

---

# Board Policy

## Privacy and Confidentiality Policy

### Policy Statement

The Pierce County Library System (“Library”) is committed to protecting privacy and upholding intellectual freedom. The Library only collects and retains essential personally identifiable customer information as necessary to manage resources and provide services.

### Purpose

This policy outlines how the Library safeguards user privacy, maintains confidentiality of records, and discloses the types of information that may be collected.

### Policy

A person’s right to privacy in a physical or virtual library is the right to inquire, browse, explore, and discover information without scrutiny. Privacy is essential to exercise free speech, free thought, and free association. Subject to legal mandates, including the Public Records Act, the Library keeps personal information confidential, including account details, interlibrary loan records, and optional borrowing history. While we don’t track borrowing history by default, customers can choose to opt in. Personally identifiable information is only accessible to authorized library personnel and is not disclosed except as required by law.

There is no reasonable expectation of privacy regarding a person's presence in a public space. There is a distinction between privacy of a customer's use of library materials and services and their physical presence in a public building; the former is protected to some degree under the Public Records Act, and the latter is not protected due to public spaces.

### Information Collected

- **Library Accounts:** Valid address within the Library’s service area and identification are required for a basic library card. The Library stores borrower, transaction and material records until deleted by request, inactivity, or removal of physical materials from circulation.
- **Public Computers and Wi-Fi:** The Library collects minimal data for system access, but no user specific data is collected. That data is purged at the end of each day, leaving only a connection record for reporting purposes.
- **Third-Party Vendors:** Some user data may be shared with contracted vendors to provide services such as catalog access, e-books, digital resources, meeting room reservations, event registrations, and research databases. The Library does not sell customer information. The Library does not store credit card information from patron purchases and works only with Payment Card Industry (PCI) compliant merchants for online and credit card transactions.
- **Website and Cookies:** The Library website collects limited usage data but does not track personally identifiable information unless provided by the user. Individuals may adjust Internet browser settings to manage cookies, small text files stored on their device by websites to

---

remember their preferences, login details, and browsing activity, enhancing their experience. Disabling cookies may limit access to certain web content or features.

- **Video Footage:** The Library may use video cameras for security purposes at its locations, occasionally recording visitors or staff. Footage is overwritten monthly as storage fills and is replaced with new footage.

The Library's privacy and confidentiality policy does not apply to external applications or websites accessed from the Library's public computers, devices, or equipment. Individuals who use services such as catalog feeds, public blogs, or hold and overdue notices via email or text message should be aware that the Library has no ability to protect the privacy of this information.

### **Library and Foundation Use**

Account notifications are automated to send to the user's email or phone number on record. The Library may use names, addresses, email addresses, or other contact information from cardholder files to conduct surveys or notify users of programs, services, or policy changes. Individuals may opt-out of notifications at any time. The Pierce County Library Foundation may use contact information of adult library users (ages 18 and older) for event and fundraising information, with prior approval from the Library Executive Director.

### **Use of Artificial Intelligence**

The Library is committed to using Generative Artificial Intelligence (AI) responsibly and ethically to enhance the user experience while protecting privacy and security. AI technologies may help personalize recommendations, analyze trends, improve efficiency, and support customer service.

The Library will comply with all applicable laws and ethical standards regarding AI use by regularly reviewing and updating its practices to ensure responsible implementation. In particular, the Library follows the [State of Washington's Guidelines for the Deployment of Generative Artificial Intelligence](#) released in response to the [Governor's Executive Order 24-01](#).

When engaging third-party AI services, the Library will carefully vet AI providers to ensure they adhere to the Library's privacy and ethical policies. By maintaining oversight, the Library seeks to uphold the integrity, security, and ethical use of AI in its services.

### **Security & Records Management**

The Library has implemented physical, electronic, and managerial measures to reasonably prevent unauthorized access to the information it collects online. Users are responsible for information collected by other websites linking to or from the Library's public website based on such use.

Library records containing personally identifiable information will be disposed of unless needed for public records retention requirements, system backups, or other reasons related to effectively managing library resources or providing services.

### **Disclosure**

Staff members and volunteers may not disclose or share information about borrower records, including transactions of checked out items, requests for information or materials and online sites accessed. Under Washington State Law (RCW 42.56.310), customer and circulation records are exempt from public disclosure under some circumstances.

Titles of items checked out by a customer under the age of 18 may be released to the customer's custodial parents or legal guardians upon request if there is a lost or damaged fee owed on the title.

---

## **Law Enforcement**

Any law enforcement agency must provide a properly executed court order to release specific customer records. Records identifying library users and their use of materials will not be made available except through legal processes including under the Public Records Act. The Executive Director, or designee, is the only authorized Library agent to receive law enforcement notices and act upon them. The Library will consult with legal counsel before the release of information to law enforcement.

**Adopted by the Pierce County Rural Library District Board of Trustees, April 9, 2025.**

By the enactment of this policy the Board of Trustees of Pierce County Library System is concurrently rescinding any prior policy or procedure within PCLS that is either in conflict with or expansive of the matters addressed in this policy.