

Privacy Policy

Approved February 1998

Revised Aug. 2003, July 2004, July 2008, July 2009, Sep. 2012

The Groton Public Library Trustees' philosophy is in keeping with the Fourth Amendment of the Constitution of the United States that reads:

“The right of the people to be secure in their persons, houses, papers, and effects, against unreasonable searches and seizures, shall not be violated.”

What people read, research, or access at the library is a fundamental matter of privacy. The Library Trustees believe that any person using the resources of the Groton Public Library should be able to access all constitutionally protected information and feel secure that what they read, research, or view at or from the library will be kept confidential and that the privacy of the individual will be protected by the Library Staff, to the extent permitted by law.

Massachusetts General Laws, Chapter 78, Section 7 reads: “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 as defined by clause Twenty-sixth of section seven of chapter four.”

The Groton Public Library's Materials Selection and Review Policy contains the following statement:

“The Library Trustees adopt and declare that it will adhere to and support the Library Bill of Rights and its interpretations, including, but not limited to, the Intellectual Freedom Statement and the Freedom to View Statements adopted by the American Library Association.”

As such, all circulation records, and other records identifying the names of library users, as well as any information or records which reveal the identity and intellectual pursuits of a person, are confidential unless disclosure is otherwise required by law.

All library employees shall be advised that such records are confidential and not to be made available to anyone except pursuant to such process, order or subpoena as may be authorized. Such process, order, or subpoena shall be referred to legal counsel.

Any individual making a request shall be referred to the Library Director for an explanation. The Library Director shall use his/her discretion and consult with legal counsel if necessary.

Should library records be requested under the USA Patriot Act, the law states that library staff cannot inform the person or persons about whom the information is requested, cannot speak to coworkers, the media, or other government officials about the inquiry. Such a request, should it occur, may only be reported to the appropriate higher authority within the library and the Town of Groton's and/or library's legal counsel.

The library's policy and practices conform to Massachusetts General Laws Chapter 78, Section 7.

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Privacy Policy (continued)

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Background Notes for Confidentiality of Minors

Confidentiality of minors is protected in the same manner as adults. Parents are ultimately responsible for misplaced/ lost borrowed library materials. Within this framework some flexibility regarding the parent's right to knowledge of the minor's (under age 12) books/items borrowed needs to be accommodated. Procedurally the minor patron can request an accounting from the library staff of their borrowed materials when visiting the library. Also, the library staff can remind both adult and minor patrons of the accessibility of the library resources online by means of their library card, Personal Identification Number (PIN), and email.

The Groton Public Library provides a safe, private environment for learning at all ages. Exploration, research, and investigation do not follow age guidelines. Parents provide the direction for their children's behavior and patron responsibility when allowing their children to use the library collection. It is not the library staff or government's role to dictate in the private relationship between the parent and child.

Addendum to the Privacy Policy

In accordance with Massachusetts General Laws Chapter 78, Section 7: "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" as defined by Chapter 4, Section 7, Clause 26, and Article V of the Library Bill of Rights, "A person's right to use a library should not be denied or abridged because of origin, age, background or views," and "the intellectual pursuits of individuals using library or Internet resources are considered confidential information regardless of the age of the borrower."

It is the policy of the Groton Public Library to provide patrons age 12 and above with the same confidentiality protections as adults in accordance with the Groton Public Library Privacy Policy. If information is needed by an adult to support the Groton Public Library's effort to retrieve unreturned item(s), the child may request a printout of his/her borrowed items either in person at the library or at home by using their library card and PIN.