Chambers County Library System - Policy on Retention of Information & Records
(Addendum to the County's Local Government Records Control Schedule)

The Chambers County Library System attempts to provide confidentiality and security regarding any personal information that the library system requires for a patron's use of county services. Patrons should understand that there are legal limits to such privacy, and that the library system is required, under certain conditions, to divulge circulation records, electronic use records, or patron identification information, if such legal processes are pursued. Libraries do not monitor information sought or read by library users. To the extent that libraries "capture" usage information of computer logs, libraries comply with court orders for law enforcement. A system of referral of requests for operational records is in place, and all requests for information must be made through the office of the County Librarian. All inquiries will be held in the strictest confidence by the County Librarian. The Chambers County Library System subscribes to the "Policy on Confidentiality of Library Records" as adopted by the American Library Association.

Part I: Patron Information

Patron identification information

The library system application card contains name, mailing and physical address, phone numbers, email address, and TDL, along with personal signatures for acceptance of library use policies, names of family members who have permission to use the card, and a signature for Internet policy acceptance. This information is physically stored in a card file, and identical information is placed in the library system's automated database. Borrowing privileges for general patron cards last 36 months and may be renewed; the Long Term Loan / Teacher Loan card expires in 12 months.

Expired patron records are purged annually from the database, unless those patrons have unpaid fines, books checked out, or messages of another nature blocking the deletion of the files. Once the record is purged from the automated database, the physical signature card is removed and destroyed. Expired patron records with active information will be retained indefinitely, subject to the discretion of the County Librarian.

Expiration, revocation, cancellation, or denial of library services may be cause for correspondence and communication between the party and the library staff. Such issues, if occurring, will be documented and maintained for 10 years from the initial date of the action.

Circulation record logs

Presentation of a library card at the circulation desk is mandatory for the charging of items to a patron record. The library system's policy regarding circulation logs of individual items: patron information is retained on each item for two previous checkouts. Current policy on items charged to individual patron records: item information will be retained for a maximum of six months.

Overdue notices and reports are generated on a regular basis. Paper information on these items is destroyed as soon as the situation is resolved. Overdue information, with fines accrued, is listed in the computer logs, and will be removed generally after 5 years' effort to collect on lost items.

Public access online service logs

The library system's automated network provides public access to software programs, to the library's database, and to the Internet. Patrons are required to abide by the library system's Automated Services Policy, and sign for that privilege when they apply for a library card.

Each computer in the library's network retains information on activity at that machine. Library policy requires deletion of the usage logs daily on public access machines. The library system does not maintain records on individual patrons at specific machines at any time.

The library system's Web page and online databases are accessed and logged through the library system's servers and filtering software. The library system is required to comply with filtering guidelines in its receipt of federal funds, and the network filter monitors all machine activity. Information from this software is subject to review by the County Data Processing Manager.

Guest users (non-registered patrons) of the library's public access to the Internet are required to abide by the Automated Services policy. Identity records are not kept, as it is presumed that this use is one-time. Habitual use of the library's electronic services will require application for a library card.

Holdings File

The library database includes information on items held in the collection. The database is altered daily, depending on additions, corrections, or deletions of materials to the system. No records of deleted items are kept. Items that are still attached to a patron's record, when that patron is delinquent, are held in the database indefinitely.

Part II: Administrative records

The following items relate to materials not generally of interest to the public, but necessary to the effective administration of the library system.

Policies and Procedures

Policies are created by the joint effort of the County Librarian and the Library Advisory Board, and approved or amended by action of Commissioners' Court. Policies that have been superseded or removed are archived for historical referral.

Procedures are operational activities that are based upon the policies of the library system, designed for working use by the staff. These procedures are subject to change without board or court action, and no attempt is made to archive outmoded procedures. Records of these procedures are destroyed when superseded.

Donor Register File

Members of the community donate used materials to the library. A release form transferring the property to the library is signed. A file of these names, with date of donations, is maintained permanently. The original signed copies will be destroyed after the file is created.

Complaints, requests for reconsideration, correspondence

Issues of concern to the public, as voiced through the library system's formal process or through informal correspondence, are documented for referral. These items will be retained for a minimum of 10 years, then purged.

Annual reports to the Texas State Library

Documents relating to the compilation of this report are compiled monthly; copies of the monthly statistical reports, and working information to compile the annual report, will be retained permanently.

Interlibrary loan records

Photocopy requests are retained for 5 years to comply with fair use/copyright information. Book requests are maintained for a maximum of three years past the date of return of the item to the lending library.

Computer generated reports

Working documents for the administration of the library, the development of the collection, inventory control, etc., are used for an indefinite length of time, then destroyed. Generally, statistical reports are retained as part of the documentation that is finally accrued and generated as the state library's annual report.

Receipt books

Receipts written for lost materials, damaged items, deposits, etc., are kept for 5 years after the date of receipt, then destroyed.

Purchasing records

Purchases made with funds administered through the County, whether from the general fund, grant funds awarded to the library, or special funds (such as certificates of obligation for construction) are monitored through the offices of the County Treasurer and Auditor. For referral purposes, materials about these purchases will be retained by the library system for 2 fiscal years prior to the current year, then purged.

The library system receives funds from individuals and grantors that are either administered elsewhere (Houston Area Library System) or in-house (Memorial Fund). Records on purchases, invoices, statements, etc. for HALS funds are kept for 3 bienniums (their fiscal cycle). Records relating to the Memorial Fund are maintained permanently for possible audit.

Chambers County Library Advisory Board
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