Privacy and Confidentiality Policy

The Somerset County Library Privacy and Confidentiality Policy is based on the ethics and practices of professional librarianship to protect each library user's right to privacy and confidentiality.

This policy establishes guidelines for the protection of personally identifiable information contained in library records. The Library is committed to privacy and confidentiality for all library users, consistent with applicable federal, state, and local laws. Maryland state law (MD Code, GP §4-308) provides specific legal criteria under which records can be inspected, used or disclosed.

Library staff will not respond to any informal request by a third party for personally identifiable information about any library user. Personally identifiable information may be released to a law enforcement agency or officer after presentation of an order by a court of competent jurisdiction issued in proper form (a court issued subpoena or search warrant).

Library users' identifiable information will only be used in accordance with this privacy policy.

Information the Library Collects and Retains

The personal information collected is as follows and will be kept until an account is deleted, unless otherwise indicated:

- Information used to register for a library card (name, parent's or legal guardian's name if patron is under the age of 18, address, library card number, telephone number, and birthdate; email address and sex are optional);
- Name and phone number as used to register for library programs;
- Grade level and school for Student Virtual Cards and Summer Reading Programs);
- Overdue item history and related notices;
- Materials currently checked out (Once returned, all checkout history is automatically deleted, unless the user has activated reading history in the catalog); and
- Library card numbers of computer users. (This data is automatically deleted nightly.)

The Way We Use This Information

This information enables us to provide patrons with access to their library accounts, promote library services, and to maintain information necessary for operations. Personal information may be used in the following ways, but is not limited to:

- Maintaining internal records;
- Assisting patrons with their accounts;
- Notification and collection of overdue materials and lost item charges;

- Notification of outstanding holds;
- Reminders regarding registration for library programs;
- Sending of informational emails about library programs and services;
- Analyzing library usage data to improve services;
- Contacting library users for research purposes to help improve services; and
- Resolving cases of violations of library rules and regulations

Personally identifiable information will remain confidential and will not be sold, licensed, or disclosed to any third party, except those vendors working under contract with the library or as required by law.

Third Party Vendor Services

The Library works with third party vendors to provide expanded services, such as digital collections, research databases, and streaming media content. When connecting to licensed databases and content providers, the Library only releases information that authenticates users. Nevertheless, when accessing remote or third party vendor sites, there are limits to the privacy protection the Library can provide.

Third party vendors may gather and disclose your information according to their own policies, including:

- Personally identifiable information provided by users, including when you register for the site, provide feedback and suggestions, request information, or create shared content;
- Other information that could be used to identify a library user, such as IP address, search history, location based data, and/or device ID;
- Non-personally identifiable information, such as ad views, analytics, browser information (type and language), cookie data, date/time of a request, demographic data, hardware/software type, interaction data, serving domains, page views, and referring page; and
- Other data that third party services may collect as described in the vendor's privacy policy and terms of use.

For more information on these services and the specific types of data that may be gathered and disclosed by each service, please refer to their Terms of Use and Privacy Policies.

Requests for Information

Personally identifiable information may be released only to a law enforcement agency after presentation of an order by a court of competent jurisdiction issued in proper form (a court issued subpoena or search warrant).

The following requests will immediately be referred to the Library Director:

- An agency of state, federal, or local government or any individual pursuant to a valid court order, search warrant or subpoena authorized under the authority of federal, state or local law relating to civil, criminal or administrative discovery procedures or legislative investigative power.
- A government official with a FISA (Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act) Request.

In the event of a search warrant, which is executable immediately, the Library will comply with the search warrant and consult with legal counsel.

If the Library Director is not immediately available, the person making the request will be given the Director's contact information. Staff will collect the name and contact information of the person making the request.

Library staff shall not disclose to any other individual, corporation, institution, governmental agent or agency, except as provided in this policy, information that includes but is not limited to the following:

- the library's circulation records and their contents as pertains to individual patrons;
- the library's registration records and their contents;
- the number or character of questions asked by a patron;
- the frequency of a patron's visits to the library;
- a patron's name, address, or telephone number;
- a patron's record of computer and database usage;
- computer contents that could identify material or sources a patron consults; or
- the contents of a patron's information transaction: titles requested, information requests, personal documents being created using library's software, etc.

If a request for information is denied, the Library Director shall inform the individual, corporation, institution, governmental agent or agency making the request within ten (10) days of receipt of the request.

Library Card and PIN/Password Protection

Patrons must notify the Library immediately if their card is lost or stolen, or if they believe someone is using their card or card number without permission.

Keeping Account Information Up-to-Date

Patrons must notify the Library of any changes to personal information to keep their account information up-to-date. Library cards expire every 3 years after the date they are created or renewed, and address updates are requested once per year.

Patron Access to Account Information

The Library will not provide information from the patron database to any individual or agency other than the person or persons named on the account, except those vendors working under contract with the library, unless presented with a search warrant or subpoena.

To safeguard privacy, patrons who request information by telephone will be asked to provide card number and name. Other information such as birthdate, address, email address and telephone number may be requested.

The following exceptions to providing information from the patron database apply.

Parents and Children

The Library respects the privacy of all library users, regardless of age. Parents and legal guardians of a child under age 18 who present the child's library card or confirm their identity as the minor's parent or legal guardian by displaying valid ID may:

- obtain access to a child's library records;
- check out items, including items on hold, for their children; and
- obtain information regarding fees on their children's accounts.

Items on Hold

The Library staff treat the materials placed on hold as confidential. Patrons may choose to have another person pick up their holds by asking staff to add that person's name to their account as "approved to pick up holds."

Patrons may also authorize another person to pick up holds by providing their library card to that person.

Fees

The amount of fees that are due may be given to someone other than the cardholder on the account but titles and account history will not be disclosed. Fees may be paid by someone other than the cardholder.

Library Notification

Information provided by staff over the telephone or left on a voicemail shall be limited to notification that an item is available. Title information will not be left via voicemail. Email and text communications about holds and overdues include titles.

Security

The Library is committed to ensuring that patron information is secure. Physical, electronic, and managerial procedures are in place to safeguard and secure the information and to prevent unauthorized access or disclosure. Confidentiality extends to information sought or received, materials consulted, database search records, reference interviews, interlibrary loan records and other personally identifiable uses of library materials, facilities, or services.

Public Computer Use

The Library's PC Reservation System erases the history and temporary Internet files that accrued during your individual session. Library card numbers are captured when patrons sign into a computer. However, they are automatically deleted nightly.

Patrons are responsible for logging off at the end of a session to protect their privacy and insure that other individuals are not using a library workstation still logged on to their account.

Electronic Resources

Website

The Library does not track or permanently record any personal information about you when you visit the Library's website unless you choose to provide that information via a contact form or newsletter registration. The Library's website collects and stores only aggregate user information using Google Analytics.

The Library website does not use cookies, but some online services, such as sessions on the Library catalog using the My Account option and remote online resources, place temporary cookies for current sessions.

Links to Other Websites

The Library website contains links to other websites. The Library does not control these other websites and is not responsible for the protection and privacy of any information that you provide. Exercise caution and look at the privacy statement applicable to the website in question.

Communication with the Library via the Website

The Library will use information submitted through contact forms only to respond to patrons' inquiries. General suggestions and comments about library services may be shared among library staff members in order to improve services.

Wi-Fi Use

Although the Library maintains the best possible security, patrons are encouraged to use secure browsing practices, whether on a public computer or on Wi-Fi.

Social Media

The Library maintains a social media presence which allows patrons to share opinions and information about library related materials and activities. The Library does not collect, maintain, or otherwise use the personal information stored on any third party site in any way other than to communicate with patrons. Third-party websites have their own privacy policies and patrons should proceed accordingly.

The Library reserves the right to edit or modify any postings or comments. The Library shall also be granted the right to reproduce comments, posts, and messages in other public venues (e.g., a posting on Facebook may be quoted in a newspaper or on the library website). Identifying information, other than first name, will be removed unless prior approval is granted by the user.

Other Services

This privacy and confidentiality policy does not apply to external applications or websites accessed from the library's public computers, devices, or equipment.

Patrons may choose to take advantage of library-related services via e-mail or other communication methods that send personally-identifiable information related to library use via public communication networks. The library has limited ability to protect the privacy of this information outside of its control.

Illegal Activity Prohibited and not Protected

Patrons may conduct only legal activity while using library resources, facilities, and services. Nothing in this policy prevents the library from exercising its right to enforce its Rules of Conduct, protect its facilities, networks, and equipment from harm, or prevent the use of library facilities and equipment for illegal purposes. The library can electronically log activity to monitor public computers and external access to its networks and reserves the right to review such logs when a violation of law or library policy is suspected. Staff is authorized to take immediate action to protect the security of library patrons, staff, facilities, computers, and networks. This includes contacting law enforcement authorities and providing information that may identify the individual(s) suspected of a violation.