseworkers would appreciate this type of library card option for children in care. Importantly, the Internet Only card would still require a guarantor to sign for it, and therefore would not undermine the rights and responsibilities of the children's guardians. An Internet Only card would also benefit adults who have had problems with fines and lost items in the past, and thus should be an option offered to all EPL customers.

Summary of Research

Overview of other libraries' policies and practices

See Appendix B. for policy links

The following comparison of policies and practices is important because it shows how other libraries address the information needs of youth who do not have a guarantor willing to sign for a library card, and provides some examples for how EPL can address the needs of youth while respecting the rights and responsibilities of guarantors. The Canadian Library Association's Statement on Internet Access encourages libraries: "To safeguard the long-standing relationship of trust between libraries and children, their parents and guardians, in developing Internet use policies and practices, acknowledging the rights and responsibilities of parents and guardians."³ By requiring a guarantor for the proposed Internet Only card, we respect the rights of parents and guarantors while being able to provide access to information for children and youth.

In researching large urban public library systems and the other Metro Federation libraries' policies around youth access to computers and Internet, three models of access were identified:

1.) Youth Library Card required or parent/guardian must be present to access computers and the Internet

All Ottawa Public Library users must have a library card to access the Internet. Ottawa Public Library requires that all children under 16 have filtered Internet access; from 16 – 18, youth can have unfiltered access with parental permission. If a child doesn't have a library card and the parent is present, a "branch card" or temporary pass may be issued for filtered Internet access. The other libraries we identified also require youth to have a

³ http://www.cla.ca/Content/NavigationMenu/Resources/PositionStatements/Statement_on_Intern.htm

library card to access the Internet, but have alternatives for those who do not have a card and do not have a parent or guardian with them (see below).

2.) *Alternative methods of computer and Internet access are provided to youth without library cards*

Out of the libraries identified (Calgary, Ottawa, Spruce Grove, Hamilton, Toronto, Vancouver and Multnomah) that require youth to have a library card to access a computer and the Internet, all offer some alternative for youth without a library card to access computers and the Internet whether it is by offering a temporary pass or having express Internet stations with limited time.

- Calgary Public Library staff will log youth on to a computer if they don't have a library card. Youth can get a limited access library card (filtered Internet access and maximum borrowing limit of 10 items) without a parent present. This card is valid for six weeks or until a parent or guardian approves full access by signing for the card. There are also 15 minute Internet stations youth can use without library cards, ID or guardians present.
- Spruce Grove Public Library allows youth under 16 without a library card to access the Internet as long as they have written consent from their parent or guardian. Youth over 16 without a library card can use a guest pass for 30 minutes of free Internet time.
- Hamilton Public Library requires a library card to access the Internet, but youth aged 14 and older do not need a parent to sign for their card. They do, however require ID to get a card. Express computers are available for 15 minutes at a time with no library card required. Out of town visitors (including children) may get a temporary Internet pass without showing ID.
- Toronto Public Library requires children under 12 to have a parent-signed library card to access computers and the Internet. Teens aged 13-18 do not need parental permission to get a library card but do need to show ID. Anyone can access an express (15 minute) or drop-in (30 minute) computer without a library card or ID. A "one-time-use" login number may be issued to customers (including children) who do not have a library card or identification.
- Vancouver Public Library will provide an "Access Card" to youth without a library card to access computers and the Internet. Youth under the age of 14 need a parent or guardian to sign the "Access Card." This card does not allow borrowing.
- Multnomah County Library requires youth to have a library card **OR** identification to access computers and the Internet. Children under 12 do not need a library card or ID to access the Internet, but can only access computers with filters. Teens age 13 – 17 can access unfiltered computers with a library card **OR** ID.

3.) *No library card is required to use computers and the Internet*

St. Albert Public Library, Strathcona County Public Library, and Fort Saskatchewan Public Library (Metro Federation Libraries) do not require a library card or ID to access the Internet. Children have full access to unfiltered Internet at all three libraries. If children without library cards want to use a computer at Strathcona County library they can login by

typing “guest.” St. Albert and Fort Saskatchewan both have policies clearly stating that responsibility for information accessed on the Internet by youth lies with the parent or guardian and is not monitored by the library.

At EPL we provide temporary cards to youth once and require a library card signed by a parent or guarantor for subsequent usage. None of the other libraries surveyed refuse to provide access to youth after the initial request. Our proposal to create an Internet Only card for youth will bring EPL’s practices more in line with that of our peers, as those youth with guarantors unwilling or unable to take on the risk of a borrowing card will have options for ongoing Internet access at the library that is not mediated by staff. While many other libraries do not require guarantors to issue cards/passes that allow Internet access, such a practice does not conform to the CLA’s statement on Internet access. We thus recommend that this card requires a guarantor.

Recommendations

1: Create a library card profile that is an Internet Only card available to all children and youth with a parent or guarantor. EPL requires a parent or guardian to give permission to children under the age of 18 to get a library card regardless of whether or not they are borrowing physical materials. Requiring a guarantor to sign for the card respects the rights and responsibilities of parents and guardians as outlined in the CLA’s statement on Internet use and is in keeping with EPL’s Registration Policy. An Internet Only card will benefit youth who do not have a guarantor willing to take the financial risk of a library card and may also be a desirable option for parents whose children have had past problems with fines and lost items. This will allow access to our digital collections in the same way that the ADUFR1 card allows this access without requiring an address, thus allowing youth to enjoy many benefits of a library card without financial risk to EPL. In order to be eligible for an Internet Only card, the guarantor’s proof of address should be shown whenever possible.

2: In addition to a youth Internet Only card, create an Internet Only card for adults. This would provide adults with ongoing access to our computers, Internet and digital collections and may mitigate the risk of financial loss incurred by the ADU1FR card as identified in this report. In order to be eligible for both the adult and youth Internet Only card, proof of address should be shown whenever possible.

3. With the Associate Manager, Circulation and Materials delivery, Community-Led team to review the Internet Only cards in 2016 to determine usage, and where possible outcomes.

Implementation

- Talk with the Associate Manager of Circulation and Materials Delivery and the Manager of CMA about creating card profiles and updating documentation in Circulation Manual and Staffweb.
- Draft communication for Community Librarians and Managers to share with community contacts, social workers, group home workers and other relevant groups.
- Communicate the registration process for this card. If a guarantor doesn’t live with the child, staff are to use the guarantor’s address in the ADDRESS 1 field with the child’s address or group

home address in the ADDRESS 2 field. Guarantor must show ID as a means of preventing fraudulent use, particularly of our digital resources.

- Work with Marketing and the Associate Manager of Circulation and Materials Delivery to update the letter mailed home to children who are provided with temporary Internet passes, indicating that ongoing Internet access may be provided to their child through the Internet Only card or any of our borrowing profiles.
- Communicate message to organizations operating group homes in Edmonton.
- Promote new card profile within EPL on Staffweb and through the staff newsletter and encourage Community Librarians to discuss the profile at staff meetings as an option for youth in care but also for children whose parents are reluctant to sign for a card because of financial risk.
- Emphasize the value of digital content available with library membership.
- Evaluate uptake of card type by comparing any changes in the number of temporary passes generated per month before and after the implementation of this card type. It is expected that the number of temporary passes will drop as Internet Only cards are issued.
- After six months, analyze the number of Internet Only cards issued by each service point to determine if uptake is lower than expected at a location. If patterns are noted, the CL team can target those locations with low uptake to determine if staff need more information or training about the use of this card.
- One year after implementation, gather any feedback from service point staff and community members related to new card profile and report it back to the sponsor of the Community Led Team.

Appendix A

Internal Letter by Peter Smyth of Edmonton Region Child and Family Services

Access to Library Resources for In-Care Children and Youth
May 27, 2014

The Issue:

On May 27, 2014, I had a meeting with Mark McHale, a community librarian with Edmonton Public Library (EPL). He works out of the Abbottsfield-Penny McKee Branch (3410-118 Ave). Mark had wanted to meet and discuss ways for in-care youth to have better access to library resources. Over the past number of years EPL has taken intentional steps to be very inclusive and encourage people from all walks of life, regardless of their life challenges and barriers, to participate in all aspects of the library whether borrowing material, Internet access, accessing community resources (some of which are on site at some branches), using gaming devices, or participating in a variety of community programs. However, there has been challenges in having children and youth who are in the care of Child and Family Services fully participating in some aspects of such programming. It is key to help children and youth to gain, or maintain, and interest in books and learning. Research strongly suggests that for children who read consistently, there is a higher predictability that they will do well academically and progress on to post-secondary education. There is also research demonstrating that illiteracy increases the chances of becoming stuck in the legal system. Without question, there are many barriers in society for those who cannot read or write adequately. To increase the chances of children and youth becoming readers it is important that they are consistently being exposed to library resources, and learn to appreciate that the local library is a key resource in their community. It is important that they know how a library works, and that there are a variety of free materials and resources available for their benefit. This can also be balanced with knowing that with this privilege comes a responsibility to respect these materials, and return them without accumulating fines. This is an opportunity to help children and youth develop some basic life skills, communication skills, and be able to trust that they can take on such responsibility.

However, there are challenges that have become barriers to in-care children and youth being able to have the opportunity to fully participate with their local libraries. As such, this becomes another area in which they can face stigma, exclusion and marginalization in society given they are in the care of the government, live in group care, are visible on the streets, dress in ways that results in profiling, are Aboriginal etc. For the average child, they get a library card and the parent is the guarantor should there be materials lost or late, resulting in fines. Feedback from case workers has been that they prefer not to be a guarantor for the children or youth in case there are costs involved. This results in an in-care child or youth not having the same opportunity as other children and youth to be able to obtain a library card. While not intentional, it does mean that this becomes an opportunity denied to a child or youth because of their in-care status, and therefore, it is a form of social exclusion. While the fear of case workers taking on financial liability of a youth perhaps not respecting library materials, or not returning items on time, is not misplaced, this becomes a larger systemic problem that could be resolved between EPL and Edmonton and Area Child and Family Services.

Overcoming Challenges:

There are ways to overcome some challenges that would make it easier for children and youth to get library cards. Of course, caution must be exercised in making assumptions that in-care children and youth cannot rise to the occasion and be able to manage the responsibility of a library card. However, having little guidance in life, and perhaps having other challenges such as an inability to self-regulate, trauma/PTSD, FASD, mental health issues, and other issues that impact on learning, many children and youth who are in care may need more hands-on instruction and require more time to build up to a point they can manage the responsibilities of owning a library card and borrowing and returning materials. Nevertheless, as guardians of these children and youth, getting a library card is a basic activity that other guardians would undertake for their children. Edmonton Public Library can be flexible in adjusting policies and expectations to accommodate various group. While there is a 40-item borrowing maximum at a given time, this could be adjusted to 1, 3, 5, 10, etc., depending in the needs of the youth, and if there has been difficulties noted. Another possibility could be to extend the borrowing time from three weeks to a month, which could allow group care and shelter programs an opportunity to consistently schedule a library evening on a monthly basis.

Staff at EPL are accommodating in being able to work with children and youth individually or in groups to teach them about how the library works, the programs offered and the responsibility they take on with getting a library card. There is also the opportunity for youth over 16, who are receiving services through their own agreements with Child and Family Services to obtain a library card through the “independent juvenile” policy. This can also be a teaching opportunity for child and youth care workers, community workers, and case workers, to encourage youth to take an interest in books and other forms of learning.

Recommendations:

- A process be started to ensure in-care children and youth have the opportunity to become familiar with their local library and be able to obtain a library card.
- The parameters set on library cards are unique to each individual, and reflect their capacity to manage the responsibility (rather than a blanket assumption that in-care youth cannot manage the responsibility).
- That discussion take place between Edmonton Region Child and Family Services and Edmonton Public Library around managing financial liabilities and ensuring that in-care children and youth are not excluded from the opportunity of having a library card.
- Reading and learning, and the library being an important part of the community, is reinforced to youth in care, especially given the benefits that can result. This could be an item on enhancement and transition to independence service plans.

Peter Smyth MSW, RSW
Specialist for High Risk Youth Services
Edmonton Region Child and Family Services

Appendix B– Policy Links

Calgary Public Library

<http://calgarylibrary.ca/faq/using-the-library-faqs/>

<http://calgarylibrary.ca/public-access-network-terms-of-use/>

Hamilton Public Library

<http://www.hpl.ca/articles/computers-wifi>

<http://www.hpl.ca/articles/get-library-card>

Multnomah County Library

<https://multcolib.org/policies-manuals/acceptable-use-Internet-and-library-public-computers>

Ottawa Public Library

<http://bibliooottawalibrary.ca/en/public-computer-terms-use>

Toronto Public Library

<http://www.torontopubliclibrary.ca/terms-of-use/library-policies/Internet-use-policy.jsp>

<http://www.torontopubliclibrary.ca/using-the-library/computer-services/rac/#noLibraryCard>

Vancouver Public Library

https://www.vpl.ca/about/details/public_Internet_policy

https://www.vpl.ca/library/details/Internet_access_cards

METRO Libraries:

Spruce Grove Public Library

<http://www.sgpl.ca/content/computer-access>

St. Albert Public Library

<http://www.sapl.ca/component/content/article/32-sapl/135-public-Internet-access-policy.html>

Strathcona County

<http://www.sclibrary.ab.ca/public/policy.htm>

This policy is not on the FSPL website, but an employee of FSPL emailed us the policy:

FORT SASKATCHEWAN PUBLIC LIBRARY POLICY

SUBJECT: Internet Use

REFERENCE #: 97/05

DATE APPROVED: September 10, 1997

REVISED: October 11, 2000, November 14, 2000, March 14, 2001, February 12, 2003, March 7, 2011

The Fort Saskatchewan Public Library believes in free access to information regardless of format.

The Fort Saskatchewan Public Library supports the Canadian Library Association statement on Internet access as stated in the CLA policy FR07 (as attached in Schedule A).

The Fort Saskatchewan Public Library will not deny or limit access to information available via electronic resources because of its alleged controversial content or frivolous value unless it contravenes the criminal code.

The Library provides public access to the Internet, on both Library Public Access Computers and through a wireless network, at no cost to the patron. Patrons accessing the service are reminded that they are at a public workstation in a public building and should conduct themselves accordingly.

1. Responsibility for materials accessed in the Fort Saskatchewan Public Library lies solely with the patron accessing the information.
2. The Fort Saskatchewan Public Library does not endorse the viewpoints or vouch for the accuracy of any electronic information it does not have control over.
3. Parents or guardians of minors are responsible for monitoring information and materials accessed by minors. Children who use the Library's Internet computers without supervision by parents or guardians may be exposed to inappropriate or disturbing information and images.
4. Accessing Internet sites that are inappropriate for viewing in a public building with multi-age users is prohibited. Accessing such sites could result in the suspension or loss of Internet privileges, at the discretion of the Library Director. Internet users are required to abide by Fort Saskatchewan Public Library's policies governing conduct in the Library.
5. Criminal Law forbids the display or spreading of hate literature, child pornography, illicit drug literature, or obscene material.
6. Civil Law forbids the harassment, libeling or slander of others.
7. The Fort Saskatchewan Public library reserves the right to establish time limits on the use of the Internet workstations, and to terminate an Internet session at any time.
8. Library staff have the authority to monitor information accessed on the Library's computers for violations of this policy.
9. Patrons may be permitted to download information from the Internet. The cost of printing from the Internet will be the same as photocopying charges.
10. Library staff is not able to provide technical assistance for wireless users' own devices, and no guarantee can be made that patrons will be able to make a wireless connection.
11. FSPL's network is not secure, and users are responsible for the safety or security of any personal equipment connecting to the Library's wireless network, and of the data files that equipment contains.