

## Staff Protocols for Patron Concerns/Complaints

### General Complaint/Concern

- If a patron has a general complaint that you are not able to deal with immediately (i.e. concerns about staff, buildings, etc, or an issue that they want to elevate to administration)
  - **Script:** "You're welcome to speak with our Library Director about your concerns."
- If a concern or complaint deals with our **materials, collections, programs, or displays**, this is something that needs to be *immediately* passed on to the Director. The Director should be the only contact for these sensitive issues- see below for procedures.
- If the Director is out of the building and there is a time-sensitive issue or complaint, the Assistant Director is fully authorized to deal with the issue as appropriate.

### Complaint about a Display or Program:

- The Library is working with the Trustees and Asst. City Solicitor to write programming and display policies. **There is no official protocol for challenging those at the moment.** The Director is available to discuss with the patron at any time.
- Follow the "How is the patron contacting us?" steps based on the location of the patron, but there is no form to give out and no official protocol other than a discussion with the Director. This will be changing in the near future.

### Complaint about Materials:

**Script:** "We have a formal Request for Reconsideration process for materials. You're welcome to speak with the Library Director for more information."

- It's important for the patron to know that there is a process, and that no decision is made AND no items are removed in the moment- is a formal and legal process that is slow and onerous for everyone involved.
- Most important- do not apologize to the patron, don't agree with them, keep your answer entirely professional and neutral, as our approach to these complaints is 100% objective and based on **policy, not emotion.**

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- Do not apologize that they were offended (this may imply that we agree with them), do not thank them for bringing the issue to our attention (this may imply that we don't know our own collection)
- ONLY if a patron asks for the form, you must give them the entire Collection Development packet and NOT only the Request for Consideration form
  - Provide the form along with a copy of our CD policy (copies at each desk and on the Policies website page), and tell them that they can return the form directly to me via email or dropping it off at any location, and the Director will contact them further. The first step of this process goes through the Director, not the Trustees, and any issue brought to their attention will immediately be referred to the Director to follow the appropriate protocols.
- **Do not volunteer the form unless they specifically ask for it.** Ideally, the form should come straight from the Director who can listen to them, acknowledge that they have a concern, and explain the entire process. It is also available on the policies page of our website ([peabodylibrary.org/policies](http://peabodylibrary.org/policies) in the appendices linked at the end of the "Principles of Materials, Collection Development, & Selection" section)

### How is the patron contacting us?

- In person at the Main, and the Director is in the building
  - Call the Director at x16
    - **Script:** "A patron would like to speak with you about our materials/programs/displays".
  - Do NOT say that a patron wants to challenge a book, or even that they have a complaint- just that they would like to speak with me about a general subject.
  - Do not send the patron into the Director's office without speaking to the Director first.
- Phone call at the Main, and the Director is in the building-
  - Put the patron on hold. Do NOT transfer them until you have spoken to the Director with a heads up.
  - Call x16

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- **Script:** "a patron would like to speak with you about our materials/programs/displays (general subject)"
- The Director will take the call once you have given the heads-up
- Phone call or in person at the Main, and the Director is not in the building/not available-
  - Phone- Offer to transfer to x16 VM or take a message.
  - In person- give them the Director's card, invite them to call or email the Director.
  - *Immediately* email the Director with ONLY the following text in the email:
    - **Script:** "A patron would like to speak with you about our materials/programs/displays"
    - Do NOT put any identifying information about the patron, including the library card number. Your heads-up should indicate an anonymous complaint. Any identifying information on the patron is a breach of confidentiality.
- Phone or in person at the South or West-
  - Phone- give them the Main # and x16 and the Director's email address, inviting them to call or email
  - In person- give them the Director's card, invite them to call or email.
  - *Immediately* email the Director with ONLY the following text in the email:
    - **Script:** "A patron would like to speak with you about our materials/programs/displays"
    - If the Director is in the building also call the Main x16 *immediately*
    - Do NOT put any identifying information about the patron, including the library card number. Your heads-up should indicate an anonymous complaint. Any identifying information on the patron is a breach of confidentiality.
- If you receive an email-
  - Forward directly to the Director without responding to the patron. Only the Director should respond. **Do not cc/include anyone else on this email.**