

Persistent Problem Patrons: What To Do when a Patron Is Violating Library Conduct Policy



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44 USC 1911

Depository libraries shall make Government publications available for the free use of the general public, and may dispose of them after retention for five years under section 1912 of this title, if the depository library is served by a regional depository library. Depository libraries not served by a regional depository library, or that are regional depository libraries themselves, shall retain Government publications permanently in either printed form or in microfacsimile form, except superseded publications or those issued later in bound form which may be discarded as authorized by the Superintendent of Documents.

Federal Depository Library Handbook – Ch. 4 Public Services

http://www.gpo.gov/su_docs/fdlp/handbook/chapter04.pdf

- **Principle of Free Public Access**
- **Principle of Comparable Treatment in Public Services**
- **General Concept of Access**

BUT ...

- **GPO recognizes legitimate security concerns of depository libraries ...**
- **Depository users must adhere to the same standards of behavior expected of other library patrons.**

BUT ...

- **Depository libraries have the right to bar or remove any individual who poses a threat to library staff, other patrons, or the security of their collections.**

BUT ...

- Depositories are not required to serve patrons who do not have a depository-related need to be in the library.





Community Patron Policy

William Howard Doane Library was designated a Federal Depository Library by U.S. Rep. Buriah Wilkins on March 1, 1884. Since that time it has provided free public access to government information to the citizens of Licking County and surrounding communities. The public is also permitted in-library use of our General Collection, Special Collections, Periodical, and Reference Collections.



Handled Well

- Staff intervention for student workers.
- E-mail of concern to campus security
- Documentation of growing concerns in staff meeting minutes
- Verbal Warnings
- Final Report to Security

Improvements needed

- **Develop a patron behavior policy that will cover all library users**
- **More formal documentation process**
- **Additional front line training for public services staff**

Toledo-Lucas County Public Library



www.doToledo.org



Main Building 325 Michigan St DOWNTOWN

- **Business Technology Science Dept
First Floor NEW ADDITION Rear**
 - **Depository No. 0472**
 - **Designation 1884**
 - **Core Collection- First Floor Open Stack**



Main Building 325 Michigan St DOWNTOWN

- **Business Technology Science Dept
First Floor NEW ADDITION Rear**
 - **95% + Print Collection-Closed
Stack-Basement Docs**
 - **Reference done at BTS Reference
Desk By 10 Librarians plus the
Documents Coordinator**



**Main Building
325 Michigan St
DOWNTOWN**

Library Policies

**[http://www.toledolibrary.org/
about/what_pol.asp](http://www.toledolibrary.org/about/what_pol.asp)**



www.doToledo.org

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Tips and Hints

Clues from the literature

Tips and Hints - prepare

■ Paperwork

- Have a “Code of Conduct” for Library users
- Be sure your “Code of Conduct” is easy to locate both in print and on your library web site
- Have easy to use incident report forms readily available.

Tips for administration - Prepare

■ Paper work

- Written procedures should be simple and straight forward
- Contact lists for assistance eg. Security, police, fire , medical, homeless shelter, etc.

Tips for administration - Prepare

■ Staff

- Encourage staff to report any potential problems
- Be sure all staff including part-time staff are aware of forms, procedures (including who receives reports)

Tips for administration - prepare

- **Provide training**
 - role playing sessions to sensitize staff to issues and problems
 - Active listening
 - Using established procedures
- **Support frontline staff**

Tips for staff

- **Remain as calm as possible**
- **Respond quickly & consistently**
- **Analyze the Situation**
 - **Library Problem**
 - **Patron Problem**

Tips for staff

- Analyze the situation and the emotional state of the patron
 - Four common states of patron emotion
 - Calm
 - Anxious – Stay Calm - Stop, look, and listen
 - Belligerent – Stay Calm - Keep eye contact – stand your ground – Get back-up
 - Out of Control – Call Security

Tips for Staff

- Choose the proper site
 - Rule reminders – calm or anxious patrons – **on the spot - on your own or with back-up**
 - Belligerent Patrons – **if possible away from the disturbance – with multiple exits – with back-up**

Tips for Staff

- **Keep hands in sight**
- **Avoid anything that might be considered a weapon**
- **Think safe keep an escape route in mind**
- **Remember stay calm and have back-up**

Tips for Staff

- Do not negotiate on matters of policy
- Record incidents in as much detail as possible
- When in doubt call security or the police

Contact GPO

- Please notify GPO to document potential or actual situations
- Document each interaction with the patron
- Phone Kathy Brazee at 202-512-1187 or the Office of Education and Outreach at 202-512-1119 (shared phone line answered by the unit) so that staff may help you right away

Persistent Problem Patrons: One **bad** apple

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Facts about Georgetown University

- Founded in 1789: oldest Roman Catholic & oldest Jesuit university in the U.S.
- Student body: ~ 14,000 from over 130 countries
- Curriculum strengths: international affairs, foreign languages, business, government, political science, public policy
- Famous alumnae: Bill Clinton, Antonin Scalia
- Famous faculty: George Tenet, Madeleine Albright, Michael Eric Dyson



Lauinger Library

- Main library for Georgetown University
- Collections, both depository and non-depository, support the curriculum of the university
- Houses university archives, theological collections, multimedia, books
- Joined the FDLP in 1969: strong in Census, State Department, presidential, congressional documents, among others



Photo credit: CIRLA

Open policy to patrons

- Library: open to those with government issued photo ID
- Generally open and tolerant with heavy community users, the library 'residents'
- Patrons not affiliated with the university, but abide by policies set forth by library, are welcome to use our resources, depository as well as non-depository



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includes the Lauinger Library and Blommer Science Library

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Special Collections

Archives, manuscripts, fine prints, rare books, art collections and exhibits.



Digital Georgetown

Supporting advancement of education and scholarship at Georgetown

<http://www.library.georgetown.edu/>



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Entrance and Building Use Policies

[Library Use Policy](#)

[Laptop Usage in the Library](#)

[Entering Lauinger Library](#)

[Murray Room Authorization Request](#)

[Exiting the Library](#)

[Policies on Tours and Instruction for Non-GU Groups](#)

Library Use Policy

Use of the Georgetown University Library is primarily to meet the research and information needs of the students, faculty, and staff of the University. They will have priority in the use of all services, resources and facilities. The library's unique collections and resources are also open to visiting scholars or researchers not directly affiliated with the University. In addition, as a Federal Depository Library we will make government publications received through the depository program available for use by the general public.

When using the library, please observe the following rules:

- Do not disturb the research and study of other users
- Do not tamper with or damage University resources and property
- Do not hamper the work of library staff
- Observe Silent and Quiet Study Area designations
- Place cell phones on silent mode and use them only in the lobby and stairwells
- The library is not to be used as a sleeping or bathing facility
- Beverages in covered containers are permitted in Lauinger and Blommer libraries
- Snack food is allowed ONLY on the 2nd floor of Lauinger Library. Food is prohibited on all other floors of the library. Examples of permitted food: candy, bagels, dried fruit, and granola bars. Examples of prohibited food: pizza, sandwiches, hamburgers, fries, salads, ice cream, subs, or any other smelly, greasy, or messy foods
- Smoking and use of tobacco is prohibited in the library and near the library entrance
- Alcohol is prohibited in the library
- Do not leave backpacks, laptops, purses, or valuables unattended

Individuals who fail to comply with this policy may face disciplinary action. Visitors may be asked to leave the library and may be barred from the campus.

Entering Lauinger Library

Georgetown University students, faculty, and staff may use the library during all hours of operation.

Visitors without a current Georgetown University ID (GOCard) may use the library between 8:00 am and 11:00 pm.

Users with current, valid Georgetown University ID (GOCard):

- Everyone having a current, valid Georgetown University ID (GOCard) may enter without signing in.
- Guests (e.g. family members, GU tour groups) accompanying someone with a GU ID may also enter provided that they sign in at the Security Desk.
- Everyone entering the library between 11:00 pm and 8:00 am will be asked to swipe their GOCard to confirm their current status at the University.
- Everyone in the library between 11:00 pm and 8:00 am must have, and show upon the request of a Department of Public Safety officer, a current, valid Georgetown ID (GOCard).

Visitors to the Library:

- Visitors must show a current, government-issued, photo ID with an expiration date and sign in at the Security Desk each time they enter the library.
- The library is open to visitors from 8:00 am to 11:00 pm.
- Visitors in the library between 11:00 pm and 8:00 am will be escorted out of the library.

Any questions about the Entrance policy should be directed to the Circulation Desk Supervisor..

<http://www.library.georgetown.edu/geninfo/epolicy.htm>



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Government Documents and Microforms

Lauinger Library has been a Federal Depository Library since 1969, selecting about 57% of the material available through the [Federal Depository Library](#) program. The collection is strong in the areas of congressional publications, census data, foreign trade, and international affairs.

Use [GEORGE](#), the library's on-line catalog, to locate call numbers for documents and World Bank publications.

The department houses all of the library's microform collections.

The University of Maryland's [McKeldin Library](#) has served as the Regional Federal Depository Library for Maryland, Delaware, and the District of Columbia since 1965.

Go directly to a **Government Documents Subject Guide**:

- [Ask a Government Documents Reference Question](#)
- [Schedule a Research Consultation or Instruction Session](#)

Documents in the News



New 2006 Housing Unit Estimates from the [Population Estimates Program](#), from the [Census Bureau](#)

[Archive of past documents in the news...](#)



[What is the Federal Depository Library Program?](#)

<http://www.library.georgetown.edu/dept/govdocs/>





Chronology of events



- 6-29-03: Patron came to the library and wanted to create maps with GIS software
- GIS specialist was not available (Sunday)
- Repeatedly insisted of staff member that GIS specialist should be called at home
- Patron repeatedly interrupted staff as they helped other people
- Was told that he could not use the color printer, but used it anyway for several print jobs (5 hours)



Chronology of events



- 6-30-03: Patron returned to use GIS
- ESRI's ArcView site license (\$10,000 yr)
- GIS specialist spent 4 hours helping patron
- Patron behavior: agitated, argumentative, combative
- Department head spoke to administration; was told to 'monitor the situation'



Chronology of events



- 7-2-03: Patron again asked for help with GIS; received about 4 hours of assistance
- Became angry when denied supplies
- 7-3-03: Patron continued to ask for assistance with GIS; interrupted staff as they were helping other patrons
- 7-7-03: Patron was notified multiple times to not use GIS computer for email, but continued to do so anyway; asked if he could store his personal belongings in the department



Chronology of events



- On 7-7-03, patron was told that he was monopolizing staff time and interfering with their regular duties
- That day, fewer interruptions
- 7-9-03: Patron wanted staff to contact ESRI, makers of GIS software, to 'correct problems with the software'
- GIS specialist said he could not spend any more time teaching this patron the software



Chronology of events



- 7-10-03: Patron returned; in conversation, asked GIS specialist where he lived
- 7-11-03: Patron again returned, asked for assistance with GIS; was in department for almost 8 hours
- 7-14-03: Patron was again told not to use GIS computer for email; also admonished for 'pounding' of the computer keys
- Librarian reports concern of 'leaving patron alone with female staff'



Chronology of events



- 7-18-03: Patron inquires about 'downloading' ArcView software for his own use; not allowed
- After spending 8 hours on GIS that day and many previous hours of assistance, patron loses much of his day's work
- 7-21-03: Patron returns; wants a student to leave the GIS terminal



Chronology of events



- 7-21-03: Department head confronts patron, again explains acceptable use policy
- Patron becomes angry; threatens lawsuits and mentions 'Canon' law
- Security is contacted; member of administration speaks to patron
- Patron is asked not to return for one week while administration contacts counsel



Chronology of events



- 7-25-03: AUL contacts counsel
- 7-31-03, 1:13 p.m. : On AUL's direction, department head contacts GPO; attaches detailed documentation of timeline of events written by all staff affected
- 2:16 p.m. : GPO concurs that patron has not abided by "the same standards of behavior expected of other library patrons"



Chronology of events



- “Depository libraries have the right to bar or remove any individual who poses a threat to library staff, other patrons, or the security of their collections.”
- Patron returns that afternoon; is given written notification of his ban
- During his probational week, patron travels to regional depository in College Park; begins the same pattern of behavior there

Update on this patron...

- In late spring of 2007, patron returned to the library
- Refused to show identification; was denied entrance
- The patron contacted GPO questioning his status, then GPO contacted me
- I acquired a file of documentation!
- As a result, I now have a detailed file on the patron that I can share with present and future staff

Lessons learned

- **Policy**: make library policy and FDLR policy easily and quickly accessible
- **Documentation**: keep notes on problem patrons as soon as a situation occurs
- **History**: keep a file on problem patrons, and how to handle the situation, for new staff – include this in employee orientation
- Post **photos** of problem patrons, since they may use various names or false identification

Lessons learned, cont'd

- Have a checklist or quiz on problem patrons issues to gauge staff knowledge of appropriate responses
- Inform staff at all levels, not just reference; employ library-wide internal communication vehicles (email, wiki, blog)
- How does your library communicate an emergency? Consider using the same broad outreach for problem patrons

Thank you!

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October 17, 2007

Persistent Problem Patrons:
What to do when a patron is violating library conduct policy

Selected Sources

Graham, Warren. Black Belt Librarians: Every librarian's real world guide to a safer workplace. Charlotte, NC:Pure Heart Press, 2006.

Written by a security and safety consultant, this book has the great advantage of being a short quick read. At the same time it offers simple practical advice on library security, training staff and keeping your cool when confronted with problem behaviors. Basic practical reasons are provided for most recommendations. This work also includes a sample of a simple event log that can be used as is or modified to record incidents.

McNeil, Beth, and Denise J. Johnson. Patron Behavior in Libraries: A handbook of positive approaches to negative situations. Chicago: American Library Association, 1996.

An excellent book on handling patron behaviors, if you only have time to read one book on the topic this would be an excellent choice. Organized in three parts it addresses: 1. various groups of patrons and the problems faced by each, 2. major issues such as crime, sexual issues and legal issues, and 3. solutions focusing on active listening and the development and implementation of patron behavior policies.

Salter, Charles A., and Jeffrey L. Slater. On the Front Lines: Coping with the library's problem patrons. Englewood, CO: Libraries Unlimited, Inc., 1988.

While an older book, this one offers examples of numerous problem behavior incidents. Each case study includes: a description of the incident, discussion questions on possible ways the incident could be handled, the outcome of the real incident, an analysis of the mental state of the person exhibiting the problem behavior and tips for handling the incident. The book also includes chapters on confronting a problem patron, training staff to cope problem patrons, and some suggested helps for librarians. The appendix also offers a checklist for library preparedness, and samples of documentation.

Shuman, Bruce A. Case Studies in library Security. Westport, CT: Libraries Unlimited, 2002.

Set in the fictional world of "Pecan Grove" forty cases studies of library related security issues are presented. Not all of them relate directly to problem behaviors exhibited by patrons but a good portion of them do. These case studies can be used in role playing exercises or training discussions.