

Town Hall Library Policy Manual	Privacy of Library Records and Library Use	Issued: April 2026
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The Town Hall Library protects the privacy of library records and the confidentiality of patron use of the library as required by laws. In addition, Town Hall Library Board supports the principle of freedom of inquiry for library patrons and adopts this policy to protect against the unwarranted invasion of the personal privacy of library users.

Legal requirements

The relevant Wisconsin laws concerning the confidentiality of library records are Wisconsin Statutes Section 43.30 and the Wisconsin Personal Information Practices Act (Sections 19.62 to 19.80). Under Section 43.30, Wis. Stats., library records which indicate the identity of any individual who borrows or uses the library's documents or other materials, resources or services may only be disclosed:

- (1) to person authorized by the individual to inspect such records, or
- (2) by court order, or
- (3) to custodial parents or guardians of children under the age of 18 under sub or
- (4) to people acting within the scope of their duties in the administration of the library or library system, or
- (5) to other libraries (under certain circumstances) [see ss. 43.30(2) and (3)], or
- (6) to a collection agency, or
- (7) to a law enforcement agency under sub. (5).

Wisconsin's Personal Information Practices Act (Sections 19.62 to 19.80) requires every state and local government authority (including public libraries) to develop procedures to protect the privacy of personal information kept by the organization. Libraries (and all other government authorities) are required to develop rules of conduct for employees involved in collecting, maintaining, and providing access to personally identifiable information. Libraries are also required to ensure that employees handling such records "know their duties and responsibilities relating to protecting personal privacy, including applicable state and federal laws." Sec. 19.65(2), Wis. Stats.

Records indicating the identity of library users include a library user's name, physical image, library card number, social security number, telephone number, street address, post-office box number or 9-digit extended zip code.

Records held by the library that include personally identifiable information about library users may also contain information that must be provided to those who request that information, as required by Wisconsin's public records law. Personally identifiable information about library users must be redacted from any records that are publicly disclosed, except as the records are disclosed under one of the exceptions provided in Section 43.30, Wis. Stats.

Rules to be followed by library staff

(1) As required by state law, library staff may only disclose library records indicating the identity of library users under the following conditions:

- a) disclosure as authorized by the individual library user
- b) disclosure pursuant to court order (see below for handling of different types of court orders)
- c) disclosure to custodial parents or guardians of children under the age of 18 [sec. 43.30(4), Wis. Stats.] (see below for responding to requests from custodial parents or guardians)
- d) disclosure to staff members of Town Hall Library, and the staff of other libraries and library systems only according to written procedures that comply with the laws cited above and that are approved by the Library Director
- e) disclosure to other libraries (under certain circumstances) for interlibrary loan purposes [see sec. 43.30(2) and (3), Wis. Stats.]
- f) disclosure to a collection agency
- g) disclosure to a law enforcement agency under certain circumstances

If someone's life or safety is at risk, library records may be released to appropriate individuals or officials without a court order.

(2) Library staff must refer to all requests for library records and all requests for information about a particular library user to the Library Director or the Library Director's designee except requests from custodial parents or guardians of children under the age of 18 as described below.

(3) Library staff are not allowed to disclose information about use of library resources and services by identified library patrons except as necessary for the performance of their job duties and in accordance with procedures approved by the Library Director and/or board.

Handling of Court orders, Subpoenas and Search Warrants

Library staff may not disclose library records in response to a subpoena that is not a court order if those records indicate the identity of library users.

1. If a law enforcement officer or other individual presents a subpoena or other court order directing library staff to produce library records:
 - Notify the Library Director, or if the director is not available, notify another manager
 - The Library Director or another manager shall forward the subpoena or court order to the Attorney for review.
 - If the subpoena contains any legal defects, require that the defects be cured before records are released.
 - If appropriate, ask legal counsel to draft a protective order to be submitted to the court by keeping the requested information confidential and limiting its use in the case.
 - Follow legal counsel's advice for compliance with the subpoena.
2. If law enforcement officers produce a search warrant:
 - Notify the Library Director, or if the director is not available, notify another manager.
 - A search warrant is executable immediately, unlike a subpoena. The law enforcement officers may begin a search for library records as soon as they enter the library.
 - Request that the law enforcement officers wait until the Attorney is contacted before the search begins to allow counsel an opportunity, if necessary, to examine the search warrant, assure that the search conforms to the terms of the search warrant, and be present during execution of the search warrant. The law enforcement officials are not required to accede to your request to delay the search.
 - Cooperate with the search to ensure that only the records identified in the warrant are produced and that no other users' records are disclosed.
 - Request a copy of the search warrant.
3. FBI Warrant: If FBI agents bring a court order in the form of a search warrant issued under the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act (FISA) (US Patriot Act Amendment):
 - Notify the Library Director, or if the director is not available, notify another manager.
 - A search warrant is executable immediately, unlike a subpoena. The law enforcement officers may begin a search for library records as soon as they enter the library.

- Request that the law enforcement officers wait until an Attorney is contacted before the search begins to allow counsel an opportunity, if necessary, to examine the search warrant, assure that the search conforms to the terms of the search warrant, and be present during execution of the search warrant. The law enforcement officials are not required to accede to your request to delay the search.
- Cooperate with the search to ensure that only the records identified in the warrant are produced and that no other users' records are disclosed.
- The library and library staff cannot disclose to any other person (other than those persons necessary to produce the tangible things sought in the warrant and legal counsel) that the Federal Bureau of Investigation has sought or obtained records or other items under the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act (FISA).