



# The Becket Athenaeum

Becket & Washington's Community Library

PO BOX 9 • 3367 Main Street • Becket, MA 01223

413-623-5483 • [BecketAthenaeum.org](http://BecketAthenaeum.org)

## CATALOG & CIRCULATION POLICIES & PROCEDURES

The Becket Athenaeum is the public library for the towns of Becket and Washington and a member of Central and Western Massachusetts Automated Resource Sharing consortium ([CWMARS](#)). Under standards one ("Be open to all residents of the Commonwealth") and six ("Lend books...and extend privileges to the holders of cards issued by other public libraries in the Commonwealth on a reciprocal basis.") of the Regulations for Minimum Public Library Service, residents of Massachusetts communities with public libraries certified by the Massachusetts Board of Library Commissioners are eligible for a free borrower's card from the Becket Athenaeum. The Becket Athenaeum (hereinafter also referred to as "Athenaeum" or "the library") also allows persons not residing in Massachusetts to be eligible for library privilege.

### A. NEW REGISTRATIONS:

- Registrants can complete their application in person, via mail, phone, or the website. The Becket Athenaeum does not require identification for this application process.
- Addresses: Record patron's permanent mailing address as the primary address. For non-resident patrons, record their local address as the secondary address and assume, unless specified, that the local address cannot receive mail.
- Full library card issuance procedure notes can be found in Drive: Shared Drives: General Staff: Procedures: Training Notes: Patron tab.

### B. LIBRARY CARD RENEWAL:

- All patron cards are set to expire every two years in order to maintain correct contact information. Until the patron renews their card, it cannot be used to check out physical or digital items (via Libby/OverDrive) or place holds.
- To renew their library card, patrons must call, email, complete the [form on the website](#), or come in to review and update their contact information.

### C. BORROWER RESPONSIBILITY:

- Borrowers are responsible for all items borrowed on their cards, including the replacement costs for items lost or damaged. The Becket Athenaeum does not charge fines on overdue materials. See full Overdue/Replacement Policy below in Section F.
- With the exception of certain items in the Library of Things collection, anyone, of any age, may use any materials in the Becket Athenaeum, or borrow with their library card, and shall not have that privilege limited by any staff person. In accordance with the Athenaeum's no censoring policy, parents/guardians who wish to deny their children access to certain materials must take the responsibility themselves, the library may not take that action directly.

#### D. CONFIDENTIALITY OF BORROWING RECORDS:

- Borrower Confidentiality: In accordance with Chapter 78, Section 7 of Massachusetts General Laws<sup>1</sup>, the borrowing records of individual patrons concerning type of material and/or specific titles borrowed and other records identifying the name of library users is considered confidential by the Becket Athenaeum. Only the Executive Director and Board of Trustees may authorize the dissemination of this information to a third party, and this will be done only when required by law.
- Records of Minors: Information about materials borrowed by minors will not be granted to the guarantor in order to maintain patron confidentiality for the minor. Instead, the library staff will give the replacement value only to the guarantor. (See section J. Purchasing Policy for additional information)
- The CW MARS privacy policy applies to all member libraries including the Becket Athenaeum and can be found [here](#).

#### E. MATERIALS LOANS PERIODS:

Audiobooks	21 days, 2 renewals
Books	21 days, 2 renewals
CDs	21 days, 2 renewals
DVDs (includes TV shows)	7 days, 2 renewals
Games	21 days, 2 renewals
Great Courses	21 days, 2 renewals
Museum Passes	varies, for museum pass policies, <a href="#">see here</a>
New Adult Fiction	21 days, 1 renewal
Periodicals	7 days, 2 renewals
Puzzles	21 days, 2 renewals
Library of Things	21 days, for Library of Things policies, <a href="#">see here</a>

Renewals occur automatically. Loan periods may differ for items borrowed from other libraries.

#### F. OVERDUE/REPLACEMENT POLICY:

- To provide the best access for all patrons, the Becket Athenaeum does not charge fines or late fees except on certain Library of Things items.
- If an item is not returned in the condition it was lent\* within twenty-eight (28) days from when it is due, or the replacement cost paid, the patron may check out only one (1) item at a time until three (3) months (at least three (3) items) of consistent & on time returns are established. During this time, they are restricted from borrowing digital items on Libby, Library of Things items, or materials that belong to other libraries. After that, full borrowing privileges are restored.

Full borrowing privileges are restored immediately upon return of the overdue item or payment of the replacement cost.

If the item was checked out under a child's account, the above restrictions will apply to both the child & guarantor's account.

If a game is returned with minor pieces missing (for example, generic dice, board game pawns), the Athenaeum will attempt to locate replacement parts and contact the patron for reimbursement.

If a patron's check is returned (for any reason, including for insufficient funds), they will be responsible for the fees incurred by the Athenaeum and will be restricted from all borrowing until the debt is paid.

\*or if a game is returned in any condition that renders the game unplayable

---

<sup>1</sup> "That part of the records of a public library which reveals the identity and intellectual pursuits of a person using such library shall not be a public record..."

## G. RENEWALS:

- All circulating library materials are renewable except for Museum Passes and certain Library of Things items. Exceptions are made for certified disabled individuals (see “Extended Loan Periods for the Disabled” in the following section).

## H. EXTENDED LOAN PERIODS FOR THE DISABLED:

- As part of the effort to ensure equal access to the information available in the collection of the Becket Athenaeum and to ensure compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act, steps are taken by the library to provide for reasonable accommodations to persons with disabilities.
- Certified Disabled: To be eligible for an exception to the Athenaeum’s Borrowing Policy & Procedures, the borrower must be able to provide certification of disability from a qualified health care or education professional (depending upon the disability), with appropriate justification from the borrower as to why the disability warrants the exception. Such justification should be directly related to the borrower’s ability to process the material (i.e. dyslexia or other learning disability) and should stipulate whether this is a one-time or ongoing request. Age alone does not qualify as a certifiable disability eligible for exception under this policy.
- Exceptions: Exceptions may be authorized by the Circulation Desk staff member at the time the request is made if the request requires an immediate response, otherwise the request should be deferred to the Head Librarian or Executive Director. Only the Head Librarian and Executive Director are authorized to negotiate open-ended arrangements. Such arrangements should be abstracted by library staff in a note on the patron’s CW MARS account to alert staff at subsequent transactions. If an employee other than the Head Librarian or Executive Director negotiates an exception, a copy of the transaction will be printed off with a note explaining the circumstances and brought to their attention.
- Reserve Books: Items on hold for others will not be granted extended loan periods regardless of the extenuating circumstances of the certified disabled requesting borrower.
- Interlibrary Loan: Materials owned by other libraries will not be granted extended loan periods regardless of the extenuating circumstances of the requesting borrower because those lending periods are established by the lending libraries.
- One Extended Loan Limit: Items granted extended loan under these guidelines will be limited to one extension period only. Requests for additional time on items will be denied.
- Total Item Limits: Borrowers requesting items be granted extended loan periods under these guidelines will be limited to six (6) items in circulation at a given time.

## I. OBTAINING UNAVAILABLE MATERIALS:

- Holds: Most items in circulation owned by the Athenaeum or other libraries in CW MARS may be reserved or placed on hold. There is a limit of twenty (20) holds per library card.
- Interlibrary Loan: Materials not owned by the Athenaeum or other libraries in CW MARS may often be borrowed through the Commonwealth Catalog ([ComCat](#)). This service is available through the library’s Circulation Desk or online at [commonwealthcatalog.org](http://commonwealthcatalog.org).
- Request for Purchase: The Athenaeum welcomes suggestions for purchase of materials not in the collection with the understanding that such requests are subject to the same selection criteria as materials considered for purchase (see Purchasing & Collection Policy in the following section). Materials not purchased may be requested through interlibrary loan.
- If an item is not available in CW MARS or ComCat and the library is not able to purchase it, the item may be available from a library outside of Massachusetts. This request can be made in person, via phone, or email. Lending or shipping fees may apply which will be confirmed with the patron prior to ordering.

## J. PURCHASING & COLLECTION POLICY:

The Becket Athenaeum provides a broad range of materials to meet the wide-ranging needs of its patrons. Library materials and services will be selected with no goal of censorship, ensuring that patrons of all beliefs are able to locate material that meets their needs. The Athenaeum is a small library with limited shelving space, so will need to conduct ongoing weeding of materials that are no longer being checked out in order to have the space for new materials.

- **REVIEW & PURCHASING PROCESS:** The selection of library materials to be acquired is generally made by the Athenaeum's Executive Director based on staff judgment and expertise, published reviews from general mass-audience periodicals and from specialized library review sources, recommendations from library users and general public, local relevance, use analysis of specific titles, authors and subject areas, availability at other libraries, most notably those in CW MARS and ComCat, availability in alternative formats, including online access, audio or visual recordings, availability of similar material already in the collection, and cost/benefit analysis. Questions regarding the absence of specific items in the collection will be directed to the Executive Director.
- **WEEDING:** The process of weeding library materials is based on accession date, number of checkouts, how recently it was checked out, and several other factors, *all with certain exceptions*. These decisions are made by the Circulation Specialist, with some consultations with the Executive Director and other library staff. Those exceptions could be based on, among other things, the book's perceived importance, whether it's part of an important set, whether there might be a renewed interest in it due to a new addition to a series or a new movie/TV show based on it, whether it's the only book in the collection by an important author, current events, if it's one of the library's Book Club selections, etc. Materials published in the last three years are kept in the collection regardless of circulation history, with occasional exceptions. If a book was acquired nine years ago but without circulation until recent years, it is typically kept despite the accession date, instead relying on the interest level. The number of checkouts that determine if material will be weeded typically decreases with each subsequent year in the collection. The amount of time between checkouts, as well as how the checkouts are clustered, are also factors. There is no computer program to make these determinations, instead the Circulation Specialist regularly reviews CW MARS catalog reports for the needed details to make weeding decisions.
- **FREEDOM TO READ, SEE, AND HEAR: Overview:** The Becket Athenaeum follows the principles of intellectual freedom as stated in "Freedom to Read," "Freedom to View," and the "Library Bill of Rights" as written by the American Library Association. Included in these statements is the commitment to honor the rights of an individual to use the library regardless of age, race, religion, national origin, or social or political views. Accordingly, library staff provide equal service to all library users. Children and adults are equally free to use the entire library and to borrow all materials in the circulating collection. Limitations to be placed upon the reading and viewing materials of young people are left to the discretion of their parents/guardians. Community members may question the inclusion of items in library collection (see Reconsideration section below). Although the Board of Trustees and library staff understand and appreciate their fears and doubts about the effects of materials on impressionable persons, the Athenaeum takes the position that not providing access to information and ideas is greater than the risk of providing it. At times, the library receives suggestions regarding the restriction or removal of certain library materials, and the Athenaeum, therefore, wishes to establish the following principles:
  - **Controversial Materials:** In an effort to provide library patrons with diverse sources of information and the widest possible range of ideas and viewpoints, the library will acquire and/or retain some controversial materials. Some of these materials may be offensive to individuals or groups because of perceived profanity, social, economic and political ideas, religious viewpoints, the background of the author, the kinds of information provided, illustrations, or other reasons. Acquisition or use of any item does not imply approval or endorsement of the contents. The Athenaeum believes it is essential to provide such materials if censorship is to be avoided.

- Age: The American Library Association supports equal and equitable access to all library resources and services by users of all ages. Library policies and procedures that effectively deny minors equal and equitable access to all library resources and services available to other users is in violation of the American Library Association's *Library Bill of Rights*. The American Library Association opposes all attempts to restrict access to library services, materials, and facilities based on the age of library users. Therefore, anyone, of any age, may use any materials in the Athenaeum, and is not to have that privilege limited by any staff member. If parents/guardians wish to deny their children access to certain materials they must take the responsibility themselves.  
(<https://www.ala.org/advocacy/intfreedom/librarybill/interpretations/minors>)
- Labeling: The Becket Athenaeum will not follow the practice of affixing a descriptive label to library materials indicating a political or social point of view or indicating that such an item is questionable or controversial. Such labeling suggests that patrons are incapable of making up their own minds about controversial subjects, and this practice is contrary to the idea of the free marketplace of ideas. The Athenaeum does label library materials by genre (i.e. fiction, biography, history, etc.) which makes no attempt to prejudice the attitude of potential readers about the work in question.
- Special Collection: The use of rare, historical, and/or fragile items of great value may be controlled to the extent required to preserve them from harm, but no further action shall be taken to restrict the public's access to the library's collection.
- Reconsideration: The library is willing to re-examine its position on any item included in the library's collection. When a person wishes to request the reconsideration of an item, they will complete the [Request for Reconsideration of Library Resources form](#) and submit it to the circulation desk. The Board of Trustees and Executive Director will review the material in question, hold discussion on whether there can be any exceptions to the anti-censorship policy, and find consensus on a decision. No item is to be removed or restricted because of a complaint except in accordance with this procedure.

Revised 2/22/24