OVERVIEW: Privacy is essential to the exercise of free speech, free thought, and free association. The right to privacy is the right to open inquiry without having the subject of one’s interest examined or scrutinized by others. Confidentiality exists when a library in possession of personally identifiable information about patrons and keeps that information private on their behalf. Patron rights (as well as the VDOT Research Library’s responsibilities) outlined here are based in part on what are known as the five "Fair Information Practice Principles." These five principles outline the rights of Notice, Choice, Access, Security, and Enforcement. The VDOT Research Library’s commitment to patron privacy and confidentiality has roots not only in law but also in the ethics and practices of librarianship. In accordance with the American Library Association’s Code of Ethics: "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."

While the VDOT Research Library adheres to these five principles, Commonwealth of Virginia employees using library systems are reminded that all library privacy policies conform to Commonwealth of Virginia policies on information security. As outlined in ITRM Policy SEC519-00, which articulates a framework and practices for state Agencies to use in securing information and in implementing information security programs that reduce the risk to Commonwealth of Virginia information. Among other compliance measures, ITRM Policy SEC519-00 notes in section 2.3.1.2 that “Any use of COV information technology resources constitutes consent to monitoring activities that may be conducted whether or not a warning banner is displayed.”

Notice & Openness: The VDOT Research Library affirms that its patrons have the right of "notice"—to be informed about the policies governing the amount and retention of personally identifiable information, and about why that information is necessary for the provision of library services. We post publicly and acknowledge the privacy and information-gathering policies of this library. In all cases we avoid creating unnecessary records, we avoid retaining records not needed for the fulfillment of the mission of the library, and we do not engage in practices that might place exposure patron information to public or unauthorized view by others. Information the library may gather and retain about valid library users may include the following:

- User Registration Information
- Circulation Information
- Electronic Access Information
- User questions and library responses

Choice & Consent: The library does not collect or retain private and personally identifiable information without consent. Furthermore, if a patron consents to give us personally identifiable information, we will keep it confidential and will not sell, license or disclose that information to any third party without the patron’s consent, unless we are compelled to do so under the law or in order to comply with a court order.

The library must obtain certain information about patrons in order to provide them with a library account and confer borrowing and access privileges, as well as verifying the patron’s status as a VDOT employee. When visiting the library’s Web site and using electronic services, patrons may choose to provide such details as: name, VDOT e-mail address, VDOT phone number or VDOT work address.

The library will never use or share personally identifiable information provided to us in ways unrelated to the ones described above without also providing the patron an opportunity to prohibit such unrelated uses, unless we are compelled to do so under the law or to comply with a court order.

Access by Users: Patrons who use library services that require the function and process of personally identifiable information are entitled to view and/or update their information. Patrons may either view or update their personal information online or in person. In both instances, patrons may be asked to provide identity verification such as a VDOT employee number or VDOT identification card to ensure they are authorized users.
Data Integrity & Security: Data Integrity: Data the library collects and maintains must be accurate and secure. We take reasonable steps to assure data integrity, including: using only reputable sources of data; providing users access to their own personally identifiable data; updating data when possible on an ongoing basis; utilizing middleware authentication systems that authorize use without requiring personally identifiable information; destroying untimely data or converting it to an anonymous form.

Data Retention: The library protects personally identifiable information from unauthorized disclosure once it is no longer needed to manage library services. Information that should be regularly purged or destroyed includes personally identifiable information on library resource use, access logs and material circulation history.

Tracking Users: The library removes links between patron records and materials borrowed when items are returned and we delete records as soon as the original purpose for data collection has been satisfied. The library permits in-house access to information in all formats without creating a data trail. The library does not ask visitors or Web site users to identify themselves or reveal any personal information unless they seek to borrow materials, request library services, or request remote access to subscription resources from outside the library from portions of the Library's Web site restricted to registered borrowers under license agreements or other special arrangements. The library discourages users from choosing passwords or PINs that could reveal their identity.

Third Party Security: The library ensures that its contracts, licenses, and offsite computer service arrangements reflect library policies and legal obligations concerning user privacy and confidentiality. Should a third party require access to our users' personally identifiable information, our agreements address appropriate restrictions on the use, aggregation, dissemination, and sale of that information. When connecting to licensed databases outside the library, the library releases only information that authenticates users as "authorized library users."

Library staff access to personal data: The library permits only authorized staff with assigned confidential passwords to access personal data stored in the Library's computer system and only for the purpose of performing library work. The library will not disclose any personal data collected from patrons to any other party except where required by law or to fulfill an individual user's service request. The Library does not sell or lease users' personal information to companies, universities, or individuals.

5. Enforcement & Redress: The library will not share data on individuals with third parties unless required by law. Library users who have questions, concerns, or complains about the library's handing of their privacy and confidentiality rights should file written comments with the manager of the library.

Only the director of research of the Virginia Transportation Research Council (VTRC), to which the library reports, is authorized to receive requests from law enforcement officers; the library will confer with VDOT's Policy Division before determining a proper response. The library will not make library records available to any agency of state, federal, or local government unless a subpoena, warrant, court order or other investigatory document is issued by a court of competent jurisdiction that shows good cause and is in proper form.

For questions relating to privacy, contact:

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