

Juggling the issues: Balancing Access, Resources, & Security Concerns in FDLs

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0

Scenarios

1

1. A student is dropped off at a FDL to do research for a school project. The library has a policy that prohibits unaccompanied minors from using library resources. This information is posted on library Web pages and at the entrance to the library. The library's FDLP Web page states clearly that all government resources are freely available to researchers, no age limitation is mentioned.

2

Unaccompanied minors...

- Is there an access issue?
- Does it make a difference what the age limitation is?
- What are the service requirements the library must meet under the FDLP for this underage depository patron?
- If the library has a history of problems with unaccompanied minors, is this policy the best overall solution for potential problem patrons?
- What other solutions can be found besides referring the underage patron to another FDL that may not have this policy in place?

3

2. Computers in the library and across campus have a security & priority statement posted that clearly states computers are for the use of faculty, students, and staff at the educational institution.

The depository coordinator has one computer workstation in the government documents area, but it also has this label.

4

Priority use of computers...

- Is the library inhibiting access when signage such as this is placed on computers?
- What signage should be changed, if any?
- Does the library have support for computer policy changes at the campus administrative level?

5

3. Two FDLs are located in the same area. Both have tangible collections and internet access. A patron walks into one library, an academic institution, and during the reference interview it is determined the patron does not attend that institution. The patron is then referred to the neighboring public depository library for reference assistance.

6

Referrals to other FDLs...

- Do both libraries have the responsibility for serving the non-primary library user?
- Does this procedure uphold the spirit of the FDLP?
- Is the referral to a neighboring public FDL an appropriate response?
- What if the material needed is only held at the academic library and the patron is then referred back to the first institution?
- Does this referral procedure limit access?

7

4. A problem patron returns to a library.
The patron has been acting in a manner in which staff is concerned for the safety of the library users or materials in the collection. The library staff asks the patron to leave and the patron complies.
The patron then lodges a complaint with GPO against the library claiming the library is not fulfilling its obligations to provide free public access.

8

Problem patron...

- Has the patron been denied access?
- Does the library have an access policy?
- Does the library have a user behavior or patron conduct policy? If not, is one needed?
- What steps do you think the library & GPO should take under these circumstances?

9

5. A patron has been banned from the entire campus, including the library, because of documented instances of violations of the University or Library Code of Conduct.

The patron was advised by the campus administration of this ban.

The patron then contacts GPO saying he was denied access to the use of depository materials.

10

Banned from the campus...

- Has the patron been denied access?
- What are other options for the patron and the library with regard to a GPO inquiry into what has happened?
- What should the library do, if anything, to advise neighboring institutions that there is a problem patron?

11

6. A library is open seven days a week, with extended hours on Saturday and Sunday evenings for students.

The library has posted hours that include late night hours, which are for students/faculty/staff only.

12

Late night hour limitations...

- Are non-primary patrons being denied access because they cannot use the library during the late-night hours?
- If a library is only open M-F, 8:00 – 5:00, what are the options for a patron that cannot visit the library during those hours?

13

7. Publications are generally shelved in closed stacks or non-browseable compact shelving, including depository resources. The library has cataloged some older depository publications. The government documents shelf list is not available in a public area.

Essentially, many depository materials are invisible to staff and the public because of their shelving situation.

14

Uncataloged and invisible...

- Is access denied when material is not cataloged and the physical volumes are located in shelving that is not conducive to browsing?
- What other resources can staff use to assist patrons in identifying Federal material to meet the patron's information needs?
- What is the responsible balance between protecting the collection (via closed stacks) and providing access?
- What is the responsible balance between space limitation and providing access?

15

Uncataloged and invisible...

- Is there a comparability issue when all publications in closed stacks or remote storage are cataloged except depository publications?
- Is access affected if a card catalog or shelflist and the depository publications are all housed in a non-public area so that library users are not able to access both the finding tool and the collection? What are the expectations of the public today to gain access to library resources?

16

Wrapping it up...

*Depository libraries shall make
Government publications available for the
free use of the general public.*

44 USC § 1911

17

Questions?

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18