



Circulation Policy

Approved by the Joint Board of Library Trustees 12/10/20

Revised and Approved 3/13/2025

Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to provide written guidelines pertaining to the circulation of Library materials for the Hamilton-Wenham Public Library. This policy is based on the need to make materials available to all patrons on an equal basis and to ensure adequate access based on the size and nature of the collection.

Exceptions to the following policy statements may be made when warranted at the discretion of the Library Director or their designee.

Library Cards

Eligibility:

Hamilton and Wenham Residents:

Residents of Hamilton and Wenham may obtain a physical library card by presenting proof of residency in either town at the Library. Acceptable documentation includes: Massachusetts driver's license, Massachusetts car registration, Massachusetts state issued ID, current Hamilton or Wenham property tax bill, lease/mortgage or utility bill.

Children under age 13 are required to have a parent or legal guardian present when applying and a parent or legal guardian must sign the application. Children age 13 and over are required to present proper identification (school ID/driver's license) or be accompanied by a parent or legal guardian with acceptable identification.

Obtaining a Merrimack Valley Library Consortium (MVLC) Library Card:

Patrons residing in Massachusetts, attending school in Massachusetts, or owning property in Massachusetts whose library is certified by the Massachusetts Board of Library Commissioners, may receive an MVLC library card or have their current card linked to the MVLC system if they reside in a non-MVLC community. Depending on residency, the MVLC card may grant access to e-resources provided through MVLC.

Out of State Residents:

Per MVLC policy, out-of-state residents may only obtain a card upon proof they work in Massachusetts, attend school in Massachusetts, or own property in Massachusetts. Out-of-state residents must register in person as the online e-card application will not verify out-of-state addresses.

Obtaining an E-Card

A Hamilton-Wenham Public Library or MVLC e-card is available to all Hamilton, Wenham, and Massachusetts residents who do not already have a card in the MVLC system and whose library is certified by the Massachusetts Board of Library Commissioners. To get an e-card, a patron must be a Massachusetts resident and not already have an account in the MVLC system.

Patrons must provide their legal first name, last name, physical address, telephone number, and email address using the online form. Successful applicants will receive an email with an e-card barcode and their PIN. Unsuccessful applicants will be provided with details on how to proceed.

Card Use and Replacement

Subject to constraints of this policy regarding withholding of borrowing privileges and other specific circumstances, all cardholders have equal use of the collection. Parents and other caregivers, not the library staff, are responsible for determining what their child may read, listen to, or view.

Patrons are encouraged to carry their library cards with them to check out material, but a valid picture ID will be accepted as well. A digital barcode is also accepted through the MVLC mobile app or in an Apple wallet. Anyone presenting a card is deemed to have the cardholder's permission to use the card as if it were the presenter's own. If a patron does not present their card or appropriate ID, borrowing privileges will be withheld until the card or ID is produced. Materials selected by the patron may be held for that patron through the close of business on the third day after borrowing privileges were withheld.

It is the cardholder's responsibility to inform the library of lost cards and changes in name, address, e-mail address, telephone number, etc. The library is not responsible for loss of privacy or other consequences of failure to notify the library of such changes.

If a patron reports their library card lost or stolen, and the patron can provide an acceptable form of picture ID, a replacement card may be issued at the cost of \$1.00. The patron's account must be in good standing in order to issue a new card.

Patron accounts are renewed on a three-year basis; at the time of expiration, patrons are notified by email to renew their account. When renewing the account, contact information is checked by Library staff for accuracy. MVLC also offers patrons the option to e-renew their library cards. Patron accounts that remain expired and inactive for two or more years are periodically purged from the Library database per MVLC policy.

Library staff, Trustees, and volunteers are subject to the same borrowing rules as other Library patrons.

Requests, Reserves, Renewals and Returns

Requests for materials may be made in person, by phone, via the online catalog, or by email. Reserved materials will be held through the close of business on the seventh day after the reserve is filled at which time the item will be returned to the owning library. Patrons will be notified of available reserve materials by phone, email, or text. In order to pick up a reserved

item, the patron must present the library card or ID used when placing the hold. Card holders may authorize another individual in the same household to pick up their holds for them by either physically giving that person their card or notifying the library.

If MVLC libraries do not have an item that a patron is requesting, the library can request material from outside the consortium. Staff will do a search of the Commonwealth Catalog and attempt to find the item in the state. The library can also search the OCLC nationwide catalog for specialized items and research. There may be a fee associated with this service.

In keeping with MVLC policy, most items may be renewed two times if no one is waiting for the item. Renewals are done automatically by the library software; however, patrons may renew items over the phone or via the online catalog.

Most Library materials may be returned to any library belonging to the MVLC. Items that must be returned directly to the Hamilton-Wenham Public Library are noted on the item. The Hamilton-Wenham Library does not charge fines for late materials. However, patrons should be aware of the borrowing policies of the library where they check out materials as fine policies vary from library to library.

Lost or Damaged Items

It is the responsibility of the patron to return all materials in good and complete condition by the item due date. Patrons should report any noticeably damaged items or equipment to the library immediately.

Upon patron request, library staff will check the collection for items which are believed to be returned but which remain outstanding on the patron's record. If checks by the library staff and the patron fail to locate the item, and the patron believes the item to have been returned, it may be marked "Reported Returned" in the library database. This function does not have any adverse effect on the patron's record. The Head of Circulation or their designee reserves the right to restrict the number of "Reported Returned" items per patron.

The Hamilton-Wenham Public Library follows the consortium recommendation and withholds borrowing privileges when a patron's fees or bills accrue to \$20 or they have 20 items overdue. In the event a patron is declined borrowing privileges, materials selected by that patron may be held through the close of business on the third day after borrowing privileges were withheld.

Materials lost or severely damaged while checked out to a borrower incur a charge equal to the list price of the item when new. Physical damage to items includes, but is not limited to, the following: torn pages/cover, pencil/pen markings, liquid/food damage, damaged packaging, missing parts, water/sand damage. The Library will accept in-kind replacements for lost or damaged Hamilton-Wenham Public Library owned items with permission of the Head of the Circulation or their designee. Replacements must be brand new and the same edition and copy type as the original. No refunds will be given if a lost item is found after it has been paid for by the patron.

Payment for lost or damaged items is accepted by cash, check made out to Hamilton-Wenham Public Library, or credit through MVLC's online payment system.

Library patrons may be charged reasonable replacement costs for missing or damaged packaging, missing pieces of sets, etc. The following is a schedule of fees for damaged or lost items:

- Missing or damaged CD, DVD, or Playaway case = \$5
- Individual CD from set = \$5
- Charging cord from Playaway View = \$15
- Playaway View Case/Packaging = \$15
- USB Cord for Wonderbook = \$10

Privacy and Confidentiality

Under Massachusetts General Laws, Chapter 78, Section 7 *“That part of the records of a public library which reveals the identity and intellectual pursuits of a person using such library shall not be a public record...”* Confidentiality extends to information sought or received, and materials consulted, borrowed, and include database search records, reference interviews, circulation records, interlibrary loan transactions, registration records, and all other personally identifiable uses of library materials, facilities, or services.

Circulation, registration information, and information retrieval records may not be disclosed except to:

- The cardholder – This is regardless of age or relationship.
- Staff of MVLC libraries acting within the scope of their duties in the administration of the library system and in facilitation interlibrary loans.
- Persons authorized by the cardholder to access the individual’s records identified by a note of permission given by the cardholder or persons with physical possession of the library card. Picking up holds is considered access to a cardholder’s records.
- Representatives of any local, state, or federal government, pursuant to subpoena or search warrant authorized under the authority of federals, state, or local law relating to civil, criminal, or investigative power. Upon receipt of any such subpoena or search warrant, the Library Director will consult with legal counsel to determine if the subpoena or search warrant is in proper form and if there is a valid basis for its issuance before providing confidential information.

Borrowing Materials

| Item Type | Loan Period | Number of Items | Renewal Limit | Fine |
|-----------------------|---------------------|-----------------|---------------|-----------|
| Books | 3 weeks | unlimited | 2 renewals | None |
| Hot Titles Collection | 2 weeks | unlimited | No renewal | None |
| Audiobooks | 3 weeks | unlimited | 2 renewals | None |
| DVD's/Blu-ray | 1 week | unlimited | 1 renewal | None |
| Music CD's | 3 weeks | unlimited | 2 renewals | None |
| Magazines | 1 week | unlimited | 1 renewal | None |
| Reference | In library use only | | | |
| Newspapers | In library use only | | | |
| Video Games | 1 week | unlimited | 1 renewal | None |
| Hot Spots | 1 week | | No renewals | \$5 a day |
| Board Games | 3 weeks | unlimited | 2 renewals | None |