 Library Express – Frequently Asked Questions

**What is Library Express?**

Library Express is the Library’s program designed to provide continual access to library material to Marion County residents who are homebound. Library Express is not a one-time delivery service.

**Can a patron who checks out library material for their neighbor sign up to be a part of Library Express?** Not to serve their neighbor. Library Express matches volunteers or staff members to patrons who don’t have friends, family, neighbors, etc. available to help them. In other words, we match strangers to strangers.

**If someone wants Library Express service, whom do they call?** Volunteer Resources at 317-275-4046 / libraryexpress@indypl.org

**If someone wants to learn more about becoming a Library Express volunteer, whom do they call?** Volunteer Resources at 317-275-4046 / libraryexpress@indypl.org .

**Do patrons have to prove they are homebound?**

No. If a patron tells us they are homebound we believe them. We rarely experience ‘homebound status fraud’. If a volunteer suspects their patron might not truly be homebound, Volunteer Resources will investigate the situation.

**Does a patron have to be completely homebound to receive Library Express service?** No. We serve patrons at varying levels of ability. Some of our patrons are able to get to the Library when they are feeling well and the weather is good. Unfortunately, those types of days are not predictable, especially in the winter. We encourage patrons to go to the library when they are able, but when they are not able, the patron’s volunteer is available to step in and serve.

**Are patrons screened?** When a potential LE patron calls, we explain the program in detail. If the patron wishes to proceed with obtaining the service, we collect usual information such as name, address, phone number, and emergency contact. We ask limited environmental questions such as do they have pets, are there a smoker in the house, are climbing stairs required, etc. We do not make patron home visits. Volunteers are informed during the volunteer interview that they are responsible for deciding for themselves what type of environment they are comfortable serving in. This comfort level varies from person to person.

**How are volunteers screened?**

Volunteers must successfully complete a screening protocol which includes;

* Volunteer screening interview conducted by Volunteer Resources.
* Two positive personal references
* Criminal background check
* Proof of vehicle insurance (proof renewed annually)

**How are matches made?** Most matches are made as a result of geographic convenience. During the volunteer interview, the volunteer is asked to define what part of Marion County is convenient for them. Once the volunteer screening process is complete and we have a patron in the volunteer’s designated area, the OSVR Administrative Assistant will ask the volunteer to drive by a potential address. The volunteer is asked to determine if the location is convenient and if the area is one in which the volunteer feels comfortable. The patron does not know they are being ‘presented’ to a volunteer, so if the volunteer decides the location is not ideal, the patron is not disappointed. If the volunteer gives the location a thumb’s up, the Administrative Assistant proceeds with making the match. If, once the match is made, the volunteer finds they are uncomfortable with the interior environment, the volunteer is instructed to call SPVR and we will break the match. Depending upon the reason for the termination (i.e. a dog the volunteer feels the patron does not have control of, someone in the house makes the volunteer uncomfortable), we may or may not attempt to re-match the patron.

**Where do patrons live?** We match patrons wherever they live. This can be a house, an apartment, a retirement community, or a nursing home.

**What is the benefit of the Library Express Patron Code?**

The Library Express Patron Code on the LE patron’s account allows for fine free status, 3 week checkout on all material, and a 10 day hold status.

**What is the purpose of the Library Express Patron Code?**

Although the benefits are on the patron’s account, the advantage is for the volunteer serving the patron. We do not want the patron to accrue a fine because a volunteer is not able to return an item on time. Volunteers do have commitments that could prevent them from returning an item on time (family emergencies or commitments). Secondly, volunteers are asked to make a commitment to serve every two to three weeks, so a seven day check out or a seven day hold status would push a volunteer to serve more frequently. As a side note, with the hold shelf status being only 10 days, the branch may be asked by the volunteer to extend a hold shelf item, though in our experience, this rarely happens.

**Who assigns the Library Express Patron Code and when is it assigned?**

Volunteer Resources assigns and manages the Library Express Patron Code. An account is not assigned this Patron Code until a volunteer or staff member is assigned to the patron. If the volunteer or staff member goes away, so does the Patron Code.

**Why are situations involving lost or damaged material referred back to OSVR?**  Sometimes our patrons do not have control of their living environment. When material goes missing or becomes damaged, we investigate the situation thoroughly, talking with the volunteer, the patron, and perhaps to a family member or an administrator of a living facility to piece together what is happening. We work closely with the OSVR Circulation Supervisor in resolving these issues and determining if fees should be waived or if the patron should be held accountable for replacing lost/damaged material. Determination is made on a case-by-case basis.

**What happens when a patron who is homebound manages their own account online?** Not all patrons need help placing items on hold or renewing items online. Sometimes a patron just needs materials picked up and delivered. In these instances, we simply request that the patron permit the volunteer or staff member access to their account so the volunteer or staff member has a general idea of what is coming in and what is due when. The patron and volunteer or staff member must communicate with each other regularly about pickup and deliveries. We have experienced very minimal problems in these scenarios, however, if this becomes an issue for a match; please feel free to pass the issue to OSVR who will negotiate a resolution.