

Texas Woman's University

Library Policy Manual

Policy Name: Library Privacy and Confidentiality

Last Library Review: April 2023

Next Library Review: April 2024

Purpose: The purpose of this policy is to address library privacy and confidentiality within the TWU Libraries. The TWU Libraries will adhere to the [University's Privacy Policy](#). However, guidelines specific to the TWU Libraries and adopted by the American Library Association (ALA) are included in this Library Privacy Policy.

Note: *Access, availability, usage, and occupancy limits may be changed in accordance with University guidelines regarding health and safety.*

Definitions: For the purpose of this policy

Library Bill of Rights – basic policies, developed by the American Library Association, that guide library services

ALA Code of Ethics – values of intellectual freedom that define the profession of librarianship and provide a framework for dealing with ethical conflicts.

Confidentiality - the possession of personally identifiable information; the state of keeping something secret or private

Privacy - prevention of any unauthorized use or disclosure of users' personally identifiable information or the data

User - all TWU students, faculty, staff, alumni, visitors, and community members

Policy:

The Texas Woman's University Libraries are committed to protecting the privacy of all who use our services, in person or online. The Libraries provide a vast array of services. Many services do not require users to divulge any information to Libraries staff or systems. Other services, however, require users to provide some information in order to receive or benefit from the service. At all times, the Libraries' staff keeps confidential all information about our users, their activities, and their research choices to the extent allowed by law. Access to personal information is restricted to authorized library staff who need it to conduct library business. Library privacy and confidentiality policies are respected in compliance with applicable federal, state, and local laws and University policies. All TWU employees receive annual training on information security.

Libraries view the right to privacy – the right to read, consider, and develop ideas and beliefs free from observation or unwanted surveillance by the government or others – as the bedrock foundation for intellectual freedom. It is essential to the exercise of free speech, free thought, and free association. Confidentiality of library records is a core value of librarianship.

As stated in the *Library Bill of Rights* and the *ALA Code of Ethics*, the TWU Libraries protect each library user's right to privacy and confidentiality with respect to information sought or received and resources consulted, borrowed, acquired or transmitted.

Library Guidelines

1. The TWU Libraries view privacy as essential to free inquiry because it enables library users to select, access, and consider information and ideas without fear of embarrassment, judgment, punishment, or ostracism.
2. The TWU Libraries and all those who work there maintain an environment that is respectful and protective of the library user's privacy.
3. Confidentiality is maintained with regard to such library-created records as email notifications, addresses, registration information, sign-up sheets, room usage records, circulation records, websites visited, reference interviews, interlibrary loan materials, or research notes. Library staff will access data stored in library computer systems only for the purpose of performing their assigned library duties.
4. The TWU Libraries avoid practices and procedure that place personally identifiable information in public view.
5. Pertaining to the [Texas Public Information Act](#) (as amended 1999) and in accord with established principles guiding the provision of library services, staff members may not release individual users names or reveal what information sources or services they have consulted. Exceptions are made only upon court order, subpoena, or warrant, or when deemed necessary by University officials for internal investigations. This applies to all resources regardless of their format or means of delivery as well as to all services offered by the TWU Libraries.
6. Websites link to internet sites and services outside the administrative domain of the TWU Libraries. The privacy practices of external websites are not governed by the TWU Libraries although TWU makes every attempt to include user information protections in its license agreements. The TWU Libraries do not provide vendors with personal user information.
7. TWU Library staff refer all requests for confidential user records to the Library Dean or their designate, who will forward the request to the TWU Counsel.
8. To ensure confidentiality, TWU Library users should log off of computers, software, and other technologies, and properly dispose of materials containing sensitive information. Confidential materials should not be left unattended.
9. Any user who needs to shred sensitive information while in the TWU Libraries can take it to an Information Desk where staff will shred it.

Review:

The Library's Policy Work Group will review this policy with recommendations forwarded through normal administrative channels to the Dean of Libraries.