



Woburn Public Library

Patron Privacy and Confidentiality Policy

Introduction

Woburn Public Library (WPL) supports every patron's right to have their library records remain confidential as specified by the M.G.L. Chapter 78 section 7 to the extent that it is consistent with federal law. Privacy is essential to the exercise of free speech, free thought, and free association, and confidentiality exists when a library is in possession of personally identifiable information about users and keeps that information private on their behalf. Our commitment to privacy and confidentiality has deep roots not only in law but also in the ethics and practices of librarianship.

Library records include patron registration data, circulation records, overdue and reserve records, participation in library sponsored programs, record of library visits, and/or any data that contains information that links a specific patron to specific materials or services used. Each person has individual control over their borrower's card and presentation of the card permits access to information about the borrower's current circulation record. Except during the period of the transaction, the library does not maintain any record of transactions.

The library retains only as much information as required to provide services unless a patron specifically requests otherwise. The library does not retain permanent records of individual borrowing histories. Information identifying the most recent borrower of an item (recorded in the "Last Patron" field) is automatically deleted after a period of three months of inactivity for that item. Inactivity is defined as no checkouts, renewals, or returns within the three-month period. In addition, the library does not retain information on internet sites visited, electronic databases used, or searches performed by patrons.

Personal Information We May Possess

We must obtain certain personal information about library patrons to provide a library account. This information about library users is found in the following contexts:

User Registration Information:

This is the information, including names, home addresses, phone numbers, and email addresses, that is provided to the library when a library card is obtained by a user. This information is retained for library business, and user accountability for checked out materials. It is also retained to determine eligibility for resources limited to residents of a community.

Circulation Information:

When library materials are borrowed through our system the information collected by WPL is limited to what is believed necessary or useful to conduct library business.

Electronic Access Information:

We may obtain data regarding users at the time they use a library card to gain access to electronic content (for which the State, the Minuteman Library Network (MLN) or WPL pays a subscription fee). WPL keeps no permanent record of sites visited by library users, the electronic databases accessed, or the searches performed by individual users. While we may disclose information about use of our website in aggregate (such as server use statistics), we will not disclose to third parties any information that could be used to identify individuals or their use of MLN resources, except as required by law or appropriate law enforcement procedures.

Location Information:

WPL will not disclose to third parties the presence or location of individuals in the library, except as required by law or appropriate law enforcement procedures.

Program Participation Information:

WPL may obtain personal information limited to what is believed necessary or useful to conduct library business when registering for library programs. While we may disclose registration information in aggregate (such as number of patrons registered), we will not disclose information that could be used to identify individuals to third parties, except as required by law or appropriate law enforcement procedures.

Access to Information

Any person is entitled to view their own library account information in person with positive identification in the library. In accordance with M.G.L. Chapter 78 section 7, library staff are restricted from disclosing information to the cardholder's family or friends. This applies to the release of information to the parents/guardians of minors when the minor has their own library card.

General Policy of Nondisclosure

WPL will not publicly disclose personal information about library users or their borrowing history. WPL will not sell, lease, or give users' personal information or borrowing information to companies, governmental agencies, or individuals except as authorized by the participating libraries or as required by federal and state law. We provide essential information to trusted partners who work on behalf of or with WPL; however, these companies do not have any independent right to share this information. These companies must demonstrate that they agree that end user data will not be retained beyond the agreed upon parameters, sold, or otherwise distributed or disclosed.

Personal information of library users may be accessed by and used by WPL when the staff member is acting within the scope of their duties in the administration of the library. WPL assumes no liability for disclosure of library user personal information by any library staff acting within or outside the scope of their duties.

WPL may be required to provide a user's personal information to a local, state or federal governmental entity pursuant to compulsory legal process. While we will make every effort to respect the privacy of our users, if under a legal requirement to turn over data, such as a court order, subpoena or search warrant, we will comply with the law.

Data Integrity and Security

Woburn Public Library makes every reasonable effort to maintain the accuracy of all information we collect and retain. We are also committed to maintaining the security of all personal information. Appropriate physical, electronic, and managerial procedures are in place to safeguard and secure the information we collect to prevent unauthorized access, alteration or disclosure of data.

Despite the precautions we take to prevent unauthorized access to personal information, we recognize that no system is immune from unlawful intrusion through hacking, which violates both federal and state laws; therefore, WPL cannot guarantee that information we collect can never be accessed by unauthorized users.

Categories of Data

User data

Data about library users is stored in our library automation software, which is not accessible outside of the systems operated by the library. Library staff must use a username and password for access to the system. Data is removed from the system if a user account is inactive for 5 or more years.

Transaction Data

Borrowing

Information on a user's current borrowing activity is retained to provide identification and accountability for library materials.

*Hold*s

User requests are kept by the system until they are filled and for an additional 30 days if the item is not picked up or the request is cancelled.

Backups for system restoration, in case of catastrophic data loss, are retained for two weeks.

Searching and User Account Inquiries

No personally identifiable data is kept about user searches in the catalog.

Users may elect to have the system keep their Reading History, preferred searches or keep reading lists. This information is only accessible to the user with their library card number and personal information number (PIN). Library staff cannot access it and library staff will not access it in ways that identify the personal interests of users.

The Minuteman site provides secure SSL transmission of any dialogs conducted once a user has logged in with barcode and PIN.

Credit Card Transactions

MLN accepts credit card payments for fines and fees levied by Woburn Public Library. Payments may be made either online or at a self-checkout station at a member library including, but not limited to, Woburn Public Library. Minuteman uses a secure, reliable payment connection through a third party vendor. MLN systems are PCI compliant (Payment Card Industry Data Security Standard).

No credit card information is stored by WPL or MLN. The credit card statement will list "Minuteman" as the vendor.

WPL and Minuteman are not able to provide refunds on credit cards.

Electronic Content Access

Access to electronic content (for which the State, the Minuteman Library Network or Woburn Public Library pays a subscription fee) from outside of a library often requires authentication to determine that the user is eligible for access. The user is asked to enter the library card number. Woburn Public Library only provides the outside database provider with an indication of whether or not the user is eligible for access to this database.

WPL works with a variety of partners to provide Electronic Content (eContent) to our users. Before checking out any of WPL's eContent, users should read the privacy policy of the company that is providing the service in question. For example, users who check out eBooks from WPL's website for use on their Kindle (or via a Kindle app) will receive those eBooks via Amazon. Amazon's privacy policy describes the kind of information that is collected and stored in connection with such transactions, and we encourage our users to familiarize themselves with that policy before engaging in such transactions. In reading Amazon's privacy policy, users will learn, for example, that Amazon retains (on a long-term basis) information about the eBook a user borrows as well as any notes or highlights added to the text by the user.

Website Access

No personally identifiable information is tracked for visitors to the WPL websites.

WPL websites may employ the use of Persistent Cookies. The purpose of Persistent Cookies is to collect and aggregate data regarding the site's visitor activity so that WPL can continuously evaluate and update its website services. Users may elect to disable Persistent Cookies; however, be advised that disabling Persistent Cookies may affect their ability to view or interact with the website.

WPL websites may also use temporary Session Cookies to allow visitors to interact with WPL and to use online applications. Session Cookies do not allow us to personally identify a visitor. These cookies are stored only in memory and are deleted when the user's browser is closed.

Email

WPL collects email addresses for purposes directly related to library services.

Electronic mail is sent, for example, to notify users when requested material is ready for pickup at the library, or when material has become overdue or billed. These email addresses are kept confidential.

WPL may export email addresses related to its patrons only to email service vendors for purposes related to other library business and customer communications. Patrons must be able to opt out of these services when the communications are not related to billing and overdues. WPL may provide interest information that is not title specific along with these email addresses to assist in message segmentation. This must be done on a report basis, and Minuteman may assist WPL in developing and automating these reports on a schedule, for example to contact new cardholders. WPL will not allow such 3rd party vendors to access WPL information via queries into our database.

There is no guarantee of privacy for email that travels over the internet between a user and WPL. Users can remove their email address online, <https://library.minlib.net/patroninfo/> or request that it be removed from their record by a library staff member.

Internet Usage

Links to other sites

The WPL website may contain links to other sites. WPL does not control or monitor access to material which may be accessible from other internet sites. WPL is not responsible for the confidentiality of any information patrons provide to outside sites.

When users connect to websites outside of WPL or MLN servers, all communication is over the public internet. Users must understand that this is not protected communication when

choosing to provide personal information to external websites. WPL cannot and does not guarantee that every task completed on PCs connected to its network is private.

Users are required to abide by the following guidelines for internet use at WPL. It is not acceptable to use the internet access for illegal or abusive purposes, including but not limited to:

- Transmission of threatening, obscene, or harassing materials
- Transmission of computer viruses
- Unauthorized access to local and remote computer systems

Disclaimer

Woburn Public Library assumes no liability for any damage to user data or loss of user privacy sustained while using member library computers. For more information, refer to WPL's *Public Computer and Internet Access Policy*.

Computer Use Records

WPL offers computers for public access that use software to manage the high demand for these computers. Users enter their library card registration number (or barcode) to use a computer. While statistics about overall usage patterns are maintained in order to improve services offered, the activities of specific users are not retained. User login information is removed from the computer in accordance with the *Public Computer and Internet Access Policy*.

Library users must keep in mind that public workstations are neither private nor secure and must use judgment and discretion when using a library computer. Woburn Public Library assumes no liability for any violation of privacy of individual or any commercial or financial loss to users who use library computers.

Forms

The WPL website provides forms for contacting the Network. Data so provided is kept confidential and is used only to respond in cases where the user has asked for a response. We reserve the right to keep suggestions for future improvement to our system or our website, so long as we strip the suggestion of any personally identifiable data.

Approved by the Woburn Public Library Board of Trustees on May 13, 2025. Amended December 9, 2025.