



Meeting Room Policy

The South Mississippi Regional Library (SMRL) system, as a public institution, welcomes the use of its meeting room facilities for not-for-profit, educational, cultural, and public information and/or gathering forums, which are of local interest. Private social gatherings are prohibited.

It is the intent of SMRL to make these facilities available to the public on an equitable basis in a manner which prohibits any one group or organization from dominating the use of these facilities. Policies governing the use of the library meeting rooms are made in accordance with Article VI of the **Library Bill of Rights**:

Libraries that make exhibit spaces and meeting rooms available to the public they serve should make such facilities available on an equitable basis, regardless of the beliefs or affiliations of groups requesting their use.

The meeting rooms are made available to all individuals or groups on a first-come, first-serve basis subject to the following requirements:

1. All meetings must be free and open to the public and media. Admission fees, collections, donations, and selling of services or materials are prohibited before, during, and after the meeting on library property. The Friends of the Library may conduct fundraising programs and sell merchandise in the library as this entity is considered a non-profit organization by the State of Mississippi. This policy is in compliance with state law and is also consistent with the Mississippi Attorney General's Opinion dated March 4, 2002, Docket #92-0167.
2. To reserve a Library meeting room, a completed **Application for Use of Library Meeting Room** form must be received by the Branch Manager or designee **at least one week** before the meeting. The person reserving a meeting room must be 21 years of age and have a valid South Mississippi Regional Library card account in good standing. Applications must be submitted at least annually and will be accepted and scheduled in the order received. Rooms may be scheduled up to one year in advance. Meeting rooms may be booked twice a month only in

order to prevent monopolizing the space by any one group or person to the exclusion of others in the community.

3. The person responsible for completing a meeting room application will be considered the official contact person for the reservation. Usage of a meeting room is not an endorsement of the individual/group's objectives or beliefs. When the use of a meeting room is questionable, the final authority will be the South Mississippi Regional Library System Board of Trustees.
4. Priority for scheduling the meeting rooms will be as follows:
 - Library and library-sponsored groups and programs or Library staff educational training programs and meetings;
 - Community oriented groups;
 - Small groups or individual study.
5. The length of time that a meeting room is reserved must include adequate time for setting up and returning the room to good order. Library staff is not responsible for setting up or cleaning up. The Library will not be responsible for, nor provide storage for, the property of groups. Neither the SMRL Board of Trustees nor Library staff assumes liability or responsibility for individuals or groups while in the meeting room.
6. The person reserving the meeting room will be responsible for maintaining order among the attendees. Programs held in the meeting rooms should not disturb other library patrons. All activities held in a library meeting room must comply with the Library's Rules of Conduct posted in the meeting room. Failure of the official contact person to enforce library policies will result in a written warning to the group. A second violation of library policies will be submitted to the Library Director for resolution, possibly resulting in the loss of permission to use the room.
7. Library-owned equipment is available on a limited basis, subject to the availability of the equipment. Request for use of this equipment must be made at the time of the application for meeting room use. It is the organizer's responsibility to ask for training or help with connections if needed. Library equipment must not be damaged or altered in any way. Neither the SMRL Board of Trustees nor Library staff assumes liability or responsibility for any privately-owned equipment used on Library premises.
8. The service of food will be dependent upon the physical facilities of the meeting room. Kitchen facilities may be available in some locations. Request for use of any kitchen facilities must be made at the time of the application for meeting room use. Food is to be served only in the meeting room.

9. Gambling in any form is prohibited. The possession and/or use of controlled substances in or on library property is prohibited. All tobacco products, vaping devices, and alcohol are prohibited inside the library, restrooms, and on library premises.
10. After-hours meetings are not permitted unless the meeting room has separate outside access, and the user must make prior arrangements to check out and return a meeting room key. All individuals checking out a meeting room key must be at least 21 years of age and have a library card account in good standing. In libraries with no outside access, meetings must be concluded 15 minutes before regular library closing time, and rooms must be vacated at closing time.
11. Individuals/groups with a meeting room reservation must **check in and out** at the Circulation Desk before and after using the room. A **Meeting Room Use Report** must be completed and turned in at the Circulation Desk after use of the room. For individuals using the meeting room after-hours, the Report must be returned with the meeting room key.
12. Groups consisting mainly of persons 16 years-old or younger must be *accompanied* by an adult who will submit the application and assume all responsibility for meeting room use.
13. Publicity must neither state nor imply that the library is either sponsoring or endorsing a program; neither shall publicity state nor suggest that attendance is limited to group members. Any written announcements or publicity must include the statement "USE OF LIBRARY FACILITIES DOES NOT INDICATE ENDORSEMENT BY THE LIBRARY SYSTEM." Individuals or groups using a library meeting room shall not use the SMRL logo in connection with publicity or use the library's address or phone number for registration.
14. **The official contact person will be financially responsible for any damages to library facilities and/or its contents. Any charges incurred will be billed to this individual or group representative.**
15. Individuals or small study groups may be permitted to use a meeting room for a study space. This use is dependent on availability and the approval of the Branch Manager or designee.
16. The Library retains the right to cancel a reservation for Library purposes or in case of a facility or weather-related emergency. If a reservation is canceled, the Library will notify the individual/group holding the reservation at least forty-eight (48) hours in advance or as soon as possible in the case of an emergency. The Library reserves the right to interrupt any meeting taking place in the meeting room in case of severe weather or other emergency situations.

17. The library reserves the right to enforce fire codes and all applicable local and state laws. Standard Fire Code Section 3101.14 restricts any open flame, flammable, combustible or hazardous materials in any place of public assemblage.

18. Library meeting room reservation requests that are denied by the Branch Manager may be forwarded to the Library Director for reconsideration. These requests should be addressed to: Library Director, South Mississippi Regional Library System, 900 Broad Street, Columbia, MS, 39429. If the applicant is still dissatisfied with the ruling, a request for reconsideration can be sent to the SMRL Board of Trustees at the above address. Action taken by the Board of Trustees is final.

Approved by the SMRL Board of Trustees on November 1, 2022.