



Patron Confidentiality Policy

The Roeliff Jansen Community Library upholds the New York State Civil Practice Law & Rules Section 4509, which protects the privacy rights of library users. This law prohibits the release of any information relating the names of a person and his/her library use without a properly executed subpoena from a court of law.

The law states: "Library records, which contain names or other personally identifying details regarding the users of public, free association, school, college & university libraries & library systems of this state, including but not limited to records related to the circulation of library materials, computer database searches, interlibrary loan transactions, reference queries, requests for photocopies of library materials, title reserve requests, or the use of audio-visual materials, films or records, shall be confidential & shall not be disclosed except that such records may be disclosed to the extent necessary for the proper operation of such library & shall be disclosed upon request or consent of the user or pursuant to subpoena, court order, or where otherwise required by statute."

Under this law, staff cannot:

- Tell a third party whether a person has a library card.
- Tell a parent what his/her child has borrowed, even if it is overdue. (Parents who wish to track materials their children have checked out should check out items on their own account.)
- Reveal the nature of someone's reference question to another person.

Patron Information

The information in a patron record is the property of the library that is listed as the home library. While other libraries have access to the data, no other library can use that data for anything other than library transactions. The home library can use the data for library mailings. The library can allow the Friends group or the Trustees to also use the patron data, but information will not be given to any other organization. The patron can request to be removed from either the Friends or Trustees list.

Borrowing History

As soon as a patron returns an item within the due date, the link to that item is deleted from the patron record. However, the software retains in the item's record, the name of the last person who took it out and the name of the current borrower of this item. In addition, if a patron owes a fine or has an outstanding bill that information stays on their record until six months after payment has been received. The software also keeps the items a patron has pending on hold.

Reading History Option

If a patron elects to use the reading history option in their account, the system will remember all items checked out even after they have been returned. This information is protected under the privacy laws and can only be accessed by the patron or by the library if presented with a subpoena. A patron can at any time delete items from their reading history and those items will no longer be included. For people who do not choose the reading history options, no history of checked out items is kept.

Procedures for court ordered Search Warrants and Subpoenas can be found in the Law Enforcement Policy

Adopted by the Board of Trustees, January 18, 2013
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