

Libraries to Not Charge Customers for Borrowing Materials cont...

The libraries will still need to track the materials the customers borrow in order to ensure compliance with the return dates – most materials check out for three weeks – and the cards also let customers place requests for materials that aren't currently on the libraries' shelves either because they are already being borrowed by another customer or because the libraries haven't purchased them yet.

"It's amazing. Truly amazing. I walk in the door, take anything I want off the shelves – they have Downton Abbey on DVD – several seasons!! And then I just walk up with my pile of goodies, hand them this card, and that's all it takes and I'm set for a week. No money, just an agreement that I'll return the materials by or before their due date! How easy is that?!" gushes one elated customer.

Another customer spoke with us about the virtual content that the library is giving away:

"I have one of these eReader tablets and for the longest time I was buying all my eBooks and they'd run me about \$10 or more per book! Today I borrowed 3 ebooks – for free – from Maryland's Digital eLibrary, or Overdrive as some of 'em call it. I just had to sign in with my library card, click a couple of buttons, and presto change-o the book was on my eReader! I'll never buy another book again."

Could this free-borrowing model be a game changer? Only time will tell. For now it is clear that, at least for the library customers, borrowing and returning items for free is the way to go!