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Why Internet and Information Privacy Policy is Necessary

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ABSTRACT

In today's digital, data, and social media age, internet and information policies are necessary for any organization. In academic libraries, the community served is diverse and thriving. Librarians and library staff are asked about research needs, research consultation, book recommendations, and technology issues. In regards to technology, two major topics arise: Information and Internet. Any thriving library needs to have an information privacy policy and an internet privacy policy. While looking at the American Library Association's (ALA) Library Bill of Rights and policies set-up by the Federal Education Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), there is much documentation on a patron's right to privacy. It is crucial for any academic library to have

these policies created and published. The focus of this article will be on the Rebecca Crown Library at Dominican University. They do not have a publicized information privacy policy. However, a different department at Dominican University has a publicized privacy policy. Dominican University has a list of 12 peer institutions, many of which have publicized privacy plans. Only four those peer institutions have a library privacy policy plan, which is separate from the university. The results will help Rebecca Crown Library establish their Internet and Information Privacy Plan.

INTRODUCTION

The Rebecca Crown Library at Dominican University serves a diverse community on a daily basis. The patronage that goes through every day consist of faculty, staff, students, alumna, community patrons, conference attendants, and perspective students. With all these potential interactions, one guarantee that should be inherent is the idea of a patron's privacy. In his article, *Information Policy-Privacy and Academic Libraries: Widening the Frame of Discussion*, by John Shuler, he defines privacy as "...the right and expectation to be left alone. It is usually a silent partner with other, more active, civil rights: free speech, freedom of assembly/association, freedom of religion, and so on" (157). To interpret this from a librarian perspective, any user has the right to research any topic they choose without fear of judgement from others. Shuler continues with "...there are two layers of privacy, often interdependent, that users expect from academic libraries (as well as other institutions in society). The first is personal and the second is organizational" (158). At the Rebecca Crown Library, both of these entities of privacy are taken into account with its patrons. The Rebecca Crown Library wants patrons to research whatever topics they need to while being able to provide as many resources as possible.

Information, internet, and privacy have always been controversial topics in the field of librarianship. At the Rebecca Crown Library, they are having patron interactions that border on

what can and cannot be revealed during the interaction. When a patron calls the library to renew a borrowed material, there is a multi-step procedure to confirm that the library is in fact talking with the correct patron. They will ask for the patrons' name, to confirm the address on the account, and to confirm their ID number. This way, they have more confidence that they are dealing with the correct patron. However, this procedure only handles interactions over the phone. There are many more layers to the topics of information, internet, and privacy.

Libraries have been protecting patrons' privacy for decades. With the advancement of technology, that goal becomes an increasingly difficult task. Another aspect to this issue is the abundance of social media platforms. With Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat, Twitter, and countless other applications, data is being used to create content a user may click on. That one click is still an insurmountable amount of data for a company. In fact, Sarah Shik Lamden's article, *Social Media Privacy: A Rallying Cry to Librarians*, stating that "...over 90% of teen Internet users participate in social media and "librarians, as information science specialists, stand at the pinnacle of this information revolution, creating social media policies and methods of use. In some communities, libraries often provide only the Internet access available to the public, making libraries the sole access point for online social media" (55). With social media growing rapidly, libraries need to include social media as an entity in their internet and information privacy policies.

In this study, by comparing Dominican University's peer institutions privacy policies, library policy collaborators can have a wider perspective on what our peers have already established. Researching specifically for library internet and information privacy policies helps build a case that a library needs to have its own privacy policy that is separate from other university offices. Their plan should also mention social media as many students in higher education use social media to communicate with peers about assignments, classes, etc. In the article *Preserving Patron Privacy in the 21st Century Academic Library* by Amanda Nichols Hess, et al, the authors state that "patrons consider the library as a place where their personal information remains secure and confidential...patrons expect libraries to protect their personal information ...

librarians and libraries need to earn this trust by protecting patron data and information” (106). Ultimately, the reason to have this kind of research is to ensure the community we serve that the privacy policy we want to provide protects patrons’ privacy from being compromised.

METHODOLOGY

I conducted a Google search of each peer institution’s privacy policy. This allowed me to find immediate results without much searching into a website. I easily accessed the correct information that I needed. I then specified that I wanted to read about each university library privacy policy in the Google search, as I wanted to see what peer institute libraries had as a library privacy policy. For my purposes, I wanted to see what information the university was collecting on students who visited their respective websites.

This case study used an exploratory research study method as it is pulling information together as it is initial data. In the future, the data from this research should enhance a potentially larger study. This case study is also a cumulative study as it is information pulled together from many plans to create some generalizations. In the future, this allows researchers to know what Dominican University’s peer institutions have already established.

RESULTS

Name	University Privacy Policy Exists	Separate Library Privacy Policy	Social Media Clause in either plan	Data collected in plan(s)
Benedictine University	Yes	Yes	No	IP Address, Internet service provider, operating system, site from which user arrived, date, time of visit, and Google Analytics to show how user uses site
Capital University	Yes	No	No	Internet location, pages visited on site, web page before coming to site, and software used to visit site
College of St. Catherine	Yes	Yes	Yes (cookies on socials)	Sole owner of information collected. Only access to information voluntarily given.
Lewis University	Yes	No	No	Sole owner of information collected. Only access to information voluntarily given
Maryville University of St. Louis	Yes	No	No	Name, email address, phone number, employment background, educational background, feedback, de-identified data
North Central College	Yes	No	Yes (cookies on socials)	Sole owner of information collected. Only access to information voluntarily given
St. Ambrose University	Yes	No	No	IP address, browser type, browser version, operating system, domain names, access dates and times, duration of visit, referring Website addresses, email clicks, and other actions taken
St. Edward's University	No	No	No	No
St. Mary's College of California	Yes	No	No	name, address, email, phone number, Internet Protocol (IP) address of computer being used; webpages requested; referring webpage; browser used; date and time.
St. Xavier University	Yes	No	No	Sole owner of information collected on its websites. We have access to and collect only information that you voluntarily provide via the website, email or other direct contact.
University of Detroit Mercy	Yes (regulations follow FERPA)	Yes	Yes	Sole owner of information collected. Only access to information voluntarily given
University of Indianapolis	Yes	Yes	No	Sole owner of information collected. Only access to information voluntarily given

Twelve institutions were researched as Dominican University considers them as a peer. After the initial search for a privacy policy for the university, I looked to see if the library had their own privacy plan. With organizations such as FERPA and ALA, it would seem as a logical conclusion that most academic libraries would have their own, publicized privacy plan. The Rebecca Crown Library is compliant to FERPA and ALA's Library Bill of Rights document. However, because they do not publicize this, there is no proof to a patron that the Rebecca Crown Library is in fact compliant. Information privacy is very important at the Rebecca Crown Library as we do have access to patrons name, home address, email address, phone number, and institutional identification number. This information is highly confidential and thus we have to protect it.

When researching the topic of information privacy, one question that was asked is why do more libraries not have an information privacy policy established. In Trina Magi's article, A study of US library directors' confidence and practice regarding patron confidentiality, she states "It is not surprising that library directors at both types of libraries expressed a need for help in writing library confidentiality policy...many libraries still do not have written policies" (753). Based on Dominican University's peer institution libraries, this statement may be true as only 25% of the libraries researched have an information privacy policy that is separate from the university's information privacy policy. The results showed that 11/12 peer institutions have an information privacy that the university supports.

As communication evolves, one cannot ignore the impact of social media and its influence. Lamdan quoted a librarian stating, "If Facebook were a country and its users citizens, it would be the third most populous country in the world, behind only China and India" (261). This is a staggering statement and the statement was made in 2010. Imagine what that number is today. Libraries cannot ignore that kind of impact. Every days, billions of people use social media to interact with other users, share content, and express their innermost thoughts. Lamden continues to say, "As social media provides library users with information, it collects volumes of personal data, from biographical information to information about personal affiliations with

people, organizations, and institutions. Social media data contains chat logs, message files, tweets, photos, videos, tags, GPS locations, “likes”, check-ins, log-in timetables, pins, and even clicks” (261). That amount of data is overwhelming and to think companies have access to that information for profit is borderline criminal. When librarians see a statement such as that, there is not a choice but to take action and make a policy.

The people who need to create and publicize the Rebecca Crown Library’s Information and Internet Privacy Policy are the University Librarian and the Librarians. This team will need to collaborate and come to an agreement on how the document is worded as well as to where exactly it needs to live on the library website. As Hess, et al quoting author Vaughan states,

“At the most basic level, academic libraries need to consider privacy as it relates to computes technologies because many libraries provide patrons computer workstations, copiers, scanners, printers, and other hardware available for use. Any statements on the privacy of patron information, then, needs to include information on data security, intellectual property, and copyright, and workstation security as they relate to patrons’ privacy and use of library equipment” (106).

With all of the different services the Rebecca Crown Library provides for its patrons, they need policies that will benefit the users. Having policies on information, internet, and privacy will establish that we are doing our best to protect our patrons’ privacy.

DISCUSSIONS

At the Rebecca Crown Library, the privacy of our patrons is very important to us as we do want to keep in compliance with FERPA and the ALA Library Bill of Rights. Specifically, with the ALA Library Bill of Rights, we want to make sure our patrons can research any topic they choose to without being judged. As a staff, we take these policies very seriously and in training any new employee, we make sure to go over confidentiality with the trainee. They have to understand

the amount of information that they have access to when they are on the clock. The major gap is that we do not have a written document that publicizes our stance on information privacy. In Patricia Mars' article *ALA Precedent in Defense of Personal Privacy and Privacy Activism of 21st-Century Information Professionals*, she provides an example of how the San Jose Public Library is handling privacy issues and make privacy understandable for their community. The Rebecca Crown Library could adapt this mentality their own community. "The San Jose Public Library created the Virtual Privacy Lab. This site is intended to give users a nonthreatening understanding of privacy solutions for their personal use. Users answer a few questions, and the site produces "a personalized toolkit, including links, tips, and resources tailored specifically to a person's privacy needs" (56). This idea will allow the Rebecca Crown Library to reach across multiple communities, as there is a vast international studies program at Dominican University.

As General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) and other international policies come to fruition, it will be even more important for the Rebecca Crown Library to have a publicized information and internet privacy policy. Every academic year, there are students from overseas who attend classes at the university. Like the Support Center, Enrollment Management, and Information Technology departments, the Rebecca Crown Library will have to be compliant with these international regulations. The biggest challenge facing the Rebecca Crown Library is having an agreed upon policy that meets the requirements and needs of our patrons. Every librarian has a different perspective about what is and is not covered in the information and internet privacy policy.

RECOMMENDATIONS

I recommend that the Rebecca Crown Library meet with other effected stakeholders to establish what their information and internet privacy policy needs to include. Key stakeholders include Information Technology, the Chief Information Officer, Director of Marketing, Business Office, Enrollment Management, Institutional Research, and lawyers on retainer for the

university. Simply put, this group would combine their expertise to make sure the library has a concise and accurate information and internet privacy policy. It should address if we will keep any personal information when using the internet, even if it is on a patrons' device. We need to acknowledge where that data goes, if anywhere. We should allow patrons to refuse to have cookies while using our site. There has to be a clause about social media as more students, faculty, and staff have accounts on the various platforms. We have to mention all the international policies as well as the local policies that we are compliant with. The policy also needs a statement regarding how often the library will revisit the policy. I recommend that the policy is analyzed annually as technology and needs are changing constantly.

LIMITATIONS

This study really is a starting point for the construction of a library information privacy policy. Though I researched our peer institutions' privacy policies, not many of these libraries have their own separate privacy policy. One school did not have any kind of publicized privacy policy, which is a major problem in today's modern, technological, and advanced age. I mention social media and again, only a couple institutions make mention of social media in their privacy plan.

CONCLUSIONS

After researching 12 privacy policies, I saw that many of the policies have very similar language, which allows for a nice starting point as the Rebecca Crown Library develops their own privacy policy. Information and internet privacy policies need to be created in any library that offers computer workstations. Like a policy in the circulation department for privacy regarding materials borrowed, a patron needs the same kind of protection when using the internet. They want to make sure their privacy is being protected as much as possible. It is an issue of trust between the library and its patronage. Looking at the library privacy policies at Benedictine University, Capital University, College of St. Catherine, University of Detroit Mercy, and University of Indianapolis will give the Rebecca Crown Library a nice starting point. Using similar

language will make the policy creation for a much quicker and easier process. If this research is conducted again, only focus on the peer institutions that have a library privacy policy that is separate from the university. This way, the policy is crafted with librarianship in mind first, not the university as a whole. Keeping the international regulations in mind regarding privacy will be essential for the success of the policy. The university plans to grow the study abroad program, which will mean the library will need to follow the regulations set up in other countries. Social media will not stop growing and will continue to evolve. Making a statement where the library stands regarding social media will be a major factor for students especially as over 90% of teens use social media today. Doing our best to protect their privacy in terms of research and personal data will be the perfect balance the information and internet privacy policy of the Rebecca Crown Library needs to succeed at Dominican University.

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