

MGRL Adult Volunteer Handbook

Thank You for Your Interest in Volunteering!

*We know you have many options to serve in the community.
We appreciate your interest in donating your time and energy to the
Middle Georgia Regional Library, and helping us serve the people of our community.*

Welcome to the Middle Georgia Regional Library!

The Middle Georgia Regional Library (MGRL) welcomes your interest in volunteering with our library! The generous gifts of time, energy, and skills from each of our volunteers are deeply appreciated.

Public libraries serve a unique function in the community, and volunteering to serve at your library can offer many personal rewards. For instance, as a volunteer you can:

- ❖ Expand your knowledge.
- ❖ Make a meaningful contribution to the community.
- ❖ Meet new people.
- ❖ Learn first-hand about the Library's services, programs, and policies.
- ❖ Better understand the vital role the Library plays in the community.

The MGRL Adult Volunteer Program assists the Library in carrying out its mission to connect all people to the information necessary to improve their lives through excellent services and materials. We recruit volunteers when needed to assist staff with work activities, projects, and events.

This handbook provides information about policies, procedures, and expectations pertaining to volunteer work at MGRL. We ask that all prospective volunteers familiarize themselves with the information in this handbook. If you have questions or need specific guidance, contact the Administrative Office.

About the Library

The Middle Georgia Regional Library system currently includes 13 branches: (1) Washington Memorial Library, downtown Macon; (2) the Shurling branch on Shurling Drive, Macon; (3) the Lanford branch on Houston Road, Macon; the Riverside branch on Holiday Drive N., Macon. Affiliate branches are located in the cities of Gray, Gordon, Irwinton, Jeffersonville, Marshallville, Montezuma, Oglethorpe, Ideal, and Roberta.

The Volunteer Program is administered by the Human Resources Department, which is located in the Library's Administrative Office at Washington Memorial Library). Screening activities for new volunteers are typically conducted at this location.

What are the Qualifications to Volunteer?

All volunteers must meet at least the following requirements:

- ❖ Volunteers must be at least age 18.
- ❖ Volunteers must be able to make a specific time commitment, which varies by assignment. *(Examples: A shelving assignment might ask volunteers to commit to at least 2 hours per week for at least 6 months. A special project assignment might ask volunteers to commit for the duration of the project.)*
- ❖ Volunteers must have the skills and the physical ability to perform the work involved in the assignment.
- ❖ Volunteers must successfully pass a background check before beginning volunteer work.

We recognize the value of community service associated with school projects or civic organizations, however, the Library does not typically offer those types of volunteer assignments. The Library does not offer court-ordered community service hours. Those with these interests and/or requirements are encouraged to contact the Friends of the Library Macon (<http://www.friendsofthelibrarymacon.com>).

Volunteer Service

A volunteer is someone who performs tasks or services of his/her own free will, without expectation or receipt of wages, benefits, or compensation of any kind. This is not an employment relationship, and volunteers are not eligible to receive any compensation or employee benefits while in volunteer service.

Volunteer opportunities may be available at different times in different departments of the Library. Some needs might be ongoing, while others might be short-term or seasonal. For instance, there might be a need for volunteers to sort and shelve library materials throughout the year, to help out during children's programs in summer, or to help with a one-time project of unpacking and labeling new materials.

Schedule – Because the Library is open seven days a week, we are particularly interested in volunteers who can offer flexibility in the hours they are available. We understand that many volunteers will have limited availability, and we appreciate what each person can offer. When reviewing applications, we will take into consideration each applicant's availability in comparison with our operational needs.

Physical Demands – Volunteers should be aware of the physically demanding nature of most library activities, which typically include repetitive hand motions, lifting items of various weights, and a significant amount of standing, walking, carrying, bending, stooping, and twisting motions. Before applying for a volunteer assignment, you should review the physical demands of the position to ensure you can safely perform the work.

Becoming a Volunteer

A limited number of volunteer assignments is available at a given time. As a result, not everyone who applies will be selected for an assignment.

Postings – Volunteer openings are posted on the Volunteer Page of the Library's website <http://bibblib.org/get-involved/volunteer/>. Each posting will describe the responsibilities, qualifications, location, and time commitment.

How to Apply – Applicants should complete a Volunteer Application (which can be downloaded from the website or obtained from any branch) and submit or mail the application before the deadline on the posting. Applications are only accepted while the position is posted, and will not be accepted after the deadline. Each application should reflect the opening in which the applicant is interested.

(Note: Applications are valid for a one-year period. Applicants who are not selected for current openings may request that their applications be reconsidered for opportunities posted within one year of their original application by emailing Volunteers@bibblib.org)

Selection Process – Applicants will be selected based on their qualifications in relation to the Library's operational needs and on their ability to commit to a consistent schedule of volunteer hours. Applicants can expect to undergo telephone screening, skills testing, interviews, and background checks. The Library maintains the right to deny a volunteer position to anyone it feels is unsuitable for any reason.

To promote a safe work environment for patrons, staff, and volunteers, criminal background checks will be required of all potential volunteers. In addition, individuals in volunteer assignments that involve operation of a motor vehicle (either a personal vehicle or library vehicle) in the course of the volunteer work will be required to undergo driving history checks. The Library recognizes the sensitivity of information contained within background reports and will maintain confidentiality of information.

The Library reserves the right, at any time or for any reason, to make changes in the nature of a volunteer assignment, to reassign a volunteer to a different project or assignment, or to terminate the volunteer relationship.

Minors – Volunteers must be at least age 18 to volunteer

Training and Evaluation

New volunteers will receive an orientation to the Library as well as training in the duties of their assignment. Library supervisors and staff will provide ongoing training and guidance to volunteers. Volunteers are encouraged to promptly ask any questions they may have about tasks, policies, procedures, or other information to help them effectively do their work. We recognize that volunteers want to do a good job and can benefit from feedback about their work. Although there is no formal evaluation process for volunteer workers, volunteers can expect to receive feedback through periodic meetings and informal discussions.

Work Schedules

Each volunteer position involves a specific type of work schedule, and an applicant's ability to work the required hours is a major factor in choosing the individual for the assignment. Once a volunteer commits to a schedule, the Library plans workload accordingly and counts on the volunteer to fulfill their commitment. Volunteers are expected to contact the Library if they will be unable to work their assigned shifts, or if they will be late or need to leave early. Failure to show up twice for assigned shifts without prior notification will result in release from volunteer service.

We appreciate the hours of service donated by our volunteers, and ask that each volunteer sign in for each shift and accurately record the hours they work. A Volunteer Time Log will be provided for this purpose. This data is collected as part of the library's annual report to the Georgia Public Library Service.

Expectations of Volunteers

MGRL counts on its volunteers to perform their voluntary service in an appropriate manner. It is not possible to describe expectations for every situation that may occur, but following are some examples of specific expectations of all volunteers:

- Follow all library policies, rules, and guidelines.
- Respect the privacy and confidentiality of all information related to patrons and their use of the library.
- Refrain from expressing any personal, social, political, or religious views to patrons in the course of the volunteer work.
- While on duty, give full attention to work activities, minimize socializing & personal business, and work safely.
- Uphold the commitment to schedule, arrive on time, and give prompt notice of any change in availability.
- Learn library tasks, follow instructions, work cooperatively with library staff, and demonstrate dependability and reliability.
- Clearly identify themselves as volunteers and refer patrons to library staff when appropriate.

Because we place a high value on volunteer service, we incorporate a Volunteer Agreement into our volunteer relationships. The Volunteer Agreement is a simple document which outlines the Library's expectations of each volunteer. Each new volunteer will receive this document during the orientation process and will be asked to sign it before beginning volunteer service.

Dress Code

Volunteers are expected to follow the Library's conservative business casual dress code. A volunteer badge will be issued to each volunteer and should be worn (positioned above the waist) at all times while the volunteer is working. Badges may not be worn outside of the library, and must be returned to the Library when a volunteer leaves service.

Confidentiality

Confidentiality is very important in a public library, particularly relating to patron information. The confidentiality of library records is stipulated in Georgia law (Official Code of Georgia Annotated 24-9-46).

All records relating to patrons and their borrowing history are confidential. This policy applies to all library records or knowledge held by library staff members and volunteers, including, but not limited to, the circulation of library materials, computer database searches, interlibrary loan transactions, information requests, requests for photocopies of library materials, title reserve requests, or any in-house use of library materials. If a volunteer is not sure whether certain information is considered confidential, the volunteer should assume that it is confidential until clarification can be obtained from a supervisor.

Library Facilities

Volunteers are welcome to use staff restrooms and break room facilities. All individuals who use the break room are asked to assist in keeping it clean. Please keep in mind that the Library does not have secure locations to store personal or valuable items, and cannot be responsible for any lost or stolen personal items. Volunteers are expected to park in areas of the parking lot that are typically designated for staff parking.

Safety, Accidents, and Emergency Situations

Everyone working in the Library is expected to make safety a part of their daily concern and follow common-sense safety practices. Volunteers should be alert at all times to potential safety hazards, and immediately report any unsafe conditions or acts. Volunteers should follow safe procedures for performing tasks (such as using appropriate methods to lift heavy objects and using back braces, handcarts, or other devices to assist with lifting or moving activities), and notify supervisors of any problems or concerns they may have in safely performing tasks. All workplace injuries and accidents must be reported immediately to a supervisor, Head of Public Services, or the Administrative Office. Volunteers should become familiar with emergency plans established within their assigned work area as well as their assigned role in the event of an emergency situation.

Liability Insurance

Volunteers working in the library are covered only by the Library's general liability insurance. The Library will not provide any medical, health, accident, or workers compensation benefits for any injuries sustained while functioning as a volunteer. In the case of personal injury or accident, the volunteer is to rely on his/her own personal insurance resources. In addition, volunteers who drive their personal vehicles in the course of their volunteer work should be aware that liability follows the owner of the vehicle, they are responsible for maintaining their own automobile insurance, and they are not covered under the Library's automobile insurance.

Employment with MGRL

If a paid library position should become available, current volunteers may apply and be viewed favorably as having volunteered for the Library.

Release from Volunteer Service

The volunteer relationship may be ended at any time, for any reason, by either the volunteer or the Library. Volunteers selected for assignment to a special project will end their volunteer assignment when that project is completed or terminated. If a volunteer is unable to adequately perform the duties assigned, the volunteer will be released from service. The Library will address problems in the performance or behavior of volunteers. Minor problems may be addressed verbally or in writing. More serious problems will result in release from volunteer service. Examples of situations that will result in release of service include (but are not limited to): failure to meet physical or mental standards of performance; failure to follow policies, procedures, rules, or guidelines; breach of confidential information; frequent absence or tardiness; falsification of documentation; reporting under the influence of drugs or alcohol; tampering with library materials; theft, abuse, or misuse of property or funds of the library, its employees, or its patrons; misuse of access to library systems or facilities; illegal activities; or violent or inappropriate actions.

Upon release from volunteer service, volunteers must return their badges as well as any other Library property (e.g., training/reference books, keys, computer storage devices, etc.). After release from volunteer service, access to the Library is limited to public areas only.

Summary

This manual was developed to outline general guidelines and procedures for volunteers, and is subject to change at any time. Any questions about the Volunteer Program can be directed to the Human Resources Office at Volunteers@bibblib.org.

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