

# PLP Data Privacy Best Practices Toolkit for Libraries: A Guide for Managing and Protecting Patron Data

Gladys Joy G. Soretas  
College Librarian  
University of the Philippines Los Baños (UPLB)

## RESOURCE REVIEW

Pacific Library Partnership (2020). *Data privacy best practices toolkit for libraries: a guide for managing and protecting patron data*. <https://www.plpinfo.org/dataprivacytoolkit/>

Librarians have moral, professional, and legal obligations to secure and safeguard patron data (Cooper, 2016). In Article 4.2 of the Code of Ethics for Librarians in the Philippines (2006), it is stated that "Librarians shall keep in confidence, information acquired in the course of professional service. They shall protect the client's right to privacy with respect to information sought or received and materials consulted, borrowed, or acquired through the library" (p.2). The importance of data privacy in libraries has been given emphasis worldwide, and this is signified by the toolkit written and conceptualized by the member libraries of Pacific Library Partnership, a library cooperative system that aims to enhance the services of public and academic libraries serving various counties in the United States. This toolkit acts as a guide for librarians to protect patron information by providing detailed information on creating and maintaining patron privacy programs in the library.

The "Data Privacy Best Practices Toolkit for Libraries" contains both high-level and specific information about the development and maintenance of all areas of library privacy protection programs. It covers various topics, from the data lifecycle and managing vendor relationships to creating policies and procedures to protect patron privacy. It is also made available to other libraries who wish to develop or modify their data privacy programs.

The first section of this toolkit outlines why privacy is vital in libraries and underlines library clients' right to privacy. Moreover, the patron data lifecycle is

discussed thoroughly in Section 2 of this toolkit. The discussion begins by identifying where patron data is stored in the library, such as library systems, database backups, print management systems, server logs, and others. It recognizes and classifies library data into two categories: "data about a patron" and "data about a patron's activities in the library." This section also discusses the six stages of the patron data lifecycle, such as collection, storage, access, reporting, retention, and deletion, as well as the privacy risks and risk mitigation strategies for each stage. This section also introduces the idea of "privacy impact assessment," which provides a standardized method for identifying and assessing various types of patron privacy risks in data processing practices.

The next section of this toolkit covers how libraries may provide patrons with the tools and knowledge necessary to safeguard their privacy and stay informed about other privacy concerns. This section highlights library programs and services aimed to educate users about the importance of data privacy. Scenarios and situations are used to highlight that patron may have varied privacy concerns, emphasizing the importance of an open discussion with patrons, which has often been neglected. We tend to forget that each person is unique, and their demands differ. The toolkit includes information on how to speak with patrons regarding data privacy.

The toolkit's fourth section focuses on operationalizing privacy at the library. This section discusses how to approach privacy in all aspects of library operations and emphasizes the significance of privacy policies and notices. It discusses how to create data privacy policies and notices, policy standards, and best practices and emphasizes that privacy policies and notices must be aligned. Additionally, it includes instructions for developing an effective

library staff training program. As noted in the toolkit, “your library's privacy policies and procedures are only as effective as the person with the least amount of knowledge and experience with them,” (Pacific Library Partnership, 2020, p. 26) thus, developing a library staff training program relating to data privacy matters is essential.

The "Vendor Relationship Lifecycle", which includes selection, onboarding, maintenance, and separation, can assist in identifying and mitigating privacy issues in the library while working with the vendor, was comprehensively studied in Section 5 of this toolkit. Furthermore, presented at the end of this toolkit are the library privacy scholarship, professional standards, regulations, and some templates and examples that libraries can use to design their contract addendums, privacy policies, and privacy workshops.

Libraries obtain patron data as they provide the client's information and research needs. Technological advancements and this pandemic have had a profound impact on the services provided by libraries in the Philippines, particularly on how libraries manage patron data. If patron data is mishandled and misused, data breaches may occur. As stated in Article VII of the American Library Association's (ALA) Library Bill of Rights (2019), "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” (para. 8). While this ALA provision is not within the specific context of the Philippines, it is nevertheless imperative to be aware of and uphold data privacy practices in our local libraries.

While we strive to accommodate our clients' information needs, we should also secure and safeguard their data. Developing and implementing patron privacy programs and privacy policies in Philippine libraries are good strategies to protect and secure patron information. Some would express, "Easy to say, difficult to do!" So, how can Philippine libraries design and administer a patron privacy program if they are unsure of where and how to begin?

This toolkit could be one of the answers. With the increasing number of data breaches and privacy intrusions recorded globally, this toolkit is of great help to libraries in protecting patrons' data privacy rights. We can use this toolkit as a guide as we

continue to create or write a data privacy toolkit fully that is applicable to the social and professional contexts of Philippine libraries and librarianship, and compliant with the Data Privacy Act of 2012.

The toolkit is informative and concise. Concepts and ideas were discussed systematically. Moreover, this toolkit is visually engaging, with easy-to-read text and illustrations that capture the reader's attention and allow them to comprehend the context completely. Overall, this toolkit is an excellent resource and a great help to librarians who are developing or modifying their data privacy programs and seeking practical guidance on protecting patron privacy in their everyday work. It provides a comprehensive and extensive explanation about the development and maintenance of the Library Patron Privacy Program. Additionally, this toolkit included links to the examples of data privacy notices and policies, which librarians can use as a guide in drafting their own. The toolkit provides readers with an in-depth understanding of library data privacy.

Thus, this toolkit is true to its claim that it can be of great assistance in helping libraries located in different geographic areas in safeguarding patron data privacy by providing comprehensive information on developing and maintaining a patron privacy program for libraries.

#### **DECLARATION ON CONFLICTING INTERESTS**

The author declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

#### **DECLARATION ON SOURCES OF FUNDING**

The author received no financial support for this article's research, authorship, and publication.

#### **REFERENCES**

- American Library Association. (2019). *Library Bill of Rights*. <https://www.ala.org/advocacy/intfreedom/librarybill>
- Cooper, A. (2016). *Safeguarding what's personal: privacy and data protection perspectives of Library Association of Ireland members* [Master's dissertation, Dublin Business School]. DBS eSource. [https://esource.dbs.ie/bitstream/handle/10788/3050/msc\\_cooper\\_a\\_2016.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y](https://esource.dbs.ie/bitstream/handle/10788/3050/msc_cooper_a_2016.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y)



National Privacy Commission. (2012). *Republic Act 10173 – Data Privacy Act of 2012*. <https://www.privacy.gov.ph/data-privacy-act/>

Professional Regulation Commission. (2006). *Code of Ethics for Librarians*. <https://www.prc.gov.ph/uploaded/documents/BoardforLibrarians-CE.pdf>

### AUTHOR BIOGRAPHY

Ms. **Gladys Joy G. Soretet** is a dedicated professional librarian. She earned her degree in Bachelor of Library and Information Science from the Adventist University of the Philippines in 2017 and successfully passed the Librarian's Licensure Examination in the same year. Currently, she is advancing her expertise by pursuing a Master of Library and Information Science degree at the University of the Philippines - Diliman. Since she started her career at the University of the Philippines Los Baños (UPLB) in 2018, Ms. Soretet has been serving as a College Librarian with a specialization as a Librarian Cataloger. Her role extends beyond cataloging duties; she is an integral part of the university library community. Ms. Soretet frequently steps into roles such as host, emcee, and moderator for various university events, showcasing her vibrant presence and engagement within the community. She also serves as a lecturer in the library's InfoSkilled Program and Library Instruction Service.

Email: [ggsoretet@gmail.com](mailto:ggsoretet@gmail.com)

	<p>This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License.</p>
	<p>The PhJLIS is published by the School of Library and Information Studies, University of the Philippines Diliman. ISSN 2719-0471 (Online)</p>