

Virtual Reference Services (Ask a Librarian) Privacy Guidelines

Temple University Libraries respects the rights and privacy of our patrons and their records in accordance with the following state law and professional and institutional policies. Temple University Libraries understands “patron records” to include all records with identifying information about patrons, including the contextual information in transcripts of reference interactions.

[ALA Policy on Confidentiality of Library Records](#)
[Pennsylvania Law for the Confidentiality of Library Records](#)
[Temple University Computing and Network Security Policy](#)

1) What Information is collected by the service?

All chat/co-browse sessions are logged in the Ask a Librarian system, on hardware maintained by the libraries. These transcripts are password protected, for view only by designated library staff.

Additionally, email reference queries entered through the Ask a Librarian system are kept in the same way, and subject to the same restrictions.

Finally, transcripts of the IM transactions are stored on hardware maintained by the libraries. By policy, these transcripts are restricted to use by designated library staff for the purpose of internal training and statistical reporting only.

2) What is the information used for?

The information is used to help analyze the amount and types of questions we are being asked. This helps determine appropriate staffing levels, and aids in training librarians to staff the service.

3) Who has access to this information?

The information collected by the library is accessible to Temple Libraries’ librarians, staff, and administrators who need access to the information in the course of their work.

4) Does the library share the information?

Statistics generated from chat/co-browse, email, and IMs may be used for official reports or publications of the Temple University Libraries. However, information about specific individuals (e.g. IP address, E-Mail, names, phone numbers, etc.) will never be shared outside of the Temple University Libraries except as may be required by law.

5) What choices do users have about the collection, use, and distribution of their information?

Any patron may request to have their chat or IM transcript deleted by contacting the Libraries’ Reference and Instructional Services department. Users will need to provide their name, email, and/or IM account name along with the date and approximate time their chat started in order to help identify the correct transcript. [Contact jbaldwin@temple.edu, or 215-204-4585]