

November 2, 2009

Lonnie Timmons III
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Board of Trustees
 Cleveland Public Library
 325 Superior Avenue
 Cleveland, OH 44114

Dear Board of Trustees:

I am writing to you in order to share some concerns with you about how the Cleveland Public Library administration communicates and handles patron issues. I am requesting the board's intervention because of poor managerial response and non-sensical application of unexplained policies. I would like the board's help in finding answers to the issues that I raise because I have doubts about the motivation behind some of the things I have been told.

There is an air of unaccountability surrounding the library's staff and administration when responding to inquiries. For example, in a recent follow-up email to Mr. Thomas, I inquired about several library policies as related to my account. Instead of responding with factual information, Mr. Thomas stated that he supported Ms. Lombardo's response which mostly contained vague generalities that did not solve any problems or resolve any issues. In reading Mr. Thomas' response, there is no logical basis as to why he supports her response. I feel as if as if they are saying we do not have to address your specific concerns because our policies do not require us to do so.

With your assistance, the issues raised will receive clear and concise responses.

1. I would like to know why there is a notation on my account that states I am no longer allowed to make any more "claims returned". If that notation is strictly policy based, please explain the policy. Mr. Oreskovic has never explained the limit for "claims returned". Is it X dollars of value or X number of items? How many items that I "claims returned" were eventually found? What does the policy permit? Again, what is the set number? It is disappointing to read they are just following policy but that policy is never stated.

How can library patrons understand and follow the rules and policies of CPL if they are not made plain? Why does an expert have to be notified to explain basic policy? This is an example of the strong lack of communication between CPL and its patrons.

2. I was told by Mr. Oreskovic that the drive-up window was for express use. How does the public know that the drive up window is for "express use?" Where is that indicated? Is it reasonable to say that the window is for "express use" when the information is not public knowledge? When I arrive at the drive-up window, there is no signage indicates its intended purpose and limits as of October 30, 2009. What policy dictates that the drive-up window is ONLY for "express use"?

3. If I return a group of magazines, how will a seventeen feet long receipt help me to determine which of those magazines were discharged since the titles are not included in the receipt? If verifying what items were discharged from account is the actual goal, it would be much more useful to print what was returned to the library and then removed from my account. What policy dictates printing out what remains on the account instead of what was removed?

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4. Ms. Lombardo mentioned there may be an abuse of "policies", but she never explained the policies or the reasoning behind the note on my account about "limiting the items" on my account since the policy applies to ALL library users. What policy dictates that CPL staff's inability to follow the policy of lending only 50 items should be noted on the patron's account? How am I responsible for the staff's failure to follow the policy of lending only 50 items?

I searched the CPL website and did not find the aforementioned policies.

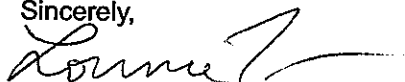
Even though Mr Thomas requested that Mr. Davis research the policies, I found it extremely odd that Ms. Lombardo as the public services administrator and Mr. Oreskovic as the head of lending were unable to explain the policies that they repeatedly mention. One week after Mr. Thomas' last response, I am no closer to having basic policy questions answered.

One of the things that disturbed me about Ms. Lombardo's response was that she never admits that there is room for improvement. For example, she states, "I wish we had a flawless system (Wouldn't it be wonderful if such a system existed!; however our staff does a wonderful job discharging material in a timely, efficient manner". My personal experience tells me that while some employees do their best, there are problems that need to be addressed. My experiences with the staff of the Cuyahoga County Public Library demonstrate that it is possible to discharge items without the errors and the attitude. Having a large volume of business is no excuse for not trying to do better. Since 2005, I have borrowed over 1,100 items from Cuyahoga County Public Library, and yet only one item that I "claims returned" was lost is their "flawless system". I am highly disappointed in the previous responses of Mr. Thomas and Ms. Lombardo. Instead of solving problems, I receive vague, unsubstantiated responses.

The issues I am describing are the lack of communication and lack of accountability regarding my account and library policies. How can patrons adhere to CPL policies if the information is so guarded? Maybe, Mr. Davis will respond, one of these days.

I sincerely hope that we can resolve these issues in the near future. I look forward to your prompt response to my concerns.

Sincerely,



Lonnie Timmons III