

4.20 Currency of registration records

Keep registration records current to help the library maintain a realistic estimate of active borrowers and ensure effective communication with borrowers.

Considerations:

Keeping registration records current involves two activities. For active borrowers, addresses, phone numbers, borrower types, and similar details need to be verified and updated. For inactive borrowers, registration records need to be purged. Although they are frequently conflated, these are separate activities performed for separate purposes.

Verify and update the information in library records for active borrowers on an annual basis. Typically this verification is done by checkout staff on or after the anniversary date of the original registration, based on manual examination of the library card or a trigger from an integrated library system. Annual verification is important to keep up with changes in borrower residence and status in today's mobile society. Most libraries do not require proof of residence if a borrower is in good standing with the library.

One of the key measures of public library performance is the percentage of community members who are active users of the library. This measure is an indicator of how well the library serves all residents of the community. Regular purging of inactive borrowers ensures that the measure will provide accurate information for library advocacy, strategic planning, and service evaluation. Although it may be tempting to inflate the number by conducting infrequent purges of the borrower records, having an accurate estimate is crucial for effective planning. Iowa standards require registration records to be purged of inactive borrowers at least every three years.

Purge registration records of inactive borrowers at least annually, using the criterion of three years without action on the record. If possible, purge monthly. If the purge itself is only conducted every three years, it may be nearly six years from the date of the last action that a record is purged. For example:

- Purge in April 2005 (last activity dates prior to April 2002)
- Last activity on record May 2005
- Purge in April 2008 (last activity dates prior to April 2005)
- Purge in April 2011 (last activity dates prior to April 2008)
- May 2005 record will not be purged until April 2011: almost 6 years

Recommendations:

Update the address and other details in borrower records annually.

Purge inactive borrower records at least annually to keep the estimate of active readers accurate, using a criterion of three years without activity on the record.