Patron Privacy Policy

I. Purpose

A. The purpose of the Patron Privacy Policy is to affirm the library's commitment to protecting the privacy and confidentiality of our patrons. We are dedicated to ensuring that all personal information, borrowing records, and use of library resources are safeguarded in accordance with applicable laws and ethical standards.

II. Patron-Identifiable Information

A. Patron-identifiable information is defined as information identifying an individual's registration with the library or use of library materials, resources, or services. This includes all records, files, computers, and electronic media that might contain such information.

B. Patron-identifiable information refers to a wide range of information maintained by the library and includes any information that links a patron to use of Mount Prospect Public Library materials, resources, or services, or the patron's choices, taste, interest, or research. More broadly, patron-identifiable information is any information which:

1. Refers to a patron by any identifiable characteristic (e.g., by name, address, telephone or other contact numbers, email address, identifying numbers such as library card number, driver's license number, or social security number); or
2. Provides, or could be used to determine, any information about a patron's library use.

C. Patron-identifiable information includes all types of registration and circulation records and anything that contains registration and circulation records, including computers, computer components, disks and other electronic storage media, email, temporary internet files stored in a computer, computer sign-up sheets or other facility use logs, interlibrary loan requests and records, patron hold requests, or librarian notes pertaining to patron requests or assistance, and correspondence with patrons. Even records which do not include a patron's name, but refer to some other identifiable characteristic, such as the patron's library card number, contain patron-identifiable information and are subject to this policy.

D. Patron-identifiable information does not include statistical records relating to use of the library or its materials and services that cannot be used to identify particular patrons. It also does not include information concerning behavioral issues (as distinguished from registration or circulation information) in the library's records regarding a patron.

E. The library will treat all patron-identifiable information as confidential. Staff will under no circumstances disclose any patron-identifiable information to the public, the press, or to any government agency, or to the patron's own family members except in accordance with this policy.

F. The library will not permit anyone access to, or a view of, any non-public computers, files, or records which might contain patron-identifiable information.

G. The library will consult records with patron-identifiable information only for legitimate purposes related to the library's operations.

H. Record Keeping

1. The library maintains records in compliance with the laws of the State of Illinois.
2. The library will make all practicable efforts to retain records containing patron-identifiable information only to the extent necessary to preserve library or public property or to fulfill another core library function.

3. To the extent that such records are necessary, the library will strive to make records non- or minimally-patron identifiable.

III. Release of Private Patron Information

A. Personally identifiable information about library users must be kept confidential in accordance with applicable laws, including the Illinois Library Records Confidentiality Act (75 ILCS 70/1-2). The Act provides: "The registration and circulation records of a library are confidential information. No person shall publish or make any information contained in such records available to the public unless: (1) required to do so under a court order; or (2) the information is requested by a sworn law enforcement officer" for purposes of identifying a suspect, witness or victim of a crime and the officer represents that it is impractical to secure a court order as a result of an emergency where the officer believes that someone is in imminent danger of physical harm.

B. Patron-identifiable information may not be released or made available in any format to a federal agent, state or local law enforcement officer, or other person unless a court order in proper form has been entered by a court of competent jurisdiction or the exigent circumstances described above are present. Library staff must cooperate with federal, state, and local law enforcement agencies when they are acting within the scope of a lawfully issued court order or acting lawfully as part of an investigation.

C. The library will generally refuse to disclose any patron-identifiable information without a patron's permission unless required to do so by a court order, including a warrant, which is properly issued and authorized by a federal or state court.

D. The library will disclose patron-identifiable information requested by a sworn law enforcement officer in writing using the Officer's Request for Confidential Library Information Form in emergency situations as described above. Information provided in those circumstances is to be limited to identifying a suspect, witness, or victim of a crime. It excludes any registration or circulation records that would indicate materials borrowed, resources reviewed, or services used at the library except to the extent necessary for this purpose.

E. Only the Executive Director, Deputy Director, or designated "Privacy In-Charge" staff are authorized to disclose any patron-identifiable information.

IV. Limited Release Exceptions

A. There are several limited exceptions which permit or even require the library to disclose patron-identifiable information.

B. In addition to the circumstances described above, the Federal Electronic Communications Privacy Act permits the library in certain circumstances to disclose the contents of certain electronic communications, such as email, temporary internet files, and other content transmitted, received, viewed, downloaded, or printed on a library computer. Authorized staff may divulge the contents of electronic communications:

1. To an addressee or intended recipient of the communication;
2. In any way consistent with the consent of the originator or an addressee or intended recipient of the communication; or
3. To a law enforcement agency:
   i. If the contents were inadvertently obtained by the library and appear to pertain to the commission of a crime; or
   ii. If the library reasonably believes that an emergency involving immediate danger of death or serious injury to any person requires disclosure of this information without delay.

C. In addition, federal law requires the library to report possible violations of child pornography laws to the Cyber Tip Line at National Center for Missing and Exploited Children. The library's attorney will be consulted prior to filing report. The library is protected from liability for good faith disclosure to the Cyber Tip Line.
D. If law enforcement asks the library to retain electronic communications in storage (such as on the computer hard drive, disk or other storage medium), it must preserve such communications for at least 90 days following the request, and for an additional 90 days if the request is being renewed. The library will require the appropriate legal process before providing access to preserved communications.

Revision History

The Privacy and Confidentiality of Patron Information Policy and the Record Keeping Policy were combined into the Patron Privacy Policy 04/17/2025. Privacy and Confidentiality of Patron Information Policy: 11/17/2016, 09/2012, 07/20/2010. Record Keeping Policy: 07/2018, 12/2012, 07/2010, 01/01/2008, 2003.