



Elgin County Library

Elgin County Library Policy Manual

Subject: Membership and Circulation Policy

Date Approved: November 28, 2023

Date of Last Revision: n/a

Purpose

Elgin County Library offers membership and circulation services as part of our key pillars of library service and to support literacy, lifelong learning, and intellectual freedom through access to collections, programs, and technology. This policy outlines the principles and guidelines to facilitate free and equitable access to Library collections and services, while establishing parameters that protect Library collections and services, and serves to provide parameters for library membership (Part A) and borrowing materials (Part B).

PART A: LIBRARY MEMBERSHIP

1. Membership Benefits

Everyone is welcome at the library. The library provides free and equitable access to information in an environment that is welcoming for all and acknowledges intellectual freedom. Members of the public may use the library space and many of its services and some of its programs without a library membership. Benefits to holding a full membership include wider access to collections, programs, technologies, and equipment.

2. Membership Eligibility

Resident, Employee

Elgin County Library Memberships are available free to any person who lives, owns property, works, or attends school in the County of Elgin. Library memberships shall also be available for anyone who lives on a First Nation reserve in Ontario. Children up to Grade 8 require permission of their parent or legal guardian in person at the time of registration. Library card registration forms may be made available for teachers and/or care providers to have cards prepared for children in anticipation of class visits or tours.

Reciprocal Relationship

Elgin County Library has reciprocal borrowing agreements with several neighbouring library systems including St. Thomas Public Library and London Public Library. Members from these systems are also eligible for an Elgin County Library card.

Non-resident

For all other visitors, guest user cards may be issued for in-library services, such as Internet access.

3. Types of Membership

Library Card

A regular library card provides complete access to all Elgin County Library's collections and services, both physical and digital. Signing up for a regular library membership must be done in person and requires identification. A virtual card is available for patrons who are unable to provide proof of address.

Virtual Card

A virtual membership provides access to all of Elgin County Library's digital and online books and resources, without the privilege of borrowing physical items like books, puzzles, and board games. A virtual membership can be obtained by signing up online or in person by providing a name and an email address; proof of physical address is not required. A virtual card can be changed to a regular card by visiting a library branch with identification.

Educational Card

An educational card is intended for educational institutes such as schools, and daycare providers. These cards expire on an annual basis as educational workers are responsible for the items borrowed with these card types.

Card for Individuals with No Fixed Address

A card for individuals with no fixed address is intended for those experiencing housing insecurity or that have no permanent address, and is valid for one (1) year and will allow borrowing of up to three (3) items at a time. Name identification must be provided.

4. Membership and Library Card

Identification Requirements

A piece of photo identification and proof of address must be provided to Elgin County Library staff upon registration. Various types of documents are accepted, please ask a staff member.

Expiration and Renewal

Library cards expire every two (2) years, with the exception of educational cards and no fixed address cards that expire annually. At which time members will need to contact the library to confirm account information, including address and phone number, to renew their card and maintain full membership benefits. A library card may be renewed if the account is in good standing.

Replacement Cost

Lost library cards can be replaced in person at a library branch for a minimal fee. Please see the current County of Elgin Fees and Charges By-Law for details.

5. Membership and Responsibilities

Equal access to library services and materials depends on the reasonable use of such services and materials by all library members.

Conditions of Membership

Library members shall:

- Present a valid Elgin County Library card when borrowing material or requesting account information;
- Report any changes to account information as soon as possible. Lost or stolen cards should be reported to any branch library immediately;
- Be responsible for any and all library material checked out on their cards and agree to abide by the regulations of the library;
- Pay any fees incurred for damaged or lost library material, including any administrative fees for long overdue items as per the current County of Elgin Fees and Charges By-Law.

PART B: BORROWING MATERIALS

1. Borrowing and Loans

- a) Loan periods and lending limits may vary based on type of membership (individual, educational, etc.). Please refer to the Elgin County Library website for the most up to date information.
- b) Library materials may be renewed for two additional loan periods either online or by contacting the library. The library reserves the right to limit the loan period and/or number of items borrowed on the basis of local demand and material supply.
- c) Materials may be returned to any Elgin County Library branch with the exception of interlibrary loan materials that must be returned to the branch they were borrowed from.
- d) Library items not eligible for renewal include, but are not limited to:

- a. Items with holds;
- b. Any items checked out at the discretion of the Branch Supervisor.
- e) The library reminds patrons to return overdue materials through a series of digital or mailed notices culminating in a bill to replace lost material.
- f) DVD materials that are classified 18A (suitable for people 18 years of age or older) or R (restricted to 18 years or older) by the Canadian Home Video Rating System are available in the collection and it is up to the individual to determine suitability for viewing. Library staff do not require proof of age for lending.
- g) In keeping with the [Ontario Library Association's Position on Children's Rights in the Library](#), there are no restrictions on the material borrowed by children. Parents/guardians are responsible for the selection, usage, and safe return of materials borrowed by their children.
- h) Elgin County Library offers outreach services to patrons who for reasons of age, disability, long-term illness or other limitations are unable to visit a library branch. Applicants will complete a registration form for homebound service. This service is dependent on the availability of volunteer services to deliver material(s).

2. Holds

- a) Customers may place a hold on any item in the catalogue with the exception of items designated "library use only". Examples include reference works, select local history materials, library program kits, and newspapers.
- b) Customers may place, cancel or freeze holds using the library's online catalogue, MyLibrary! app, in person at any branch, or by telephone during branch open hours.
- c) When a hold is available, the customer will be notified by their preferred contact method, either by email or by phone. Materials on hold are held at the requested branch location for a maximum of ten (10) days. If items are not picked up within that time, the hold will be removed.

3. Lost / Damaged Items

- a) Library patrons shall report lost or damaged items at the earliest possible opportunity.
- b) Charges for lost / damaged items are based on the cost of each individual item. Please refer to our Membership and Fees schedule found on the Elgin County Library website for the most up to date information on applicable replacement and administrative fees.
- c) Repeated loss, damage or misuse of library material could result in the suspension of library privileges.
- d) The library does not accept donations of materials in lieu of replacement fees.
- e) Refunds will be issued for lost items returned to the library in good condition within thirty (30) days after the charges for the item have been paid. Lost and

paid material charges will first be applied to any further outstanding charges on the patron's account, and any remaining balance will be refunded.

4. Suspension of Borrowing Privileges

- a) Borrowing privileges will be suspended when library patrons have fees and/or overdue materials in excess of the maximum allowable amount. (Please see current County of Elgin Fees and Charges By-Law).
- b) Accounts suspended due to overdue items or outstanding balances will be reactivated when the total balance owing falls below the threshold.

5. Interlibrary Loans (ILLO)

- a) Elgin County Library cardholders with a valid library account in good standing are eligible to request up to five (5) ILLO items at a time, while homeschool patrons are eligible to request up to twenty (20) ILLO items at a time.
- b) Elgin County Library will not lend or borrow some material types through ILLO, including board books, picture books, and book club kits.
- c) While the ILLO service is free to Elgin County Library patrons, a library could charge a fee to lend materials. Patrons wishing to receive the requested item may be subject to paying a charge.
- d) If an interlibrary loan item is lost or damaged by a patron, it is the responsibility of the patron to pay for the item.
- e) Items borrowed for a patron through the ILLO service will have a standard loan period, unless otherwise specified by the lending institution. ILLO items are not available for renewal automatically. If a patron requests an interlibrary loan item longer than its current lending period, staff may submit one renewal request per ILLO item to the Interlibrary Loan Clerk. The lending library will approve or decline the renewal at its discretion.
- f) Patrons with overdue ILLO items could be subject to overdue fines as per the lending library's policy or suspension of borrowing privileges until the ILLO item is returned.

CONFIDENTIALITY OF PERSONAL INFORMATION

Elgin County Library respects the privacy of all library patrons and will keep all information related to membership confidential in accordance with [the County of Elgin's Access to Information and Privacy Policy](#). Identification documents are used to verify name and address only when applying for a library card. No other information on the document(s) presented is kept or recorded.

Confidentiality of all personal information held by Elgin County Library in matters relating to lending services is governed by the [Municipal Freedom of Information and](#)

[Protection of Privacy Act \(MFIPPA\)](#), and related County of Elgin policies, as listed in the References and Related Documents section below.

DEFINITIONS

For the purpose of this policy:

“Circulation” is defined as the usage of library materials including, but not limited to, obtaining a library card, borrowing library materials, placing holds, checking out, and checking in, etc.

“Reciprocal borrowing” is defined as an agreement between two (2) or more library systems which allows library patrons of one library system to freely use the services of another.

“Account in good standing” is defined as a patron in good standing; who has a current membership; who has no lost or damaged items, and has not exceeded the minimal fees threshold.

“Resident” is defined as someone who lives in the County of Elgin or supports Elgin County with the payment of taxes.

“Loan period” is defined as the total number of days, or lending limit, that one can keep a specific item before returning it to the library.

“ILLO” or “Interlibrary Loan” is defined as a provincial program and service in which libraries, on behalf of patrons, can request to temporarily borrow materials that are not owned by the local library.

REFERENCES AND RELATED DOCUMENTS **(Accessible formats available upon request.)**

[County of Elgin, Access to Information and Privacy Policy, 2023](#)

[County of Elgin, Fees and Charges By-Law, 2023](#)

[Elgin County Library, Interlibrary Loan Policy, 2019](#)

[Elgin County Library, Membership and Fees Web Page, 2023](#)

[Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act, R.S.O. 1990, c. M.56](#)

[Ontario Library Association, Position on Children's Rights in the Library, 1998](#)

[Public Libraries Act, R.S.O. 1990, c. P.44](#)

APPENDICES

Appendix A: Juvenile Application Form



Elgin County Library Juvenile Form (Grade 8 and Under)

Proof of address will be requested by library staff

PLEASE PRINT CLEARLY

Name	Last:	First:
Address	Apt./Unit#:	Street #:
Street:		City:
Province:		Postal Code:
Preferred Phone Number ()		PIN = last 4 digits of phone number
Email Address		

STAFF USE ONLY

Home Branch	
Notify via	() Email <i>*Holds/Items Due notifications, Library e-newsletter(s)*</i> () Phone Number
Patron Type	Juvenile / Virtual (<i>please circle type</i>)
Barcode	06279

I agree to follow the rules and regulations of Elgin County Library's Membership and Circulation Policy; care for all materials borrowed on this card; assume full responsibility for the choice of material the child borrows from the Library; pay any fees incurred for all lost or damaged materials; inform the Library if the card is lost or stolen and/or if there is a change in the child's personal information. I am responsible for any use of this card.

Parent/Guardian Name (Please Print)

Parent/Guardian Signature

This information is collected under the authority of the Public Libraries Act (R.S.O. 1990, c. P.44) and for library-related purposes only. The information on this form is subject to the Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act (R.S.O. 1990, c. M.56).

Resident/Reciprocal
(*please circle type*)

Date

Staff Initials

Appendix B: Adult Application Form



Elgin County Library Adult Form (High School Age and Over)

PLEASE PRINT CLEARLY

Name	Last:	First:
Address	Apt./Unit#:	Street #:
Street:		City:
Province:		Postal Code:
Preferred Phone Number ()		PIN = last 4 digits of phone number
Email Address		

STAFF USE ONLY

Home Branch	
Notify via	() Email *Holds/Items Due notifications, Library e-newsletter(s)* () Phone Number
Patron Type	Adult / Virtual / Homeschool / Homebound <i>(please circle type)</i>
Barcode	06279

I agree to follow the rules and regulations of Elgin County Library's Membership and Circulation Policy; care for all materials borrowed on this card; pay any fees incurred for all lost or damaged materials; inform the Library if the card is lost or stolen and/or if there is a change in my personal information. I am responsible for any use of this card.

Signature of Applicant

This information is collected under the authority of the Public Libraries Act (R.S.O. 1990, c. P.44) and for library-related purposes only. The information on this form is subject to the Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act (R.S.O. 1990, c. M.56).

Resident/Reciprocal
(please circle type)

Date

Staff Initials

Appendix C: Educational Application Form



Elgin County Library Annual Educational Membership Form Year Issued:

PLEASE PRINT CLEARLY

Institution Name		
Email Address		
Primary Contact	Last:	First:
Job Title		
Street Address:	City:	
Province:	Postal Code:	
Preferred Phone Number ()	PIN = last 4 digits of phone number	
Authorized Users (Please list names and job titles)		

STAFF USE ONLY

Home Branch	
Notify via	() Email <i>*Holds/Items Due notifications, Library e-newsletter(s)*</i> () Phone Number
Barcode	06279

As the administrator of this institution, I am qualified to apply for membership to Elgin County Library on its behalf. I understand that I am responsible for all materials borrowed by authorized users of this account and that these materials are subject to replacement fees if they are lost or damaged. Materials borrowed under this membership are not for personal use. I will notify the library of any changes to our list of authorized users in writing and understand that our membership will be reviewed annually. Our authorized users understand that the library reserves the right to withhold materials from institutional loan that are in high demand or limited supply and that borrowing privileges may be suspended as a result of unpaid bills or materials that are long overdue. This membership will be revoked by the library if privileges are abused.

Signature: _____ Date: _____

FOR LIBRARY USE ONLY

** Applications may be approved by a Branch Supervisor, Manager of Library Services or Director of Community & Cultural Services.*

Approved by: _____(print name) _____(signature) Date approved: _____

This information is collected under the authority of the Public Libraries Act (R.S.O. 1990, c. P.44) and for library-related purposes only. The information on this form is subject to the Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act (R.S.O. 1990, c. M.56).