

Patron Privacy in Small & Rural Libraries: A Practical Approach

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Preserving privacy while maintaining the intimacy of a small town can be achieved fairly painlessly with a combination of empathy and education.

Library Card Use

Educating Patrons:

- Library User Records; Confidentiality NH RSA Chapter 201-D:11
- Parent/Child relationship and issues of confidentiality
- Who pays the bill?
- The role of Teen cards
- Spousal permissions

Educating Frontline Staff:

- Their role in education of patrons
 - New cards
 - Patron created reading lists vs. records kept in ILS
 - Access to reviews and reader's advisory tools
- Changing new card practices
- Using notes feature on patron records for special permissions
- Telephone protocol – Mindfulness in the library and in voicemail
- Reader's advisory
- Use of reserve wrappers
- "No, I am sorry but I can't tell you who has that out..."
- Policy, policy, policy
- Preserving goodwill through referrals up the supervisory chain
- Administrators: Back up your staff and take the heat for them! Sometimes, a patron just needs a sympathetic ear and an opportunity to vent (and be acknowledged) by the person in charge.

Educating Volunteers:

- Training – Use examples to which they can relate.
- Copy of the Confidentiality agreement
- Signed receipt of the confidentiality agreement (sends the message we are serious...)