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

The Chambers County Library System values the privacy of all those who access and utilize library resources and attempts to provide confidentiality and security regarding any personal information that the library system requires for a patron's use of county services. Information regarding an individual's library account will only be shared with the patron. However, patrons should understand that there are legal limits to such privacy, and that the library system is required, under certain conditions, as outlined in Texas Government Code, Section 552.124 and the USA PATRIOT Act, to divulge circulation records, electronic use records, and/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, 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" and the "Code of Ethics" as adopted by the American Library Association.

Part I: Patron Information

Patron identification information

The library system application card contains name, mailing address, phone number(s), email address, and license or ID card number, along with a signature accepting library and Internet use policies. 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 is valid from August 1st through June 1st of the following year.

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 five previous checkouts. Current policy on items charged to individual patron records: item information will be retained until the patron's account is purged from the database. Any patron who prefers not to have his/her circulation information retained should speak to a library staff member.

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 retained until any outstanding balance has been paid in full.

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. Usage logs on public access machines are deleted, at a minimum, on a weekly basis. The library system does not maintain records on individual patrons at specific machines at any time, with the exception of documenting a violation of the Automated Services Policy.

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.

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, library staff, and the Library Advisory Board.

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 also receives funds from individuals and grantors that are administered in-house (Memorial Fund). Records relating to the Memorial Fund are maintained permanently for possible audit.

Chambers County Library Advisory Board
November, 2002
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