



Communications Policy

300 W. Merrill St. Birmingham, MI 48009 | 248-647-1700 | www.baldwinlib.org

The Baldwin Public Library (BPL) communicates through a variety of means, including but not limited to, photographs, video, media releases, newsletters, and social media. BPL strives to accurately inform the public about activities, events, and incidents that take place within BPL as well as share information about its mission, services, and resources.

The purpose of this policy is to establish standards for and responsibilities regarding the means by which Staff members, Trustees, and Friends communicate about BPL that is in keeping with existing policies and legal requirements. It is a tool to guide communication with the media, officials, schools, residents of our service area, and visitors to BPL.

How we communicate information has an impact on how BPL is perceived and what message is received. Staff members, Trustees, and Friends should always bear in mind that communication is two-way, and the message we send may not be the message that is received.

BPL's communications will:

- Reflect BPL's values and its commitment to responsive public service
- Be delivered clearly and effectively in a respectful and positive manner
- Support intellectual freedom while protecting privacy rights
- Represent the diverse nature of the community in a fair and inclusive manner
- Reflect the value of accessibility and comply with accessibility legislation and standards
- Provide information in different formats using various means of communication to efficiently reach the intended audience
- Be delivered in a proactive, rather than reactive, manner

Authority and Responsibility

The Library Director is ultimately responsible for communications about BPL. With the intent of providing effective, responsive, and consistent communications to our community, the Library Director, Associate Director, or BPL Board President are authorized to speak on behalf of BPL. However, all staff members, as well as Trustees and Friends, can have a positive impact on the success of BPL's publicity and image.

The Library Board President is the spokesperson for the Library Board of Trustees. All inquiries from patrons, politicians, or the media should be reported immediately to the Library Director or Associate Director. The Library Board President works in tandem with the Library Director to coordinate communications and respond to questions. The Library Director will contact BPL's attorney for guidance when warranted. Whenever feasible, the Library Board President will engage the entire Board in official discussion during a BPL Board meeting before

responding. However, depending on the urgency of the matter in question, the Library Board President may speak on behalf of the full Board without having first met with the full Board.

When asked by the public for information related to BPL business or policy, staff members should respond in accordance with BPL guidelines regarding such requests and, in the case of doubt, should consult with the Library Director or Associate Director.

BPL staff members are permitted to speak about BPL on behalf of BPL to members of the public and media, but must limit themselves to areas of their operational expertise, including:

- Answering a reference question or providing materials from BPL collections
- Talking about a particular program, display, or service for which the employee is responsible

Staff members should also bear in mind their obligation to present BPL in the best possible light. Interviews with staff members are permitted as long as the supervisor is informed and it does not interfere with job duties. Staff members should avoid speculation on any topic and refrain from offering personal opinions about BPL policies or programs, even when asked to do so.

Questions from the public regarding the general operations or direction of BPL should be referred to the Library Director. Inquiries related to the underlying principles of a policy that are open to interpretation from a political, constitutional, and/or legal perspective should be referred to the Director. Examples of such policies include but are not limited to those covering Internet Access, Filtering, Intellectual Freedom, and Meeting Room issues.

Inquiries regarding BPL's budget should be referred to the Library Director.

Print and Promotional Materials

Newsletters, brochures, press releases, and other promotional materials shall be produced and distributed through approved channels. All such materials shall originate with the Associate Director and shall receive the approval of the Library Director prior to distribution.

All material written or prepared by BPL staff members shall be reviewed for appropriateness, accuracy, completeness and eye-appeal by the Library Director, Associate Director, Department Head, or Office Administrator before being released to the public or media. This includes printed material such as flyers, bookmarks, newspaper articles, press releases, BPL's website, and BPL's social media accounts.

Crisis Communication

In the case of media interest in controversial, negative, or crisis issues, every effort should be made to contact the Library Director, Associate Director, or Board President immediately. The Library Director or designee will prepare an informed statement that can be given when questions arise about particularly sensitive issues.

Public Records and Freedom of Information Requests

Requests from the media for public records should be handled promptly and in a manner consistent with other BPL policies. All public record requests should be forwarded to the Library Director. When there are questions about whether the information requested can be released, the Library Director will consult with BPL's attorney.

Photography, Film, and Audio Recordings

Professional Photography and Videography: All photographers and videographers hired by entities not involved with BPL must seek permission from the Library Director or designee before taking photos or filming at BPL. Official identification must be shown. Patrons may not have their pictures taken, unless consent is granted from the patron to the professional photographer or videographer.

Open and/or Public events: BPL staff members have the right to photograph, film, and record BPL events and patrons for promotional use. Visitors to BPL, or participants in any BPL event being captured on film or by photograph, will be advised in advance, verbally or through signage, that their participation in the event acts as consent to being photographed, filmed or recorded, unless they otherwise clearly indicate to the contrary to BPL staff members. Person's images will not be identified using full names or personal identifying information without written approval from the photographed subject, parent or legal guardian.

Non-public events (e.g. school visits): BPL recognizes that entities using BPL for non-public events may have different release or permission requirements. BPL will follow requirements from third party entities regarding photography, videography, and audio recordings.

Restrictions: In order to protect the rights of individual patrons and to prevent disruptions, interference with staff members or patrons, or conduct inconsistent with BPL's mission, photographing and video or audio recording on BPL property are restricted as follows:

- The general public, media, or all other entities are discouraged from taking photographs or recording video or audio without the express permission of any BPL patron or staff member who may be photographed, filmed, or recorded. In the case of minors, permission must come from the minor's parent or legal guardian.
- All members of the general public and media are subject to the provisions of BPL's Code of Conduct and may not disturb the normal operations of BPL.

Personal Opinion

When speaking to the public or the media about BPL, it is expected that Trustees and designated staff members will define when their remarks represent personal opinion.