

# **Teacher Card Committee**

## **How we developed our recommendations**

### **The goal for the committee**

We recognized that a lot of libraries feel that Teacher Cards are needed, in light of the new holds policy, and wanted to find a compromise that would address the needs of those libraries, without negatively affecting libraries who did not want the change. In short, we were seeking a win-win solution.

### **How the process started**

- 1) AAC requested that a Teacher Card Committee be convened to investigate implementing Teacher Cards in OWLSnet.
- 2) Because the Teacher Card Program had previously been eliminated by AAC, it was clear that a new teacher card program would need to have broad support.
- 3) A lot of libraries volunteered to be on the committee. In order to have the best chances of coming up with a recommendation that would meet the needs of most OWLSnet libraries, the committee was comprised of six OWLSnet member library staff, three of whom started in favor of Teacher Cards, and three of whom started opposed to Teacher Cards.

### **What do other libraries do?**

A lot of libraries have Teacher Cards, which are also sometimes called Educator Cards, A+ Educator Cards, and Homeschool Cards. We took a look at a number of these policies, which were posted on the web.

The sites we looked at included the Westerville Public Library in Ohio, Howard County Library, Cuyahoga County Public Library, Multnomah County Library, Grandview Heights Public Library (which has since discontinued Teacher Cards), Aurora Public Library, Kent Free Library, Fond du Lac Public Library, the Enoch Pratt Free Library and the Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh. We didn't attempt to do an exhaustive search, but looked for libraries that had well documented teacher cards guidelines on their websites.

We used these sites to come up with the questions we should consider, rather than come up with the answers. Based on the policies we looked at, we came up with the following list of questions:

- 1) Who is eligible for a Teacher Card?
- 2) How do we determine that they are a teacher? (Or a homeschooler, if homeschoolers are eligible)
- 3) Does the patron need to live or work in an OWLSnet county?
- 4) What can be checked out?
- 5) Many libraries explicitly limit the checkouts to instruction related materials. Should we do this? It can't be truly enforced by the loan rules, but making this clear might help to limit abuse.
- 6) Where are the cards stored?
- 7) Who is responsible for materials checked out on the card?
- 8) Does the patron get a regular patron card and a Teacher card, or just one card with extra privileges?
- 9) How do we enforce one Teacher Card per teacher?
- 10) What are the benefits of the card?
- 11) If the patron gets two cards, do we block checkout if either card is blocked?
- 12) Do we block at the bill, or the 1<sup>st</sup> or 2<sup>nd</sup> overdue?
- 13) When does the card expire?
- 14) How do we make sure this is useful to libraries who want a Teacher Card, and fair to everyone, even those who choose not to use the Teacher Cards?

### **What are we trying to accomplish with Teacher Cards? Do we have a mission statement?**

We discussed a number of possibilities – ideas libraries had discussed in AAC meetings, or in separate discussions with members of the committee. These included:

- Promoting local collections to local educators and learners
- Promoting local collections to students from Pre-K to K12
- Community outreach
- Reaching homeschoolers
- Promoting the use of the library to schools
- Promoting cooperating with the schools
- Books to the classroom for educational purposes, not books to children for personal use.

Eventually, we decided that what we really wanted to do was:

*Help OWLSnet libraries promote local collections to local educators and learners.*

We used this to make decisions about our recommendations.

### **Making a balanced Teacher Card proposal**

The committee attempted to balance the need for a useful Teacher Card with the need to avoid a negative impact on libraries that choose not to issue Teacher Cards. We discussed a lot of

issues in great detail, and tried to consider all the possible consequences for OWLSnet libraries of all shapes and sizes.

We recommend that participation in the Teacher card program be optional.

### *Number of holds*

We talked long and hard about the number of holds that would be allowed. We wanted to allow teachers additional holds, but not an unlimited number. In some of our conversations with other libraries, we were told that a teacher card wouldn't be useful unless it had a very large number of holds, since they couldn't meet the needs of local teachers from the materials in their own libraries.

We came to feel that if a library couldn't meet the needs of their teachers, that it wasn't appropriate to turn to other OWLSnet libraries, who are likely experiencing the same demands at their libraries. Instead, we felt that by offering a modest number of additional holds, and the full 75 checkouts, Teacher Cards would allow libraries to offer some additional service, and start a conversation with local teachers about what they could offer from their own collection.

We discussed, but ultimately decided against, allowing only holds on items that the library owned. While we felt it was fair, since these extra holds would only be pulled from the issuing library, it wouldn't be particularly useful to the teachers.

### *Keeping the card at the issuing library*

By keeping the card at the issuing library, and only allowing holds to be picked up at the issuing library, we hope to prevent demand at non-participating OWLSnet libraries.

We also like that checkouts will involve talking with staff, and might make it easier for libraries to promote their location collections and services.

### *Blocking checkout if either card is blocked*

Blocking checkout for a patron if either their Patron Card or their Teacher Card is blocked should also help keep both accounts current. We wanted to avoid a patron being able to choose their regular patron card if there were bills on their Teacher Card, and vice versa.

### *Limiting item types that can be checked out on Teacher Card*

Since the card is to be used for instruction related materials, we thought it appropriate that only books, magazines and audiobooks be checked out on the card.

### *Videos, video games and music*

We didn't include videos, because although videos can be used for instructional purposes, it was unlikely that a teacher would need multiple videos at once – so these could be checked out

on their Patron Card. Preventing these materials from being checked out would also prevent teachers from placing holds on popular videos with their Teacher Cards. We felt the same argument applied to music and videogames.

### *Short Loan items*

Ultimately, we decided that we'd recommend not allowing Teacher Cards to check out Short Loan Items. We had two goals here. One was to prevent these cards from being used to place holds on High Demand items. The other was to prevent these cards from being used to place holds on seasonally in-demand items for educational purposes. Since libraries place these items into a short loan category *because* they do not have enough copies to fill their local needs, it didn't seem fair to allow teachers from other areas additional access to these items. Please note that libraries would be free to check out Short Loan items to teachers locally.

### **Inclusion of homeschoolers**

While we didn't feel that including homeschoolers met the committee's goal for Teacher Cards, we did feel that many libraries would want homeschoolers included. Because the Teacher Card cannot be used for popular materials and videos, we were comfortable with making homeschoolers eligible for Teacher Cards.

Of course, this means that the name is a bit misleading. The committee would be open to naming the card something else – we were somewhat partial to the name *A+ Educators Card*.

Since Wisconsin requires home-schooling parents to fill out Form PI-1206 each year, we thought this would be an appropriate means of establishing homeschooling status. Here, we followed the lead of other libraries. While every state handles homeschooling differently, other libraries used a similar process to establish eligibility for homeschoolers.

### **Teacher eligibility**

We decided to focus on K-12 schools. Preschools are eligible for Institution Cards, and due to turnover of teachers, and the type of materials they use, we felt this was a better choice for preschools. Teachers at online schools use an online curriculum, and don't have a means of sharing library books with their student; students are of course eligible for patron cards just like students at brick and mortar schools. We felt that college professors, and teachers of continuing education classes or hobbies, were more appropriately served by the regular patron card.

Since the purpose of the card is to promote local collections to local educators, we tried to ensure that the teachers served would be local. For example, the Kimberly Library shouldn't be expected to provide a Teacher Card to a patron who lives and works in Menasha, which is not an OWLSnet municipality. Marinette has the additional concern of teachers living or working in Michigan, so we included a stipulation that the teacher must reside in the state of Wisconsin.

## **Process**

The process we recommend is designed to keep bookkeeping to a minimum and allow the library to store the Teacher Cards. A patron needs to have a regular patron card before they get a Teacher Card.

Once they demonstrate eligibility for the Teacher Card, the patron should fill out a short registration form (not yet created--no sample to show) that also details the rights and responsibilities of the Teacher Card.

The library then creates a new account with the Teacher Card barcode and then links it to the patron's regular card. When a patron checks out, they present their regular patron card, then ask the staff to check the items out on the linked Teacher Card.

In order for patrons to be able to place holds using their Teacher Cards online, the committee suggests that the second part of the barcode sticker be placed on the patron's copy of the Teacher Card registration form.

Teacher cards can only be used at the issuing agency (except in the case of joint libraries or county libraries.) To let staff know which agency issues, the card, we could place a popup on the Teacher Card with the name of the issuing library. Alternately, staff could simply check the patron's home agency in the patron record.

To keep from issuing duplicate cards, staff should check the patron's regular patron card for linked records before issuing a Teacher Card.

## **Overdues and Fines**

While our recommendations say that patrons will not be allowed to check out materials if either card has more than \$5 in charges, Millennium will not handle this automatically.

It should be clear to staff when a patron using a Teacher Card owes more than \$5 on their regular card, but staff would need to manually check the Teacher Card if a patron is checking out using their regular patron card. In order to make this easier for staff, we recommend that staff put a manual block on the regular patron card once they see that the Teacher Card is not in good standing.

## **Conclusion**

Our committee started pretty far apart on many of the issues. We talked through them, and ultimately came to a recommendation that we can all whole-heartedly and enthusiastically recommend. We feel it's a balanced solution that protects the needs of libraries while still offering a useful Teacher Card that will help libraries reach out to local educators.