



PROGRAMS AND SERVICES POLICY

Approved by the Library Advisory Board March 1, 2023

Programs and Services Policy (PS)	1
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Programming at Bentonville Public Library	1
Programming for All Ages	2
Youth Programming	2
Storytimes	2
Tween Programming	3
Teen Programming	3
Adult Programming	3
Summer Reading Program	3-4
Special Programs and Events	4
Outreach Activities	4
Public Relations and Marketing	4-5
Library Services at Bentonville Public Library	5
<hr/>	
Information & Reference Services	5
Reader's Advisory	6
General Reference & Research Questions	6
General Assistance	6
Technology Assistance & Training	6
Resources	6
Liability and Referrals	6-7
Displays, Public Art, and Community Information	7
Inter-Library Loan (ILL)	7
Examination Proctor	8
Homebound Delivery and Services for the Blind	8
Consortium Agreements	8
BPL at the Community Center	8
Outreach Collections	8-9
<hr/>	
Model of Service	9
Handling Complaints	9
Regular Review	9
Support Services	9
Volunteer Services	10
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Programs and Services Policy

The modern public library is an interactive space where the community expects informational assistance, educational events, and recreational programs. The Bentonville Public Library strives to provide value-added professional programs and services to Library patrons of all ages, enriching their public library experience.

Value-added professional programs and services may be described as any program or service that adds value to patrons' lives. Simply defined, it is more than a "transaction," such as checking in or checking out materials for patrons. Value-added programs and services often require involved planning, funding, specialized training, and personal interactions between Library staff and patrons.

The Bentonville Public Library is committed to establishing and providing programs and services that promote lifelong learning, discovery, imagination, cultural diversity, and community awareness. Library programs and services should vary with the changing needs of our community.

Programs and information services are available to all Library patrons, regardless of race, sex, color, age, national origin, religion, Veteran status, or disability.

Programming at Bentonville Public Library

The goal of providing Library programs is to offer innovative cultural and educational opportunities for our community. These programs attract visitors to Bentonville Public Library and establish the library as a community gathering place.

Bentonville Public Library programs are coordinated by Library staff and may be planned and presented by Library staff. Programs may be planned or presented by other individuals or groups, in conjunction with Library staff. This may involve outsourcing professional services or cooperative efforts with other organizations.

Library programs should be free and open to the public, have educational merit, and be relevant to our community's needs. Library programs should complement other Library services by providing an opportunity to highlight collections and promote Library services.

Programming should not interfere with other Library services or operations and the library should have adequate staff to provide programs. Budgetary resources and grant support affect the library's ability to provide value-added programs. In rare instances, programs may involve a cost-recovery fee that is passed along to attendees; these fees are not considered a revenue source. The Library Advisory Board will approve special fees for special programs.

Due to inclement weather, library programming is canceled when Bentonville Public Schools are closed.

Programming for All Ages

- A. The library offers several programs for all ages throughout the year. Library programs are engaging opportunities to develop skills, discover ideas, and connect with others.
- B. Space constraints may limit how many patrons can participate in a program. In some instances, registration or ticketing systems may be required to fairly accommodate most attendees.
- C. Library programs are offered based on perceived need, staff resources, and public demand. Some examples of Library programs include, but are not limited to:
 - 1. Book discussion groups for adults, teenagers, and children foster open dialog, a sense of shared experiences, and literary appreciation for participants.
 - 2. Technology workshops/training for adults allow for technology awareness and evaluation of information resources.
 - 3. Homeschool programs, workforce development sessions, literacy programs, and standardized testing workshops inform participants about the library's reputable and valuable resources.
 - 4. Film screenings for adults and youth are offered as warranted by public demand. The MPAA ratings for the films are listed in Library marketing materials. While many film screenings are family-friendly, parents should determine the appropriateness of Library film events for their children.
 - 5. The library also offers many passive activities, drop-in sessions, and take-home kits for all ages throughout the year.

Youth Programming

- A. Youth programming is a standard service in public librarianship and is designed to help fulfill the informational, recreational, cultural, and educational needs of youth, their families, and those who work with them.
- B. Youth programming can strengthen developmentally appropriate literacy and life skills in the youth of our community.
- C. The Bentonville Public Library children's staff will maintain a regular schedule of Storytime programs for children, with scheduled programming breaks throughout the year.

Storytimes

- A. Bentonville Public Library provides dynamic, engaging, and interactive storytimes that develop and enhance children's early literacy skills such as phonological awareness, vocabulary, print motivation, letter knowledge, print awareness, and narrative skills.
- B. Stories, songs, and rhymes are selected around these approximate basic age group divisions:
 - 1. Babies (newborn – 18 months)
 - 2. Toddlers (18 months – years)
 - 3. Preschoolers (3 – 5 years)
 - 4. Families (all ages)

Tween Programming

- A. Bentonville Public Library offers free, fun, and educational programming for “twens” in grades 4th – 7th all year long. For example, book groups, clubs, workshops, and other interesting programs are engaging opportunities to discover ideas and connect with friends.
- B. Tween Advisory Group: students in grades 4th – 7th are invited to apply for the Library’s Tween Advisory Council (TAG).
- C. Participants are selected year-round by an application and orientation process.
- D. Members of the group directly influence Library offerings and are well-prepared for BPL’s teen volunteer program. Additionally, members gain valuable skills and make new friends.

Teen Programming

- A. Bentonville Public Library offers free, fun, and educational programming for teenagers in grades 7th – 12th all year long. For example, book groups, clubs, workshops, and other interesting programs are engaging opportunities to discover ideas and connect with friends.
- B. Teen programs are designed to reflect current and popular trends in teen librarianship and are of interest to local teenagers.
- C. Teen Advisory Board: High School juniors and seniors are invited to apply for a position on the Library’s Teen Advisory Board (TAB).
- D. TAB’s mission is to suggest services, materials, and programs that Benton County teens need and to work with Library staff to provide these services.
- E. The Library’s TAB members are selected on an annual basis through an application and panel interview process.
- F. Members of the board directly influence what goes in the teen collection and help plan the library’s teen programs. Additionally, members gain leadership skills, volunteer service hours, and make new friends.

Adult Programming

Bentonville Public Library designs a variety of programming options for adults to enjoy. For example, book clubs, author visits, and art programs are designed for patrons ages 18 years and older.

Summer Reading Program

- A. The Bentonville Public Library summer reading program is an incentive-based program that encourages youth to read throughout their summer vacation.
- B. Usually following a nationally coordinated theme, the summer reading program encourages free voluntary reading and offers theme-related activities.
- C. Research indicates that summer reading programs help prevent summer learning loss and have several positive effects on student achievement:
 - 1. Increased scores on reading comprehension and vocabulary tests
 - 2. Improved literacy development
 - 3. Increased amount of time children spend with books
 - 4. Number of books read during summer has been consistently related to academic gains
 - 5. Enriched reading experiences through literacy-related activities
 - 6. Increased parental involvement in children’s reading activities.

Programs, activities, and incentives for adults are offered at BPL during the summer reading program as well.

Special Programs and Events

- A. Author visits, dance productions, puppet shows, learning forums, cultural celebrations, community festivals, etc. may be offered at Bentonville Public Library throughout the year.
- B. These special programs for youth, adults, or families are designed to meet community recreational and educational needs.
- C. Special events are frequently well-attended programs and often bring in new Library patrons and confirm the public's demand for value-added services.
- D. Budgetary constraints may affect the library's ability to provide special programs.

Outreach Activities

- A. Bentonville Public Library staff visit schools, community groups, or organizations to provide information about the library's goals, mission, services, and needs.
- B. Library staff attend city events, local festivals, or expos to make presentations, share storytimes, lead book clubs, and provide other Library services that broaden BPL's reach in the community.

Public Relations and Marketing

- A. Bentonville Public Library programs, services, and policies should be communicated in a professional and appropriate manner.
- B. Media press releases are prepared and distributed according to the City of Bentonville's established distribution methods.
- C. Release of marketing information should come from designated staff which typically is the Library Director, the Librarian(s) associated with the program or service, or the marketing specialist.
- D. When the Library plans cooperative programs with another organization, the Bentonville Public Library reserves the right to review all information releases prior to distribution. While the other organization may be communicating pertinent information about a specific cooperative program with the library, that organization is not considered a spokesperson for the Bentonville Public Library.
- E. Unsolicited media requests should be directed to the Library Director. Depending on the nature of the request, the Library Director may refer specific inquiries to City administrative staff, including the mayor, for review and direction.
- F. Brochures, newsletters, postcards, and bookmarks promoting the Bentonville Public Library should reflect established formats, branding, and themes.
- G. Design and reproduction of materials may be produced by Library staff or professionally outsourced, depending on budgetary or grant support.
- H. Promotional materials should be prominently displayed in the library and may be strategically distributed via grass-roots marketing efforts throughout the community or circulated to target audiences.
- I. Marketing information may also be communicated via e-mail, the library's website, social media, or other mass-communicative efforts.

Library Services at Bentonville Public Library

The goal of value-added services such as reference assistance, reader's advisory, and technical assistance is to assist Library patrons of all ages with their information needs. Such services fulfill the Bentonville Public Library's mission by providing patrons access to the library's diverse cultural, intellectual, and informational resources in a personal and professional manner.

Value-added services at Bentonville Public Library should be free, highly accessible, and relevant to our community's needs. Budgetary constraints may affect the library's ability to provide value-added services. In rare instances, services may involve a cost-recovery fee that is passed along to the patron; these fees are not viewed as a revenue source. An example of cost-recovery fees for service is Proctoring Exams.

Information and Reference Services

- A. Bentonville Public Library staff will provide Library patrons with accurate, current, and unbiased information in a timely and courteous manner.
- B. Priority will be given to Library patrons at the service desks, with telephone, postal mail, and electronic communications serving as other means to communicate with Library patrons.
- C. Depending on the nature of the information request, Library patrons will be directly interacting with children's staff or adult reference staff. Library staff will exercise discretion and tact, as well as privacy protection, in fulfilling all information requests.
- D. Library staff should not offer advice to patrons, or interpretations of content, for any informational requests. They may provide instructional assistance for accessing information, but shall not provide involved assistance with medical, legal, or tax queries.
- E. Translations, proofreading, homework help, and mathematical calculations are not performed by Library staff.
- F. Directional assistance may be given to Library patrons by any Library employee during any interaction. This often involves pointing or leading patrons to specific signage or areas of the library. It may also entail answering specific operational or policy questions about the library such as hours of operation, loaning policies, the scope of services, etc.
- G. Reference queries should be directed to library service desk staff. These questions often involve known-item requests where a Library patron is asking for specific data, which is easily and quickly accessible.

Reader's Advisory

- A. Library staff should be informed of award-winning materials and classics, as well as current best-selling books.
- B. Further, Library staff should stay abreast of current trends in the publishing market, as well as a broad understanding of all literary genres to assist readers in finding appropriate educational or recreational reading.
- C. The library develops reading lists and guides to the collections for Library patrons.

General Reference and Research Questions

- A. General reference questions should be directed to library service desk staff.
- B. Library staff play an active and engaged role in leading Library patrons to the information they need. This includes leading patrons to the library collections for author, title, or subject requests.
- C. Or it may involve detailed, hands-on assistance and instruction using the library's collections and resources, as necessitated by the information query.

Genealogy Assistance

- A. Library reference staff may provide minimal instructional assistance regarding genealogy materials.
- B. Northwest Arkansas Genealogical Society volunteers are experienced and knowledgeable in this specific subject and provide Library patrons with involved research assistance.
- C. Volunteer hours of availability are posted in the genealogy center and on the library's website.

Technology Assistance and Training

- A. The Circulation and Adult Services staff is responsible for monitoring the public access computer environment. The youth services staff is responsible for monitoring youth iPad and computer(s).
- B. Library staff will provide Library patrons with instructional assistance for Library computers and equipment, as well as using the online Library catalog and Library databases.
- C. Minimal staff assistance is provided for patrons to troubleshoot their personal laptops, handheld devices, tablets, eBook readers, or other technologies. Library staff's technical advice is not guaranteed.
- D. In some instances, patrons may need to adjust security settings, permissions, or other technical features to allow for successful downloading or networking with the library's systems.
- E. The library and staff are not liable or responsible for the functionality or security of the patron's device.

Resources

- A. To successfully assist Library patrons with their information requests, Library staff will refer to the library's core print collections (including reference, fiction, or non-fiction collections) audiovisual materials, electronic databases, Internet resources, or individuals or groups, as necessitated by the request.
- B. Refer to Bentonville Public Library's Collection Development and Internet policies for more information on these resources.

Liability and Referrals

- A. While professional reference assistance is a high-quality standard, Bentonville Public Library does not guarantee the accuracy of the information provided and is not liable for patrons' use of the information provided.

- B. Every reasonable effort will be made to answer patrons' questions completely and accurately, but some queries may require referrals to specialized organizations or businesses.
- C. Any referral from Library staff should be considered for informational purposes only and does not constitute an endorsement of the referred organization or business.

Displays, Public Art, and Community Information

- A. Bentonville Public Library utilizes various displays to promote Library programs, services, and collections. These displays consist of open-access book displays or secured exhibitions in locking cabinets.
- B. Public art displayed at the Bentonville Public Library is considered part of the library's collection. Items may reflect cultural, historical, or aesthetic interests.
- C. Any item on public display at the Bentonville Public Library will not be removed arbitrarily. Patrons who have concerns about display items will be directed to the Library's Reconsideration of Materials policy to address those concerns.
- D. A community information bulletin board is located inside the Bentonville Public Library. Individuals, organizations, and businesses may post brochures, flyers, signage, business cards, etc.... that advertise or promote their business or charity. Illegal items may not be displayed. The library reserves the right to remove information placed in the library for display or distribution at any time; such removal may be based on space constraints or the date of the material.
- E. Display cases are for Library purposes only. Bentonville Public Library may elect to partner with governmental groups or community organizations to promote educational, cultural, recreational, or charitable activities by utilizing the library display space. Organizations partnering with the library must agree to set up and remove the exhibit based on Library specifications. Further, the Library is not responsible for the care, damage, or theft of display items. Exhibitions in the Library should not be used for solicitation or political campaigns.
- F. Materials on public display at the Bentonville Public Library are for informational purposes only and do not constitute an endorsement by the library.

Inter-Library Loan (ILL)

- A. Inter-Library Loan (ILL) services is a resource-sharing agreement among cooperating libraries that enhances the libraries' collections, allowing them to better meet patrons' needs.
- B. Bentonville Public Library has established Inter-Library Loan procedures that enable Library patrons to request to borrow materials from other libraries.
- C. Bentonville Public Library also loans its collection materials for ILL requests to other libraries.
- D. ILL requests and procedures are handled by the Circulation and Adult Services staff.
- E. ILL services may be subject to a cost-recovery fee that is passed along to patrons.
- F. Any associated costs such as overdue fines, damage, or replacement fees charged to Bentonville Public Library from the loaning library will be passed along to the borrower. A processing fee may also be added to the patron's account in these instances.

Examination Proctor

- A. Librarians, or designated staff, are available to provide proctoring services for educational exams or other professional development projects.
- B. Services are provided based on the library staff's schedule and may be subject to a general agreement form.
- C. Proctoring services may be subject to cost-recovery fees for copies, office supplies, postage, staff time, or technology use.

Homebound Delivery and Services for the Blind

- A. The Bentonville Public Library may provide limited homebound services to Library patrons who are unable to visit the library.
- B. Delivery and pick-up of materials to assisted-living communities or residences should be coordinated with local nursing homes and volunteer delivery services.
- C. The Bentonville Public Library participates with the Library of Congress's National Library Services for the Blind and Physically Handicapped program.
- D. This service provides special materials and services in cooperation with the Library of Congress to meet the needs of visually impaired and handicapped clients.
- E. The Bentonville Public Library collection includes audiobooks and books in Braille for visually impaired readers as appropriate to format usefulness, space, and use trends.

Consortium Agreements

- A. As Bentonville Public Library attempts to meet varied patrons' needs of the Northwest Arkansas community, the library may elect to enter consortium agreements with other local libraries or appropriate organizations in order to expand collections, programs, and/or services for Bentonville Public Library patrons.
- B. Considerations for entering such agreements should involve balancing potential costs and impact on Library services.

BPL at the Community Center

- A. A partnership with the Bentonville Parks & Recreation Department, allows the library to offer off-site services at the Bentonville Community Center.
- B. The "mini-branch" Library is an open-access, self-service Library that features a small collection of materials, convenient bookdrop, and technology access
- C. Requested items are made available for patron pickup using BPL's self-service remote locker system.
- D. Services such as Library card registration, storytime, special events, or other Library activities are incorporated, when feasible.
- E. Patron use patterns, changing technology, and operational efficiencies are addressed as necessary to improve the mini-branch model of service.

Outreach Collections

Just as BPL offers hard copy collections at the Community Center, other outreach collection opportunities may be offered to increase access to books in the community. Examples include

small library boxes installed in the city, targeted collections made available at local human service agencies, pop-up collections featured at special events, or other practical options.

Model of Service

Such collections are subject to the “leave a book or take a book” model as practiced in many shared community collections.

- A. Books are the intended primary focus and audiovisual materials are allowed.
- B. The library staff will use donated materials to stock the outreach collections.
- C. Materials for all ages on various subjects will be provided; efforts will be made to avoid placing highly mature content in outreach collections.
- D. BPL staff will assess the condition and appropriateness of the content on a regular basis (i.e., weekly schedule/rotation).
- E. If community members donate items, BPL reserves the right to use or dispose of such materials.
- F. Efforts to weed highly mature content will be made as staff regularly stock and review items.

Handling Complaints

- A. If BPL receives a complaint about any title in its outreach collections, the item will be reviewed by a Librarian for appropriateness.
- B. The following criteria will be considered:
 1. Did BPL staff add the item to the outreach collection?
 - a. A procedural note should identify the library’s selection.
 2. Did a community member add the item to the outreach collection?
 3. Is the item owned and circulated in BPL’s regular collection?
- C. If the item was added by Library staff and is owned and circulated in BPL’s regular collection, the complaint is subject to the Collection Development Policy. Requests for Reconsideration will be handled as normal.
- D. If the item was not added to the outreach collection by Library staff, it is subject to de-selection without following BPL’s policy and formal reconsideration process.

Regular Review

The following will be assessed to determine the success of BPL’s outreach collections (i.e., is it manageable for the library and embraced by the community?):

1. Library operational efficiencies
2. Patron use patterns
3. Ongoing availability of donated stock
4. Condition of materials as related to environmental conditions
5. Accessibility and subject matter for the outreach collections
6. Community partnerships and general program support
7. Other unknown or unforeseen situations.

Support Services

As outreach collections develop and prove to be manageable for the library and embraced by the community, select volunteers, or groups (i.e., Friends, Advisory Boards, and Altrusa) may be

a viable option for general maintenance of the resource. If volunteers adopt BPL outreach collections, the members will use donated stock approved by BPL. Volunteers will be trained to review content and conditions, working closely with Library staff.

Volunteer Services

Bentonville Public Library values our partnership with our volunteers. Our goal is to provide a positive environment for teamwork and engaged public service.

- A. From clerical tasks such as sorting, folding, and filing to public assistance duties such as assisting children with crafts or helping people with genealogy research, volunteers contribute to our community's high quality of library service.
- B. The library welcomes adults, teenagers, corporate groups, and parent/child teams. Additionally, the Library partners with Friends, Genealogy, Foundations, and other organizations for volunteerism opportunities to support Library programs and services.
- C. Bentonville Public Library does not accept court-ordered community service applicants.
- D. In addition to the policies, procedures, and agreements outlined in the Bentonville Library Volunteer Application, general guidelines support Library volunteer programs.
- E. These general guidelines include expectations regarding etiquette, attendance, confidential information, dress code, emergency procedures, logistical information, and other professional standards.
- F. Additionally, Library volunteers are expected to follow BPL patron's code of conduct and internet/computer policies.
- G. For safety reasons, and adhering to standard city practices, the library requires all individual adult volunteers, promoters, program presenters/participants, board members, and paid employees who may be in direct contact with any youth patrons using a city facility, such as the library, to pass a Level 2 background check on an annual basis.
- H. This includes all BPL volunteers 18+ years old, regardless of assigned library duties, and extends to Advisory Board members, Friends of the Library, Bentonville Library Foundation members, genealogy volunteers, work-study students, and other volunteers serving in a capacity for Library services.
- I. The library maintains standard operating procedures for volunteer background checks based on legal advice from the City and other departmental programs.
- J. The library contracts with a professional company to perform volunteer background checks.
- K. The requirement for a background check may be approved or waived at the discretion of the Library Director.