



Standards of Behavior

*Sonoma County Library
welcomes you.*

Everyone has a right to quality library service in an atmosphere that is calm, safe and free of disturbances from others. While you are here, please be considerate of others.

The Library has adopted this policy to ensure a positive library experience for everyone who visits any Sonoma County Library.

Failure to comply with these standards may result in loss of Library privileges.

Under the authority granted by the Joint Powers Agreement, the Sonoma County Library Commission determines all Library policies, including standards for public behavior on the premises of all public libraries in the County. The Library retains the right to take any action necessary to ensure a safe and appropriate environment for everyone.

These standards of behavior are available as a brochure and online at www.sonomalibrary.org. The Library Director and his/her designated staff are responsible for interpreting these rules in accordance with applicable law and for ensuring appropriate behavior in all Library facilities.

Enforcement of these rules will be conducted in a fair and reasonable manner. Any person who violates these standards will be asked to bring their behavior into compliance immediately or leave the Library. Failure to comply with the Library's established rules, regulations, and policies could result in removal from the premises and exclusion from the Library for one day to one year. Violations could also result in the restriction and/or termination of Library privileges, including use of library computers and other equipment.

Individual patrons have the right to request an administrative review of an exclusion order that is for a period greater than seven days.

Adopted by the
Sonoma County Library Commission
September 2008.

Santa Rosa Central Library Revisited

Summary

The Sonoma County Library Commission and the Sonoma County Library Administration has in the last several years made vast improvements in the infrastructure and management of our Sonoma County libraries. Unfortunately the Commission and Administration have not dealt effectively with several ongoing issues that still exist at the Santa Rosa Central Library with regard to enforcement of their Standards of Behavior policy.

Reason for Investigation

Last year's Grand Jury report stated, "It has been a tradition in library practice to maintain open, inclusive access to all. However, the corrective action taken falls short of sending a clear message to repeat violators that their interference with the rights of all users will not be tolerated."

The 2008 Grand Jury investigated and reported problems specific to the Central Library. Most of the findings and recommendations of that Grand Jury were rejected by library management. The 2009 Grand Jury decided to re-examine its predecessor's report and to determine independently the nature of the Central Library problems, if any, and the current status of those issues.

Background

Because of its large size and downtown location Central Library has had to deal with a variety of problems not experienced by smaller libraries. These problems include smoking issues, improper restroom use, children's inadvertent exposure to pornography, and chronic unacceptable behavior by several patrons. The staff at the Central Library believes that they have inadequate support from the library administration to deal with Central Library's unique problems. These problems have been the subject of several news articles published since 2007.

Investigative Procedures

Interviews conducted:

- Sonoma County Library Commissioners
- Director Sonoma County Library
- Branch Manager of Santa Rosa Central Library

- Central Library Circulation and Training Supervisor and other staff
- Security Guard and the downtown beat Police Sergeant
- Grand Jury members 2008
- Numerous visits to Central Library as well as other Sonoma County libraries

Documents and data reviewed:

- Library Standards of Behavior
- Library response to Grand Jury Report 2008
- Santa Rosa Mayor's response to Grand Jury Report 2008
- All data collected for Grand Jury Report 2008
- Internet research
- Complaint and incidence reports

Findings

F-1 Standards of Behavior have always existed in the Sonoma County Library System and were last updated Sept, 2008. Enforcement of the Standards of Behavior is the major problem. **Enforcement does not exist.**

F-2 The incident reports and the patron complaints at Central Library far exceed those from all the other 12 libraries combined. These reports are available for review at the Commission's monthly meetings.

F-3 Because of lack of enforcement of Standards of Behavior, the Central Library staff members felt it necessary to generate and sign a petition requesting the reposting of the "Library Behavior Policy Sign" at the entrance of the library. This action reflects lack of support from the Director and Commission to address problems at Central Library.

F-4 The Director was hired in 2005 in part to update the infrastructure of the library system. This goal has largely been met including the introduction of self-check out.

F-5 Central Library has NO FILTERS on any computers. There would be an initial cost for installation and implementation of the filter system. There is financial assistance available for schools and libraries through the Children's Internet Protection Act.

F-6 Internet Access URL specific web page filters can be effective.

F-7 Movement of computers to other locations within the building would minimize inadvertent viewing by other patrons.

F-8 Protection of Children Against Sexual Exploitation Act of 1977 can be implemented.

F-9 A letter from the Mayor of Santa Rosa dated October 1, 2008, authorized Sonoma County Library Commissioners to regulate conduct on the premises and the surrounding area outside of all the three properties, Central Library, Rincon Valley and North West Regional Library. As of May 2009 the Commission has not utilized its authority to address the problems at Central Library.

Conclusions

The Library Commission has always had an open door policy, which in essence attempts to make this library, a democratic institution, available to everyone. The policy has a great deal of merit. The Grand Jury has concluded that its recommendations can be achieved without compromising that policy.

The 2008 Standards of Behavior have been updated and now should be enforced. The library Commission needs **to actually implement and enforce** the appropriate rules of behavior at the Santa Rosa Central library. This flagship library deserves the attention of the Library Commissioners as an individual facility. Standards of Behavior **must be enforced** to send a clear message to violators that their conduct and interference with the rights of all users will not be tolerated.

In 1996 the Commissioners adopted an Internet Access Policy.

<http://www.sonomalibrary.org/libinfo/policies.html>

The policy states, "It does not monitor and has no control over the information accessed through the Internet." The statement in this policy, "parents alone have the responsibility to control their children's access" is short sighted. Internet filters would block the access by minors when parents are not with them at the library computers. Furthermore, it is a violation of federal law to knowingly receive visual depictions of minors engaged in sexually explicit conduct. Anyone who does so is subject to federal criminal prosecution under the Protection of Children Against Sexual Exploitation Act of 1977.

A related issue is the fact that anyone, teenager or adult, traversing the central aisle in the library may be exposed to images on the computer screen that they may find to be shocking and offensive. This problem could be solved by moving the computers to a less exposed location.

Permission was given to the Commission last October for Central Library's grounds to become a smoke free zone. An extended zone is needed to prevent smoke from entering the interior of the library.

Commendations

Central Library's staff is commended for their persistence in giving excellent service to their patrons, especially under the stress of not having enforcement of the Standards of Behavior in place.

The Security Guard has received an award for his outstanding work in October 2008. We are very fortunate to have a person with his qualities at Central Library.

Because of all the hard work and many hours last year's Grand Jury spent on their report "Santa Rosa Central Library at Risk" this year's Grand Jury had a solid foundation for their 2009 report.

We appreciate the Press Democrat for all the informative articles published by them on the Central Library.

Recommendations

The Grand Jury recommends that the Sonoma County Library Commissioners:

R-1 Stop just reviewing the enforcement policies of the Standards of Behavior and start implementing them.

R-2 Immediately prioritize the implementation of the interior floor plan at Central Library and move the computers to a side wall out of the present main aisle, as approved by the FY 08-09 Sonoma County Library Commissioners budget.

R-3 Request a filter on all computers at the Central Library as a means of protecting minors against Pornography, taking advantage of the e-rate discount and achieving the protections embodied in the "Protection of Children Against Sexual Exploitation Act of 1977".

R-4 Immediately impose a smoke free zone to the entire Central Library property extending to the edge of the city sidewalk. (Permission was granted by the Mayor of Santa Rosa on October 1, 2008).

Required Responses to Recommendations

Sonoma County Library Commission

R1, R2, R3, R4