

Library Connection, Inc Privacy Policy

I. Declaration of Principles

Library Connection and its Member Libraries believe that free inquiry is an essential aspect of library service. We believe that upholding the right to privacy prevents the right to free and open inquiry from being compromised by having the subject of one's interest examined by others.

Privacy is essential to the exercise of free speech, free thought, and free association. The courts have upheld the right to privacy based on the Bill of Rights of the U.S. Constitution. Section 11-25 of the Connecticut General Statutes declares all patron identification and patron transaction information confidential, and requires libraries not to release any of this information without the patron's permission or a court order. This law specifically exempts patron identification and transaction information from Freedom of Information requests. Numerous decisions in case law have defined and extended rights to privacy.

Our commitment to patron privacy and confidentiality has deep roots not only in law but also in the ethics and practices of librarianship. In accordance with the American Library Association's Code of Ethics:

"We protect each library patron's right to privacy and confidentiality with respect to information sought or received and resources consulted, borrowed, acquired, or transmitted."

II. Library Connection's Commitment to Our Member Libraries Regarding Their Patrons Rights of Privacy and Confidentiality

Library Connection provides computer and telecommunication services to its member libraries that include maintaining a database of patron records and records of circulation transactions at our member libraries. We also provide links to electronic services and resources whose access is validated against patron records in our database. We acknowledge that these duties give Library Connection the responsibility to secure the privacy and confidentiality of the information entrusted to us. We have established these Privacy Policies to enable us to discharge this responsibility.

We consider the intellectual pursuits of individuals using library resources, including library internet resources, to be confidential, regardless of the age of the individual. We will not produce any records we may have of such pursuits to any individual or agency unless compelled to do so by a court order.

1. Notice & Openness

We freely share the privacy policies of Library Connection with our member libraries. We share them with the public by posting them on our web site. Whenever policies change, notice of those changes is immediately posted to our web site and shared with our member libraries, who are encouraged to share them with their patrons.

We avoid creating and retaining records that are not needed for the fulfillment of the mission of Library Connection.

Information that, through our member libraries, we may gather and retain about library patrons include the following:

Patron Registration Information: Our libraries collect and we retain a patron's name, library card number, address, town of residence, and phone number. With patron permission our libraries may collect and we would retain birth year and email address. At the request of parents or guardians our libraries may collect and use an "in care of" address to which library notices will be sent. We periodically purge from our system expired library cards, which have no outstanding fines or fees associated with them.

Information on non-Registered Library Users: No information is collected on library users who do not register as patrons. Some member libraries may collect the names of those who wish to use library computers to access the Internet. We encourage these libraries not to retain this information longer than three days.

Circulation Information: Our computer system records when patrons borrow materials at any of our member libraries, when materials they have borrowed are returned to any of our member libraries, and when and what library materials they request via holds placed by themselves or by library staff. Our computer system also calculates and tracks fines for overdue materials, fees for lost materials, and partial and complete payments of those fines and fees.

Patrons may access their library account through our catalog interface. After authenticating their request by supplying their library number and a personal identification number (PIN), patrons can place holds, and learn the status of holds they have placed, when materials they have borrowed are due back, and the amounts of any fines and fees charged against their records.

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Library staff can access the same information patrons can. While library staff have no access to an individual patron's borrowing history, they can access the identity of the previous borrower of returned library materials, so that if materials are found damaged or missing components, the previous borrower can be contacted.

Our computer system maintains logs of transactions executed during the operation of the system. Library Connection staff (but not member library staffs) can search these logs, and do so on request of library staffs to clarify circumstances surrounding disputed patron fees and fines or to investigate apparently anomalous computer system behavior.

Information Required to Provide Library Services: Our member libraries contact patrons when materials on hold become available for pick up, and when borrowed materials are overdue. If the only information libraries have is the required information on the library registration card, these notices are done by mail or phone. With patron permission and patron supplied email addresses, many of our libraries send these notices via email. Email also enables them to send notices to alert patrons that material is coming due shortly. Email addresses have the same statutory protection as other patron identifiable information: Email addresses can only be released with patron permission, in response to a court order.

2. Choice & Consent

This section explains the way Library Connection and its member libraries collect and use patron information. Our libraries will not collect or ask us to retain patron private and personally identifiable information without patron consent. Further, absent such consent, we will consider all personally identifiable information to be confidential and will not disclose such information unless compelled to do so by a court order.

If patrons wish to receive borrowing privileges, they must provide certain information about themselves in order to obtain a library account and be issued a library card. When visiting our Web site or those of our member libraries and using electronic services, patrons may choose to provide their library card number to access their accounts. They may also choose to provide their library card number to access ReQuest and other databases external to our member libraries. Patrons should understand that their library card number identifies them as a patron of a specific library in order to validate the provision of services, but the card number cannot be linked to their individual and confidential information by any service provider external to Library Connection or its member libraries.

Public library patrons have the option of providing their home library with their e-mail address in order to receive e-mail notifications about their library account. They may request that their e-mail address be removed from their record at any time.

Library Connection will never use or share the personally identifiable information provided to us in ways unrelated to our library systems and procedures described in Section I unless compelled to do so by a court order.

3. Data Integrity & Security

Data Integrity: We take reasonable steps to assure the integrity of our patron data. Our member libraries provide patrons with access to their own personally identifiable data; updating data whenever necessary. We use middleware authentication systems that authorize use without requiring personally identifiable information.

Data Retention: We protect personally identifiable information from unauthorized disclosure once it is no longer needed to manage library services. We periodically purge expired patron information and material circulation history.

Tracking Patrons: We permit access to information in all formats without creating data trails. We protect the security of any personally identifiable information while it is in our custody. We do not ask Web site patrons to identify themselves or reveal any personal information unless they are making use of those portions of our Web Site restricted to registered borrowers.

Our web site contains links to external web sites not maintained by Library Connection. We cannot be responsible for guarding privacy beyond our web site. Users of our web site who link to other web sites should consult the privacy policies of those web sites should they have questions regarding their use.

Third Party Security: To the best of our abilities, we ensure that our contracts, licenses, and off-site computer service arrangements reflect our policies and legal obligations concerning patron privacy and confidentiality. Should a third party require access to our patrons' personally identifiable information, our agreements address appropriate restrictions on the use, aggregation, dissemination, and sale of that information, particularly information about minors. In circumstances in which there is a risk that personally identifiable information may be disclosed, we will warn our libraries.

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Security Measures: We guard against unauthorized access to our data through the use of firewalls, passwords and other authentication measures. Staff access to personal data: We permit only authorized Library staff with assigned confidential passwords to access personal data stored in our computer system for the purpose of performing library work. We will not disclose any personal data collected from patrons unless compelled to do so by a court order.

4. Enforcement & Redress

Library Connection will not share data on individuals with third parties unless compelled to do so by a court order. Library staff and patrons who have questions, concerns, or complains about our handling of patron privacy and confidentiality rights should file written comments with the Executive Director of Library Connection. We will respond in a timely manner and may conduct a privacy investigation or review of policy and procedures.

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