



Southborough Library Privacy Policy

The Southborough Library is committed to protecting the personal privacy of library users. The library complies fully with the General Laws of Massachusetts related with the privacy of library use, which states “that part of the records of a public library which reveals the identity and intellectual pursuits of a person using such library shall not be a public record” ([General Laws of Massachusetts Chapter 78, Section 7](#)).

The Southborough Library does not share information sought or received and materials consulted or borrowed, including database search records, circulation registration and records, interlibrary loan transactions, program registration records, and all other personally identifiable uses of library materials, facilities, or services.

Library staff may not use patron library accounts or information retrieval records for personal use and may not share this information with other individuals for personal use.

Circulation, registration, and information retrieval records may not be disclosed except to:

1. Library personnel within the scope of their library duties as authorized by the Library Director and Assistant Library Director.
2. Persons authorized by the cardholder and identified as “Designated Borrowers.”
3. Representatives of any local, state, or federal government, with a subpoena or search warrant authorized under the authority of federal, state, or local law relating to civil, criminal, or investigative power. If the Library is served with any such subpoena or search warrant, the Library Director and Assistant Library Director will consult with the Southborough Town Counsel to determine if the subpoena or search warrant is in proper form and if there is a valid basis for its issuance before providing confidential information.
4. The only exception to this policy is in the case of cardholders seventeen years old and younger who have one or more billed items on their library card account. In this circumstance, a parent or legal guardian, upon supplying proper identification, will be given information about titles that are checked out on the minor’s library card, fines accrued, or billed items. If library staff are unable to confirm the identity of the parent or guardian, no confidential information will be supplied.

Southborough Library Policy and Procedures Regarding Retention of Confidential Information

1. **Circulation Records:** Library materials are circulated via the C/W MARS automation system. The circulation software tracks materials currently checked out, automatically erasing a reader’s borrowing record once a book is returned. Fines paid information is retained in the patron’s record for 3-6 months. Information on the last person to have borrowed an item is retained in the item record until another patron checks out the item.



2. **Searches of the online catalog:** The Library does not require personal information to use the online catalog. Catalog searches are conducted via the C/W MARS automation software. Once a search is completed, a patron may clear their own search history.
3. **Electronic Databases and the Internet:** Library patrons should be aware that the Southborough Library and other Massachusetts library organizations license commercial databases from a variety of vendors. The Library will make every effort to restrict electronic database vendors from collecting and using identifying personal information of library users, however it cannot provide a guarantee that personal information will not be shared with third parties.
4. **Interlibrary Loan Records:** Patrons may borrow items not owned by the Southborough Library from other libraries within Massachusetts and nationally. The Southborough Library tracks items currently being requested or borrowed.
5. **Reference Interviews:** A reference interview is when a patron asks a library staff member for information. The staff member interviews the patron in order to fully understand the question. Staff do not discuss patron inquiries with others except when consulting another library worker on a complex question. If a patron name, telephone number, or other identifiable information is noted, the information is discarded as soon as the patron's inquiry is completed.
6. **Security Cameras:** Security cameras are installed throughout the library system to assist the Library Director and Assistant Library Director in monitoring and quickly responding to situations affecting the health and safety of library visitors and staff. Security camera images are only made available to law enforcement through a legal subpoena or warrant. If the Library is served with any such subpoena or search warrant, the Library Director and Assistant Library Director will consult with the Southborough Policy Department to determine if the subpoena or search warrant is in proper form and if there is a valid basis for its issuance before providing confidential information. [Please click here to review the Southborough Library Security Camera Policy.](#)

Approved by Southborough Library Board of Trustees: January 13, 2023.