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Circulation Policies for External Users:  
A Comparative Study of Public Urban Research Institutions

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## **Abstract**

This article is a study of the policies that govern the use of the university library by external users at Indiana University–Purdue University Indianapolis (IUPUI) and 12 peer institutions used by IUPUI for comparative purposes. A search of each institution's Web site was conducted as well as interviews with circulation librarians and managers. Although it was useful to learn of common practices, it was especially beneficial to learn about policies that differed substantially from those in place at comparable institutions. Creative solutions developed to address problems at other libraries can be used to influence policy development.

## **Keywords**

Circulation policies, external users, community users, university libraries

Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis

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## **Introduction**

In addition to serving their primary clientele of students, staff, and faculty, many university libraries also serve external users, such as local residents, high school students, and students and faculty from other colleges and universities. Russell, Robison, Prather, and Carlson (1992) described external users as “individuals with no affiliation with the institution” who are “generally more diverse than typical institutional users and in some instances lack academic backgrounds” (p. 27). Serving external users has been a contentious issue. Courtney (2001) reported that “the arguments for and against opening academic libraries to the use of the public are generally made by librarians who find themselves caught between a professional instinct to [end of p. 111] provide access to all and the realities of budgets, space, and the needs of their own clientele” (p. 473). Historically, the main concern has been that by providing services to external users, services available to the primary clientele may be diminished. Courtney observed that “insufficient facilities and staff made it difficult to provide services for an institution’s own members; stretching those resources to include the public would reduce the quality provided to the primary clientele” (p. 474). Serving an external clientele can present particular challenges for librarians and staff working in public services. As external users have different needs than those of the primarily clientele, it has been common practice for public services units to have developed specific policies for external users.

Two researchers, the Access Services Team Leader at the University Library at Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis (IUPUI) and a graduate student enrolled in the School of Library and Information Science at IUPUI, commenced a review of circulation policies and practices. Having questioned the efficacy of some of the current circulation policies, it was determined that it would be useful to learn about policies at libraries at similar public urban

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research university libraries. The main purpose of the study was to determine if the University Library at IUPUI should consider modifying some of its existing policies based on a review of policies at a set of comparable institutions. This article is a report of the study.

### **Terminology**

What—or who—are external users? The literature search revealed that there has been a great variety of terms used to describe patrons of academic libraries who are not students, staff, or faculty at the parent institution. More than forty terms for *external users* were found in the literature, including *community borrowers*, *external users*, *guest borrowers*, *non-affiliated users*, *permit patrons*, *secondary users*, *unaffiliated users*, and *visitors*. Johnson (1998) has suggested that it is easier to define this group by what they are not: current students, staff, faculty, and researchers. She referred to everyone else as an “unaffiliated user” (p. 8).

Whatever the term or terms used to describe patrons of academic libraries who are not students, staff, or faculty at the parent institution, these patrons can be categorized in a variety of ways. In their study of access for external users at academic libraries in the Atlanta area, Russell, Robison, and Prather (1989) identified thirteen types of external users, including (for example) the general public, visiting scholars, and college students home for the holidays (pp. 136-137). Johnson (1998) identified four umbrella terms that cover most types of external patrons, as well as ten smaller groups, including alumni, members of friends associations, and visiting faculty (p. 8). [end of p. 112]

Perhaps the terms that best describe this varied group of patron types are *non-affiliated users*, *unaffiliated users*, *secondary users*, and *external users*. However, these terms are not without problems. *Non-affiliated users* and *unaffiliated users* are not entirely accurate terms; some of these patrons do have an affiliation—with another school, college, or university, or

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perhaps with an academic center or institute that is associated with the university, but the employees or members of the academic center or institute are not employees of the parent institution. The term *secondary users* is also problematic because some librarians and library administrators do not believe a hierarchy of users should exist, and that certain groups of patrons should not be treated differently than other groups. Martin (1990) argued that “the notion of a primary clientele directly contradicts our service ethic” (p. 24). There is also a problem with the terms *borrowers* and *users*. Although often used interchangeably, it is worth noting that not all who borrow items from the collection use the facility, and not all users of the facility borrow from the collection. This paper uses employs two terms: *external users* and *community users*. The term *external users* describes the collective status of the variety of patron types who are not students, staff, or faculty at the parent institution. *Community users* describes local residents who use the university library, as opposed to external users such as visiting faculty from institutions located elsewhere.

## **Literature Review**

Fifty years ago O’Harra (1959) lamented how little had appeared in the library literature concerning the use of academic libraries by community users. Interested in services provided by academic libraries to high school students and local residents, O’Harra conducted a small survey of 33 university libraries. In the five decades following O’Harra’s study, there have been many studies and surveys that have addressed policies governing the use of the library by external users.

The first large national study of the community use of academic libraries was conducted in 1965 under the auspices of the Association of College and Research Libraries (ACRL) in which 1100 colleges and universities in the United States were surveyed (Josey, 1967). This was

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followed in 1968 by a similar study of junior colleges (Josey, 1970). These two national studies were followed in the 1980s and 1990s by a series of smaller surveys, most of which studied libraries that shared one or more specific characteristics, such as type of institution or geographical location. Isom (1982) surveyed fifteen publicly-supported universities, most of which were located in Illinois, with some located in other Midwestern and Western states. W. B. Mitchell (1982), writing primarily about an internal study conducted at the Montana State University Libraries, referred in the conclusion to a survey conducted by Mitchell and Swieszkowski in which 122 public and private academic [end of p. 113] libraries were queried about various circulation policies for external users. DuBois (1986) described a study designed by an ad hoc committee at California State University, Long Beach, that surveyed the other eighteen campuses in the California State University (CSU) system, branches of the University of California, and 21 CSU peer institutions nationwide—this last group having characteristics similar to the campuses of the CSU system (p. 698). Russell, et al (1992) surveyed 26 large urban universities to determine the “variety, depth, and types of access accorded by each library to external users.” E. S. Mitchell (1992) described a survey addressed to 68 library directors at publicly-supported four-year colleges and universities in major metropolitan areas. Shaw (1999) conducted an online survey focused on practices and procedures in the management of electronic resources in reference departments of academic libraries; although the focus of the survey is beyond the scope of this article, it did include information about library use by “community people” as well as limitations on internet use imposed on these users. More recently, Wojtowicz (2006, 2007) examined policies and privileges for external users at four-year public universities in five northwestern states: Washington, Oregon, Idaho, Montana, and Wyoming. A search of the literature also yielded a number of studies investigating policies for external users that were

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limited to academic libraries in one state only. These included surveys of libraries in North Carolina (Best-Nichols, 1993), Louisiana (Hayes & Mendelsohn, 1998), New York (Judd & Scheele, 1984), Virginia (McCulley & Ream, 1988), Texas (Paul, 1985), Georgia (Russell, et al., 1989), Ohio (Schneider, 2001), and Florida (Shires, 2006).

Courtney (2001) provided a comprehensive overview of the library literature that addressed academic policies toward external users from the late 1950s to the late 1990s. Courtney (2003) also conducted a survey of 814 academic libraries in the United States on physical access, borrowing privileges, and computer use. This was the most comprehensive national study about public access to academic libraries since the ACRL study in 1965.

The issues examined in this study—university and library mission; physical access to the library; computer access; borrowing privileges; circulation policies; fines, fees, and other charges; as well as other issues related to external users—have deep roots in the five decades of surveys that followed O’Harra’s study in 1959.

Library policies for external users are driven in part by the mission of the library and in part by the mission of the university. Laurence R. Veysey, author of *The Emergence of the American University*, identified three principal functions of the American university: spreading liberal culture, doing research, and providing services to the greater community (as cited in Williams, 1992, pp. 3-4). Williams asserted that “the mission of the library can be defined only within the context of the university” and that “the role of the university is defined by its relation to the community surrounding it” (p.3). Bangert (1997a, 1997b) studied the mission statements of university, [end of p. 114] college, and specialized institutional libraries in California. She found indicators that demonstrated an intention to connect the library to the greater community (Bangert, 1997a, Analysis of Language Expressing Library Vision, para. 4). Schneider (2001)

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examined the missions and roles of regional campus libraries in Ohio, analyzed how and if these missions and roles were put into practice, compared the missions and roles of different regional campus libraries, and considered the future roles of regional campus libraries in their communities (p. 122).

Most of the studies and surveys found in the literature search addressed physical access to the library. (Best-Nichols, 1993; Courtney, 2003; Hayes & Mendelsohn, 1998; Josey, 1967; Josey, 1970; Judd & Scheele, 1984; McCulley & Ream, 1998; E. S. Mitchell, 1992; O'Harra, 1959; Russell, et al., 1989; Russell, et al., 1992; Shaw, 1999; Shires, 2006). In general, physical access refers to either access to the building or permission to use library materials in the building.

Many of the more recent studies (studies completed since the late 1990s) included information about access to computers for external users (Courtney, 2003; Hayes & Mendelsohn, 1998; Shaw, 1999; Shires, 2006; Wojtowicz, 2006). Some of these studies focused specifically on which online tools and applications have been made available to external users, such as access to the internet, the library catalog, journal databases, and office productivity tools.

Nearly all of the studies related to external users included information about borrowing privileges. The focus was chiefly on which categories of external users (for example, community users, friends of the library, alumni association members, or faculty and students at other institutions) could borrow library materials, as well as the types of items these users were allowed to borrow.

Circulation policies, specifically the modification of existing loan policies to address the use of the collection by external users, were widely addressed (Best-Nichols, 1993; DuBois, 1986; Hayes & Mendelsohn, 1998; Isom, 1982; Josey, 1967; Josey, 1970; E. S. Mitchell, 1992;

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Paul, 1985; Shires, 2006). Examples of policies modified included shortened loan periods or limitations on the numbers of items that could be borrowed.

Fees for services to external users were also widely studied (Best-Nichols, 1993; DuBois, 1986; Hayes & Mendelsohn, 1998; Isom, 1982; Josey, 1967; Josey, 1970; McCulley & Ream, 1998; E. S. Mitchell, 1992; O’Harra, 1959; Paul, 1985; Russell, et al., 1989; Shires, 2006). Fees included charges for obtaining a card for borrowing privileges, charges for computer use, fines for overdue materials, and charges for lost items.

## Methods

### Comparison Group

Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis (IUPUI) shares a variety of characteristics with other large urban public universities found across [end of p. 115] the country. IUPUI has selected twelve similar institutions to be used for “comparative purposes and various appropriate benchmarking efforts” (Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis, 2009) (Figure 1).

- Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis
- Temple University
- University at Buffalo, The State University of New York
- University of Alabama at Birmingham
- University of Cincinnati
- University of Colorado Denver
- University of Illinois at Chicago
- University of Louisville
- University of New Mexico
- University of South Florida
- University of Utah
- Virginia Commonwealth University
- Wayne State University

FIGURE 1 Public urban research universities included in this project.

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These schools are all public research universities located in urban settings, with similar enrollment and undergraduate profiles, and a comparable mix of undergraduate instructional programs. The graduate instructional program classification for each of these institutions, consistent with the Carnegie Classification framework, falls into one of three categories: comprehensive doctoral with medical/veterinary; doctoral, professions dominant; or doctoral, STEM dominant (Carnegie Classification of Institutions of Higher Education, 2005).

The particular programs offered by these institutions and the distinctive student body of these schools influence the services provided by the university's libraries, it was determined that this group of university libraries (IUPUI and its twelve peer institutions) would provide the most useful comparisons for this exploration of current lending policies and practices. The focus of this study is on the main library (or libraries) used by undergraduate and graduate students. No information was gathered for specialized libraries serving graduate students enrolled in professional programs such as dentistry, medicine, or law. [end of p. 116]

Originally, this study was designed to compare policy to practice, as day-to-day practice in public services units such as circulation does not always conform to stated policy. However, in the process of obtaining permission from the IUPUI Institutional Review Board to conduct the study, it was learned that care must be taken not to make any disclosure which could "reasonably place the subjects at risk of criminal or civil liability or be damaging to the subjects' financial standing, employability, insurability, or reputation" (Indiana University, 2009). For instance, if it was reported that someone from a certain institution did not routinely enforce a particular policy, such disclosure might jeopardize that person's employment. Instead, the study has focused on how policies vary among the institutions. Thus, in reporting the findings, no particular policy has

been linked to the person interviewed or to a specific institution, except in the implications section, where policies specific to IUPUI have been disclosed.

## **Questionnaire**

Having identified the institutions that would provide the most useful comparisons for IUPUI, a battery of questions was developed to elicit specific information regarding the types of access granted by each library to external users. It was assumed that most of the needed information would be found on the websites of the libraries in the study group. In addition, telephone interviews were conducted with access services librarians or circulation managers at each institution. These interviews made it possible to obtain answers to the unanswered questions, clarify information found on the websites, and verify that the information that had been found was up-to-date. The battery of questions served as both the search guide for the web and as the interview guide for the telephone interviews.

## **Library Websites**

Before interviews were conducted, the website of each institution in the study group was thoroughly reviewed in an effort to locate any information that would answer the questions in the interview guide. Locating the mission statements was relatively easy. Some had mission statements accompanied by other documents such as vision statements, values statements, or a list of goals—or some combination of these concepts. In a few cases, the mission was embedded in a strategic plan. In others, supporting documents such as goals, values, and vision statements provided information about service to the community.

Many of the policies for external users (such as loan periods and borrowing limits) were available on the websites of each library. Some websites included tables which displayed the various loan periods, borrowing limits, and renewal limits attendant to each category of user.

These tables were [end of p. 117] particularly appropriate for the libraries that had established many of the most important categories of library users. As the websites of each of the thirteen institutions were examined, the needed information was added to a set of spreadsheets created to record the responses to each question. These spreadsheets provided an opportunity to examine and compare policy information side-by-side with the information from other institutions. This process, generally referred to as constant comparison (Glaser & Strauss, 1967), is used to analyze qualitative data (field notes, observations, interviews, etc.) in which each piece of data is taken in turn and compared with the other pieces of data similarly categorized. As the data is compared, new categories and new relationships between categories may develop. As the information found on the library websites was input into the tables, it was compared to the data from the websites of other libraries. The constant comparison method made it possible to recognize major themes and patterns, as well as identify policies that were markedly different from the others. Any gaps in the data would be filled as a result of the telephone interviews.

### **Semi-Structured Interviews**

To obtain the information that could not be located on each library's website, telephone interviews were scheduled with access services librarians or circulation managers at the target institutions. These telephone conversations—essentially semi-structured interviews—were organized around the questionnaire. Before each interview, an email query was sent to the contact person at each institution to set up a date and time for the interview to take place. The questionnaire was sent to each interviewee before the interview; this allowed them to be prepared to answer questions about policy which they might not readily know. Telephone conversations with colleagues were conducted at eleven of the thirteen peer institutions. There was no conversation with anyone at two of the institutions: one responded by completing and returning

the questionnaire; the other never followed through with an interview, but nearly all of the needed information about that institution was found on their website.

All of the telephone interviews began with a brief explanation of the project and the rationale for collecting this data. The length of the telephone interviews varied. A few were only twenty minutes long; one lasted nearly an hour. During the interview, responses were entered directly into the spreadsheets created to record responses.

There were several reasons why it was decided to conduct interviews rather than a survey. First, the number of institutions (thirteen) was so small that constructing a survey instrument seemed unnecessary. Second, knowing that survey response can be poor, the rate could be improved by making the process more personal. It was correctly surmised that interviewing would provide a fairly high level of participation. Most importantly, [end of p. 118] semi-structured, open-ended, informal interviews generate rich and informative responses. It is desirable to not only know the range of policies in place at these institutions, but to gain an understanding of why and how each institution's policies had developed. Although these interviews were originally intended simply to fill in any gaps in the information that could not be located on the institution's websites, it turned out to be worthwhile to ask all of the questions on the questionnaire. There were cases in which the information found online did not reflect current practice. By conducting interviews, more was learned about practices and procedures at each institution than a survey with yes/no or numerical answers would have provided.

This project is qualitative in nature. The focus of the study is on why a library has a particular policy rather than on how many libraries have that particular policy. Although qualitative, exact numbers of responses are reported for some of the findings, but usually the terms *many*, *some*, or *a few* have been used. The term *many* indicates that more than 50% of the

libraries studied adhered to a particular policy. *Some* indicates a range of 25% to 50%, while the use of *a few* indicates less than 25%.

## **Findings**

The findings are grouped into seven subsections: mission, physical access, computer access, borrowing privileges, circulation policies, fines and fees, and other issues. Each of the sections will be discussed separately. In the examination of mission, language was sought that indicated a commitment by the library or by the university to serving members of the community outside of the university. Physical access refers to both access to the building and the use of the collections. Computer access refers to the privileges extended to external users for the use of a computer, as well as what is available via that computer. For example, do guests have access to the internet only, or are they also granted access to the library's subscription databases?

Borrowing privileges refers to what materials could be borrowed—and by who, while circulation policies refers to loan periods and loan limit. When writing of fines and fees, the focus is on those fines and fees imposed on borrowers who are not primary patrons. For example, if there is a fee for obtaining a card for borrowing privileges, or if there is a fee for computer use. Other issues include the services available to primary users that may or may not be available to external users.

### **Mission**

- Is service to the community part of the university's mission?
- Is service to the community part of the library's mission?

FIGURE 2 Questions related to mission.

Both library mission statements and university mission statements were examined in an effort to see to what extent the library mission supported the university mission. Two questions were related to mission (figure 2). [end of p. 119] Specifically, an effort was made to determine if

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objectives such as cooperation with the community, outreach to the community, or support of the community found in some library mission statements reflected or supported a corresponding idea in the university's mission. As expected, the library mission statement tended to affirm support for the university's educational mission with the assurance that collections, services, and facilities would support the learning, teaching, and research mission of the university.

The mission statements were examined to find language that indicated that the university and/or library had a commitment to serving members of the community. A review of the library mission statements did reveal a frequent use of the word *community*, and this generally was a reflection of the same concept found in the university mission statement. Typically the term *community* was used in conjunction with another term that defines community, such as academic community, the university community, or the intellectual community.

Objectives that expressed a commitment to serve the community surrounding the university through outreach programs or cooperation with local associations were not always found in the library's mission statement, but could be a part of supporting documents such as a vision statement, a values statement, or a list of goals. Alternatively, such language might be integrated into a strategic plan. While some (but not all) of the library mission statements and related documents explicitly mentioned service to a wider community beyond the university, most of the interviewees believed that community service was central to the overall mission, even if not explicitly stated.

## **Physical Access**

Regarding physical access, the questions focused on whether or not community members could use the library—and, if so, what restrictions, if any, were placed upon them (figure 3). All thirteen libraries surveyed allowed physical access to the building for visitors. Only one of the

- Can community members use the library?
- Do you restrict use of the facility to community members based on their proximity to the campus library?
- Do you restrict use of the facility to community members based on the proximity of a public library?
- Do potential borrowers have to provide proof of local residency?
- Is there an age restriction for who can use the library?
- Do community members have access to special collections and archives?

FIGURE 3 Questions related to physical access.

thirteen required that users have an ID to enter the building during daytime hours. At that particular library, faculty, staff, and students must show their university ID, while others must show an ID with a photo, such as a driver's license or a passport, and must also sign-in. Five other libraries monitor access to the building after normal business hours by requiring identification to enter the building after a certain [end of p. 120] hour. The times after which an ID is required varied: 5:30, 6:00 (two libraries), 8:00, and 10:00 p.m.

None of the libraries restricted physical access to the building based on the patron's residential proximity to the library. Nor was there a restriction on the use of the facility based on the nearness of a public library to the university library; however, one interviewee noted that they routinely recommended that community members use the public library.

The question about age restriction produced an array of answers. Five libraries indicated that there was no age restriction for the use of the building. Most of the other libraries indicated that children need to be accompanied by an adult. Some identified a specific age restriction, i.e., under twelve, fourteen (two libraries), fifteen, or sixteen. Four other libraries did not specify an age, but reported that unaccompanied minors were not welcome. At one library with no age policy, the interviewee expressed concern about students leaving their children in the building without adult supervision.

Finally, most of the libraries reported that access to special collections was available to external users.

### **Computer Access**

- Do community members have access to computers?
- Do community members have access to computer labs?
- Do community members have access to the internet only?
- Do community members have access to subscription databases?

FIGURE 4 Questions related to computer access.

The questions regarding computer access focused on physical access to computer workstations, as well as access to content (figure 4). All thirteen libraries allowed access to computers, albeit with limitations. The number of computers available to external users, the length of time that those computers were available for use by any one patron, and the physical accommodations for visitors varied greatly. Seven of the thirteen libraries had a limited number of computers designated for public use. For those libraries that stipulated that only certain work stations were available to visitors, the number of those [end of p. 121] work stations varied from three to fifteen. Seven of the thirteen libraries also had time limits for computer use, ranging from fifteen minutes to two hours. Two of the libraries did not provide seating at the work stations designated for use by members of the community. One library had a daily computer access fee of one dollar per day, for which the patron is granted all-day access.

Not all of the libraries had computer labs; for those that did, most required log-in or a level of authentication that is not available to those who are not affiliated with the university. Two of the thirteen libraries had labs that were accessible to the public.

None of the thirteen libraries restricted external users to internet access only. All thirteen provided in-house access to subscription databases. However, one interviewee noted that a few databases have limited access; for example, databases that allow access to only a limited number

of simultaneous users were not available to the public. Another interviewee indicated that external patrons were granted the use of computers only after a reference interview, at which time a staff member logged the patron on to the work station.

### **Borrowing Privileges**

- Do you allow materials to circulate to community members?
- Are borrowing privileges extended to only certain types of community members (such as friends of the library, alumni association members, or faculty and students at other institutions)?
- Are there separate sets of policies for high school students and the general public?
- Are there separate sets of policies for faculty and students from other institutions?
- Are there library resources that are not accessible to public patrons?
- Are digital cameras, laptops, or other AV equipment available for use by community users?

FIGURE 5 Questions related to borrowing privileges.

The questions regarding borrowing privileges largely focused on policy variation for specific types of users (figure 5). All thirteen libraries allowed external users to borrow materials, but obtaining this privilege could be complicated. In some cases, users needed to belong to a specific category of external users, such as friends of the library or the alumni association. To obtain the privileges available to patrons in a specific category often required that the individual pay for membership. It is worth reiterating the distinction between library use (physical access to the facility) and the privilege of borrowing materials. In other words, a patron does not need to be a member of any specific group to enter the library, but he or she may need to be a member of a specific group (e.g., “friends of the library”) to borrow materials.

Policies for faculty and students from other institutions varied. Four libraries indicated that they did not have separate policies for faculty or students. In two cases, visiting faculty from other institutions needed to be sponsored by someone within the institution in order to obtain borrowing [end of p. 122] privileges. Some libraries indicated that faculty and graduate students

within a particular consortium could borrow materials, but privileges for faculty and students outside the consortium were restricted.

Five of the interviewees reported that lending policies for high school students were different than those for other external users. It appeared that two of the libraries had a lower limit (five) on the number of items that could be borrowed by high school students than they had for other borrowers. In one case, the library required that high school students obtain advance permission to borrow materials. In another case, the library had instituted a new system in which the high school became the borrower, rather than individual students. In this case individual students had a borrowing limit of ten items, and the high school had a borrowing limit of 250 items. The policy was implemented in reaction to the high loss rate of materials associated with this particular group. Two libraries did not allow high school students to borrow materials.

Regarding the question about resources not accessible to public patrons, it was learned that learning spaces such as individual or group study rooms were generally not available to external users. With regard to the availability of such items as digital cameras, laptops, or other AV equipment, it was found that of those libraries that did loan AV equipment, most such equipment has been restricted to faculty and/or student use; one interviewee noted that “we are slowly getting out of the business.”

## Circulation Policies

- Are the circulation policies different for community members than they are for primary patrons?
- Are there limits to how many items a community member can borrow at one time?
- Is the loan period for some or all items different for community members?
- Is there an age restriction for who can borrow materials?
- Can community users renew, recall, or request traces, holds, and shelf checks?

FIGURE 6 Questions related to circulation policies.

As was indicated above, borrowing privileges referred to who can borrow materials, and what types of materials could be borrowed. The questions about circulation policies addressed issues such as loan limits and loan [end of p. 123] periods (figure 6). Twelve of the thirteen libraries indicated that the circulation policies for external users were different than the policies for primary users. Twelve of the thirteen libraries imposed limits on the number of items that could be borrowed at one time. The lowest limit was five items; the highest, 40 items; the most popular limit was ten items (six libraries). In four of the libraries the length of the loan period was the same for community users as it was for undergraduate students.

Six of the libraries indicated that there was no age restriction for borrowing. Of those libraries with an age restriction, ages fourteen, sixteen, and eighteen were named as the minimum ages for borrowing.

Regarding services such as renewal, recalls, holds, and searches, the policies varied. Twelve of the thirteen libraries allowed external patrons with borrowing privileges to renew items. One library specified that guest users could not renew items, but alumni borrowers could do so. Some libraries indicated that they limited the number of times a patron could renew items, typically only once. Five libraries allowed community users to initiate recalls; five indicated they could not. It is worth noting that in a few libraries, patrons of any type—primary clientele as well as secondary—could not initiate a recall. Eight libraries allowed community users to place holds; one interviewee reported that a staff member would need to place the hold (the patron would not be able to do it himself). Only two libraries reported that they would initiate a trace (search) for a missing item for community users; none of the libraries would check the shelf for the availability of an item for any patron. These requests were usually made by patrons who were on the

telephone; like the recalls above, this service may not have been available to primary users either.

### Fines and Fees

- Is there a fee for obtaining a card for borrowing privileges?
- Is there a fee for computer use?
- If you charge community members for services, what are the charges?
- What is the fine structure for overdue items charged to community patrons?
- What is the fee structure for items lost by community patrons?
- Is the fine or fee structure different for community members than it is for primary patrons?

FIGURE 7 Questions related to fines and fees.

The questions regarding fines and fees focused on charges for borrowing privileges, and charges for computer access, as well as on the fine and [end of p. 124] fee structure for overdue or unreturned items (figure 7). The answers to the questions about fines and fees were complicated by the libraries that have created multiple classes of external patrons, including friends of the library, donors, alumni, graduate students from other institutions, and so forth. Charging a fee for obtaining a card for borrowing privileges was dependent upon the type of user. Four of the interviewees reported that their library did not charge a fee for *most* classes of community patrons. That said, ten of the libraries did charge an annual fee for borrowing privileges for *some* classes of patrons. Fees for borrowing privileges ranged from \$35 to \$150 per year. In five libraries borrowing privileges were granted once the patron had become a friend of the library; all five charged an annual \$50.00 fee for this privilege. At a few libraries the cost of obtaining borrowing privileges varied by patron type; for example, at one library corporate borrowers were charged \$150, individuals \$50, and those affiliated with a nonprofit organization \$25. One library did not issue borrowing cards; residents simply used their driver's license or state-issued ID card to establish and access their account.

Of the libraries that granted access to computers for community users, only one library charged a fee for this service. In this case, external users needed to obtain a borrower's card first, as it was needed to obtain a guest login. The login was valid only on the day it is issued. The fee for a login was \$1.00 per day. The fee was waived for guests with an ID that indicated that they were enrolled at another school, or if they were university alumni.

Regarding the fine or fee structure, twelve of the thirteen libraries indicated that the fine structure for external users was the same as for regular student borrowers. Five of the libraries had eliminated daily accruing fines for most materials in favor of imposing a replacement charge unreturned items. For unreturned items, libraries charged a replacement fee based on the cost of the specific item or charged a default replacement fee which varied widely: \$50.00, 51.15, 60.00, 67.50, and 80.00 (two libraries). Nine of the libraries charged a processing fee, which varied as well: \$10.00, 20.00, or 25.00. Two libraries indicated that they did not charge for lost items. [end of p. 125] At one, privileges were blocked if the borrower lost library materials; at the other, the patron must either bring the item back to the library or replace it themselves.

### **Other Issues**

- Is interlibrary loan available to community users?
- Are course reserves available to community users?
- Are electronic course reserves available to community users?
- What is the library's relationship with local public libraries?
- What do you call non-primary users?

FIGURE 8 Questions about other issues.

Finally, there were a number of other questions that did not fit into the areas already addressed (figure 8). Not surprisingly, some services available to students and other members of the campus community were not available to external patrons. None of the libraries offered interlibrary loan to community users, although one interviewee indicated that emeritus faculty

maintained ILL privileges. Access to items on reserve was largely dependent upon format and how those items were stored. In almost all cases, external patrons were unable to use electronic reserves, usually because they did not have the necessary access. Reserve items stored in the course management system were accessible only to students enrolled in that course.

Some academic and public libraries share facilities and/or catalogs; and some academic libraries have intentionally created liberal borrowing privileges for community members. In response to the question about the relationship of the library to the local public library system, it was found that none of the libraries in this group had established a distinct relationship with a public library. However, some of the libraries belonged to a consortium which included public libraries. Others indicated that although they had no formal relationship with a public library, they had participated in informal exchanges of information.

The question “what do you call non-primary users?” was a problematic aspect of this research. Because the literature revealed such a rich array of terminology used to identify users who were not members of the primary clientele, interviewees were asked what terms or terms were used to identify external users at their institution. Almost all of the libraries reported that they used some variation of community: community borrowers, community patrons, community people, or community users; two others use the term residents. [end of p. 126]

## **Discussion**

The information obtained revealed a great deal about how this particular group of institutions addressed issues concerning the use of the library by external users. The discussion that follows is intended to provide additional understanding. In the findings, the areas in which some or many of the institutions had developed the same or similar policies have been identified. More importantly, however, policies that differed substantially from the policies of other

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institutions are highlighted below. It is the uncommon solutions to common problems that may prove to be most useful.

## **Mission**

University mission statements and library mission statements were analyzed with the aim of learning more about three aspects of library service: the library's relationship with community users, the extent to which the library is responsible for service to community users, and the level of access that community users are given to the library and its collections. While the overarching philosophy of public service is influenced by the university mission and the library mission, both frontline experience and the personal philosophies of those delivering the frontline service drive day-to-day policy implementation. However, it is clear that the implementation of policy is not entirely an individual choice; a service entity like circulation will over time develop a particular service culture or ethos.

It is worth noting that the language of the mission statements tended to be very vague. *Community* was a frequently used word in university and library mission statements, but the term was not necessarily being used to describe people who live in the locality that surrounds the university who wished to use the university library. Frequently, it was not particularly clear who or what was meant by the term *community*. For example, community might in some cases have meant campus community or the learning community.

Serving members of the community who were not faculty, staff, or students appeared to be an especially important commission for some, but not all, of the institutions. The interviews suggested that the perceptions of the university mission and the library mission held by librarians and staff play a more significant role in policy than did the actual content of the university and library mission statements. Although only some of the university mission statements explicitly

mentioned service to a wider community, most of the interviewees believed that community service was central to the overall mission. In one case, an interviewee told us, “we are mandated to support the community”—yet neither the university mission statement nor the library mission statement explicitly identified that goal. Thus, in some cases there [end of p. 127] was a disconnection between what was found in the text of the mission statements and what the interviewees believed to be their mission.

### **Physical Access**

All of the libraries allowed community members access to the library building. However, after normal business hours, access to the building was restricted by some, but not all of the libraries. Restricted building access was intended to provide a safer environment for the primary clientele. To what extent such policies really improve patron safety and building security is not known; none of the interviewees indicated that policies limiting building access had improved safety or security. Unfortunately, such restrictive policies may send a message to external users that they are not welcome at the university library.

### **Computer Access**

A number of libraries have taken significant measures to manage the use of computers by external users. Nearly all of the libraries limited the number of computers available to external users and/or limited the length of time that computers were available to external users. Some libraries did not provide seating at workstations designated for guest use; one library charged a fee for computer use. The interviews suggested that practices such as limiting the number of computers available for use by visitors, limiting the time computers are available, removing the seating for these workstations, and charging a fee for use of computers, have been developed to address particular problem behaviors by some segment of community users. Again, such

restrictions may send a message to non-primary clientele that they are not welcome at the university library.

### **Borrowing Privileges**

The responses to the questions about borrowing yielded rich variation in policy and procedure. Six of the libraries clearly had an egalitarian approach to lending. Four of these libraries had policies indicating that all state residents are eligible to borrow materials. For some of the other libraries, the policies governing borrowing for community users (unlike regular physical access granted to community users) were less generous than those for members of the academic community. These less liberal libraries had policies indicating that permission to borrow materials was not available to everyone. External patrons were assigned to a variety of user groups, and members of these groups were granted borrowing privileges. Such groups included alumni members, friends of the library, members of university donor groups, visiting academics, consortium members, government employees, teachers and [end of p. 128] administrators at public or private schools, and corporate borrower program members. Membership fees for these groups varied; fifty or one-hundred dollars per year appeared to be the most commons fees. It was evident that members of friends groups and other university donor groups were purchasing permission to borrow materials. At one library, donors who gave \$1,000 or more on an annual basis were granted borrowing privileges. It may be concluded that some libraries were selling privileges, while others had taken a more democratic approach to access and service.

### **Circulation Policies**

Like borrowing privileges, the policies governing circulation for external users were less liberal than those for the primary clientele. There may be some reasonable rationale—based on

experience—for some policies, such as limiting the number of items that can be borrowed by non-primary clientele. Practices such as refusing services (renewal, recalls, holds, etc.) to some users that are available to primary users is perhaps more difficult to justify. On the other hand, restrictions based on the age of the user may be justifiable, as it is unlikely that borrowers under the age of eighteen could be held liable to any agreement they make with the library.

### **Fines and Fees**

Charging a fee for the privilege of borrowing is perplexing. For the most part, the interviewees suggested that service to community users was highly valued by the community. Yet, some of these same libraries charged considerable fees to members of the community, which very likely discouraged library use and borrowing. In some cases it is likely that the reason for charging fees was part of an effort to curb borrowing. None of the interviewees indicated that the population of community users was especially large. Thus—if the pool of community users is small—it is unlikely that any of these charges generate large sums of money. It is noteworthy that some libraries insisted on charging a borrowing fee to donors, alumni, and others who may currently be contributing to the university, or may do so in the future.

### **Implications for IUPUI**

The purpose of this study was to compare and contrast access policies for external users at a set of similar institutions to determine if the University Library at IUPUI should consider modifying its existing policies based on the policies and practices of its peers. Several areas were identified in which Access Services at the University Library would benefit from a review of its policies in light of what has been learned. [end of p. 129]

Limiting physical access to the library to some external patrons at certain hours is of interest to some members of the Access Services staff. A security audit completed several years

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ago recommended the installation of swipe-card access devices at the entrances to the library to limit access to the building in the evening in an effort to provide a safer environment for primary users. Apparently motivated by similar concerns about patron safety and building security, five of IUPUI's peers limit physical access to their buildings in the evening. These libraries control access to the building after normal business hours by requiring identification to enter the building after a specific hour. Such access could be controlled by swipe card technology coupled with an access control system that would require a patron to swipe or scan his or her campus ID for access to the building. Alternatively, a security firm could be hired to monitor access to the building. However, as was noted above, it is unknown if such measures improve safety and security.

External users who have been granted computer access at the University Library can use many of the workstations in the building, with the exception of those located in the three instruction classrooms (99 workstations), in the Academic Commons (47 workstations), and in the Rich Media Cluster (eighteen workstations). Thus, of the 345 public workstations in University Library, 181 workstations are available for public users. It is not unusual during peak periods of the semester for all of the public workstations to be in use. Limiting the number of workstations available to guests is of particular interest to Access Services staff at IUPUI. Staff issue about thirty guest passes on a normal day, and thus a fairly large number of the workstations are being used by these external patrons. The University Library imposes no time limits on computer use. In the study it was found that more than half of the peer libraries imposed time limits for the use of computers. Changes to both parameters—the number of workstations currently available for use and the length of time that they can be used—may need to be reevaluated.

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The University Library describes itself as both an academic library and a community library, and opens its doors and collections to the citizens of the State of Indiana. There are two mentions of community in the mission statement; the first is a reference to the “wider community of learners” and the second to “transforming the lives of our community members.” The University Library does not impose a fee in exchange for borrowing privileges. A change in policy at the University Library with regard to charging a fee in exchange for borrowing privileges is unlikely because serving the community is a significant aspect of the IUPUI culture. However, the fact that ten of the peer libraries do charge an annual fee for borrowing privileges for some classes of external patrons shows that the policy at the University Library is outside the norm—and raises the question if the library should consider imposing a fee for borrowing privileges.

The University Library is happy to serve high school classes that visit the library to do research. Unfortunately, experience suggests that lending [end of p. 130] to high school students by university and college libraries is problematic because of the low return rate of borrowed materials. The staff member in Access Services responsible for billing can easily identify dates when high school classes have come to use the library to work on a research project because of the exceptionally high volume of final notices generated when overdue materials have reached the billing stage. The other libraries in the study have taken a variety of approaches to address this problem. Some do not lend to community users less than eighteen years of age; others limit the number of items that can be borrowed; still others require some type of advance permission to borrow materials. A system such as one in which the high school library would be the responsible borrowing party (described above) is of some interest as it might curb the loss of materials attributed to high school age borrowers.

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## **Conclusion**

Serving external users—such as local residents, high school students, and students and faculty from other colleges and universities—will continue to present challenges for librarians and staff working in public services, and will remain a contentious issue for academic libraries. External users will continue to have different needs than those of the primarily clientele. The need to reconsider and modify specific policies designed for external users will be ongoing.

The review of current policies at peer institutions as described in this paper proved to be helpful to IUPUI librarians and Access Services staff members in assessing current policies. It was beneficial to learn that many of the University Library policies reflected common practice among IUPUI's peers. That said, it was also useful to learn about policies that differed substantially from those at IUPUI and those of others in the peer group. Creative solutions developed by peer libraries to address common problems may influence future policy development at the University Library. It is hoped that other librarians, in the process of assessing library policies, will likewise investigate policies at peer institutions to learn about current practices as well as discover unique solutions to common problems, and to share their findings broadly.

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