

Onondaga County Public Library Free Direct Access Plan
In fulfillment of Commissioner's Regulation 90.3(a) through (d)(4)

1. Describe how all individuals residing within the boundaries of the system but outside a member public library's chartered service area will receive library services.

The Onondaga County Public Library (OCPL) is chartered to serve all of Onondaga County, and all county taxpayers are taxed for library service. OCPL technically has no residents in unchartered areas although a small number live outside of the service area for an individual member library. Because OCPL serves a compact geography, most of the population lives relatively near to a public library. Non-resident fees are not imposed by any OCPL library on any Onondaga County resident.

Resource sharing has been a hallmark of Onondaga County libraries since the creation of the library system. In recent years, technology has facilitated this sharing as the online catalog has made the holdings of all libraries visible to all residents, and the ability of patrons to place their own holds at a time or place convenient to them has increased the usage of materials across the system. The libraries are dedicated to seamless boundaries, with all libraries treating all system cardholders equally, generally without restrictions on or charges for typical library services.

To enhance free access to library resources, OCPL and several member libraries provide traveling collections to nursing homes, senior centers, and other agencies serving people with limited mobility. Several member libraries routinely deliver materials to the homebound, and OCPL provides "Service to the Homebound" which mails items to individuals who, for medical reasons, are unable to visit their library.

While improving technology has had a positive impact on sharing library materials such as books, DVDs and CDs, the sharing of electronic resources which are an ever increasing portion of library collections is much more problematic. Many of the electronic resources acquired by the Central Library and by member libraries have vendor-imposed restrictions to access. Contracts and licensing agreements now curtail the sharing of resources in a way not true with library materials in the past. This trend in library service makes the lack of equity in library funding throughout the County more apparent than ever.

The concern for funding and equitable access is a strong motivation for the system and member libraries to push forward the completion of a Memo of Understanding that will contain a commitment and procedure for sharing the costs of library materials and system services to benefit every County resident.

2. Describe how the system will assure that those persons living within the system boundaries in an area where a member library chooses to withdraw from the system, or where a chartered and registered library was never a member of the system, will be served by the system.

Onondaga County libraries have one card which is honored at all libraries in the system, providing seamless access to all residents of the system charter area. Because users of all libraries have become accustomed to free access and open resource sharing, it is highly unlikely that the clientele of a library would be agreeable to a library's decision to withdraw from the system. In fact, the only public library in the county that was not part of the system has recently joined, recognizing the benefits offered by membership.

3. Describe what the system considers "serious inequities and hardships" and the criteria used by the system to make the determination.

"Serious inequities and hardships," defined as "those conditions which adversely affect resident borrowers of member libraries," are not present in OCPL because the system-wide resource sharing goes in both directions. The criteria used are statistics from the Polaris Integrated Library System reports in conjunction with the observations of the member library directors. The reports consistently show that each library lends and borrows materials in proportions that demonstrate the benefits of resource sharing. If in the future a difference of more than 10% exists between a library's borrowing and its lending, the impact on that library and the other member libraries will be examined by System administration and the Onondaga County Suburban Library Director's association. Note that Central Library items are not included in these counts since Central Library items serve all County residents.

4. Describe what constitutes excessive out of chartered service area borrowing in the system.

This problem is unlikely to occur within Onondaga County because of the seamless access and the county-wide service area. Member library directors have not reported that usage by patrons from Onondaga County residents outside their chartered to serve areas negatively affects service to their residents. Some member library boards are studying the significant use of their libraries by residents of other counties.

5. a.) Describe the unserved and the underserved populations within the system.

Since Onondaga County Public Library is chartered to serve all of Onondaga County, and all county taxpayers are taxed for library services, technically there are no unserved areas within the county. Only a small percentage of the county's residents living outside of the city of Syracuse are not within a specific member's chartered service area, and those residents are served by the library nearest their home or workplace—or by whichever library they choose to visit.

An issue that has been identified is the inequitable access of residents to particular resources such as electronic databases and downloadable formats.

b.) Describe the criteria used by the system to identify libraries as having an inadequate level of local income to support the delivery of acceptable library service (underserved). List those libraries so identified.

The level of local funding received by the different libraries in the system varies greatly. Some libraries have been identified as needing more local funding in order to provide a more equitable level of library service throughout the county. Using 2010 operating expenditures data, the average per capita support in Onondaga County is \$53.

The following 10 libraries have the lowest per capita operating expenditures:

Northern Onondaga Public Library	(pop 53, 454)	\$39.41
Syracuse City Libraries	(pop 147,860)	\$38.31
LaFayette Public Library	(pop 4,833)	\$28.92
Skaneateles Library	(pop 7,323)	\$27.18
Onondaga Free Library	(pop 21,063)	\$23
Tully Free Library	(pop 6,067)	\$21.28
Fairmount Community Library	*	\$18.83
Maxwell Memorial Library	*	\$18.83
Elbridge Free Library	**	\$15.86
Jordan Bramley Library	**	\$15.86

*Fairmount and Maxwell serve the Town of Camillus and receive equal funding from the Town and on the West Genesee school district ballot. The Town population in 2000 was 23,152. Adding their budgets and dividing by the town population brings their funding to \$18.83

**Jordan and Elbridge, although chartered to serve their respective Villages, receive funds from the school district with a population of 9,065. Adding their budgets and dividing by the school district population brings their per capita to \$15.86.

c). Describe the actions the system will take to expand the availability of library services to unserved and underserved individuals residing within the boundaries of the system.

Libraries are aware of and make use of their funding options including school district and municipal referenda. The effort to secure better funding is ongoing, and system assistance is available in exploring options, developing strategies, planning presentations and designing promotional pieces.

Since the inception of the system in 1976, all member libraries have pointed to one library card as a tangible product of cooperation and collaboration. A milestone was reached in 2010 with the Skaneateles Library, the only public library in Onondaga County not in the system, joining OCPL. This has maximized service to all parts of Onondaga County.

An initiative of the OCPL Board of Trustees in 2011 – 2012 is to study possible models of funding the System and Central Library in a more sustainable manner which equalizes access to resources for all County residents.

d.) Provide a timetable for such actions.

These actions are ongoing. The funding study initiative is targeted for completion in 2012.

e.) Identify who will be responsible for carrying out these actions.

The Administrator for System and Member Library Services and the Member Library Liaison will work with member directors, member library trustees and the OCPL Board and administrators.

6. Describe the conditions under which modifications to the free direct access plan can be made:

a.) Without the prior approval of the Commissioner of Education

Agreements may be made with the approval of the OCPL Administration and a majority of member libraries for certain limitations to the plan. Examples of such modifications are restricting holds on new materials for a specified period of time to local borrowers only and blocking holds on certain popular, expensive or rare items if purchased with local funds.

It is noted that the access to electronic library materials is at this time being dictated by the vendors of the electronic resources and the access is not under control of the purchasing library. This is an area that needs ongoing discussion with vendors, all member libraries and the system administration.

b.) With the prior approval of the Commissioner of Education

The system does not anticipate the need for any modifications requiring the prior approval of the Commissioner of Education.

7. Describe how the system will assure that member libraries are complying with the system free direct access plan approved by a majority of member libraries.

Compliance with the plan is expected because it is in the best interests of the libraries and the library boards have agreed to the terms of the plan. Polaris reports and patron complaints or discussions at the Onondaga County Suburban Library Directors' meetings would alert the system to any unlikely instance of noncompliance, and the issue would be handled by the procedure for complaints outlined in the Memo of Understanding (still in draft form, scheduled to be in force during 2012).

8. Describe how the system obtained member library input to the plan for free direct access.

The Onondaga County Suburban Library Directors appointed a subcommittee to meet with OCPL administrators to discuss and update the previous Free Direct Access Plan. It was then presented along with the Plan of Service 2012 – 2016 to the OCPL Board of Trustees and to each member library board.

Nineteen of the nineteen member library boards have voted to approve the plan. They are as follows:

Information will be provided shortly.

The OCPL System Board ratified the plan at its **September 14, 2011** meeting.

Elizabeth J. Dailey, Executive Director
Onondaga County Public Library

Virginia Biesiada, President
Onondaga County Public Library Board of Trustees