

Civic Engagement: Hosting a Deliberative Forum on Privacy

- *What are our expectations for privacy in the digital realm?*
- *Is it reasonable to expect that information by and about us remain private?*
- *Who do I trust to protect my privacy?*

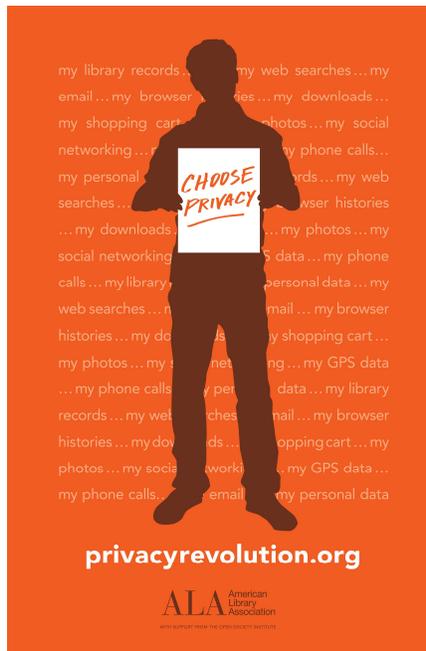
#1: Background

By sparking a national conversation on privacy, Choose Privacy Week will give people with different perspectives an opportunity to learn more about the issues, weigh in on choices with their fellow citizens, and consider options for action. Deliberative forums provide an opportunity for the public to have a voice on critical issues by weighing different approaches and considering costs, consequences, and tradeoffs. Trained moderators help participants listen to and understand the experiences and views of others and seek common ground for addressing difficult problems. America's libraries invite our communities to join this conversation about the tough privacy choices facing our nation.

The purpose of public deliberation is to increase the likelihood of making sound, well-supported decisions about public issues. This is achieved by exploring and testing our ideas as we struggle with hard choices, considering the pros and cons of each option. Deliberation opens possibilities for new solutions and leads us to find common ground – mutual understanding of our differences and ways to act even with those differences.

Deliberative forums encourage dialogue and understanding about difficult issues facing our country and our communities. They offer opportunities for participants to listen to each other for deeper understanding, without advocating a position or debating opponents. With the help of trained moderators and issue guides, individuals are able to discover that their personal values and concerns often overlap with those who hold very different perceptions of problems and their possible solutions.

Privacy is a particularly slippery and amorphous issue, about which people hold a wide variety of opinions and beliefs. This section offers tips to help librarians plan to convene and moderate their own deliberative forums about privacy. For those who wish to learn how to moderate deliberative dialogue, ALA can offer guidance on locating a training institute. Below is a short overview of the process of convening and moderating a deliberative forum on privacy.



Convening a Deliberative Forum

Privacy:
What's at stake?
What are the issues?
What does it mean to me?

#2: Convening

Convening a deliberative forum about privacy means that you need to assemble a team of partners to plan and coordinate the event, advertise and promote the forum, book a room, arrange the room, gather the materials, welcome participants, identify a moderator(s) and recorder(s), prepare materials, and so on.

1) Assemble a team of partners to plan and convene the forum.

Building a broad base of support for local deliberative forums ensures participation from many segments of a community and serves to spread the workload.

- Identify partners with an interest in privacy. Consider representatives from various sectors.
- Be inclusive. Successful forums represent a diversity of interests, resources, and perspectives.
- Invite partners to participate at the earliest stages of planning a forum. Give them ownership in the forum and the opportunity to contribute their special skills, resources, and points of view.
- Define the roles for partners in order to take advantage of their skills and resources, needs and interests and recognize their contributions.
- Clarify the purpose of the forum and expectations of partners.

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- Encourage partners to reach out to their constituents to promote the forum and widen participation.
- Identify moderators and recorders who will agree to participate in online training and lead the dialogue on the day of the forum.

Some logistics to consider in convening a forum include:

- Schedule the forum at a convenient time, preferably weekday evenings or weekend mornings or afternoons. Allot at least 2 hours for the dialogue.
- Hold the forum in a convenient place, one people can easily find, placing signs where necessary.
- Advertise/promote the forum—this could be as simple as word-of-mouth invitations to get a small group together, or a bigger effort. Personal contact is most effective.
- Invite members of the media—especially those who may want to cover the forum.
- Arrange the room with chairs in a circle, horseshoe or semi-circle shape, with one row if possible, or more rows if the group is larger.
- Aim for 8 to 30 people per group. The ideal number is 20-25. If more people show up, consider dividing the group in two, with each having a space where they can hear the dialogue. Each group will need a trained moderator and a recorder.
- Arrange for microphones, just in case people strain to hear what others are saying.
- Provide nametags with first names (write large with a dark marker). They help the moderator to call participants by name.
- Arrange for an easel, flipchart, and markers, masking tape to hang up the flipchart pages on the walls if self-stick flipcharts are not available.
- Post Ground Rules and Reflections.
- Have someone personally welcome participants as they arrive and sign-in participants. Retain the list so that you will know who came and be able to reconnect with them.
- Summarize the dialogue after the forum and make the results available to the media, policy makers, participants, and partners. Post flyers, materials, and your report on the ALA Connect site dedicated to Privacy Forums.

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The moderator begins by selecting a recorder and introducing the ground rules. The group's charge is to make choices about public issues by deliberating and weighing choices. Competing approaches to problems will be considered and all positions will be discussed, including the perspective of people who aren't present. Posters of ground rules are available from the National Issues Forums Institute. Key ground rules include.

- Everyone is encouraged to participate
- No one or two individuals dominate
- The discussion will focus on the choices
- All the major choices or positions on the issue are considered
- An atmosphere for discussion and analysis of the alternatives is maintained
- We listen to each other (Source: National Issues Forums Institute)

Participants then introduce themselves and their personal stake in the issue. Taking 1-2 minutes each, individuals give their first name and discuss what brought them to the forum, what their personal experiences with this issue are, and what concerns them most about this issue. Concerns of all participants are recorded.

The moderator guides discussion to define the problem and discuss a course of action.

- What are the pros and cons of different approaches?
- What are the costs and consequences?
- What can we define as facts, trade offs, and values?

Who do I trust to protect my privacy?

Approach 1: Marketplace

- The marketplace is the source of innovation in security and privacy protection technology and it also has a vested interest in privacy that secures the integrity of financial data.

Approach 2: Government

- The government has a responsibility to provide for public safety which includes identity protection and to secure the rights necessary to a free society.

Approach 3: Self

- I, myself, recognize that privacy values are individual and varied and that no one cares more about my needs than me.

After taking a moment to read about Approach 1, participants are asked:

- What do you like about the approach (pros)?
- What don't you like (cons)?
- Why or why not?
- When someone makes what seems like an obvious and straightforward statement, sometimes it can be very helpful for the purposes of deliberation to ask 'why?' or 'why not?'

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- How? This is another question that can be very effective in pushing people to think more deeply.

The moderator encourages participants to consider what is valuable to us.

- How has this issue affected you personally?
- When you think about this issue, what concerns you?
- What is appealing about the first option or approach?
- What makes this approach a good one – or a bad one?
- How did you come to hold the views you have?

Consequences, costs, and benefits are also at issue.

- What would be the consequences of doing what you are suggesting?
- What would be an argument against the option you like best?
- Is there a downside to this course of action?
- Can anyone think of something constructive that might come from the option, which is receiving so much criticism?

The moderator also focuses discussion on inherent conflicts.

- What do you see as the tension among the options?
- What are the gray areas?
- Where is there ambiguity?
- Why is this issue so difficult to decide?

The group seeks a shared direction or common ground by considering:

- What trade-offs are we willing and unwilling to accept?
- What are we willing and unwilling to do as individuals or as a community in order to solve this problem?
- If the policy we seem to favor had the negative consequences some fear, would we still favor it?

Quiet time for personal reflection (2 minutes) encourages individuals to consider:

- How their thinking about the issue has changed.
- How their thinking about other people's views has changed, and
- How their perspective has changed as a result of what they heard in the forum.

Group Reflection:

- Has the way I'm thinking about or understanding this issue been affected by how we've worked our way through it? If so, how?
- Did I, as an individual, really grapple with the costs and consequences of each approach, even the one I liked most?
- Did we, as a group, really identify and work through the costs and consequences of each approach?
- If we did not thoroughly work through this issue in this forum, what should we do about that?

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- What tradeoffs are we willing to make, at this point, to work on this issue? Why?
- What tradeoffs are we not willing to make? Why?
- Do we see any ways for taking action on this issue, with the information we now have?
- If not, what kind of information would help us see ways of acting on this issue?

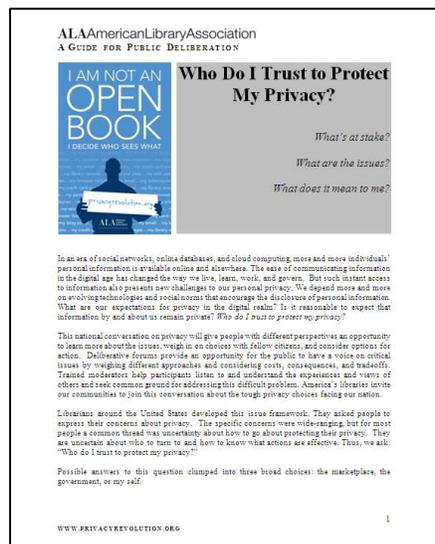
Finally, a group reflection and focus on next steps also allows participants to discuss a shared sense of direction or purpose, and any common ground for action.

- What do we still need to talk about?
- How can we use what we learned about ourselves in this forum?
- What are you going to do with what you learned today?

Close by thanking everyone for participating and tell them that you will share their concerns with the ALA Office for Intellectual Freedom, policy makers, community partners, and others concerned with privacy.

All participants can visit www.privacyrevolution.org to learn more about Choose Privacy Week and participate further in the national conversation on privacy.

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In addition to this Moderator Guide, moderators should be sure to print themselves a full copy of the materials for participants, “A Guide for Public Deliberation.”