

Chatham-Kent Public Library

Communications Policy

Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to ensure that Chatham-Kent Public Library (CKPL) provides consistent and accurate information about library policies, resources, programs and services to the general public, municipal officials, community leaders and news media.

CKPL also commits to facilitating meaningful two-way communication between patrons, other library users, and library staff.

Accessible and professional internal and external communications also promote active participation in the varied services and programs offered by CKPL to the residents of Chatham-Kent.

Scope

This policy refers to:

- External communication about or on behalf of Chatham-Kent Public Library
- Communications by CKPL Board members, CKPL staff
- All forms of communications, including all online communication platforms such as social media

This policy is supported by “IT Acceptable Use Policy” for Municipal employees, “Employee Code of Conduct” for Municipal employees, and “Code of Conduct” for patrons. This policy combines CKPL’s former “Social Media” and “Public Relations and Media” policies.

Definitions

Communications means the interaction between two or more people or groups where information and other content is provided, sent, or received.

Communications platform means a tool that supports two-way communication such as conversations, information sharing, and commentary rather than a one-way or broadcast communication.

Personal Information is defined as information which can be used to identify an individual.

Transparency means a situation in which business and financial activities are done in an open way without secrecy, so that people can trust that they are fair and honest.

Policy Statement

Chatham-Kent Public Library values the role that communications plays in:

- Engaging and consulting with the community and members of the public
- Sharing information about CKPL
- Celebrating the value of the public library to the community
- Providing transparency about how CKPL operates

The Library will:

- Maintain a clear and consistent corporate identity to help the public recognize and understand library policies and use library programs and services
- Communicate in a respectful and positive manner, reflecting the library's values and its commitment to responsive public service
- Support intellectual freedom while protecting privacy rights
- Ensure that communications represent the diverse nature of the community in a fair and inclusive manner
- Ensure that communications reflect the value of accessibility and comply with accessibility legislation and standards
- Communicate possible danger, hazard or threat, to public health and safety as needed
- Ensure that the Library Board and all library staff work together to achieve clear and effective communications with the public
- Manage communications effectively, efficiently and in a financially responsible manner

Interpersonal contact is a primary requirement of communications and is the responsibility of every employee and Library Board member associated with CKPL.

The CEO/Chief Librarian is the final authority on the library's communications, with the exception of common or routine programming and events promotion.

While staff and Library Board members may represent the library in the community, the CEO/Chief Librarian or designate will act as the library's official spokespeople in matters of a sensitive or controversial nature.

1. Media Relations

Contact with the media in a community is essential to promoting the library. CKPL recognizes the value and impact that local new media offer to CKPL in helping to share information about library programs and services to the community.

Inquiries from news media are given high priority by CKPL. Requests for information will be responded to effectively and efficiently and in as timely a manner as possible.

Any media inquiries received by library staff as a result of a media release where they are listed as media contact should be answered by that staff person in a timely manner.

Any non-routine inquiries should be referred to the CEO/Chief Librarian or designate. An appropriate response to media partners is, "I don't have the full information regarding that issue. I will forward your request to the Chief Librarian, who will contact you as soon as possible." Staff should obtain the reporter's name, contact number, topic of the story and the deadline.

2. Community and Library Users

CKPL is committed to providing a venue for sharing information about CKPL and local community resources with our patrons and partners. CKPL offers several communication platforms that provide a means for meaningful two-way communication between patrons, other library users and library staff.

In addition to the general rules respecting the use of the library, as outlined in the Codes of Conduct, the Library Board prohibits the use of communications platforms managed by CKPL for any purpose which would contravene any statute or government regulation, or which might create civil liability by the user or the Library Board to any person. For example, the Ontario Human Rights Code prohibits discrimination and harassment of other individuals or groups, and the Criminal Code of Canada prohibits child pornography, obscenity, hate literature, sedition and literature for illicit drug use.

Use of communication platforms managed by CKPL is conditional on the user's agreement to observe this policy. By continuing to use the application, the user indicates agreement to all requirements of this policy.

Comments, posts, images and messages are welcome on CKPL social media, provided they do not contain:

- Obscene or racist content
- Personal attacks, insults, or threatening language
- Potentially libelous statements
- Plagiarized material
- Private, personal information published without consent
- Comments totally unrelated to the content of the forum
- Hyperlinks to material that is not directly related to the discussion
- Commercial promotions or spam
- Content promoting candidates for public office and other organized political activity
- Content promoting illegal activity or encouragement to break the law
- Information or actions that compromise the safety or security of the public

3. Photography/Film

Library staff will obtain a signed photo/video release for any photos or video where a member of the public is featured. Authorization for photo and video will be completed by the parent or guardian of those under 18 years of age. Photographs and video may be used by the library in any of its promotional material.

A release does not need to be completed for photos/videos of crowds of people when no one person is clearly identifiable.

All external photographers and videographers must seek permission from the CEO/Chief Librarian or designate before taking photos or filming on library premises. In order to protect the rights of individual library patrons, permission must be sought from anyone whose face would be prominently included within the composition of a photograph or video.

4. Social Media

Social media managed by CKPL provides an online place to create and disseminate information on relevant library content and topics. Social media may be used to educate, discuss, promote and market, build bodies of knowledge and/or to entertain.

Being followed by CKPL on any social media platform or having messages or content created by other parties shared on CKPL social media does not imply endorsement.

CKPL regards social media in the same way as it does its other information resources and communication platforms in accordance with its mission, "to be an indispensable centre of culture, community and learning in Chatham-Kent" and CKPL's Strategic Goals that "CKPL encourages Chatham-Kent residents to engage in the virtual world, proactively provides programming that informs, inspires and enriches lives of CK residents, and creates welcoming, accessible and social inclusive spaces."

All social media channels affiliated with the library will be regularly screened by library staff. Postings that contain any prohibited content will be removed immediately and the posting account may be blocked from posting any subsequent messages to that library social media platform. CKPL also reserves the right to edit or modify any submissions that do not comply with the library's policies.

By posting content, the user agrees to indemnify CKPL and its administration and staff from and against all liabilities, judgments, damages and costs (including legal fees) which arise out of, or are related to, the posted content.

Social media managed by CKPL may contain links to content on other websites. CKPL is not responsible for the reliability or accuracy of content managed within these links. Patrons accessing any user-generated resources do so at their own risk.

Patrons are encouraged to protect their privacy when participating in online public forums. CKPL is committed to protecting patron privacy. Therefore, library staff will not

share personally identifiable information and/or patron information that is protected by library confidentiality as per the CKPL Privacy Policy.

However, patron privacy does not extend to public forums, including social media channels where a user may choose to identify him or herself as a patron of CKPL. By posting content in a public forum, the user acknowledges that he or she may forfeit any expectation of patron privacy.

As with more traditional library resources, CKPL does not act in place of or in the absence of a parent. The library is not responsible for enforcing any restrictions which a parent or guardian may place on a minor's use of this resource.

Staff Use

CKPL staff are free to publish or comment via social media in accordance with this policy. CKPL staff are subject to this policy to the extent they identify themselves as CKPL employees.

Any proposals by staff to use new social media platforms to expand or promote the collections, services and programs of CKPL are first vetted by the appropriate Manager. The Manager then submits the proposal to the CEO/Chief Librarian for review and approval prior to implementation.

Appropriate content for staff to post includes, but is not limited to:

- Notices of upcoming meetings, programs and events
- Content of all press releases, policies and procedures, information about library services, collections, trends or technology, reviews and recommendations
- Communication between staff and the library community regarding CKPL work and/or projects
- Frequently asked questions
- Promotion and outreach
- Information relevant to the community, information from community partners, local employment, training, and continuing education information

5. Emergency and Crisis Communication

In the event of an emergency, CKPL will communicate as best it can during and after the event. The intent of this communication is to prevent injury or loss of life, limit damage to library assets and property, maintain public services, assist in the process of recovery and maintain or restore public confidence in the library.

Official statements to the public and the media will be made by the CEO/Chief Librarian, or designate. Communications regarding the stewardship or reputation of the library will also be the responsibility of those persons.

The library will support the Municipality of Chatham-Kent and its boards and divisions and departments in any crisis or emergency communications as required.

Adapted from London Public Library, Kenosha Public Library, Ypsilanti District Library (Michigan)

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Background Documents: Media Relations Policy, Social Media Policy

For more information or alternative formats of this document, please email cklibrary@chatham-kent.ca.