

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE TOLLAND PUBLIC LIBRARY MUSEUM PASS
LENDING PROGRAM

BY

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When looking at the distances between the Tolland Public Library and the museums that it owns passes for, one museum stands out because of its distance from the library. The U.S.S. Constitution Museum is 83.9 miles away from the library. That is 28.7 miles farther than the next farthest museum. However, the drive is only estimated at being nine minutes longer. In the heavy traffic that often exists between the library and Boston the trip could take much longer. I would recommend the library not renew this pass unless it is very popular or the argument could be made that the museum is like nothing else in the area. If people in the town frequently travel to Boston it would make sense for the library to purchase more museum passes in that area. However, with just one museum located in the Boston area, the pass appears to be an outlier that does not fit in with the rest of the collection. If the argument were made that the museum is unique than many other one of a kind museums in the area would have to be considered for inclusion in the museum pass lending program.

Google Maps estimates that it will take over an hour for patrons to drive to four of the other museums that the Tolland Public Library provides passes for. It is not uncommon for libraries to have passes for museums that are so far away. All of the town libraries that were compared in this study own passes to museums that are more than an hour away. One library even owns a pass for a zoo that is 101 miles away. These passes could be necessary to provide patrons with informal learning in a variety of subject areas. One pass that was over an hour away from the Tolland Public Library was for the Roger Williams Park Zoo, which is 55.2 miles away from the library. Despite its distance it is closer to the library than any of the other zoos listed at the Association of Zoos and Aquariums website. The same was the case for Mystic Aquarium with its distance of 50.7 miles from the library. It is the closest accredited aquarium (AZA, 1997-

2009). When renewing these passes, the library should question if it is more important to have passes reflecting a wide range of subjects or to have passes for museums and other attractions that are nearby. Can patrons reasonably travel to these sites? With current gasoline prices can patrons still afford the trip? Also, are passes lent to patrons for a long enough period of time for patrons to pick up the pass and return it on time?

The Tolland Public Library provides passes to museums covering a range of topics, which would allow patrons to learn about many subjects in an informal setting. While none of the museums were coded as science, patrons can visit the Springfield Science Museum, which is part of the Springfield Museums (2012). No museums were coded in the Nature / Environment / Natural History category, but patrons could still visit a nature center by going to the Roaring Brook Nature Center with the same pass as for The Children's Museum in West Hartford, CT (Friends of the Tolland Public Library, n.d.). However, this center is over an hour away from the library, perhaps a closer nature center should be considered.

While the local library offers a range of passes, it appears that some local museums might have been overlooked. Three museums, the Hicks-Sterns Family Museum, the Old Tolland County Jail and Museum, and the Old Tolland County Courthouse are operated by two different organizations within less than a 10-minute walk from the library, but the library does not offer passes for them. It could be that these organizations do not offer passes for libraries, but this is worth investigating. The Connecticut Science Center is 18.9 miles from the library while the Springfield Museums are 22.6 miles from the library. This is a small difference when choosing a science museum to visit, but it might still be worth considering.

References

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