

Ames Public Library Policy
Section: Library Operations
Subject: Confidentiality of Library Records

Board
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Policy

Confidentiality of library records is central to intellectual freedom and directly related to the ability of citizens to use library materials and pursue information without fear of intimidation. In accordance with the Code of Iowa and the American Library Association's statement of professional ethics, the Board of Trustees of the Ames Public Library respects the privacy of users and recognizes its responsibility to protect their privacy.

1. The Library will not reveal the information sources or services individual users consult unless required by law or court order. Confidentiality extends to information sought or received and materials consulted, borrowed or acquired. Confidentiality includes database search records, reference interviews, interlibrary loan records, computer use records, and all other personally identifiable uses of Library materials, programs or services.
2. The Library will hold confidential the names of card holders and their registration information and not provide access for private, public or commercial use. Use of this information by the Ames Public Library, Friends of the Ames Public Library and the Ames Public Library Foundation is permitted as outlined in the Use of Patron Database policy.
3. The Library will require all staff, volunteers, and third parties with access to library records to attest and agree to uphold the confidentiality of library records as specified by Library policy and applicable Iowa code.
4. The lawful custodian of the records is the Director of the Library.
5. Unless required by court order, library records will only be released to the person(s) whose name(s) appear on the library borrower's record. The Library will not release registration, circulation, or other records of a registered library borrower that are protected under Iowa Code 22.7 (13) unless it is required by court order to release such information.

Circumstances which may require the Library to release the information include the following:

- A. A criminal or juvenile justice agency is seeking the information pursuant to an investigation of a particular person or organization suspected of committing a known crime AND the criminal or juvenile justice agency presents the Library Director with a court order demonstrating that there has been a judicial determination that a rational connection exists between the requested release of information and a legitimate end and that the need for the information is cogent and compelling.
- B. The Library receives a Warrant for the information issued under the USA Patriot Act (which includes amendments to the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act and the Electronic Communications Privacy Act) under a properly drawn court order.

- C. The Library receives a valid court order requiring the Library to release registration, circulation or other records protected under the Iowa Code as a result of local, state, or federal judicial review.

Procedures

1. The Library staff member receiving a request to examine or obtain information relating to registration records or circulation records or other records identifying the names of Library users, shall immediately refer the requestor to the Director, the official custodian of the records. (To prevent any misunderstanding, the staff member should avoid discussing with the person making the request what user information may or may not be available, or what the Library can or cannot do.)

If the Library Director is not available (such as during evenings or weekends or away on business) inform the requestor when the Director will be available. If pressed to act sooner, contact the Director immediately whether the Director is away on business or at home. In the event the Director cannot be reached, the Assistant Director or the highest ranking person on duty is responsible for working with the requestor.

2. The Library Director shall meet with the requestor of the information. If the requestor is a law enforcement officer the officer must have a properly drawn court order to receive the requested records. If the officer does not have a proper court order, such as a subpoena or warrant compelling the production of records, the Library Director shall refuse to provide the information. The Library Director may explain the confidentiality policy and the state's confidentiality law, and inform the agent or officer that users' records are not available except when a properly drawn court order has been presented to the Library.
3. If the records requested cover registration, circulation or other records protected under the Iowa Code, and the Director is uncertain about whether the order, or subpoena presented to the Library Director is sufficient to require release of the records, the Library Director may immediately consult with legal counsel to determine if such process, order, or subpoena is sufficient to require release of the records.
4. If any written request, process, order, or subpoena is not in proper form or does not otherwise appear to be sufficient to support releasing the records, the Library Director shall insist that such defects be cured before any records are released.
5. If the Library Director or the Director in consultation with Library's attorney determines that the order is sufficient and compels the release of the records, the Library Director shall release the records.
6. If the request is made pursuant to the USA Patriot Act, the Library Director is authorized to obtain legal counsel regarding the request. As required by the USA Patriot Act, the Library Director may not discuss the request with anyone other than legal counsel and other persons necessary to obtain such information.
7. If the requestor is not a law enforcement officer and has not presented any type of court or administrative order requiring release of the requested information, the Library Director shall refuse to provide the requested records. The Library Director may explain the confidentiality policy and the state's confidentiality law.

8. The Library Director is authorized to take legal action (such as moving to quash a subpoena) to resist releasing requested registration, circulation or other records protected under the Iowa Code if the Library Director and the Library's legal counsel deems such action to be appropriate.
9. Any threats or unauthorized demands (i.e. those not supported by a written request, process, order, or subpoena) concerning circulation and other records identifying the names of Library users shall be reported to the Director.
10. Any problems relating to the privacy of circulation and other records identifying the names of Library users which are not provided for above shall be referred to the Director.

References

1. Code of Iowa 22.7 "Examination of Public Records (Open Records)":

22.7 Confidential records.

The following public records shall be kept confidential, unless otherwise ordered by a court, by the lawful custodian of the records, or by another person duly authorized to release such information...:

13. The records of a library which, by themselves or when examined with other public records, would reveal the identity of the library patron checking out or requesting an item or information from the library. The records shall be released to a criminal or juvenile justice agency only pursuant to an investigation of a particular person or organization suspected of committing a known crime. The records shall be released only upon a judicial determination that a rational connection exists between the requested release of information and a legitimate end and that the need for the information is cogent and compelling.

18. Communications not required by law, rule, procedure, or contract that are made to a government body or to any of its employees by identified persons outside of government, to the extent that the government body receiving those communications from such persons outside of government could reasonably believe that those persons would be discouraged from making them to that government body if they were available for general public examination.

2. Code of Ethics of the American Library Association:

"We protect each library user's right to privacy and confidentiality with respect to information sought or received and resources consulted, borrowed, acquired or transmitted."