What 'Open to the Public' Means at IUPUI

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Note

The University Library at Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis (IUPUI) is both an academic library and a community library. In addition to supporting the academic programs of IUPUI, the library also "opens its doors and collections to the citizens of the state of Indiana and beyond" (http://www.ulib.iupui.edu/development/community). The library is a significant economic and social resource for our community; as such, we believe it is important that we share our collections and services.

Although we tend to refer to all of our community users as if they are all of one type, there are actually three particular types: (1) computer users; (2) borrowers; and (3) high school students who come to the library to access databases and to use materials from the collection. With the exception of the high school students, there are very few patrons who visit the library who both use the computers and borrow materials.

Any adult state resident with a valid I.D. and proof of address is eligible for a University Library card. Every year we issue about 1,000 borrower cards to Indiana residents as well as thousands of guest computer passes. There is no charge to obtain a library card. A community member does not need to belong to any specific group (e.g., "Friends of the Library") to borrow materials. There are, however, limits on the number and types of items that may be borrowed.

We welcome community members at the IUPUI University Library during all regular hours of operation. We allow them access to more than half of the computer workstations in public areas; the exceptions are those computers located in the academic commons, the rich media cluster, and individual and group study rooms. We grant guest users all-day access to computer workstations for a one-dollar fee.

Although serving the community is a vital part of our mission, such service presents a number of challenges. For example, some of our regular guests are homeless. A few appear to have behavioral issues, and some have hygiene issues. Complaints are relatively rare. It is worth noting that the great

majority of community users do not cause any problems. However, most of the library's security issues do originate with public patrons, not with students.

We believe that providing computer access to those who would not otherwise have it and sharing our rich academic collection with those who would not otherwise have access to these resources are both laudable reasons for being open to the public. Moreover, the willingness of University Library to be open to the public sends a strong message about the University's commitment to the local community.

Suggested Reading

William H. Weare, Jr. & Matthew Stevenson (2012): Circulation Policies for External Users: A

Comparative Study of Public Urban Research Institutions, *Journal of Access Services*, 9:3,

111-133.