

Community Borrower Policy Modification Proposal

In this proposal we recommend amending the current Community Borrower Policy so that the library can better serve all residents of PEI, including those experiencing insecure housing. The proposed change seeks to modify the requirement for proof of fixed address and instead reduce those requirements to, minimally, a valid ID along with active/current contact information and a PEI address.

1. Introduction and Purpose

Our academic library is committed to fostering a welcoming and inclusive environment for all members of the Prince Edward Island community. A core tenet of our mission is to provide equitable access to information, and this is in alignment with the UPEI EDI Strategy, which commits the university to being an "open, accessible, and welcoming community" and to the "elimination of systemic barriers".

However, our current Community Borrower registration policy, which requires proof of a permanent address, inadvertently reinforces just that kind of barrier for unhoused Islanders. The purpose of this proposal is to advocate for a simple change to our policy language that brings our practices in line with our institutional values.

2. Proposed Policy Change

To address this barrier, we propose the following amendment to the Community Borrower policy. This change is a minor textual amendment with a significant positive impact on accessibility and equity.

Library Card

Community users (members of the general public ~~with an address in PEI~~ **who reside in PEI**) ~~must~~ **can** complete our registration process and acquire a Robertson Library Card in order to sign out library material.

First, complete a library registration form and bring it to our Service Desk, along with ~~Photo ID and proof of address~~ **a valid ID and a PEI address**. Forms are also available from the desk.

Community users under the age of 18 must have a parent or guardian sign the registration form, who must also be present at time of registration and have Photo ID with them.

3. Proposed Procedure Change

The following could be added to the Service Desk 'Patron Registration' documentation, a section of which is shown below (not shared with the public)

While we request proof of address where available, we do not turn anyone away from getting a library card due to not having an address. If no address from the patron is available, use the address of the Library (550 University Avenue).

Address - Section 3

Type: defaults to Mailing

Postal Code:

Street (1):

Street (2):

City:

County:

State:

Country: defaults to Canada

Valid Address:

Within City Limits:

[\[link\]](#)

4. Justification

This proposal directly supports and operationalizes several key commitments outlined in the UPEI EDI Strategy:

- **Reducing Systemic Barriers:**

The EDI Strategy defines equity as the need to "eliminate systemic barriers and biases that have played a role in impeding the full participation of underrepresented or disadvantaged groups." The current proof of address requirement is a clear barrier that disproportionately affects unhoused individuals and others with insecure housing, preventing their full participation in the services our library offers.

- **Creating an Accessible and Welcoming Community:**

The University's value statement commits to "making UPEI an open, accessible, and welcoming community, and to the fair treatment of all persons." Removing an unnecessary administrative hurdle for the most vulnerable members of our community is a tangible action that helps us embody this value, making our library a more genuinely welcoming space.

Precedent in Canadian Academic Libraries - [spreadsheet](#)

Shifting away from requiring proof of a fixed address is not an untested concept. A survey of 23 Canadian academic library community borrower policies demonstrates that this proposal aligns with emerging best practices: findings revealed that five major academic library institutions have decided to forego the traditional fixed address requirement in favour of just identity verification and robust contact information collection. Adopting this change would position our library among a forward-thinking group of institutions committed to low-barrier access within their communities.

5. Balancing Stakeholder Responsibilities

We recognize our dual responsibility to our primary stakeholders – students, faculty, and staff – and to the broader PEI community. This proposal carefully balances these commitments:

Campus Stakeholders:

While this change potentially opens an avenue for bad faith actors, risk is offset by the continued requirements of valid ID and contact information – the former of which could be limited to valid forms of PEI ID, thus ensuring no great expansion of the set of people we extend our services to.

The requirement of a photo/Gov ID and current/active contact information still allows for the responsible management and protection of our collections, and this provides a method of contact for overdue or lost items, mitigating risk without creating undue hardship for patrons.

The proposed change does not otherwise impact the services and resources dedicated to our primary academic community. Community borrower privileges remain limited to a specific subset of materials and our collection of contact information ensures that priority holds placed by our campus patrons can be retrieved promptly.

Community Stakeholders:

By removing an unnecessary barrier, we more fully embrace our mission to serve all residents of Prince Edward Island. This fosters goodwill, promotes education and information resource access across the province, and strengthens our position as a valuable community asset.

6. Implementation Plan

- I. **Consult** with PEI shelter(s) to determine a full set of appropriate Photo / Gov-issued IDs.
- II. **Staff training** where we distribute updated info for all Service Desk staff to ensure they understand the new policy and can apply it consistently and compassionately.
- III. **Policy revision** where we officially amend the language of the Community Borrower policy on the library website.

Conclusion

Amending our Community Borrower policy is a small, low risk change that can have a positive impact on the accessibility of our library for some of PEI's most vulnerable islanders. It is also a progressive step towards a more inclusive service model that strongly aligns with the core principles of UPEI's Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Strategy.