
Welcome! You have joined a dedicated group of community members who support the programs and services Arlington Public Library provides to the community. We are very happy to have you!

This manual is a resource to introduce you to the library's work culture and to answer some questions you may have during your volunteer service at Arlington Public Library.

About the Library

Arlington Public Library has eight locations: Central, Aurora Hills, Cherrydale, Columbia Pike, Courthouse, Glencarlyn, Shirlington and Westover.

- We offer outreach library services in locations throughout the community, including community centers, senior centers, at local community festivals, and at the Arlington County Detention Center.
- We have collections in many formats (including print, audio, video and digital), databases, and periodicals for all ages. We also circulate nontraditional materials such as garden tools, puzzles and games, American Girl dolls, Wi-Fi hotspots, our award-winning Energy Lending Library, and more!
- Central Library delivers print materials to patrons via the Books by Mail service.
- All locations provide free Wi-Fi, and most have meeting rooms available for public use.
- Staff and volunteers help to bridge the "digital divide," providing tech and digital literacy skills support necessary for success in the digital age.
- We host over 3,000 programs a year reaching children, teens and adults.
- The Friends of the Arlington Public Library (FOAL) is a nonprofit organization that provides financial support for programs, materials, and various other initiatives.

Our Mission

We champion the power of stories, information, and ideas.

We create space for culture and connection.

We embrace inclusion and diverse points of view.

Our Vision

Arlington Public Library is the heart of a thoughtful, inclusive and dynamic community where people and ideas connect.

Our Promise

Arlington Public Library promises to:

- Inspire and quench your thirst to know.
- Encourage you to ask why and why not?
- Embrace inclusion and diverse points of view.
- Be a wellspring for ideas, for conversation, for disagreement, for enlightenment.
- Create opportunities for an increased understanding: of our world, of our community and of each other.

We will do all of this with goodwill, humor, and kindness. Through books and community programs. Within our walls and outside in the community.
We are here for you.

Library Organization

The library is organized into three divisions:

- **Director's Office/ Administration** provides the library's infrastructure and overall leadership.
- **Collections, Access & Technology (CAT)** manages acquisitions, bibliographic services, collection development and access services.
- **Public Services** oversees all public-facing operations.

Friends of the Arlington Public Library (FOAL)

The Friends of the Arlington Public Library (FOAL) is a volunteer organization established to support Arlington Public Library. Their mission is to enable a strong, vibrant, engaged community using the library as a place to read, learn, work, create, congregate, and share ideas. FOAL provides funding for all Library programs including story-times, maker events at The Shop, author talks, and the Summer Reading program. Fundraising is primarily done through the bi-annual book sales (Arlington's longest running recycling program!) and through each of the library locations' bookstores.

Public Libraries Ethics

Confidentiality

According to the [American Library Association's Library Bill of Rights](#), "privacy is essential to the exercise of free speech, free thought, and free association. In a library (physical or virtual) the right to privacy is the right to open inquiry without having the subject of one's interest examined or scrutinized by others."

Arlington Public Library employees and volunteers follow procedures that protect every patron's personal information, such as:

- Reading history
- Reference interviews and email inquiries
- Internet browsing
- Patron contact information
- Fees charged/paid

We keep only the most basic records necessary to conduct library business. Internet management software automatically clears the memory cache after each patron logs out of public computers. Thus, patrons using public terminals retain their privacy.

Personal information is released only to the cardholder to ensure someone else cannot gain access.

Intellectual Freedom

The right to Intellectual freedom is one of the library's core values. Librarians believe that:

- access to the information citizens need to make informed decisions forms the basis of our democratic society.
- When information is suppressed, informed decisions cannot be made.

As a result, libraries provide open access to information, programs and services,

- for free, to make it accessible to all regardless of social or economic status.
- Libraries are the public entity that levels the playing field between the haves and have-nots.
- Libraries aim to bridge the digital divide by providing free and equal access to digital resources and information literacy instruction.

Most library patrons cherish the freedom to access a broad range of information and to choose whatever they want to read or research. However, the nature of intellectual freedom ensures that somebody is likely to find something offensive in the library.

The library welcomes patron feedback and opinions. Comments about the collection provide library staff with useful information about interests or needs that may have been overlooked or not adequately met by the collection.

The library's selection of materials does not imply endorsement of the author's viewpoint. Rather, the library seeks to balance its collection of materials and resources so that it is broadly inclusive rather than exclusive of ideas.

Patrons may express concern about materials in the collection they consider inappropriate or objectionable. The sound judgment and good sense of staff can contribute to a quick and successful inquiry resolution. Staff and volunteers should be familiar with library policies and always demonstrate respect for customers and their opinions.

Equal Access to Resources

The library's policies seek to ensure equitable access. We have only so many items in our collection, there are only so many meeting rooms, and there are only so many hours in the day. Consequently, our policies are designed to give equitable access to as many people as possible without purposely or inadvertently giving priority to one person or group over another.

Introduction to the Volunteer Program

The mission of Arlington Public Library's volunteer program is to enhance the services the library provides and to foster relationships with the community.

Volunteers are selected based on their skills and interests in relation to the needs of the library. They will receive training from volunteer coordinators on the tasks they are asked to perform. Volunteers represent the library while they are volunteering and are responsible for presenting a positive image to the public. Consequently, they should dress appropriately and wear a volunteer badge or other identifier provided by the library. Volunteers are expected to act in accordance with library policies and the library's rules governing behavior or risk being asked to leave their role.

Volunteer Positions

Arlington Public Library, a department within the Arlington County Government, provides equal access to all programs and services for all persons without regard to race, color, religion, sex, sexual orientation, gender identification, national origin, age, disability or marital status. Arlington County provides reasonable accommodations to persons with disabilities in compliance with the ADA.

Volunteer positions can be revised and restructured to meet the changing needs of the library, and volunteer positions can be discontinued at the discretion of the library, the volunteer program supervisor, or the volunteer coordinator.

Volunteer tasks are designed to complement the work of paid staff, although a supervisor may make an exception and ask a volunteer to do more. Potential exceptions include volunteers who are given assignments narrow enough that they can be trained to perform the standard; former staff returning to perform tasks for which they are already trained; and volunteers who are currently certified or licensed to perform specific tasks. A copy of such a certificate or license might be requested by the library's volunteer coordinator.

Volunteer Application Process

Volunteers should complete a volunteer application and have a scheduled conversation with library staff to ensure their interests and skills match the library's current needs. Staff will check their references and initiate a criminal background check for most adult volunteers. At the completion of this process, and after adults pass the background check, the volunteer will be onboarded and ready to get started!

All volunteers must:

- ☐ Participate in a staff interview and/or orientation,
- ☐ Sign a Volunteer Agreement outlining the terms and conditions of volunteer employment,
- ☐ Submit to a background check (high school graduates and older).

Additionally, the library requests that volunteers log their hours regularly.

Volunteer Rights

- Volunteers and their supervisor will agree upon the time and duties for which a commitment is made.
- Volunteers will receive sufficient training to perform the assigned duties.
- Volunteers will be notified of unexpected closings or changes in operating procedures.
- Volunteers have the right to speak with supervising staff if they have questions or concerns about their role or established duties.

Volunteer Responsibilities

- Perform their duties to the best of their ability.
- Treat all Library patrons with courtesy and respect.
- Volunteers will log their time on the volunteer management platform.
- Adhere to Department rules and procedures, especially as concerns [social media](#)?
- Meet their time and duty commitments or provide adequate notice of schedule changes so that alternative arrangements can be made.
- Keep confidential all information regarding the patrons that they work with during their volunteer assignment. If a volunteer shares this information, they may be asked to stop volunteering.
- Dress appropriately. Discuss appropriate attire with your volunteer supervisor. Wear a volunteer badge or other identifier while working.

Time Commitment

Because of the time and resources necessary to train and onboard new adult volunteers, the library asks volunteers for a commitment of at least six months. This requirement can be adjusted at the discretion of the volunteer coordinator or immediate supervisor.

Safety and Liability Statement

Arlington County covers its volunteers for personal injury or property damage to others while acting within their volunteer assignment. If injured on the job, they are covered by the County's accidental insurance plan, which provides secondary coverage to the volunteer's private insurance. The County will provide primary coverage up to the limit of its policy for volunteers without primary medical insurance.

When an injury occurs while doing work within your job description, notify your supervisor within 24 hours. The supervisor will then fill out an incident report and appropriate action will be taken.

Inclement Weather

During inclement weather or emergencies, the library may close early, open late, or be closed entirely. The volunteer's supervisor will attempt to notify the volunteer of any changes affecting their shift. Notices will also be placed on the library's website and social media accounts.

Volunteers should exercise their best judgment regarding travel during inclement weather. They should call their supervisor or the appropriate library branch to report an absence.

Resignation

Volunteers wishing to resign should notify their supervisor. Except in emergency situations, volunteers should try to give as much notice as possible so that a replacement or appropriate arrangements can be made.

Ideally, volunteers will provide feedback prior to their departure, enabling the library to improve the volunteer program.

Dismissal

The library retains the right to stop using the services of a volunteer when appropriate. Volunteers can be dismissed immediately if behavior warrants this action. The following are grounds for immediate dismissal:

- Repeated absences from work and absences without proper notification
- Violation of library policy or procedures, including poor customer service or a breach of confidentiality
- Violation of the volunteer agreement

Appendix:

- Hours and Addresses for all Library Locations: [APL Hours and Locations](#)
- Most holidays and closings will be announced on the library homepage: [Arlington Public Library](#)