

Data Privacy Week

By Paulina Poplawska, Library Director

The weekend caps off Data Privacy Week. It was first observed by the American Library Association's Office for Intellectual Freedom in 2010. This initiative invites library users and patrons into a national conversation about privacy rights in a digital age.

We're living in a new world. When was the last time you unplugged from your devices? I have to admit, for the first time in my career as a public librarian, I have more books checked out in my Libby app than I do physical books on my library card. If you find yourself constantly online, you're not alone. There's a particular pull toward your tech and your favorite apps – whether to check your email or turn on your e-audiobook.

You want to make sure that the tech in your life is working for you. One way to make tech work for you is by being present. If your goal is to spend less time on social media, there are many apps such as Facebook, Instagram, or Snapchat that provide you with an option to monitor when you've reached your daily time limit. It's usually found in the settings option of an app. A second way is to stay media savvy. You can do so by becoming wise to misinformation by making a habit to ask critical questions of your news sources. Some of those questions can be: What website is this from? Who wrote it (and when?)?

The theme for Data Privacy Week this year was Choose Privacy. You can curate what information you put out into the digital world. By being plugged in, from the moment one picks up a cellphone in the morning, there is an exorbitant amount of information being collected. You can regulate the information that is collected on you by utilizing privacy settings, ad blockers, and restricting the data you give out.

As a public librarian this is a friendly reminder that the American Library Association's Code of Ethics guides us in ethical decision-making around privacy issues in its statement, "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." For many who use the public library every day, know that we are guided by the Library Bill of Rights wherein Article VII, "All people, regardless of origin, age, background, or views, possess a right to privacy and confidentiality in their library use. Libraries should advocate for, educate about, and protect people's privacy, safeguarding all library use data, including personally identifiable information."

Last week, the library debuted a new system. Library patrons can now pick up their own holds on the hold shelf and the library's self-check computer to check out library materials. Directions on how to retrieve your hold are posted on the shelf. Library staff are available to check out items if you prefer not to use the self-check station, or to help with any other questions you may have.

The library is located at 17 N. Broadway and is currently open to the public Monday to Thursdays 9:30 a.m.-7 p.m. and Friday and Saturdays 9:30 a.m.-5 p.m. As always, we look forward to seeing you in the library soon!