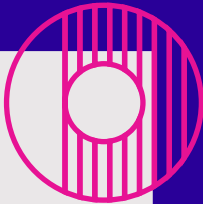
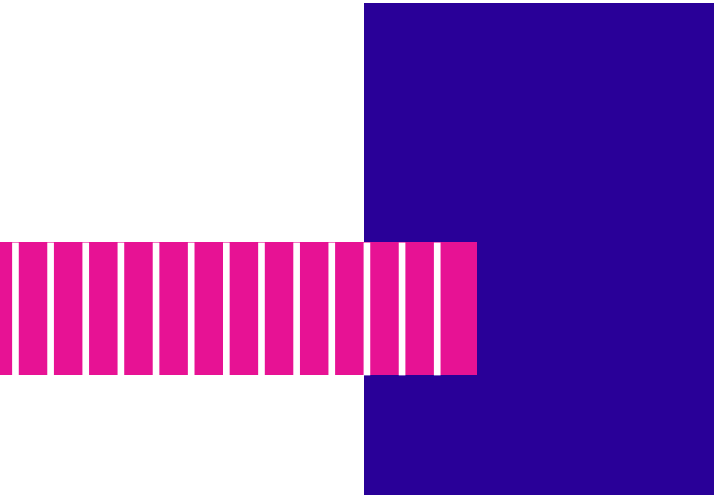


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PRIV



Privacy is a fundamental right of library users. When most people think of privacy, they think of technology. However, threats to our privacy can come from both hi-tech and low/no-tech practices. This guide is meant to help you navigate some areas in your library that are often overlooked when thinking about privacy. You don't have to be a tech whiz or have access to your library's catalog, vendors, or information technology to enact healthy privacy practices. Use this guide to help your library protect users' privacy, even when they're not online.



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The design of a library space can hinder or enhance privacy. Most staff are locked into the physical space they have, but a lot can be done with furniture to make the library inviting and also give the maximum amount of privacy to your users. Everyone should have spaces where they can look at information without a passerby seeing what they're reading or typing.

Many users depend on the library for access to a computer. From students in school to the public in branches, our users deserve privacy when using a computer. Adults may be filling out sensitive documents that contain Social Security numbers or credit cards. Children may be seeking out information on personal health or gender identity. College students may be exploring deep research on topics that might seem dangerous or offensive to the casual passerby. It doesn't matter why a user accesses a library computer, we are responsible for upholding that user's right to privacy.

Creating private spaces can feel tricky when libraries also need to consider the safety of their users. Libr



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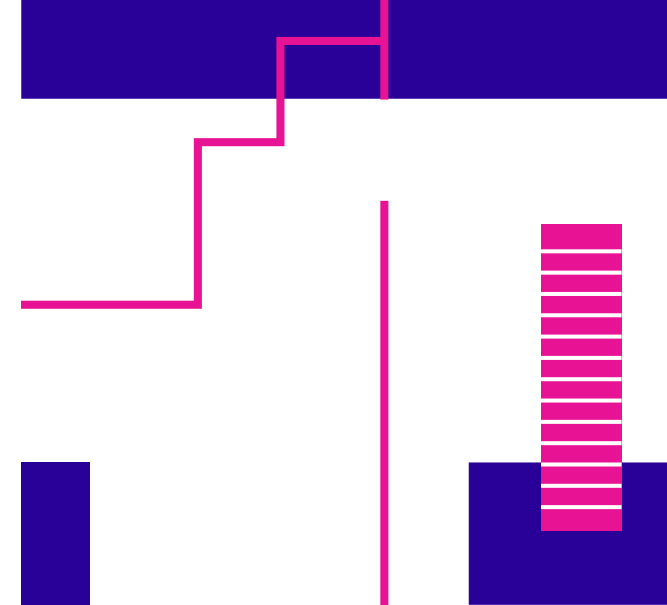
How do you monitor users within your library? Many libraries have cameras to ensure the safety of both users and staff. While safety is always of the utmost importance, it can also lead to privacy violations. Cameras placed inside the library might be able to follow a user through the building, tracking their use and borrowing history. This footage could be viewed by library staff or requested by law enforcement. Everyone who enters a library should have the right to a private experience, free from an obtrusive eye in the sky.

If your library doesn't have cameras, you may still be violating the privacy of users by monitoring their behavior inside the building. Sometimes staff may have conscious or unconscious biases that lead them to follow certain types of

Discuss User

We all discuss library users with fellow staff. Sometimes it is necessary for security or for the academic enrichment of a user to share their name or other personal details. Many times staff just want to share an interesting interaction or express their frustrations after a long day. When discussing users, it's important to take a pause to decide if it's necessary to divulge who they are to another staff member.

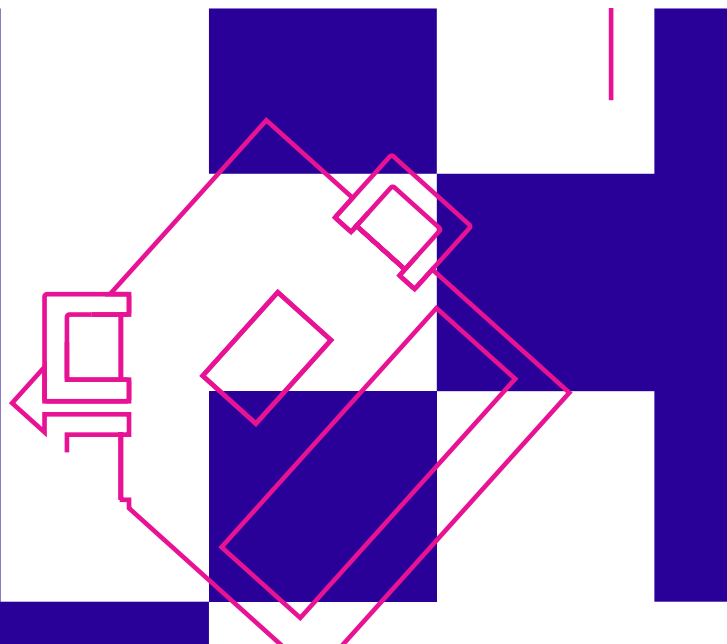
Staff should never discuss one library user's behavior or library use with another user. If you live in a small town or serve a smaller library community, you might not even need to share someone's name for another person to figure out who you're talking about. Be vague with details that might expose someone without their consent. Also, always consider where you are before speaking. While it might seem at first glance that it is only you and a co-worker at the circulation desk, another user may be within earshot.



EXERCISE

It can feel uncomfortable to stop a colleague when they're violating someone's privacy by sharing their personal information in a conversation.

Write up three ways that you might approach a co-worker if you overhear them talking about a user.





Not returning an overdue book can be embarrassing for many users. For some, it means incurring punitive fines. Those fines can prevent them from coming to the library or graduating from college. While libraries will often delete the borrowing record of items returned, an overdue book may remain on your record for years. It is a ripe opportunity for a user's borrowing history to be shared without their consent.

EXERCISE

RESEARCH HOW YOUR LIBRARY IS NOTIFYING AND DISCUSSING OVERDUE MATERIALS WITH USERS.

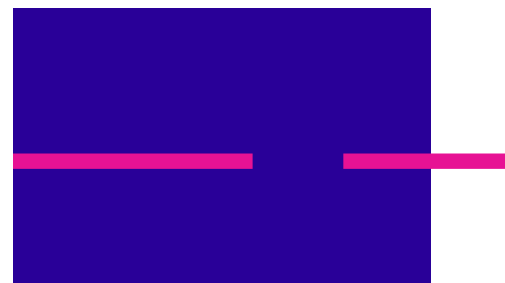


Examples of Personally Identifiable Information (PII) include:

- Name
- Social Security number
- Birthdate
- Government issued ID number
- Financial account numbers
- Contact information (email, phone, address)

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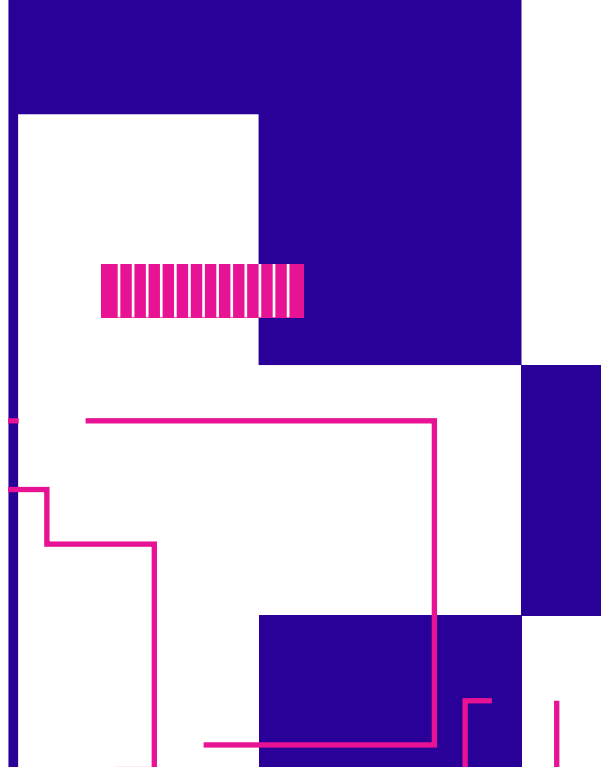
Libraries are palaces of paper. We hold vast quantities of information on the pages lining our shelves. We also hold



A r H d

Most states have laws in place that require public libraries to keep a user's library use private. Both the American Library Association's (ALA) Code of Ethics and Library Bill of Rights insist that libraries respect and uphold a user's privacy in their use of the library. This means that we should not expose a user's reading, viewing, or listening habits to others. The number one way that libraries violate this is through on-the-shelf holds. There are many libraries that use full names and library card numbers to identify holds. Sometimes, that library card number is a piece of sensitive data like a Social Security number. That is far from best practice since it allows users to see what others are reading and also exposes users' PII.

Don't have any control over changing the holds slips? What else could you do to anonymize the process? Some libraries have opaque bags or paper slips that can go over books when they sit on the shelf.



EXERCISE

Go to your holds shelf and look at how they are labeled. What did you find?

If your holds slip includes a full name and library card number, what could you use instead?

Talk with your circulation department about alternatives.

CASE STUDY:

When you walk into a library in Aalborg, Denmark, you'll notice the holds shelves are free of receipts. How do users find their holds without the classic receipt tucked into the pages? Staff use an app to scan the barcode on the item and then the barcode of the shelf where it will be placed. This generates an automated message that is sent to users with the specific location of their item. Using this system eliminates any possibility of violating a user's privacy since there is no way of publicly displaying what items they have on hold.

R C

Even as we move further into the digital world, many users still love getting a physical receipt after checking out their materials. Parents hang them on the fridge to remember due dates. College students keep them tucked inside their course reserves. Sometimes the receipts get tossed into the trash, but often they are left behind inside a book for the next user to discover. Before computerized checkouts, it was common for someone to know who had checked out an item. All you had to do was look at the checkout card pasted on the inside cover. Integrated Library Systems (ILS) made us rethink this approach, but many receipts divulge a user's PII.

SAMPLE RECEIPT



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Your catalog is likely the primary way that users discover materials in the library, but it shouldn't be the only way

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