

# **USER FEE FAQs**

## **NEWPORT PUBLIC LIBRARY, NEWPORT PENNSYLVANIA**

We hope that the information below will answer questions you may have about the charging of user fees at Newport Public Library (NPL). Please feel free to contact us at 717-567-6860 if you would like additional information.

### **Background**

Commonwealth Libraries, part of the PA Department of Education, oversees the Public Library Code, coordination of library services, and public library funding. It is a financial partner with local governments in providing library service to communities. As a first step to receiving State Aid dollars, a public library must show Commonwealth Libraries that its community is willing to make a commitment to stable financial support year after year. In other words, to have free library service, local communities must help fund it for their own residents. In the late 1980's the Access PA Statewide Library Card Program was initiated. Before the Access PA program, PA residents could expect to use libraries for free only in their own communities. The Access PA program changed all that. Today the state subsidizes a portion of a library's costs for lending materials to PA residents outside of their community if those residents have Access PA privileges. As a result, all PA residents with Access PA privileges may freely use public libraries across the state. The blue Access PA sticker on a library card indicates Access PA privileges-the right to use state-aided public libraries at no charge.

### **How do PA residents get a library card with a blue Access PA sticker?**

To get a library card with a blue Access PA sticker, you must have a 'home library'. To have a 'home library', a person must live in a public library's service area. A service area-made up of boroughs and townships-is based on population size and how much money a library receives from the community to provide service. Each PA public library has a legally defined service area, and if you live within a service area you have a 'home library'; if you do not live within a service area, you do not have a 'home library'.

### **Why don't all Perry County residents have a 'home library' and Access PA privileges?**

Until recently, all Perry County residents did have a 'home library' because the entire county population was claimed within the service area of the Perry County Library System (made up of the Newport Public Library, the Bloomfield Public Library, the Marysville-Rye Library, and the Community Library of Western Perry County). However, in 1999, Commonwealth Libraries revised the PA Library Code and updated State Aid standards. They now require that a state-aided library (or library system) spend a minimum of \$5 in local financial support for each person living in its service area. The Perry County Library System could not meet the \$5 per capita minimum expenditure requirement for the entire county population of 43,602; the System was therefore forced to disband for state-aid purposes. Today, each of the four public libraries must operate as independent libraries with individual service areas. Each library can only claim a population amount for which they can spend a minimum of \$5 per person in local financial support. As a result, 54% of the county population does not have a 'home library' or Access PA privileges.

### **Why can't the Perry County Library System meet the new minimum State Aid standards?**

In order to spend a minimum of \$5 per capita in local financial support, the Perry County Library System must first receive a minimum of \$5 per capita in local financial support. To include the entire county population in its service area, the System would need to spend at least \$218,010 (\$5 x 43,602) each year. Although money received from fundraisers, private donations, and other local sources of revenue can be counted towards meeting this minimum requirement, they do not total anywhere near the amount needed. Possibilities for meeting this requirement are few:

(1) Local government can pledge stable, long-term funding to the system by placing the libraries in the county budget (as Juniata County does, for example) or (2) County residents can pay an annual dedicated tax to support the libraries (as is the case in Dauphin and Cumberland Counties). In May of this year the library tax referendum was

defeated in Perry County, and our county government still does not provide stable funding. Without adequate annual funding, the minimum State Aid standards cannot be met.

**How much State Aid was lost because minimum System standards are not met?**

At least \$200,000 in 2002 State Aid income was lost because the Perry County Library System no longer qualified for State Aid. This was money that our county residents had already paid in state taxes, but instead of that tax money benefiting our citizens, it went to other counties whose Library Systems did meet minimum state standards.

**Why did the Newport Public Library Board of Trustees decide to charge user fees at this time?**

The Board of Trustees does not want to charge county residents a fee to use resources that they strongly believe should be freely accessible to all. However, after the defeat of the library tax referendum in the May primary, and in the continued absence of county government funding, the decision had to be made to begin the charging of user fees. Providing public library service costs money- to have free library service, local communities must help fund it for their own residents.

**When did NPL begin charging a user fee to PA residents without a 'home library'?**

August 1, 2002

**Which Perry County residents are subject to user fees?**

The people who live in these 13 municipalities (54% of the county population) do not have a 'home library' or Access PA privileges. As a result, they may be assessed a user fee at PA public libraries.

Carroll Township	Liverpool Township	SavilleTownship	Tyrone Township
Duncannon Borough	New Buffalo Borough	Spring Township	Watts Township
Landisburg Borough	Penn Township	Tuscarora Township	Wheatfield Township
Liverpool Borough			

**Why don't you charge every Perry County resident who wants to use the library a flat fee instead of charging only those residents who don't have a 'home library'?**

*It is a violation of the PA Library Code to charge PA residents with Access PA privileges a user fee. If our library were to charge user fees to residents with Access PA privileges, our library would become ineligible for State Aid. We would be forced to seriously curtail services as a result. The charging of a flat fee to all library patrons is not an option.*

**How much is the user fee at NPL? Are there different payment options?**

If you choose to pay for an entire year of service at NPL, the fee is \$50. You may also pay \$5/one month, \$15/three months, \$30/six months, or \$45/nine months. Payments may be made by cash, check, or VISA/MASTERCARD.

**Are other area libraries charging a user fee to PA residents without a 'home library'?**

The Marysville-Rye Library charges \$50/year with no payment options. The Dauphin County Library System charges \$60/year with no payment options, and the Cumberland County Library System charges \$60/year with the same payment options that we offer. The Bloomfield Public Library and the Community Library of Western Perry County (in Blain) are not currently charging user fees.

**Can more than one person in the same household use the same library card?**

Yes, you may pay one fee, and receive one library card, which everyone in your household can use.

**What services will I be entitled to if I pay a user fee? Will I get an Access PA sticker?**

You will be entitled to all of our library's services, including Interlibrary Loan which gives you access to millions of materials available at libraries around the country. You will not, however, get an Access PA sticker on your library card, which means that you may be subject to user fees at other PA libraries. Only a resident's 'home library' can issue a library card with an Access PA sticker.

**How is a library's service area determined? Why does NPL claim some municipalities and not others?**

A library's service area is based on population size and the amount of money that a library can spend per capita. When the Perry County Library System was formed in 1980, NPL's service area was comprised of the municipalities in the Newport School District-Newport Borough, Oliver Township, Juniata Township, Howe Township, Buffalo Township, and Miller Township. Due to various changes during the mid-1990's (including the closing of the Greenwood Public Library, housed in Greenwood High School), NPL had to expand its service area to include the Greenwood School District-Millerstown Borough, Greenwood Township, Tuscarora Township, Liverpool Borough, and Liverpool Township-so that all municipalities were included in the service area of the Perry County Library System. Until the revision of the Library Code in 1999, which increased the minimum per capita spending from \$2 to \$5/capita, NPL was able to include all of both Newport and Greenwood School Districts in its service area. With the increase to a \$5/capita minimum, however, NPL was forced to reduce the population of its service area in order to continue to qualify for essential State Aid. Statistics such as the number of patrons from each municipality and the number of materials circulated, as well as the population of each municipality, were used to determine which municipalities could still be included in NPL's service area, and which could not be included. It was a difficult decision, but one that had to be made so that NPL would qualify for State Aid. The other three libraries in Perry County faced similar decisions when they also were forced to reduce their service areas.

**What can I do to change this situation so that all county residents will have Access PA privileges?**

The current funding crisis will not change until there is a significant increase in public library funding by our local government. We urge you to call or write your County Commissioners (P.O. Box 37, New Bloomfield, PA 17068; 717-582-8984) to request that they provide stable, adequate funding for our county's four public libraries so that all Perry County residents will once again have a 'home library' and the benefits of Access PA privileges.