



Policy of Confidentiality of Library Transactions and Patron Files

It is library policy that what individuals read, view, or listen to is a matter of personal privacy protected by Washington State Law Regarding Public Records and the Public Library Exemption (RCW 42.56.310) which establishes the confidentiality of library records. Under this policy, library staff members and volunteers may not tell employers, government agencies, school personnel, relatives, or others what materials are checked out to a card holder without a court order requiring that the records be provided and a public hearing of which the patron is notified. All library transactions are confidential in nature. The library upholds the right of a card holder to be given full, confidential access to available library resources no matter what political or intellectual atmosphere prevails. Every person of any age who has a Port Townsend Public Library card has the right to borrow any item in the library's collection and is eligible for all services offered.

Although the Port Townsend Public Library makes every effort to protect patron privacy, under the federal USA PATRIOT ACT (Public Law 107-56), records of the books and other materials borrowed from this library may be obtained by federal agents with a court order. Unlike the Washington State law this federal law prohibits library workers from informing patrons if federal agents have obtained their library records.

Names and addresses from the patron files may be released under the following circumstances:

1. The titles of overdue items checked out by a patron under the age of eighteen (18) will be released to the patron's custodial parents or legal guardians upon request.
2. The Library Director may approve the use of patron files names, addresses, or email addresses in order to conduct user surveys or to notify library users of programs, services, or library policy changes.
3. The Library Director may approve the use of names and addresses of adult library users ages eighteen (18) and older to be used from time to time by the library for the sole purpose of

notifying users of upcoming events or to invite users to participate in or to monetarily support library activities.

Provided that, in the case of items 2 and 3, care is used to a) prevent such information from being misused or misappropriated, and b) to enable patrons to inform the library of their desire not to receive such notifications and for the library to honor those wishes.

Ways the Library Protects Patron Privacy

- Library computers erase browsing history, passwords and personal data between sessions.
- If materials are returned on time, they are removed from the patron's record at the time of check in. "Last patron" information is attached to each library item after checking in, to help the library determine responsibility for damages and missing parts.
- Interlibrary Loan records are shredded one month after the items are returned.
- We retain no long-term records of the materials and equipment patrons have used and returned.
- Patrons may opt in to saving their reading history for their convenience.

Revised and Approved 6/26/2003 and reviewed by the Library Advisory Board and approved again by the Library Advisory Board on 4-19-2018. Revised and reviewed by the Library Advisory Board again on 4-13-2021 and approved by City Council on May 3, 2021.