



## Customer Comments

January, 2015

The following comment was received by the Library during the month of January, 2015. Where the customer requested a personal reply by phone or email, it was provided. Customer comments and responses are posted on the Library's website.

### **Received by e-mail**

**Comment:** Research shows that one sided conversations are distracting. They are certainly annoying. I would like cell phones banned from the library.

**Response:** I'm sorry to hear you had a less than positive experience at the Port Angeles Library, due to a loud cell phone user, and that the response you received from staff was not more helpful and informative.

While NOLS does not have a policy that specifically bans cell phone use in the library, we do have a policy (4.1) that prohibits any library visitor from engaging in disruptive behavior. You can read the full policy at [www.nols.org](http://www.nols.org) (pull down "About NOLS" and click open "Policies).

The reason for this more general approach is that there is a very wide array of potentially disruptive behaviors, many of which are constitutionally protected and/or not problematic unless and until they become disruptive. Rather than trying to identify, define, and prohibit all potentially disruptive activities, the library's policy instead focuses on whether a behavior unreasonably disturbs library users or staff, or hinders others from using the library.

Library staff do their best to identify and address inappropriate library behavior when it occurs, but admittedly it is not always simple, quick, or straightforward to do so. Recognizing this, NOLS has recently initiated a review of our policies and practices in this area. We will also be improving signage to make library visitors more aware of Policy 4.1 and providing refresher training for staff in how to determine when a behavior crosses the line from acceptable to disruptive, how to manage disruptive events more effectively, and how to provide information to visitors about the library's patron code of conduct.

I hope that your future visits to the library will be more satisfactory. If you again encounter problems of the type you previously experienced, please let staff know immediately. If you have additional comments, or if I can assist in any further way, please let me know.

Thanks for your reply.

**Additional Comment:** I am sure that you are very busy and taking the time to reply is appreciated and supports my ongoing support of the NOLS. I find the staff most helpful and eager to assist. Being a librarian is not an easy job and takes a special type of person. Thanks

I agree with you that library governance has to be flexible. After all, it is a public facility paid for by the taxpayers. As such its availability cannot be capricious or whimsical pandering to personal preferences but rather should be for the general good.

The basis of my comment to you is that cell phone conversations are distracting to a third party and have no place in the library. By purpose and design (no Musak, Fox News, ESPN or other abominations) library use is an intellectual experience which requires concentration.

Remember when libraries displayed QUIET and SILENCE signs?

My opinion is in line with comprehension research where subjects were given cognitive testing while under the influence of various sources of potential distraction. Without question, comprehension scores were lower when the subjects were exposed to the "halfalog" of another person on a phone. This effect is exacerbated by the tendency for people to speak louder when using a cell phone. Here is a link to one such research.

[One-Sided Conversations - Science Updates - Science NetLinks](#)

The library vestibule is a place where people can take or place calls without disturbing others. It is a short walk from the nethermost corners of the library and hardly an imposition.

I would like for you to change the policy to ban cell phone use and place a no cellphone icon on the entrance to the library proper.

Thanks for your consideration.

**Additional Response:** Thanks for your thoughtful response. While public libraries no longer endeavor to be the restrictive and silent places of the past, we do recognize that the increased voice volume and one-sidedness of cell phone conversations make cell phone usage one of a dozen or so library behaviors that can be particularly bothersome and disruptive. We'll certainly take your input under consideration as we continue our current review of disruptive behavior policy and management.