

Privacy and Confidentiality Policy

The Ventress Memorial Library is dedicated to protecting the privacy and confidentiality of our patrons. Our policy complies with the Massachusetts General Laws, Chapter 78, Section 7 (1994 edition).

“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 as defined by clause Twenty-sixth of section seven of chapter four.”

This policy extends to circulation records (borrowing records, registration records, reserves or fine records), interlibrary loan transactions, registration records, database search records and reference interviews. Except in cases involving the USA Patriot Act, no records can be made available to any inquiries, governmental or otherwise, unless a subpoena has been served by a court of competent jurisdiction and the library administration has consulted with legal counsel to determine if it is proper to release the requested information.

Our staff must support this policy of privacy and confidentiality; it is required by law and by the library’s long commitment to protecting a patron’s right to access information freely. In accordance, with the law, the policy restricts our staff from disclosing information to the cardholder’s family or friends. This applies to the release of information to the parents’ of minors when the minor has their own library card. The Supervisor of the Public Records of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, Carolyn Kelly MacWilliam, stated in May 1997,

“A public library may not disclose records which reveal a minor’s borrowing information to the minor’s parent, regardless of whether the parent is paying the fine on an overdue item or the parent has signed the child’s library card application form.”

Approved by the Board of Library Trustees May 17, 2016