

Public Relations Policy

Public relations involves every person who has a connection with the library. To ensure that the public receives consistent and accurate information about library policies, procedures, programs and services, and to ensure that the best possible image of the library is presented to the public, the Grand Forks Public Library has developed the Public Relations Policy.

The Library Director is the official designated Library spokesperson. However, the Board urges its own members and every staff member to realize that he or she represents the Library in every public contact.

PUBLIC INQUIRIES

Any questions by the public referring to the policies, procedures, programs, and services of the library should be answered with complete accuracy. If the details are not clear to the questioner, they should be referred to a corresponding supervisor or the Director.

OUTREACH

Library employees are encouraged to engage in further public relations activities through speaking to local groups, participating in local organizations, visiting classrooms, and conducting tours and informational sessions at the Library. The Library Director must be informed of these activities.

TRADITIONAL MEDIA AND PROMOTIONAL MATERIALS

The Library will send news releases to local media outlets, including but not limited to newspapers, radio stations and television stations. News releases may focus on regular or special programming, library services, Board news, general library information, etc.

News releases and promotional items should look professional, be accurate, and provide a positive reflection of the Library. Any letters to the editor or public-facing social media statements from library staff designed to speak for the library must have prior approval from the Director.

Contacts initiated by the media that are not general reference questions should be forwarded to the Marketing Director, or the Library Director, or in the case of programming, to the staff member in charge of the program. That staff member will inform the Marketing Director or Library Director of media coverage. Should a query from the media be received after administrative business hours or when the Marketing Director or Library Director are out of the building, the staff member can answer questions of a general nature but should ask the media to contact the Director for more in-depth information. Public information or open meeting requests should be referred to the Library Director.

In the event of an emergency, official statements to the public and the media will be made by the Director or the Library Board President. If it is necessary for other library staff to provide the public with information in such situations, library administration will offer guidance as needed. If both the Library Director and Board President are unavailable, another member of the Board may act as spokesperson.

SOCIAL MEDIA

Library-sponsored social media is used to build relationships with patrons and convey information about library programs and services, raise awareness about community issues, obtain patron feedback, exchange ideas or insights about library trends, reach out to potential new patrons and supporters, and respond to breaking news or publicity.

Only employees designated and authorized by the Library Director can post, delete, edit, or otherwise modify content on Library-sponsored social media. Any such employee with authorization to add or modify social media content is required to follow these general guidelines:

- Make sure all social media postings are accurate, without grammatical errors or factual misrepresentations.

- Maintain privacy, confidentiality, and obtain permission to use another individual's or organization's content. If you are unsure whether to disclose any information, refrain from posting it.
- Find ways to engage patrons by posting content that supports the Library's mission.
- Make sure all postings provide a positive reflection of the Library; all posts should be constructive, inclusive, and beneficial for the community.

The following social media guidelines apply to all library staff members, regardless of their involvement with the official Library social media accounts:

- Follow all applicable Grand Forks Public policies. Maintain patron privacy and confidentiality both online and offline.
- Speak for yourself. On your personal profile, write in first person and make it clear that you are speaking for yourself and not on behalf of the library.
- Be respectful and professional. If your online activities, including comments, photos, videos, or other communications, are inconsistent with or would negatively impact the library's reputation, you should not refer to Grand Forks Public or identify your connection to the organization.
- Do not create any kind of library social media account prior to getting approval from the Marketing Director and Library Director.
- Be aware that nothing is truly private online. Seemingly "private" social media, such as Snapchat, private Facebook groups or closed online forums, can be discovered, captured, and shared with new audiences. Remember that if you wouldn't want your manager or others at the library to see your comments, photos, or other communications, it is unwise to post them to social media.

GUIDELINES FOR PARTICIPATION IN LIBRARY-SPONSORED SOCIAL MEDIA

We encourage employees to participate in conversation by liking, commenting, and sharing posts, and ask that you keep your feedback relevant and respectful. Grand Forks Public may remove any comments that we consider inappropriate or offensive, including those that are harassing, obscene, or abusive, as well as those that promote commercial products and services or illegal activity.

We reserve the right to block individuals, remove discussions, or delete excessive posting to improve the overall visitor experience. We may also remove posts that violate the social media's Terms of Services agreement or are inaccurate or otherwise objectionable.

EMPLOYEE RIGHT TO ENGAGE

The National Labor Relations Act (NLRA) guarantees the right of employees to engage in, or refuse to engage in, certain protected concerted activity. These rights include, but are not limited to, the right of employees to discuss wages and benefits and other terms and conditions of employment with co-workers, management or a union or to take action with one or more co-workers to improve working conditions. The NLRA also protects the right of employees to refuse or refrain from participating in such discussions. Nothing in this policy is intended to restrict employee rights to engage in protected concerted activities, including discussions regarding wages and benefits or other terms or conditions of employment, or to otherwise discourage employees from seeking to improve their working conditions as guaranteed by the NLRA.

Media Policy approved by the Grand Forks Public Library Board 8/19/2015; Amended and renamed Public Relations Policy approved by the Grand Forks Public Library Board 5/17/2017; 2/20/2019; 12/16/2020; 06/15/2022