



LIBRARY CARDS AND BORROWING POLICY

Policy # 4003

Effective Date: 12/3/2025

I. POLICY STATEMENT.

The purpose of this Library Cards and Borrowing Policy is to provide free and convenient access to the Library's collections as well as protect the materials within those collections for use by its patrons. To satisfy these goals, the Library has developed the following criteria for borrowing privileges and materials use.

II. DEFINITIONS.

The following definitions shall apply to this Policy, unless the use and context clearly indicate otherwise.

- A. "Book Club Copies" means copies of books used by Library book discussion groups.
- B. "Director" means the Director to the Sonoma County Public Library, or designee.
- C. "Electronic Information" means information and materials accessible only via an electronic device, including but not limited to the online catalog of Library materials, online reference sources, eBooks, downloadable content, streaming content, and other materials which can be accessed using the internet.
- D. "Fees" means costs to be charged for lost or damaged Library materials, printing and copying services, use of Library meeting rooms, as well as other types of costs the Library charges to its users, as outlined in the Library's Schedule of Charges Policy.
- E. "Mobile Devices" means small electronic devices for in-library use only (including tablets, Chromebooks and laptops) that connect to the internet via WiFi, and are not subject to an Item Request.
- F. "Item Requests" means requests submitted by patrons to reserve a physical item for future borrowing, and are also known as "requests for library holds."
- G. "Library Cards" means the several types of Library Cards available to patrons for use in accessing and borrowing circulating materials from the Library.

- H. "Lucky Day Items" means separate copies of a physical item in high demand in the Library, and are not subject to an Item Request, but may be borrowed if available.
- I. "Minors" means persons under 18 years of age.
- J. "Physical Items" means all formats of physical materials held by the Library for public use, including books, discs (CD/DVD), and other materials in tangible formats.
- K. "Policy" means this Library Cards and Borrowing Policy approved by the Library Commission, and as may be amended from time to time.
- L. "Services" means services provided to the public related to special collections, internet access, resource sharing, placing requests for Library materials, and other types of actions designed to provide a patron with access to Library information or materials.
- M. "SonomaFi Devices" means circulating WiFi hotspots and connected Chromebooks, which are not subject to an Item Request.

III. POLICY.

A. Scope.

This policy shall apply to all library patrons. It outlines the different types of Library Cards made available to patrons, eligibility criteria for the different Library Cards, terms of accessing and borrowing Library materials, patron responsibility for borrowed materials, and rules for the loan of materials.

B. Policy Standards.

i. Library Cards.

1. Library Cards – Types and Uses

a. General Library Cards

Adults and minors living in California may register for General Library Cards, which allow full access to the collections, Electronic Information, and Services of the Library without charge.

General Library Cards allow cardholders to borrow up to 100 physical items at a time, and to submit up to 50 Item Requests at a time. Exceptions are noted in Section III.C.3.

General Library Cards may be used at any library branch within the Library's countywide system as well as in the library systems for the Counties of Mendocino and Lake (subject to the borrowing rules of those library systems).

General Library Cards do not expire; however, the Library may close General Library Card accounts that have not been used for a designated length of time.

b. Limited Use Cards

Limited Use Cards may be issued to any minor and all persons who are out-of-state residents visiting Sonoma County. Limited Use Cards allow full access to the collections (other than

Mobile Devices and SonomaFi Devices), Electronic Information, and Services of the Library without charge.

Limited Use Cards allow cardholders to borrow up to 4 physical items at a time, and to submit up to 4 Item Requests at a time.

Limited Use Cards do not expire; however, the Library may close Limited Use Card accounts that have not been used for a designated length of time.

c. eCards

The Library provides for online partial Library Card registration through its eCard program. ECards can be used to borrow Electronic Information; they cannot be used to borrow a physical item or place Item Requests. ECards are available to residents of Sonoma County. ECard accounts automatically expire after 120 days.

d. Educator Cards

Educator Cards may be issued to any educator employed by an educational institution in Sonoma County (including but not limited to educational institutions that are public or private schools, religious schools, certified home schools, licensed childcare providers, recreational leaders, and student educators). Educator Cards are also available to educators whose primary residence is in Sonoma County but who teach in another county.

Borrowing privileges for Educator Cards are the same as for General Library Card accounts, with an extended loan of up to 42 days. Certain library materials cannot be borrowed using an Educator Card.

Educator Cards expire each year on August 1 and may be renewed.

e. Student OneCards

The Student OneCard program is intended to remove barriers to library use and to provide students with access to Library materials and Services to support their learning. Schools may create Student OneCard accounts for each currently-enrolled student through a direct data import. No physical cards are issued to the students; rather, the account is tied to the student's school ID number.

Parents or legal guardians may choose to have their minor opt out of the Student OneCard program by contacting the applicable school district.

Student OneCards allow cardholders to borrow up to 10 physical items at a time, and to submit up to 25 Item Requests at a time. Certain materials may not be borrowed using a Student OneCard, including but not limited to DVDs, video games, and streaming media.

Students are encouraged to have an additional Library Card (a General Library Card or Limited Use Card) in addition to a Student OneCard.

Student OneCards automatically expire at the beginning of the next school year.

f. Agency Cards

Government agencies and private entities may be issued Agency Card accounts in order to provide library resources to affiliated individuals who are dependent on the organization.

Borrowing privileges for Agency Card accounts are the same as for General Library Card accounts, with an extended loan period of up to 42 days. Certain library materials cannot be borrowed using an Agency Card.

Agency Cards expire one year after the date of issuance and may be renewed.

2. Library Cards – Application Process

Patrons requesting issuance of Library Cards must complete applications containing their names and contact information. Such applications may be submitted orally to Library staff or in writing; applications for eCards may also be submitted via the Library's website. Upon approval of an application for a Library Card, an account will be created under the cardholder's name.

Cardholders are required to update their accounts by informing the Library of any changes in their contact information.

All patron information obtained by the Library through the Library Card application process is maintained as confidential and shall not be disclosed to any person or entity absent strict compliance with the Library's Policy to Protect the Confidentiality of Patron Information and Records.

All Library Cards, regardless of type, are issued free of charge.

a. Library Card Applications for Adults

Adults may apply for and receive General and Limited Use Library Cards by completing the required application and providing photo identification and contact information. Acceptable forms of photo identification include:

- i. State Driver's License or ID Card
- ii. Passport
- iii. Green Card or Permanent Resident Card
- iv. School-Issued ID
- v. Tribal ID
- vi. Military ID
- vii. Matricula Consular ID
- viii. Law Enforcement-Issued ID
- ix. Other Government-Issued Photo ID
- x. Other Credible Photo ID, such as Bank Card, Credit Card, Check Cashing Card, Transit Card or Membership Card
- xi. Other identification as approved by library staff in charge

b. Library Card Applications for Minors

Minors may apply in-person for Library Cards as follows:

- i. General Library Card: Application must be completed by a parent or legal guardian. Parents or legal guardians shall be responsible for all materials borrowed on the minor's General Library Card.
- ii. Limited Use Card: Application may be completed by a minor without the approval of a parent or legal guardian.

Library staff do not monitor or restrict minors' use nor borrowing of Library materials, either inside or outside of a library.

c. Applications for eCards

To apply for eCards, applicants must submit an online application via the Library's website, or orally to Library staff (via telephone). Applicants must provide contact information, including a physical or mailing address in Sonoma County, an email address and a telephone number.

d. Applications for Educator Cards

To apply for Educator Cards, applicants must comply with the application requirements in Section III.B.2.a, above, as well as present one of the following documents to verify educator status:

- i. School ID badge
- ii. Contract or letter confirming employment
- iii. Pay information from educational institution
- iv. Home school certificate

e. Applications for Agency Cards

To apply for an Agency Card, applicants must comply with the application requirements in Section III.B.2.a, above, as well as present a letter requesting issuance of the card presented on official letterhead of the government agency or private entity, and signed by a legal representative who can accept financial responsibility for items borrowed on the card.

3. Library Cards – Cancellation

Library Cards may be canceled at any time upon the cardholder's written, phone or in-person request at a Library branch. Parents or legal guardians may cancel a minor's General Library Card, but not a minor's Limited Use Card.

4. Library Cards – Lost, Stolen, and Replacement Cards

If a cardholder's Library Card has been lost or stolen, the cardholder is required to inform the Library of this event as soon as is practicable. Replacement cards are available by contacting any branch library; requests for replacement cards require verification of cardholder identity.

ii. Borrowing and Circulation of Materials

Use of Library Cards to borrow and utilize Library materials is a privilege that may be limited or curtailed under the circumstances identified in this policy.

1. Use of Library Cards to Borrow Materials

Library patrons must use a valid Library Card issued in their name to borrow Library materials, or they may use a Library Card issued in the name of another cardholder with their express consent.

Library staff is not required to verify the identity of a patron: staff is entitled to rely upon a patron's presentation of a Library Card as a representation that the patron is the subject cardholder or has consent of the cardholder.

If a cardholder does not have a Library Card in their possession at the time of borrowing, then the cardholder will be required to provide sufficient information to confirm their identity before using the account.

2. Denial of Requests to Borrow Materials

The Library shall deny a patron's request to borrow materials on a Library Card under any of the following circumstances:

- i. The Library Card account has 10 or more physical items that are more than 14 days overdue.
- ii. The fines and fees charged to and remaining due on the Library Card account exceed \$100.
- iii. The maximum number of items allowed to be borrowed on that Library Card account has been reached.
- iv. The Library Card has been reported lost or stolen.
- v. The patron has been excluded from using the Library under the Library's Safe Library Use Policy.

SonomaFi and Mobile Devices may only be borrowed by General Cardholders age 13 and over.

3. Loan Periods and Borrowing Limits for Physical Library Materials

All materials in the Library's collections that are allowed to be circulated have a 21-day loan period, with the following notable exceptions:

- i. Book Club Copies can be borrowed for 42 days.
- ii. Mobile Devices can be borrowed for 2 hours for in-library use only.
- iii. Sonoma County Library items delivered by the Mendocino County Library bookmobile are subject to special loan periods corresponding to the bookmobile schedule.
- iv. The loan period for all items borrowed with an Educator Card or Agency Card is 42 days, with the exception of the 2-hour loan period for Mobile Devices noted above.
- v. Items delivered by Sonoma County Library outreach vehicles can be borrowed for 28 days.

Most materials have no borrowing limit, with the following notable exceptions:

- i. Only one SonomaFi device may be borrowed at a time on a single library account.
- ii. Only five video games may be borrowed at a time on a single library account.

The Library may, from time to time, pilot new materials and formats using loan periods and/or borrowing limits not listed above, upon approval of the Library Director.

4. Renewals of Physical Items

Borrowed Library items may be renewed either in person at a library branch, via a telephone call to a library branch made during normal operating hours, via a telephone call to the Library's automated renewal system at any time, or via the Library's website or app at any time. Most physical items may be renewed up to three times, with the exception of items borrowed from Sonoma County Library outreach vehicles, which may be renewed up to two times.

However, borrowed Library items cannot be renewed if there is a pending Item Request for them or if they were borrowed as a Lucky Day Item.

Chromekits and SonomaFi hotspots cannot be renewed.

5. Item Requests

Item Requests may be placed on all circulating Library materials (unless they are designated as non-requestable).

When the requested item becomes available, patrons are notified using the contact information they have supplied. A physical item subject to an Item Request will be held for a patron for 7 calendar days before being returned to the shelf or held for the next patron in the request queue. Items delivered by the Mendocino County Library bookmobile will be held for an additional period corresponding to the bookmobile schedule. Items delivered by Sonoma County Library outreach vehicles will be held for an additional period corresponding to the outreach schedule.

The number of Item Requests a patron may submit for physical items is limited based on the type of Library Card account, as indicated above.

Item Requests remain active until filled or for 270 calendar days, whichever comes first.

6. Loan Periods for Electronic Information

Any limits on the loan periods for Electronic Information will be identified via the particular resource utilized.

iii. Patron Responsibilities for Borrowed Materials

Notifications about Library materials or services are sent to patrons using the contact information supplied by the patron. The responsibility for returning borrowed materials to the Library on or before their due dates rests with the patron and is not dependent upon receipt of a notice from the Library.

Materials borrowed from the Library may be returned to any branch in the Library's countywide system, as well as to the library systems for the Counties of Mendocino and Lake, unless the Library expressly required the item to be returned to a specific location.

Adults are financially responsible for all materials borrowed via their Library Cards until the materials have been returned. Parents or legal guardians are financially responsible for all materials borrowed on their minors' General Library Cards until the materials have been returned.

1. Overdue Materials – No Fines

The Library does not charge any fines for overdue Library materials retained beyond their return due date.

2. Overdue Materials Deemed Lost After 42 Days Past Due Date

If a physical item borrowed on a Library Card is not returned within 42 days after the item becomes overdue, then that item will be considered to be “lost.” Lost items are subject to payment of fees, as set forth below.

Patrons are encouraged to return overdue materials, and will not be charged for an item previously presumed to be “lost” if it is ultimately returned to the Library.

3. Charges for Lost, Destroyed or Damaged Library Items

If an item borrowed from the Library becomes lost, or has been destroyed or damaged to the extent that it is no longer usable, then the responsible adult on the Library Card account is required to pay for the item per the amount set in the Library’s Schedule of Charges. Pursuant to that Schedule, additional fees may apply to items borrowed via resource sharing from another library system.

Once a patron pays the cost of a lost or damaged item, they become the owner of that item and are entitled to keep it, except SonomaFi and mobile devices.

The Library will give refunds for payments made on lost Library items if the items are returned to the Library within one year of payment of the applicable charge.

The Library does not accept replacement items and does not charge processing or restocking fees.

C. Administrative Procedures.

i. Waivers of Charges for Lost, Destroyed or Damaged Library Items

1. Required Waivers of Charges

Library staff shall waive fees charged to a patron for lost, destroyed or damaged physical items under the following circumstances:

- i. Educator Cards: Library staff shall waive fees for up to 4 lost, destroyed or damaged items per school year (August – July) on Educator Card accounts.
- ii. Student OneCards: Library staff shall waive fees for up to 2 lost, destroyed or damaged items per school year (August – July) on Student OneCard accounts.
- iii. Agency Cards: Library staff shall waive fees for up to 4 lost, destroyed or damaged items per calendar year (January-December) on Agency Card accounts.

2. Permissive Waivers of Charges

Library staff may waive fees charged to a patron due to a lost, damaged or destroyed item borrowed from the Library under any of the following circumstances:

- i. A natural disaster (fire, flood, earthquake, etc.)
- ii. Theft (police report is required)
- iii. A Library staff error or unexpected library branch closure
- iv. The fees were accrued on the cardholders’ accounts while they were minors

All requests to waive accrued fees must be considered and resolved on a case-by-case basis, and waivers shall be granted equitably.

D. Library Director Authority.

The Library Director, or designee, is expressly authorized to make minor amendments to this Policy, including, but not limited to, imposing additional policies or procedures that are deemed necessary for the efficient and safe functioning of the Library, so long as in line with the purpose of this Policy.

IV. APPLICABLE LAW AND REGULATIONS.

No applicable law or regulations.

V. REVISION HISTORY.

Policy #: 4003

Effective Date: 12/3/2025

Significant Changes: update policy format.

Policy #: 4003

Effective Date: 3/5/2025

Significant Changes: Minor changes to describe BiblioBus service parameters and update SonomaFi Device description.

Policy #: 4003

Effective Date: 7/6/2023

Significant Changes: Adjust borrowing limit of video games; update parameters for Agency card; clarify eCard application requirements; generalize information about mobile devices for in-library use only; update title of Safe Library Use Policy; clarify that minors must be present for account creation.

Policy #: 4003

Effective Date: 05/09/2022

Significant Changes: Standardize lending period for ChromeKit and SonomaFi formats to 21 days.

Policy #: 4003

Effective Date: 01/04/2022

Significant Changes: Minor changes to increase number of physical holds; add ChromeKit and SonomaFi formats.

Policy #: 4003

Effective Date: 07/01/2019

Significant Changes: Replaced Existing Circulation Policy and Appendix A (Circulation Parameters); numerous changes made, including removal of fines for overdue materials and increase in number of physical items allowed to be borrowed at a time.