

Parents are in control

A few weeks ago, I saw a mother and her young daughter holding hands as they proudly left the library. They were so happy. The child had just gotten her first library card and they were celebrating her access to the wide world of books. In the coming weeks, when parents of minors with library cards visit the library again, we will ask them to update their library card information.

Parents of minors – those under 18 years of age – will have to choose the level of control they want to exercise when they and their child use their library cards. Parents have several options:

- The parent can choose to put the child on the parent's card. The minor can use the card while the parent is not there, but the parent can use our online system to see what is currently checked out. Our software will allow for multiple persons on one card, but we will only issue one card per parent.
- The parent can allow the child to have their own card with the parent being listed on the card. The desk staff will be able to provide the listed parent with information about books the child has currently checked out. Again, the parent will be able to use our online system to see what is checked out. If the child refuses to put the parent on the card, the parent can refuse to allow the minor to have this card.
- The parent can approve issuing a card to the child with no other name on the card. If the parent chooses this option, under state law we will not be able to disclose what the child has checked out. Of course, this does not prevent the parent from accessing the child's account information online provided the child has given that information to the parent.
- For parents who prefer complete control over their child's library usage, they may simply check all books out on their card without listing any child. In these cases, the cardholder (parent) would need to be present for the child to leave the library with a book.
- Please keep in mind that parents can revoke permission for their child's library card at any time.

So, the next time parents of minor children come into the library, the desk staff will review their options and provide strategies for monitoring their child's library usage. Parents will be provided with information to take home and use as they see fit. It isn't a long or difficult process to update information in our system to give parents the level of control they feel comfortable with.

This policy was hammered out after months of discussions among the Board of Trustees, staff, concerned citizens, parents, other libraries, our library district consultant, and our lawyer. We thank everyone who participated. We feel that this policy and our procedures provide various levels of parental control from complete control to complete privacy, depending on individual parents' choices for their own children.