Introduction

Welcome to Choose Privacy Week! This new initiative is a project of the American Library Association (ALA) Office for Intellectual Freedom, and it relies on the participation of libraries all across the country. Libraries are the information hubs of their communities. They’re the perfect places for citizens to learn about, think about, and talk about privacy issues today.

Choose Privacy Week is an education and awareness campaign that invites citizens into a national conversation about our privacy rights in a digital age. The goal is for libraries to help educate and engage their users—giving individuals the resources they need to think critically and make more informed choices about their privacy.

This resource guide was designed to provide libraries with ideas and tools for privacy-related programming and outreach. It includes brief background information on why privacy matters, thorny issues around young people and privacy as well as our increasing use of the internet and online social networking tools, and library advocacy for privacy. A section on civic engagement introduces and offers resources for libraries to host a public forum on privacy. The programming guide serves as the heart of this publication, providing out-of-the-box activities and events for libraries to initiate in their communities. Resources for libraries to protect themselves and promote user privacy are offered as well. Finally, a roundup of contacts and resources is followed by a useful annotated bibliography for further information.

This printed resource guide is supplemented by online tools and resources. Visit www.privacyrevolution.org to learn more and take advantage of updated information.
Why Privacy Matters

ALA Office for Intellectual Freedom

Privacy has many meanings and many faces. Libraries recognize that privacy is essential to the exercise of free speech, free thought, and free association—all strongly held American values—and protecting user privacy has long been an integral part of libraries’ work and mission.

In an era of social networks, online databases, and cloud computing, more and more individuals’ personal information is now available online and elsewhere. The ease of communicating information in the digital age has changed the way we live, learn, work, and govern. But such instant access to information also presents new challenges to our personal privacy. We depend more and more on evolving technologies and social norms that encourage the disclosure of personal information.

We also live today with surveillance cameras on our street corners, wiretaps on our phone lines, and monitors on our internet activities. Retailers, hospitals, and schools demand the details of our personal lives as a condition for receiving service, health care, or education. Our government claims the rights to open our mail, x-ray our bodies, and track our reading in the pursuit of national security.

At the same time, current and emerging technologies facilitate constant, penetrating surveillance and the unlimited storage and scrutiny of data. Financial records, health care records, educational records, library records, tax records, even the mundane details of our calls to parents and children and friends now circulate freely among government offices, corporations, and law enforcement agencies. Privacy, as an American value, is rapidly vanishing.

In light of these drastic changes to our way of life, a number of compelling and confounding questions confront us as American citizens. Is privacy a basic human need? What does a loss of privacy mean to our democratic way of life? Do Americans really care about their privacy? Can we take back our right to privacy and, if so, how? Where do we start?

We believe that the answers can begin to emerge in conversation—in a national discussion about the meanings of privacy today. Different individuals will hold different attitudes, opinions, and beliefs about the issues at stake. All views are welcome in this conversation and will contribute to a truly diverse and meaningful dialogue. We invite all citizens to join us in examining the many faces of privacy and the ongoing erosion of privacy—indeed, our very expectation of privacy—as an American value.
Youth and Privacy

Barbara Jones

Children and young adults in the United States have most of the same First Amendment rights as adults. And this is where parents and librarians should begin—with children’s rights, not with restrictions. Children will thrive as their parents read to them and then as they learn to read. They are gradually exposed to information that helps them understand their world and make informed choices. Children are discovering that reading and self-expression are lifelong pleasures. Libraries and librarians play a key role in children’s reading, discovering, and using information. This is often a partnership with parents, teachers, boards of education, and other community leaders.

The internet is now an exciting part of the information landscape, and children love it. In 2003 the National Center for Educational Statistics found that 90% of school-age children have access to computers at home or at school. There is now a wealth of excellent web content designed for children.

At the same time, librarians, children, and their parents/guardians must be aware of potential privacy violations should young people reveal too much personally identifiable information (PII) in an internet (or a non-internet) setting. Most studies find that while the public expresses great interest in protecting their personal privacy, their online shopping, browsing, and social networking behavior suggests otherwise. The Pew Internet and American Life Project found in 2007 that 82% of those profiled had posted their first name online; 29% their last name; 79% their photo; 61% their city or town; and 29% their email address. Children are especially vulnerable to online predators and commercial website information aggregators. That is why U.S. information laws and some school and library use policies may place restrictions on children’s access. These laws should not be an open invitation to create barriers to children’s access to information. Rather, parents/guardians, teachers, and librarians need to work together with children and young adults to educate them about these risks and help steer them toward the internet sources they will find useful and enjoyable.

All librarians working with minors have an ethical obligation to protect and promote youth privacy.

A. School Libraries: School libraries are an integral part of the programs, curriculum, and services of their institutions. This mandate might appear somewhat constrained compared to public or academic library missions; but creative, dedicated school librarians develop extraordinary collections and services that promote the spirit and principles of the Library Bill of Rights. School media specialists must assume a leadership role in promoting intellectual freedom in their libraries. They are challenged to work closely with teachers, administrators, parents, their district, and their school board—hopefully before problems arise.

Parents are understandably concerned about the internet environment their children might be exposed to at school. School librarians should work with parents—with the entire school community, for that matter—on library privacy and other intellectual freedom issues, to create community confidence in the library’s commitment to uphold minors’ privacy rights. At the same time the librarian can demonstrate how excellent internet resources can help children learn and discover.

1. COPPA: The Children’s Online Privacy Protection Act of 1998 applies only to commercial websites targeted to children and sites knowingly collecting information from children 12 years old or younger. Such commercial website owners have a legal obligation to obtain consent from parents of minors before collecting PII. COPPA should not ordinarily affect school libraries or their websites. But the school librarian should be ready to explain COPPA to parents who are developing a home internet use policy for their family.

2. FERPA: The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974 grants parents the right to access their children’s records until they turn 18. This includes library records. Librarians should be careful to limit this access to parents/guardians and make sure that teachers don’t use it to monitor student reading habits, even for class assignments. The school librarian should be part of the team working on school privacy policies so that library interests are included. It is important to teach children about keeping their PII private, and the school’s policies should serve as a model.
3. Positive library programming: There are plenty of restrictions on children’s use of the internet. It is important that in spite of the risks, librarians promote internet use in the school library. There are many terrific homework sites, and the school library website should list these as a guide for parents.

4. Online resources that can be of assistance include: the Illinois Library Association brochures, *The Internet and Our Children: A Community Partnership; and Privacy and Confidentiality in Libraries* (available free on the www.ila.org website). They not only describe how to partner with your community on privacy issues, but also recommend good websites for children. Other great sources include Frances Harris’s *I Found it on the Internet: Coming of Age Online* (2005) for high school age students and Pat Scales’s *Protecting Intellectual Freedom in Your School Library: Scenarios from the Front Lines* (2009).

B. College and University Libraries: College libraries also must be aware of the FERPA law (see A.2 above). Students have the right to access their school records when they turn 18. This also applies to college records. The college library might want to use FERPA as justification for confidentiality of library records, especially if the state law does not apply to their particular institution. Librarians should be part of the campus team monitoring the legal protection of student information privacy in all units—including the career recruitment center and information technology (IT) departments. It is very common for library e-reserves to be placed on online courseware systems such as Blackboard. Access to student reading habits on such courseware should be prohibited as a potential violation of state law or at the very least an ethical breach of student privacy.

College students are avid social networkers, so they need to be reminded of the various privacy breaches possible with Facebook and other such sites. Futurist writer Cory Doctorow makes the privacy message appeal to young adults; his website on privacy is http://craphound.com. See also Janice Tsai’s “Privacy and Social Networking” (page 5 of this resource guide) and Barbara Jones’s *Protecting Intellectual Freedom in Your Academic Library: Scenarios from the Front Lines* (2009).

C. Public Libraries: In many public libraries the rules of privacy apply to all users, regardless of age. Check your state laws. COPPA (see A.1) may well apply, depending on what content is available on your public library terminals. Librarians need to be prepared to explain COPPA to parents and children. The library’s own website developers might consider providing the same privacy protections as those mandated for commercial websites. Librarians should not breach a minor’s privacy rights on behalf of a parent, if that information is readily available to the parent. It is the parent’s or guardian’s responsibility to determine their child’s use of the library. There may be some differences between adult and minor use of the public library, depending on state law, and often older minors’ use is not problematic. In short—whenever possible, the privacy rights of minors should be taught and modeled in the library itself.
INTRODUCTION

Privacy and Social Networking

JANICE TSAI

Social Networks

You may have heard about social networking or social networks. Some examples of online social networks include Facebook, MySpace, LinkedIn, and Twitter. Other examples include online web forums or even blogging communities such as LiveJournal or Tumblr.

In general, social networking sites allow users to do the following (boyd & Ellison, 2007):

1. Construct a public or semi-public profile within a bounded system,
2. Articulate a list of other users with whom they share a connection, and
3. View and traverse their list of connections and those made by others within the system.

These sites allow you to meet new people or connect with people with whom you already have a connection.

Protecting Your Privacy

When people join social network sites, they typically provide their name, a profile photo, an email address, age or birthday, and a general list of interests. You can participate on social networks and protect your privacy. Privacy today is a matter of having control over one’s information.

Things to consider . . .

1. Public or Private? Based on the site you’ve joined and the reason you are participating, you should consider whether or not you want your site to be public or private. A public profile (say, on LinkedIn) can help other people find you and may make your profile a top hit for a Google search for your name. This may be beneficial if you are looking for a job or trying to promote your brand or company. Otherwise, you may want to consider restricting access to your profile.

2. Watch What You Say. The internet is forever. The things you say, the photos that you post, and the comments you make may be saved or archived by the site even if you delete them. Also, remember that people (including your employer) may discover the things you say or infer things from the photos you post.

3. Privacy Settings. Most social networks provide you with control over the information that you share. Privacy options are often available on these sites under links or tabs called Settings, Profile, or Privacy. Take advantage of these settings and update them as you see fit.

For detailed information and instructions on adjusting and updating privacy settings on social network sites (including Facebook, LinkedIn, MySpace, and Twitter), visit www.privacyrevolution.org
Advocating for a Revolution

Marcie Merola

Those most sage in the area of advocating for libraries will tell you that there were days when a librarian could not utter the word “advocacy” aloud, much less speak up about the value of libraries and the profession. Although there were certainly generations of dedicated librarians fighting for resources—new books and new buildings—so that they could make a difference in the lives of their patrons and in their communities, the public perception of the librarian was, overall, not that of a political animal.

Yet I came to the profession in time to see my colleagues on the steps of the U.S. Supreme Court in the fight against the Children’s Internet Protection Act (CIPA). What had transpired in between?

In some ways, librarians were simply doing what they do best: organizing and disseminating information. But they’d begun doing so in a new context of pointedly promoting their own self-worth and the value of their institutions to decision-makers, as well as creating awareness for libraries across the nation. A revolution in the way the profession views its role had begun.

Clearly, by the time CIPA had reached the Supreme Court in 2001, librarians were fighting for the same ideals that we’ve always held dear: intellectual freedom and equity of access. What had changed was the landscape. The onset of the Information Age had exponentially expanded the purview of the profession and, when we look at the privacy implications of emerging technologies, this expansion continues today.

In the early days of CIPA and the local bills or “mini-CIPAs” that continue to emerge, the library community was caught unaware by a new hostility. The media and political fringes created pernicious myths around librarians’ defense of open access to information on the internet. These attacks, not unlike those levied against librarians for their response to the USA PATRIOT Act’s privacy abuses years later, left us no recourse but to be defensive.

Years later still, we find ourselves fighting for dollars in the middle of what some call “The Great Recession.” If there is any silver lining in the current economic crisis, it is that the media—with the prodding of ALA’s PR and media efforts—has helped reposition libraries as information hubs. The public has rediscovered its love of libraries as the go-to place for job searches, educational materials, financial information, and entertainment. The stage has been set for libraries to take the lead in a bold new initiative: Choose Privacy Week.

Choose Privacy Week pushes the library community to the cusp of yet another of its own revolutions. In an era of constantly evolving technology, librarians have positioned themselves as venerable information experts. Finally, we enter this issue not on the defensive, but as leaders in the digital frontier.

Admittedly, my own point of view from the American Library Association is a bit different than yours, on the day-to-day front lines in public, school, academic, and special libraries around the country. What I can offer is perspective, and a few things to keep in mind as we enter a national conversation on privacy:

- **Let’s be leaders.** We will surely have our battles ahead, but let’s not start the conversation from a defensive posture. Let’s be confident and clear that we are, indeed, the information experts.

- **Let’s be teachers.** The world is our classroom! And for guidance, let’s look to our peers who teach information literacy and critical thinking skills on a daily basis and assure us that future generations will participate in Choose Privacy Week: school library media specialists and instruction librarians of all stripes.

- **Let’s get there first.** As privacy in the digital age becomes an increasingly pressing issue, let’s make sure that we are the vanguards of this new facet of the information age.

- **Let’s be fearless.** Even the biggest revolution, the strongest movement, begins with just a few first steps.

- **Let’s get excited.** As Judith Krug, founding director of ALA’s Office for Intellectual Freedom, once said of the internet: “We are at the beginning in the most important revolution, in terms of communication, that we’ve experienced since the invention of the printing press. Being there right at the beginning is so exciting!”