



Librarian's Log by Arlisa Harris, Librarian Forrest City Public Library



The need for privacy rights in Arkansas

Privacy rights are fundamental in today's digital age, where personal information is collected, stored, and used by businesses and organizations across various sectors. However, residents of Arkansas find themselves in a unique position compared to their counterparts in states like California, Colorado, and others that provide strong legal frameworks for protecting personal data. This disparity not only raises concerns about individual rights but also impacts transparency, accountability, and overall trust in how personal information is managed by those who we trust with our personal data.

Arkansas residents, unlike those in states with comprehensive privacy laws, do not have statutory rights such as:

- **Right to Know/Access:** Accessing personal information held by businesses to understand what data is collected, how it's used, and with whom it's shared.
- **Right to Delete:** Requesting the deletion of personal data held by businesses, ensuring control over one's information.
- **Right to Opt-Out of Sale:** Preventing businesses from selling personal data to third parties.
- **Right to Correct:** Correcting inaccuracies in personal information held by businesses.
- **Right to Limit Use and Disclosure of Sensitive Personal Information:** Exercising control over the use of sensitive personal data like health or financial information.

The absence of these rights in Arkansas leaves residents vulnerable to potential misuse or unauthorized access to their personal information. It also limits our ability to make informed decisions about privacy, impacting our already limited trust in businesses and institutions that collect our data.

As the library director,

ensuring patron privacy is paramount. Libraries have long been champions of intellectual freedom and privacy, upholding principles that safeguard patrons' right to access information without fear of surveillance or monitoring. Here's how we protect our patrons' privacy at our library:

No Records of Internet Activity: We do not retain records of users' Internet activity, including sites visited or web search terms. This ensures that patrons can explore diverse topics and information freely without concerns about their browsing history being tracked or monitored.

Confidentiality of Borrowing History: We do not disclose or retain patrons' history of materials researched or checked out from the library. Whether it's books, DVDs, or other resources, our policy ensures that borrowing records remain confidential to protect patrons' intellectual freedom.

Anonymous Access: We do not keep records of names, dates, or times of patrons' visits to the library. This practice ensures anonymity and protects patrons' privacy while using library facilities and resources.

Educating Patrons: We educate our patrons about privacy rights and best practices for protecting their personal information online. This includes guidance on secure browsing, managing privacy settings, and understanding their rights regarding data protection.

While Arkansas currently lacks comprehensive privacy legislation, there is growing recognition nationwide of the need for robust privacy protections. Advocacy efforts are crucial in urging lawmakers to enact laws that empower residents with rights like those in other states. These laws should not only protect personal information but also hold businesses and organizations accountable for

how they collect, use, and share data.

By advocating for privacy rights and implementing stringent privacy policies at the library level, we aim to build trust with our patrons. Ensuring that their personal information remains confidential and secure strengthens our commitment to intellectual freedom and privacy principles upheld by libraries nationwide.

Arkansas residents deserve privacy rights that empower them to control their personal information and make informed decisions about its use. While the state may currently lack specific legislation in this area, libraries like ours play a critical role in safeguarding patron privacy through robust policies and educational initiatives.

In my view, it is time for our lawmakers to take a page out of our local libraries' book and step up and take a stand for our privacy here in Arkansas.

Library bits & bytes

Our children's summer reading program ended recently, and we are fortunate to have community partners help us not only educate but provide fun times for kids and their families. Firstly, we were fortunate to receive a literacy grant from the St Francis Community Foundation.

We want to thank representatives from Mississippi River State Park, Parkin Archaeology State Park, Delta Heritage State Park and Delta Cultural Center for providing fun and substantive programming. A special shout out to Candace Dolls with the Delta Cultural Center, Alderman Lowry Astin, Marla Lane with St. Francis County Extension, Holly Loewer and Farm Bureau and the DBS Sorority volunteers for ensuring successful summer programs!

Until next time, signing off from your Forrest City Public Library. Where we bring the community together, one story at a time.

Death toll seven