THAYER MEMORIAL LIBRARY

MEMBERSHIP POLICY

1. Purpose

The mission of Thayer Memorial Library ("Library") is to bring people, information, and ideas together to enrich lives and build community. This Policy establishes eligibility requirements, registration procedures, and conditions governing Membership and borrowing privileges. The Policy is intended to support equitable access to Library resources while ensuring responsible stewardship of public property and Library resources.

2. Scope

This Policy applies to all applicants for Library Membership, cardholders, parents, guardians, institutions, organizations, and any other individuals or entities seeking borrowing privileges from the Library.

3. Definitions

3.1 Library Membership

Library Membership "Membership" entitles eligible individuals to borrow Library materials and access services offered by the Library. Membership is established through the completion of the Library registration process and acceptance of the responsibilities outlined in this policy.

3.2 Director

"Director" means the Library Director or a staff member designated by the Director to act on the Director's behalf.

3.3 Parent

"Parent" means an individual possessing legal authority to care for the personal and property interests of a minor. The term includes guardians and any other person, or entity authorized by law to act on behalf of a minor.

3.4 Guardian

"Guardian" means a person authorized by law to act on behalf of another individual and exercise rights and responsibilities applicable to that individual.

3.5 Library Materials

"Library Materials" means books, audiovisual materials, equipment, devices, digital resources, and any other items made available by the Library.

3.6 Cardholder

"Cardholder" means any individual or organization issued a Membership by the Library.

4. Eligibility for Membership

4.1 Massachusetts Residents

Memberships shall be issued without charge to eligible Massachusetts residents in accordance with applicable Massachusetts Board of Library Commissioners (MBLC) certification requirements and reciprocal borrowing agreements.

4.2 Reciprocal Borrowers

Individuals presenting a valid library card issued by an MBLC-certified public library may borrow Library materials in accordance with applicable Central Western Massachusetts Automated Resource Sharing (CW MARS) policies, reciprocal borrowing agreements, and Library procedures.

4.3 Nonresident Borrowers

Applicants who do not satisfy Massachusetts residency requirements may purchase an annual nonresident Membership for a non-refundable fee established by Trustees. Unless otherwise authorized, such memberships shall permit borrowing of Library materials owned by the Library but may be restricted from reciprocal borrowing, interlibrary loan services, or other network borrowing privileges. Applicants who do not meet Massachusetts residency requirements, but who pay property taxes to the Town of Lancaster may be eligible for a fee waiver upon presentation of satisfactory evidence of taxpaying status.

5. Membership Registration

Adult applicants shall provide proof of identity and current residential address before a Library card is issued. Acceptable forms of identification may include:

- A driver's license;
- A state-issued identification card;
- A federal identification card; or
- Documents establishing current residency.

The Library recognizes that not all individuals possess traditional government-issued identification. Accordingly, the Library may accept alternative documentation or other reasonably acceptable means of verifying identity and residency when necessary to facilitate access to Library services.

The Director shall establish and administer such alternative verification procedures in a reasonable,

consistent, and nondiscriminatory manner, taking into consideration the Library's commitment to equitable access, responsible account administration, and protection of Library resources.

6. Collection and Use of Personal Information (See: Privacy and Confidentiality Policy)

6.1 The Library collects only information reasonably necessary to:

- Establish Library accounts;
- Provide circulation and account services;
- Communicate with members;
- Administer online resources;
- Collect fees or fines where applicable.

6.2 Personally identifiable information collected by the Library may include:

- Name
- Address
- Telephone number
- Email address
- Date of birth
- Library barcode number
- Current checkouts
- Active holds and requests
- Interlibrary loan requests
- Outstanding overdue items
- Fine and fee information

7. Membership Term

Memberships shall remain valid for two (2) years unless suspended, revoked, or otherwise restricted. Cardholders shall verify contact information upon expiration and whenever requested by the Library. Cardholders are responsible for maintaining accurate account information.

8. Proxy Authorization

A Cardholder in good standing may authorize another individual to act as a proxy for purposes approved by the Library, including pickup of reserved Library materials. The Cardholder remains responsible for all Library materials borrowed through the account, including those obtained by a proxy.

9. Membership for Minors

Library memberships are available to applicants under eighteen (18) years of age. No minimum literacy, writing, or signing ability shall be required to obtain a Library card.

When a minor is unable to independently satisfy the Library's registration requirements as listed in section 5, a Parent, Guardian, or other person legally authorized to act on behalf of the minor may authorize the issuance of a Library card by completing and signing the application for membership. The adult who signs the application shall assume responsibility for all materials borrowed on the account and for any charges or fees.

A Parent or Guardian who assumes responsibility for a minor's account may request, in writing, the suspension or termination of the minor's borrowing privileges at any time. The Library recognizes that Parents and Guardians, and not the Library, are responsible for determining a minor's access to Library materials, services, and resources.

Pursuant to Massachusetts General Laws Chapter 78, Section 7, records that identify a library user's identity, use of library resources, or intellectual pursuits are confidential and shall not be disclosed except as authorized by law. These protections apply to all library users, including minors.

Nothing in this section shall be construed to prohibit the issuance of membership to a minor who independently satisfies the Library's registration requirements.

10. School Partnerships

The Library may participate in partnerships with local schools or educational institutions to facilitate student access to Library membership. The school administration or a designated representative is responsible for ensuring this policy is followed before submitting completed membership forms to the Library.

11. Guardianship

A Guardian shall possess the same rights and responsibilities under this Policy as a Parent when authorized by law to act on behalf of a minor or ward. A Guardian who assumes responsibility for a membership account shall be responsible for Library materials borrowed on that account and may request restrictions or suspension of borrowing privileges consistent with Library procedures and applicable law.

12. Institutional Memberships

Residential programs, and other local organizations may obtain institutional Library memberships.

Institutional cardholders shall be responsible for all activity conducted through the account, including any charges, replacement costs, or other obligations associated with Library materials borrowed using the account. The rights, responsibilities, and accountability for Library materials borrowed on an institutional account shall be governed by the terms and conditions established between the Library and the participating institution.

The Director may establish procedures governing issuance, renewal, accountability, and authorized users of institutional memberships.

13. Temporary Memberships

The Library may issue temporary memberships to individuals temporarily residing with Lancaster residents.

Temporary memberships shall generally be issued for periods not exceeding three (3) months unless otherwise authorized by the Director. The Director may extend or renew a temporary membership when such action is consistent with the purposes of this Policy, operational requirements, and responsible administration of Library resources. All determinations regarding the issuance, extension, renewal, or restriction of temporary memberships shall be made in a reasonable, consistent, and nondiscriminatory manner.

Temporary memberships may be subject to restrictions on borrowing privileges, reciprocal borrowing, interlibrary loan services, or other Library services.

Restriction of borrowing privileges shall not automatically result in exclusion from Library facilities, programs, or services unless otherwise authorized by Library policy or applicable law.

14. Borrowing Requirements

A valid Library card or acceptable proof of membership shall be required to borrow Library materials. Individuals who do not possess a Library card may continue to use Library facilities, collections, and services available for onsite use.

15. Replacement Cards

Cardholders who lose a Library card may obtain a replacement card upon verification of identity and payment of any replacement fee established by the Director.

The Director may waive or adjust a replacement fee when it is reasonable to do so based on the circumstances, including but not limited to financial hardship, damage caused by circumstances beyond the borrower's control, the return of a long overdue item, or other situations where a fee waiver supports fair access to Library services.

If a lost card is subsequently recovered, the cardholder shall return the card to the Library or destroy it to prevent unauthorized use.

16. Privacy and Confidentiality

Library registration records, circulation records, electronic account information, and other patron records

shall be maintained and disclosed only as permitted or required by applicable federal, Massachusetts, and local laws and Library policies governing privacy and confidentiality. See The Library's Privacy and Confidentiality Policy

The Library shall take reasonable measures to protect the confidentiality of patron information maintained in Library systems and records.

Nothing in this Policy shall create a right of access to confidential patron information that would not otherwise exist under applicable law.

17. Administration and Interpretation

The Director shall be responsible for administering, implementing, interpreting, and enforcing this Policy.

The Director may establish administrative procedures, forms, guidelines, and workflows necessary to conduct the provisions of this Policy.

In situations not expressly addressed herein, the Director may make reasonable administrative determinations consistent with the intent of this Policy, operational requirements, professional Library standards, and applicable law.

The Director's interpretation of this Policy shall govern day-to-day administration unless modified by action of the Trustees.

18. Equitable Access and Nondiscrimination

The Library is committed to providing equitable access to its services, Library materials, programs, and facilities by administering membership eligibility, borrowing privileges, or access to Library services fairly, consistently and in compliance with applicable federal, Massachusetts, and local laws.

Nothing in this Policy shall be construed to limit the Library's ability to enforce reasonable registration, identification, security, or borrowing requirements necessary to protect Library resources and ensure responsible account management.

19. Suspension and Restriction of Privileges

The Library may suspend, restrict, or revoke borrowing privileges when a cardholder:

- Provides materially false information during registration;
- Fails to comply with Library borrowing requirements;
- Incurs charges, replacement costs, or obligations exceeding limits established by Library procedures;
- Uses a Library card in a fraudulent, unauthorized, or unlawful manner; or

- Otherwise engages in conduct that threatens the integrity of Library operations or resources. See the Library's Patron Conduct Policy.

20. Reservation of Rights

The Library reserves the right to verify information provided by applicants, request updated documentation, deny applications containing materially false information, and impose reasonable administrative requirements necessary to safeguard public resources.

The Library reserves the right to modify membership classifications, borrowing privileges, administrative procedures, and fees authorized by law, subject to approval by the Trustees where required.

21. Compliance with Applicable Law

This Policy shall be administered and interpreted in accordance with applicable federal, Massachusetts, and local laws, regulations, ordinances, and lawful governmental orders.

22. Severability

If any section, subsection, sentence, clause, or provision of this Policy is determined to be invalid, illegal, or unenforceable, the remaining provisions shall remain in full force and effect.

23. Waiver

Failure by the Library to enforce any provision of this Policy in a particular instance shall not constitute a waiver of the Library's authority to enforce that provision or any other provision in the future.

24. Review and Amendment

The Board of Trustees of Thayer Memorial Library retains sole authority to adopt, amend, suspend, or repeal this Policy.

The Trustees may review this Policy from time to time to ensure it remains consistent with applicable law, guidance from the American Library Association and its divisions, the Massachusetts Board of Library Commissioners, the Central Western Massachusetts Automated Resource Sharing consortium, and the Library's operational needs. Administrative procedures established by the Director may be revised from time to time, provided such revisions remain consistent with this Policy.