

## **Northwood Public Library Confidentiality of Records Policy**

### Purpose:

The confidentiality policy of the Northwood Public library is based on the First and Fourth Amendments of the U.S. Constitution, the Iowa Code, and professional ethics. The purpose of this policy is to explain how the Library serves as a custodian of and protects confidential information, honors privacy, and responds to requests for information about library users.

### Policy:

Confidentiality is essential to protect the exercise of rights under the Constitution of the United States of America, the First and Fourth Amendments, United States Code, the Code of Iowa, and the Code of Ethics of the American Library Association

1. The library will not reveal the identities of individual users nor the information sources or services they consult unless required by law. 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, facilities, 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.
3. The lawful custodian of the records is the Director of the Library.
4. The library will not release registration, circulation, or other records protected under the Iowa Code unless it is required by law to release the information. Circumstances that may require the library to release the information include the following:
  - a. The library receives a valid court order requiring the library to release registration, circulation or other records protected under the Iowa Code.
  - b. The library receives a Warrant for the information issued under the USA Patriot Act or a National Security Letter seeking the information also pursuant to the USA Patriot Act.

### Procedures:

1. REQUEST: The library staff member receiving a request will be referred to the Director, the official custodian of the records, if the Director is unavailable the staff member 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 court order, a warrant issued under the USA Patriot Act, or a National Security Letter (NSL) issued under the USA Patriot Act to receive the

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requested records. If the officer does not have a proper court order, warrant, or NSL 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 proper court order in good form 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 determine that the order, warrant, or NSL, 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.
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.

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## References

**Constitution** of the United States of America. First Amendment: Congress shall make no law...abridging the freedom of speech... Fourth Amendment: The right of the people to be secure in their persons, houses, papers, and effects, against unreasonable searches and seizures, shall not be violated, and no Warrants shall issue, but upon probable cause, supported by Oath or affirmation, and particularly describing the place to be searched, and the persons or things to be seized.

### **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...:

22.7.13 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.

22.7.18. 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.

**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.”