

Patron Confidentiality Policy
Athol Public Library

Every library patron has the right to privacy in their choice of books and materials and in their use of the library.

Under the 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...”

Confidentiality extends to information sought or received, and materials consulted or borrowed, and includes database search records, reference interviews, circulation records, interlibrary loan transactions, registration records, and all other personally identifiable uses of library materials, facilities, or services.

The Athol Public Library safeguards access to patron library records and restricts access to that information to the patron to whom the card is issued.

Confidentiality may not be breached for a spouse, parent or other relative without the cardholder’s permission. There is one exception: Parents of minor children may access their records under specific circumstances. (See below for details.)

- We never give out any information about a patron or his or her library visits or library use to anyone, even our friends, relatives, or the police or other governmental agency, unless a subpoena has been submitted to the library director and the library director has consulted with Town Counsel to determine if it is proper to release the requested information.
- If someone asks for an address or telephone number for one of our patrons, please find it in a public source other than our records, such as the phone book, street list, etc., before giving it out.
- When calling patrons to let them know that there are items on hold for them, do not give out the title unless you are speaking directly with the patron. Do not leave title information on voice mail, even if you are sure it is a personal cell phone.
- If a patron wishes for someone else to pick up his or her library materials, (thereby waiving confidentiality), the patron should give his or her card to that person so that it may be presented to the librarian on duty. The patron should also notify the library in writing, in person, or by calling. The staff person assisting this patron should add this information to the patron’s account in Evergreen, using the “Alert” field. In cases in which the patron is homebound a duplicate card may be issued to the person who regularly picks up library materials for the patron.

- When a new patron registers for a library card, the staff member on duty should ask if there is anyone who is likely to pick up library materials for that patron. A note can be made in the patron's record indicating who has permission to pick up materials in his or her name. Patrons who have given this permission waive confidentiality with one another.

The staff of the Athol Public Library recognizes that instances may arise when it may be necessary for a parent or legal guardian to be provided information about his or her child's library records.

- As the financially responsible party, a parent or legal guardian is permitted access to the records of their minor children when their child has overdue or lost materials. The parent or legal guardian must provide identification, or be personally known to the librarian on duty. Parents or legal guardians who have signed their minor child's application have assumed the financial responsibility for materials charged out to their child's card. Parents may ask for this information in person or over the phone. If there are no lost or overdue items, do not divulge information to the parent unless the child has given permission.
- We can exchange information with other libraries, however, for purposes of inter-library cooperation and coordination. This information is confidential as well.

Individual card holders may check on their own records:

- Online.
- In person - upon presentation of their library card, library notice or acceptable identification.
- By telephone – after verification of name, address, telephone number, and date of birth.

All staff members are required to support this policy of confidentiality.

Accepted by the Board of Library Trustees 21 January 2015