PINES Executive Committee Vote, December 2021
Library Card Requirement

Proposed Change to Policy:

Submitted by Valerie Bell, Director of Athens-Clarke County Library System, and Geri Mullis, Director of Marshes of Glynn Libraries

Brief summary:
Remove the requirement that a patron must present a library card to borrow materials.

Detailed proposal:
https://pines.georgialibraries.org/sites/default/files/AI-3%20Library%20Card%20Requirement.pdf

Survey Results

The following summary is based on survey results from 55 PINES Subcommittee members and Directors representing 38 library systems.Two questions were asked.

1. **Should patrons be allowed to check out library material if they present alternate identification such as a government-issued photo ID?**

Overall Responses:

	Responses	Percentage
Yes	34	62%
No	19	35%
Other: Local discretion	2	3%

Responses by Circulation Subcommittee Members Only:

	Responses	Percentage
Yes	7	58%
No	5	42%

Responses from Other Subcommittee Members:

	Responses	Percentage
Yes	9	56%

No	6	38%
Other: Local discretion	1	6%

Responses from Directors who are not subcommittee members:

	Responses	Percentage
Yes	18	67%
No	8	30%
Other: Local discretion	1	4%

2. **Should patrons be allowed to check out library material if they provide their library card number with another piece of personally identifiable information (ie, date of birth, address, etc.)?**

Overall Responses:

	Responses	Percentage
Yes	30	55%
No	24	44%
Other: Local discretion	1	2%

Responses by Circulation Subcommittee Members Only:

	Responses	Percentage
Yes	7	58%
No	5	42%

Responses from Other Subcommittee Members:

	Responses	Percentage
Yes	7	44%
No	9	56%

Responses from Directors who are not subcommittee members:

	Responses	Percentage

Yes	16	59%
No	10	37%
Other: Local discretion	1	4%

Comments

- A big hurdle to getting this passed is getting staff buy in on changing their workflows. But it would be a relatively minor adjustment that would have a large impact on reducing barriers to service.
- A card provides confidence that the correct account is being used and eliminates potential for confusion on part of patron and their interactions with circulation staff. Keep it simple.
- Accepting alternate ID might be left to the individual system
- Access! Breaking down barriers to library services
- All staff was in agreement that not requiring a library card will lead to issues with items checked out on wrong accounts, juvenile cards will add a extra layer of difficulty deciding which parent or grandparent can check out without the card. It was mentioned that if this was something that could be decided on a system level but that was countered by we are getting further away from the Pines experience being state wide once things shift to system decisions.
- First off, patrons carry a couple of dozen cards in their wallets at any given time. How hard is it to keep their library card in there too?
  I'm not a fan of allowing someone to give their card number and DOB because all they have to do is memorize someone else's information, which people do all the time in order to use the computers when they have fines on their own card.
  Also, it's going to create problems when a staff member in a hurry picks the wrong Bob Johnson out of the list of 150 Bob Johnsons. I think this will create the potential for errors on the part of the staff. If they pull up the wrong patron and check out materials or if they pull up the wrong patron and then update the account with someone else's information.
  I realize not everyone has a smart phone but those who do can download the app, which shows their library card number and barcode.
- I do understand the desire to reduce barriers and encourage more usage of all of our libraries. However, throwing the baby out with the bath water seems excessive. It seems as though it would be easier to encourage frontline staff to remind customers at the desk that they can take a picture of their library card and use it to check out and use library services. Almost everyone has a smartphone with the capability of capturing and storing an image of their library card. A lot of times for us customers may not have a government issued ID let alone their library card. It would be too easy for a neighbor or acquaintance, especially in small towns, to know someone's address, birth date, and/or phone number. This would then present a Pandora's Box nightmare to handle a person refusing to pay for a lost item when they swear they did not check out said item(s).
- I have had to clean up too many mistakes from staff looking up an account instead of scanning a card number. I wouldn't say that addresses are exactly identifying information, and birth dates are not required information to get a library account. There's already a provision for scanning a card from a phone or other mobile device, and patrons receive two cards when they register. I still believe that having a library card in hand is a reasonable requirement for checking out materials.

- I'd like to see some sort of ID for a patron - not just give verbal information. Even a credit card in their name or something with their address on it would satisfy me.
- I'm not sure about this one. We just had an ex husband come in because former wife ran up his account because she had his library card. A borrower could potentially know library card numbers, birth dates and addresses of former friends and family members with whom they are estranged.
- If this policy change is made, will libraries continue to purchase and issue physical library cards to patrons?
- If we want our tax-voting and pay public to believe that libraries are an important part of our community, then we'd better find a way to convince them that keeping track of their library card is equally as important.

  It seems there are already plenty of PINES libraries actively flaunting the library card requirement, and these people are doing a grave disservice to us all. There is a distinct difference between blocking accessibility and enabling laziness. If we stop requiring library cards, we are diminishing our place and importance in the eyes of the public.   For those few individuals, mentally impaired, homeless, or minors who perpetually loose cards and have unavailable parents, there are local, case by case strategies that can and should be implemented to assist them. For the vast majority of privileged or honestly lazy people that can't manage to keep track of their cards, this is not a case of blocking access, but instead a clear case of failing to prove our importance and worth to our communities. If you're not willing to "fight" or convince people of the necessity of presenting a library card to have free access to the many resources we provide, then you will soon find yourself failing to convince people of the need for libraries at all.
- My main concern is that the proposed method of account identification creates more opportunity for patrons to enter into altercations with circulation staff. If you have worked in circulation, you know that the more convoluted the rule, the more complicated it is to enforce. Many patrons who come in without a card will be confused (some upset) by being told they can provide a+b or b+c, but not a+c or just a, b, or c alone. This method also affects circ staff, allowing more room for mistakes. Subsequently, patrons have greater latitude to contest fines/fees/claims returned items, etc. if staff cannot verify which forms of ID were shown at checkout. It is much more effective for everyone to have a hard and fast rule: To check out materials, all you need is a library card.

  If we don't require patrons to show a physical library card for access to materials, why have physical cards at all? They are a cost to provide and a cost to patrons if/when in need of replacement. This element should be discussed before a decision is made.

  Finally, 98% of patrons respond well to being told, "We'll hold these items for you while you run out to your car to get your library card," or, "You must have a library card to check out items. Let's update your account and get you a replacement card." Why change this policy if it has worked well for years, allowing patrons easy access while also reliably holding them responsible for library property? I think the proposed method is a hasty decision that will cater to people trying to duck responsibility and/or who already believe rules do not apply to them. Simply stated, we have a basic requirement to check out materials. Why make that complicated?

  Finally, I am by no means opposed to change, I just think decisions to change should be carefully considered, research carried out and shared (I know other libraries do not require physical cards to check out), and perhaps even piloted prior to wide-spread implementation.
- Question - what happens to patrons that use the self-check machines? Also, can we ask the patron that if they lost their library card that they should replace it? Would they need to have a library card to pick up holds or would a "government-issued photo ID" be enough?

- Staff question: would this change apply to minors?
- The majority of our staff believe patrons should be required to provide a card when checking out material. Looking up a patron and verifying their information will increase the time it takes to check out a patron and also lead to staff making an error and checking out material on the wrong persons account.
- The PINES app allows the patron to show their library card number without actually having the physical card.

  Will there be a specific list of accepted Govt issued ID's? Are they still acceptable if they are expired? Staff concerns are there would or could be a lack of consistency in accepting alternate forms of ID.
- The requirement to present a library card should not be framed as a barrier. Neither are library fines. If our rules are clear and fair, then asking you to follow the rule isn't a barrier just because you don't like it. If you can't keep up with a library card (that we freely gave you), what's to say that you'll be able to keep up with library materials.
- There are several Cons to having patrons be able to check out items without a library card.
  1. It makes the card useless. Why spend money on cards or even have them if all you have to do to checkout items with an ID?
  2. Staff would have to keep up with what ID that is acceptable. They already have to do that when someone signs up for a card.
  3. Some people are unpleasant when you ask to see their IDs. This would create unnecessary stress on staff.
  4. Some patrons do not have drivers licenses. (ex. and elderly patron that no longer drives, DUI offender, People who are riding with someone else, children)
  5. Could create checkout errors. Staff are great, but if they are busy they might not be as diligent as they should. If they just look at the persons name on their ID this could create checkout errors on other accounts. For example if Joe Smith wants to checkout an item, and you have 30 joe smiths in the system the staff might checkout on the wrong account by accident.

  Patrons are able to checkout out items for free. All we request is they have a card in order to verify who has the items so we know where our and other libraries inventory is. If they don't have their card they can replace it for $2, and if they don't have the money then they can just add it to their account. They can even add their card to their phones now. I don't' think it is asking to much for patrons to present a card to us for checkout.

  I'm not saying checking out with a card isn't without error. Other people have used other people's cards before. This is especially true in the case of children's checkouts. Honestly, I don't know the correct answer to this dilemma. Instead of no cards, maybe a tier system for cards? I would say that the only population that I would recommend alternative checkouts for would be kids under 18. Kids may not have available to them the card in order to checkout out. This is especially true in the case of parents where the mother has the card but the father brings the kids in. The hardest demographic to reach is teens, and yet we create barriers for them to get a card. Because they are 18 they can't get a card without a parent even though they have their own IDs. Sometimes, teens don't even live with their parents. I would think that would be the exceptions. Maybe create a teen level card, or a kids level with limited checkouts. Again, I don't know the answers, but I do think adults should present a card.
- These changes would remove barriers for patrons and enable them to check out materials. Otherwise, we charge $2 to replace the card, which also can be a barrier.
- Trust people.

- We can see a couple of scenarios that this flexibility would be beneficial in our library system. All of the scenarios are rare instances. We feel as though these rare instances do not offset the concerns we have with dismissing the requirement completely. The value of the required card is extremely helpful in instances of billing disputes. It greatly reduces the impact of inevitable human error. We want to minimize this opportunity for error as much as possible. For these reasons, we believe that the card requirement should allow for some local interpretation but remain wholly intact.
- We have said from the beginning that our patrons should treat their library card like a credit card. Most stores that have their own brand credit card will allow you to use your social security number and a photo ID so that you can use their credit card in their store. They want my business! We should have this same mentality. We want you to use your library card here - let's find a secure way to make this happen when they don't have their library card in hand!
- We have talked about this for years. And always the issue comes up about staff members choosing the wrong patron from a list of patrons in PINES. Without presenting a physical card, a patron can claim they never checked out the item(s). The change would prohibit us from being able to say with any certainty that the patron was responsible for the lost materials. You can store your card number on an app in your phone. That works for me. But I can't get into my gym without a card and I'm not taking home any gym equipment.
- We must be careful not to take away those things that are meant to account for our collections, and hold the patron responsible or accountable for the materials that s/he borrows from our collections. Presenting a library card in not a hinderance or unnecessary, especially when we issue cards with a key chain card, and allow patrons to present a photo of their card on their smart phones. Asking the patron to present a card is no different from when law enforcement asks for a valid identification, or a merchant asks for a credit card to make a purchase. The patron being responsible for a card is a small thing considering it gives access to materials that they can borrow, or services which would otherwise be costly or inaccessible to them or at minimal or no cost. Libraries can extend the courtesy of looking up accounts in some circumstances if they choose, but should remind the patron of the importance of presenting the physical card.
- We strongly agree with patrons being allowed to check out using their ID. We also agree with patrons providing their library card numbers with personal info but we were wondering how much info would be required? Will they have to provide date of birth and address and etc or just one?
- We want to be patron friendly and remove barriers however the potential for human error is exponentially increased by each step a staff member takes to ascertain the validity of the photo ID, any accompanying information that may be required, etc.
- With the app which allows for cards to be scanned from phones, a physical card is optional after the initial visit. Taking the time to look up a patron at checkout is going to slow down the circulation process exponentially. There are too many patrons with similar names / birthdays / etc. and too many points of failure. When I am training new staff, I use my own name as an example of how NOT to "look up" patrons. My last name is common in a certain part of the state and there are over a dozen potential mis-matches based on a name search.
- Yes, But the government ID must include current address and NOT be expired.