



Somers Library
Route 139 & Reis Park, Somers, NY 10589 914-232-5717
www.somerslibrary.org

Media Relations Policy

Library Spokesperson

In order to provide the most current and consistent information about the library, all contact with news media will be carried out through the Library Director, or Board President, although at times individuals occupying such positions may refer the media to specific staff members. The Library Board President is the spokesperson for the Library Board of Trustees. All inquiries from reporters or other media persons should be reported immediately to the Director.

When asked by the public for information related to library business or policy, staff should respond in accordance with library guidelines regarding such requests and, in the case of doubt, should consult with the Director.

Employees who represent the library as media spokespersons should avoid speculation on any topic and refrain from offering personal opinions about library policies or programs, even when asked to do so by a reporter.

Questions from the public regarding the general operations or direction of the library should be referred to the Director. Inquiries related to the underlying principles of a policy that are open to interpretation from a political, constitutional, and/or legal perspective should be referred to the Director. Examples of such policies include but are not limited to those covering Internet Access, Filtering, Intellectual Freedom, and Meeting Room issues.

Inquiries regarding the library budget should be referred to the Library Director.

Newsgathering in the Library

Members of the media who wish to conduct newsgathering in the library in any manner disruptive to, or interfering with, the operation of the library or its use by other patrons or be inconsistent with its mission, must make themselves known to either the Director or to the staff member in charge of the building in the Director's absence. Examples of behavior that can be disruptive, or interfere with, the operation of the library or its use by other patrons or be inconsistent with the library's mission, include (but are not limited to) interviewing at other than normal conversational voice level, photographing, video recording, or audio recording customers or staff. (See **Photography or recording by members of the public or media below.**) Staff members witnessing members of the media engaged in such activity must inform them of the policy and ask that they request and gain permission from the Director before further conducting newsgathering in the library. This policy does not apply to a member of the media in his or her capacity as a patron using the library's resources.

Photography and Video or Audio Recording in the Library

Photography or recording by the library

The Somers Library frequently uses photographs of patrons in its publications and electronic media to promote the value and use of library services and materials. Taking photos of patrons does not put the Somers Library in any legal liability; this aligns with New York Civil Rights Laws § 50 and 51. A patron's participation in a Library event serves as consent to being filmed, photographed, or recorded, unless they otherwise clearly indicate to the contrary to Library staff. To ensure the privacy of all individuals, their images will not be identified using full names or personal identifying information without written approval from the photographed subject, parent or legal guardian.

The above policy applies only to open, public events. Closed events such as class visits would require releases and/or permissions from the supervisor of the visiting organization.

Photography or recording by members of the public or the media

While the library is a public place, it is considered a "limited public forum" under federal law. Public libraries may reasonably restrict the exercise of free speech rights in their buildings, particularly when the conduct would be disruptive to, or interfere with, the other customers or staff or be inconsistent with the library's mission.

Subject to the preceding paragraph: photography and video or audio recording by visitors to the library are generally permitted if it is strictly for personal use. Photography and video or audio recording for commercial purposes are permitted only if the activity has been expressly approved by the Library Director. In order to insure that such activity would not be disruptive to, or interfere with, the library staff or customers, or be inconsistent with the library's mission, all individuals proposing to engage in such commercial activities must request approval in writing and in advance.

All requests to use a library facility as a setting for photography, video or audio recording are to be referred to the Director, who has the responsibility and authority to evaluate the requests and to monitor the recording. Requests will be evaluated in terms of their impact on library operations and services. The Director will make arrangements with specific Library departments and personnel in advance of the approved photography or recording.

In order to protect the rights of individual patrons and to prevent disruptions, interference with staff or customers, or conduct inconsistent with the library's mission, photographing and video or audio recording on library property are restricted as follows:

1. Under no circumstances may the public or members of the media take photographs or record video or audio without the express permission of any library patron or staff member who would be included within the composition. In the case of minors, permission must come from the parent or legal guardian.
2. Media are subject to the provisions of the Code of Conduct policy and may not disturb the normal operations of the library.

3. In the event of a critical incident or emergency requiring police or fire response, public and media access may be limited to allow emergency personnel to ensure safety and security.
4. The terms above apply to the media as well as to amateur photographers and audio/video creators.