

Zoe E Bergmire-Sweat. Digital Privacy and Protection as it affects Youth Patrons in County Public Library Systems in NC. A Master's Paper Proposal for the M.S. in L.S degree. April, 2022. 52 pages. Advisor: Casey Rawson

Libraries frequently have free WIFI, public computers, printing, and now are relying on digital libraries to increase collection size and accessibility. They make available digital resources to decrease the digital divide. Adding resources to the management systems that coordinate information across multiple branches in a library, as well as housing identifying information required for library cards, and suddenly it becomes apparent how important digital security and privacy is on behalf of library systems.

Since policies happen at the system level, it's difficult for individual librarians to advocate for the recommended settings to be implemented if the administration is not fully supportive of the immediacy of such actions. Utilizing ALA guidelines, CIPA, COPPA, and NC Laws, this thesis project serves as a content analysis of 25 NC County Library systems. Through the content analysis, I make apparent basic actionable procedures libraries could implement to increase transparency alongside enhancing protection procedures.

Headings:

Young Adult Services Librarians

Digital Divide

Library Cooperation

Online Library Catalogs

Right of Privacy

Data Security Failures

Library Rules and Regulations

Public Access Computers in Libraries

DIGITAL PRIVACY AND PROTECTION AS IT AFFECTS YOUTH PATRONS IN
COUNTY PUBLIC LIBRARY SYSTEMS IN NC

by
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Introduction

The internet and the digital age are frequently touted as the future of libraries as “libraries are synonymous not only with knowledge and information, but with the tools needed to acquire it in the digital age” (Pew Research Center, 2014, para. 1). Databases have developed alongside apps, and new library management systems have formed since libraries first began adapting to the new digital age. However, with new technology comes new requirements for privacy and protection, not only of data, but also of library patrons. With libraries being some of the last places of public access computers with free Wi-Fi and affordable printing, patrons belonging to vulnerable populations are increasingly at risk when protection policies are not built responsibly around equitable use. Library policies have a responsibility to effectively protect patrons, especially those of vulnerable communities such as minors, since this is the age of increasing digital surveillance and tech data mining.

The American Library Association (ALA) has built a list of library checklists with priority actions listed 1-3 for each one (ALA, 2017a). Following is a summary of what each checklist entails as detailed on the ALA website. Priority 1 guidelines are “actions that hopefully all libraries can take to improve privacy practices. Priority 2 and Priority 3 actions may be more difficult for libraries to implement depending on their technical expertise, available resources, and organizational structure” (ALA, 2017b, para. 2). As

such, most of this content analysis focuses on priority 1 actions since proof would be shown in any public facing policies.

According to the ALA (2017b), general privacy policies should not only be public facing, but they should also address what information is stored by the library, the reason for information being traceable (mostly pertaining to library facility use such as locating a patron's account when they don't have their library card). The privacy policy should mention both analog security as well as digital security measures and there should be easily findable policies for how patrons will be notified should any breaches occur. The responsibility of the general library privacy policy is to protect users while utilizing digital resources on the library website and catalogs. With public facing policies, separate information educating patrons on which browsers to use, any plugins to put on their personal devices, and steps they can take to protect themselves while on an insecure network should be provided at the library. Since my project is focusing on county library systems, such protections can easily be formed by the library staff and county IT management employees.

Digital Content Privacy policies focus on the relationships between libraries and third-party vendors. Libraries are utilizing third party vendors like Libby/Overdrive and partnering with tech companies to develop interactive mobile apps for patron convenience. Some of the features on the app include having a scannable digital barcode, accessing patron accounts to track holds, and even checking out books to patrons.

The benefits of having multiple digital library databases/app partnerships include providing an increased availability for accessible texts which fit within library budgets. However, county library system employees should also understand the impact of such

services for patron privacy and protection. The ALA has a checklist that includes libraries sharing how patrons can manage personal privacy through listing recommended user settings and providing a contact for the vendors that patrons can reach out to with questions. Such partnerships should also follow standards provided by the National Institute of Standards and Technology,¹ and links to vendor privacy policies should be accessed from the library's own website. Such information is necessary when the digital access that is important for library functions is accessed just through patron library card numbers and pin numbers or passwords that are at risk of being used to find out identifiable information such as the patron's full name, potentially information regarding immediate family, individual address, phone number, email contact, birth date, etc. since that information is all stored in library databases.

Public Access Computer Privacy policies go beyond a library's internet use agreement (which includes an agreement to not change computer settings, and the understanding that files cannot be saved or added to the hard drive). As such, plugins that coincide with CIPA (the Child Internet Protection Act) are on all of the youth services computers if not every public access computer, which means privacy software and plugins and browsers (such as Tor) can be added to library computers alongside signage about recommended privacy settings to increase personal protections. Some ALA recommended plugins include CleanSlate and Deep Freeze which purge data after individuals have logged out from sessions. An analog protection that should be offered is privacy screens to prevent observation.

¹ <https://www.nist.gov/cybersecurity>

Library Management System (LMS) Privacy policies are challenging to observe as a patron, as such information about data protection mostly exists internally. However, LMS updates can include ways to “fuzz” information when possible, allowing libraries to move to more general information such as if a patron is of age or still a minor, instead of asking for their exact DOB (date of birth). It’s also important for libraries to look at what information is utilized for library functions, such as information accessible via hold requests, and what information might not be required for library card attainment in the future. Such policy procedures should also focus on how to handle law enforcement requests for records and other official requests, to prevent mishaps due to human error regarding breaches of data confidentiality.

It’s important to recognize that most of ALA’s guidelines are for students in public schools and aren’t necessarily applicable to student age youth in public libraries. However, a common addition to internet use agreement policies already mentioned on library websites (different from youth privacy policies) is adherence to CIPA. However, more guidelines that are also transferrable to youth services departments are having celebrations and information sessions pertaining to Choose Privacy Week, Data Privacy Day, and Tech Teen Week for teen and youth data advocacy and data protection awareness.

OPAC privacy statements refer to Online Public Access Catalogs and equivalent service discovery services. Such statements should have information on data privacy and security policies which address most of what library general privacy policies would address, except this pertains to catalog partnerships and online databases, which are

associated with the library but exist on other websites (which a general privacy policy would not be able to enforce protection on).

It is my understanding that until the baseline of meeting guidelines for data protection occurs, the adequacy of protection for patrons is lacking. To this end, and to address my research questions, I endeavored on a content analysis to see the state of policies as they currently exist as a roadmap for improvement in the future.

Literature Review

North Carolina And Public Library Discrimination History

As public facilities, the earliest public libraries in southern states excluded African Americans by law (Digital Public Library of America, n.d.). In fact, “the few public libraries in the South that did provide limited services to blacks often subjected them to experiences that were humiliating” (Eberhart, 2018, para. 2). Over 70 percent of public libraries in the Southeast were founded after 1919. Service to blacks was part of this expansion. A major factor giving impetus to the development of library service for blacks during the 1920s was the establishment of the Hampton Library School for the training of black librarians in 1925. Before the establishment of this school, there were only limited attempts to train blacks to work in libraries (Du Mont, 1986).

In the fall of 1963 black emotions were touched off in Wilmington when local activists attempted once more to desegregate the county library (Godwin, 2000). The Civil Rights Act of 1964 would specifically outlaw discrimination in public accommodations like public libraries (Digital Public Library of America, n.d.). Finally, the Voting Rights Act of 1965 gave African Americans power in their local governments and thus in their local public libraries (Granville County Library System, 2019).

During the Jim Crow-era, some southern towns had designated libraries for Black patrons, but with holdings that were often worn-out, outdated cast-offs from the main branches, Wayne explained. Other libraries had segregated entrances and reading rooms

for Black and white visitors. In yet other locations, no library services at all were available to people of color. African Americans who dared enter off-limits libraries were ignored or asked to leave. Occasionally the police were called to escort them out and some protestors were beaten and ended up in jail (Bains, 2018). By 1964 library protests in the South were largely at an end, and de jure desegregation had been achieved.

The American Library Association took four somewhat halting steps to aid desegregation: a 1936 decision to boycott potential convention cities where facilities were segregated; refusal to deal with segregated state library associations; amendment of the Library Bill of Rights to condemn limitations on library use based on race; and the 1962 commission of an "Access Study" of black citizens' access to public libraries. The most important factor in securing desegregation of southern libraries was the skillful use of protests by groups such as the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) and relatively quick action by white business leaders in each city, aimed at ending the protests (by ending segregation) and thus salvaging the community's reputation as a calm and prosperous place for investment (Cresswell, 1996).

However, it's safe to recognize that the end of segregation did not mean that the end of barriers to access and equity for communities through using the public library were suddenly fixed. There are multiple facets of library institution discrimination. This section will address the built-in issues with the Dewey decimal system, library of congress subject headings, and impacts of library fining policies.

Dewey is in many ways an outdated mess. Racist and sexist, it classifies "women's work" separately from jobs, and African American culture separately from American culture. It puts the "working animals," such as cows, sheep, and horses, in an

entirely separate category from animals including lions and tigers, a distinction that may have made sense at the turn of the century but is unhelpful at best today. One could Dewey-classify fiction but not graphic novels. Diseases are separate from their cures. Boats are found hundreds of decimals away from the sinking of the Titanic (Marrocolla, 2019). It's no secret that Melvil Dewey was a racist. Even for the late 1800s and early 1900s, he held shockingly prejudiced views (Gooding-Call, 2021).

Dewey's eponymous classification system was a ringing indictment of his narrow philosophy. The 200 section of the Dewey decimal system covers religion, and 70% of it explicitly deals with Christianity. In the same way, all the catalog is tacitly white unless explicitly otherwise. Originally, the only Dewey space for people of color fell into the slavery and colonization categories. Diversity was the other to this cataloging system, and its inclusion as a topic at all is a compensation that later librarians have had to make. Howard University librarian and multi-linguist Dorothy Porter was one of the foremost of these innovators. Decolonizing libraries was her life's work (Gooding-Call, 2021).

Suppose a librarian receives an email from a man named Greg Walsh, wanting to become a cardholder, and politely asking what he needs to do to make this happen (e.g., does he need proof of address?) or simply inquiring about the open hours. Would the librarian reply? And, if so, would the reply be polite, including for instance some form of salutation, such as "Hello" or "Good morning"? Does your answer change if the guy is called Tyrone Washington? Is a librarian treating Jake Mueller differently from DeShawn Jackson? Unfortunately, it turns out, the answer is yes (Tonin, 2018).

Library fines are a great example of one of these barriers. When staff members are empowered to waive or reduce fines for patrons, a practice that is considered good

customer service, their own implicit biases come into play. When libraries rely on revenue from fines, they may end up blocking patrons' accounts or worse, referring them to a collection agency. This is a perfect example of unequal access for all (Shea, 2020).

For many years, the Library of Congress categorized many of its books under a controversial subject heading: "Illegal aliens." But then, on March 22, 2016, the library made a momentous decision, announcing that it was canceling the subject heading "Illegal aliens" in favor of "Noncitizens" and "Unauthorized immigration." However, the decision was overturned a few months later, when the House of Representatives ordered the library to continue using the term "illegal alien." They said they decided this to duplicate the language of federal laws written by Congress. This was the first time Congress ever intervened over a Library of Congress subject heading change.

Even though many librarians and the American Library Association opposed Congress's decision, "Illegal aliens" remains the authorized subject heading today (Ros, 2019). However, it is important to recognize American libraries have discriminated towards other populations and communities that have not been focused on in this brief literature review, including indigenous communities and non-English dominant communities.

Public Libraries Innovation

However, that history does not translate to how libraries are across the board today, especially public libraries. In fact, many libraries are experiencing a wave of

innovation, activism, community engagement in such a tour de force that hasn't been seen in the field in the past. One example is Chicago's Maker Lab:

The Maker Lab launched in July 2013 as a six-month experiment to explore the role of the library in makerspaces, community-operated workspaces where people come together to learn, create, and collaborate. Due to the overwhelmingly positive community response, we chose to keep the Maker Lab open and continue to offer exciting new workshops. In 2013, CPL received the Social Innovator Award from Chicago Innovation Awards, which recognizes the most innovative new products or services brought to market or to public service each year, for the Maker Lab's accomplishments in enabling new forms of personal manufacturing and business opportunities. (Chicago Public Library, n.d., "About the Maker Lab").

Chicago doesn't exist in a bubble, in fact, the director for the Memphis public library, Keenon McCloy, "toured the Harold Washington Library Center, where a 5,500-square-foot facility called YOUmedia opened in 2009. It was the first dedicated teen learning center in an American library, and it had a maker space and an in-house production studio to record teenage musicians. 'That's where I got the idea for Cloud901,' says McCloy. 'People kept saying the biggest problem at the Central library was all the teens hanging around, and I thought, well, they're in our library, let's find a way to redirect their energy'" (Grant, 2021, para. 10). It was not a quick project she took on, but it paid off, and now Memphis public library is recognized as the most innovative public library in the US.

Additionally, there's a growth and awareness within public library systems about systems and infrastructures based on the history of inequity and inequality. One such program is library fines; "But a growing number of some of the country's biggest public library systems are ditching overdue fees after finding that the penalties drive away the people who stand to benefit the most from free library resources" (Bowman, 2019, para. 6). Fines in practice disproportionately punish users from low-income backgrounds.

“Acknowledging these consequences, the American Library Association passed a resolution in January in which it recognizes fines as ‘a form of social inequity’ and calls on libraries nationwide to find a way to eliminate their fines” (Bowman, 2019, para. 8).

New discourse that is not new, has started to extensively make its round through the LIS field about the need and lack thereof for security guards and police officers in public libraries. There is a growing awareness that public spaces are being commercialized for patron consumption, thus increasing use of private security companies. A large issue is that the company policing practices have shifted to handle perceived threats. Perceived threats include individuals who are homeless, mentally ill, poor, visibly non-white and excluding those individuals without cause has become the norm in maintaining a sense of safety for other community members. (Robinson, 2019).

The reach of this discourse has entered youth activism spaces, an organization, Safe LAPL found that 5% of the library budget went towards the LAPD in 2020, Austin Public Library is allocated 3.2% of its budget to security in 2021, and Denver Public Library allocated around .5% of its budget to security in 2019. “So, while L.A. taxpayer money was being spent on books and library resources, a generous amount of the operating budget was also going towards staffing facilities with police officers and security officers under contracts managed by the LAPD” (Fassler & Ventura 2021, para. 3).

While this topic has limited examples of success stories, the fact that this conversation is happening as widely as it is, is innovative through existing. “In an ideal world, abolitionists argue, libraries would be supported by specialists in de-escalation and trauma-informed care, leaving librarians to their jobs” (Fassler & Ventura, 2021, para.

11). “Seizing on this moment, "abolitionist" librarians sought to articulate a concrete proposal with teeth. The Library Freedom Project (LFP), a national privacy-focused organization that provides trainings and resources to librarians, published a proposal in June arguing that ‘police and their surveillance technologies do not belong in libraries’ because "they inhibit our ability to promote our values of intellectual freedom, privacy, and access" (Christian, 2020, para. 20).

And, libraries and librarians can be subversive in other ways, through displays, managing bulletin boards, and creating libguides that are easy to access by patrons. An example is “‘Wherever There’s a Fight’... a great (cheap) traveling exhibit for California libraries based on a book by Stan Yogi and Elaine Ellison, *Wherever There’s a Fight: How Runaway Slaves, Suffragists, Immigrants, Strikers, and Poets Shaped Civil Liberties in California*” (Jensen, 2017).

The relevance of how much of a library system’s budget goes into policy enforcement should be recognized. If library budgets are including third party security enforcement, there should also be public facing policies for when librarians and patrons are interacting with law enforcement. It should be common and public knowledge on the steps to take when requests for records or requests for personal information is requested; meaning anyone in the library should be able to follow the chain of command and have the required documentation for such a request to be lawfully followed.

Vocational Awe And Why Public Library Institutions Are Slow To Change

Now that we understand how libraries are actively engaging with their discriminatory history, and we know libraries are actively moving away from that legacy, we need to talk about the other elephant in the room. Vocational Awe. Coined by Fobazi

Ettarh “Vocational awe describes the set of ideas, values, and assumptions librarians have about themselves and the profession that result in notions that libraries as institutions are inherently good, sacred notions, and therefore beyond critique. I argue that the concept of vocational awe directly correlates to problems within librarianship like burnout and low salary” (Ettarh, 2018, para. 1).

Unfortunately, the public response and demands of the public, increased the relevance of vocational awe during the pandemic that is ongoing:

Not only should we be asking what constitutes a fair burden to place on library staff- but whether the very fact that public libraries provide access to limited resources allows us to make excuses for the fact that so many in our society struggle with underclass status- without access to wireless and internet services, without access to emergency shelter. When it comes to serious widespread issues such as poverty and homelessness, offering public libraries as the panacea can seem like siphoning up the ocean with an eyedropper. (LaPierre, 2020, para 9).

The burden of such vocational awe expectations on incoming librarians in the field is exponential, librarians want to do their jobs and want to be viewed as excellent at them, whether when interacting with patrons or when providing additional services (Ettarh, 2021). Such expectations extend into policy understandings as well. Librarians are simultaneously encouraged to work in systems that hold their values, then improve said systems while working there, or they are encouraged to improve library systems that don't currently recognize those values in existing policies. This ties into policy formation, and administrative work, which is frequently above the job descriptions of new and incoming early career librarians.

This pattern increases burnout and also increases the amount of resilience narratives (Berg et al. 2018; Galvan et al., 2018) by expecting library branch workers to change systemic and administrative levels of authority. Being expected to advocate for

change, understand the patrons, and maintain the current levels of functions within a library is challenging for anyone. “Often, the most precariously positioned workers are members of traditionally marginalized groups, including women and Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC)” (Kendrick, 2021). Librarians are therefore expected to juggle additional job duties that weren’t listed on job applications, and encouraged to make do, which increase levels of burnout and turn the resilience narratives into those of survival.

Data Doubles: Data Protection And Patron Data Security Projects

It is imperative that librarians, and everyone engaging with libraries, understands their data, knows how infrastructures and institutions have capitalized on learning analytics (LA) to improve user experience, and knows what their rights are. Learning Analytics involves measuring, collecting and analyzing users’ data “for purposes of understanding and optimizing learning and the environments in which it occurs” (Siemens, 2012 pg 4). LA originated as a practice on campuses and universities but has gained public library interest as research involving LA has shown how to improve user experience in public places (Jones et al. pg 571, 2020).

While assessment and research are valid, valued, and important, the push towards learning analytics or LA is dangerous when not critically analyzed, the support of LA shows:

This argument moves beyond the documentation and assessment of library efforts to combining library data with identifiable student data from other sources to seek potential correlative trends. OCLC’s research with higher education administrators signaled that there is an ever-increasing interest in gathering identifiable student data. (Jones et al. pg 574, 2020)

Though this research critically thinking about LA takes place in academic libraries, the risk in public libraries is that patron data is being collected for no clear purpose. Patrons are easily identifiable should a security breach expose patron data. Recognizing what the study uncovered, and desiring to preserve institutional trust, the ALA recommends that patrons must always have to choose to opt-in to services in which data mining might occur. This means that services are offered but opting out is the default setting on library technologies.

Institutions must balance their desire to implement LA with their obligation to educate students about their analytic practices and treat them as partners in the design of analytic strategies reliant on student data in order to protect their intellectual privacy. (Jones et al. 2020)

This is especially relevant when utilizing OPACs and Digital/Downloadable libraries in which third party companies or vendors are contracted with the library. Developing contracts with private companies can be tricky, and most libraries have only gone as far as to mention that policies of said vendors can be different than those of the library, and as such, the self-education is placed on the patron to either care enough to advocate for themselves, or to trust in the institution, no matter what information the vendors might be using for their own purposes.

Digital economy trends have moved towards data mining the habits of online readers and researchers for an expanding array of purposes using methods that are difficult to trace, and government interest in surveillance of online activity has been revealed. (Klinefelter, 2016).

However, libraries are also becoming aware that algorithms as an infrastructure are also influencing bias and potential risk to patrons who utilize library services. Auraria library spoke on the issue, designing a survey to catch algorithmic bias in the systems and

the parental systems of those utilized by the library. It's a good place to start when addressing algorithmic issues but not the best when talking about user privacy in the digital sphere (Auraria Library, 2020; Browning & Brett, 2021).

And then there's how doubly marginalized communities are protected even less with digital privacy. Specifically, the prison population. On Overdrive's site Cindy McLaughlin says, "Ours is a unique case, as we require both technical security – our users are not allowed to access the main OverDrive website, social media, or any other external website – and a curated book list that's both engaging to inmates, and non-threatening to our facility clients" (OverDrive, 2015, "Describe how your set up process..."). And later mentions that "The Indiana State Department of Corrections uses NCL in a juvenile girls' maximum-security prison. We've watched the girls checking out titles steadily, and increasingly, while violence in the facility has gone down substantially since our solution has been implemented" (OverDrive, 2015, "Any specific examples..."). Surveillance is heightened in a prison, jail, incarceration setting; so, there's minimal information on what exactly is being watched, censored, and what data on the inmates themselves is identifiable.

When resources are provided touting to bridge the digital divide, increase access to library materials, and promote community literacy, and yet there is no information about how individuals' profile information will be used, either for circulation or traffic reporting, or to identify user patterns, with a promise of anonymity or encryption, individuals aren't aware of, or aren't provided the ability to opt-out of their data being used. Additionally, the ALA recognizes in their provided checklists the importance of an opt-in resource management system.

When individuals by default are suggested to opt-in to services or resources, they are made aware of how their data might be used, and what information will be collected, instead of having a lack of awareness equating to lack of protection or lack of privacy. Integrating an opt-in approach increases informed consent as a norm in public-accessed resources.

Increasing protection on public access computers in the library can be as simple as integrating a Tor browser into available browsing options for patrons. Tor is an anonymity network browser available for download, the project's mission is focused on "deploying free and open-source anonymity and privacy technologies" (The Tor Project, n.d.) and there are options for mobile devices as well. I learned about this browser while going through the ALA checklists for this project. When libraries take an extra step to educate patrons by spotlighting such technologies, with staff-offered privacy and protection programs, as well as analog signs explaining the benefits and instructions on how to use such browsers or additional plugins, the community becomes empowered and informed properly.

Library Management Systems are frequently not thought of, since very few people have authorized access, and even fewer have authorization to access any information stored. However, having measures and policies in place explaining the purpose of storing or accessing certain identifiable information can also show which information is not needed to be stored by the management system.

Additionally, when library management systems have procedures in place for staff to follow should unauthorized individuals request information, it prevents human error from unintentionally doing harm by breaking laws or by harming vulnerable

community members. When law enforcement procedures are listed in policies the public can access, it lays out the chain of command, and reassures individuals that such requests for information need to lawfully be proven or justified for such records to be released. Front facing policies that outline procedures also allow for a check and balance system, where any breaches of procedures can be held accountable by community members.

When library policies can grow to accommodate OPAC and Discovery systems, even as the world becomes more connected digitally, encrypting and holding onto records before purging them across systems that access the same catalog increase trust on behalf of patrons who rely on such resources for access.

Understanding that the missions and strategic plans of libraries are to uphold the communities they serve, providing access and resources for free, connecting with the community through outreach and programs, and continuing the pursuit of literacy across groups, library policies are necessary to line up with, support, and enforce such intent. By having these guidelines for privacy and patron protection met, an increased sense of trust and agency is built between user and library systems. It has become apparent that libraries have leagues of improvement before such equitable practices are recognized.

When DEI Falls Short: The Unpaid Labor Of DEI Work

ShinJoung Yeo and James R. Jacobs (2006) state that “diversity means little if there is no understanding of how the dominant culture and ideas are articulated within our institutions and our daily library practices” (p. 5). “Nevertheless, these efforts are not making any meaningful difference. As one of my colleagues has so accurately put it:

“We’re bringing [people] from underrepresented identity groups into the profession at same rate they’re leaving. Attrition [is] a problem” (Vinopal, 2016).

With minority librarians leaving the profession as soon as they are recruited, what can be done to render our abundance of diversity initiatives truly effective? Why are these ambitious and numerous initiatives failing to have the desired effect? (Hathcock, 2015). Later, Ione and Todd discuss the underlying issues.

But I find these market-driven motivations for promoting diversity to be very superficial and highly problematic...including increased privatization,[and] a shrinking public sphere...Failure to think about how diverse communities have been and continue to be impacted by such trends, and along with it the perpetuation of the implicit race and class privileges, will only lead to the further homogenization and privatization of places, practices, and services. (Why Diversity Matters, 2015)

Additionally, there’s a large problem with continued tokenism and diversity hires. Multilingualism is increasingly desired on job applications, but those who can claim fluency can feel boxed in on requests to only focus on outreach with previously excluded communities. Someone who speaks both English and Spanish in a monolingually English workplace, who is not hired for the specific jobs of translation, is at risk of being turned into an in-house translator, even if they don’t want to focus on translation. In a field such as library science, with the pressure to ethnically and lingually diversify the workplace, library workers are put in similar situations as previously mentioned. Such tension creates a “conflict between promoting the value of EDI and the implementation of these values in their organizations” (pg 27). Furthermore, privileged colleagues are once again at the whim of vocational awe, being forced to advocate for themselves for dismantling existing systems. This extra effort might not be rewarded and so coworkers

show “reluctance to recognize their White privilege or dismantle the systems that protect and promote such privilege” (The Public Librarian Low-Morale Experience: A Qualitative Study | Partnership: The Canadian Journal of Library and Information Practice and Research, n.d.).

As previous examples in other fights for equity, diversity, and inclusion have shown, one person can not do it all. The reality of the profession as it currently stands, is that it is predominantly white and predominantly female, and if administration is not pushing certain policy changes, then the burden for advocacy falls on the shoulders of those least protected by the institution and most influenced by inaction. And yet, some in administration can also claim they weren’t pushing EDI because there wasn’t feedback that it was necessary. This finger pointing only serves to delay necessary change.

Ultimately, reducing implicit bias is a job for all librarians because it exists in all parts of librarianship. It is there when we:

- teach patrons in formal sessions and through reference interviews
- catalog materials and design search algorithms
- choose what materials to promote
- recruit and hire new librarians and make decisions about tenure and promotion. (“Mitigating Implicit Bias” 2021)

Additionally, the culture of LIS is to not bring up any uncomfortable topics or discussions. There is a “dynamic already well known to people from marginalized groups: individuals from the dominant group have a tendency not to perceive (or to ignore) acts of subtle discrimination by members of their own group against individuals from marginalized groups. Thus there is little incentive to report such experiences to the very members of that dominant group with the potential power to do something about it” (The Quest for Diversity in Library Staffing, 2016).

So what can be done now? The goal with this thesis project and report will be to discuss best practices in increasing digital protection of patrons and library staff alike, producing a test blueprint of what data is relevant and helpful and what data libraries do not need to collect due to the fact it is either unethical or unusable. I will look to existing best practices from ALA and YALSA regarding advocacy and privacy regarding youth services and see what needs to be improved for the future of libraries to continue thriving.

Further Research Hypotheses

Is there a way for public libraries to protect personal data information of patrons who are minors that are utilizing the services of 3rd party vendors?

Yes, the ALA guideline checklist specifies that when libraries contract with 3rd party vendors, they should hold the vendors to the library privacy standards, not the other way around. The library systems should also operate on an opt-in standard instead of an opt-out standard for information use and data sharing. Another mode of protection for the protection of minors is to use “fuzz” data to specify whether a patron is considered a minor or not a minor if that information is accessible on the vendor’s side.

Library policies that specify what information about youth patrons is shared is an unofficial recommended step that Mecklenburg took; clearly stating how youth will be announced or credited should the library take any images at programs or announce contest winners. As such, they specify that no identifiable information is shared publicly.

With the face of public libraries and youth services being rebranded as a safe community space for diverse, vulnerable populations, how can the current policies be revised to assist youth in managing, understanding, and using their data their way?

Current library policies can add and be revised to include subsections on COPPA and CIPA (specifying what those laws are and how they impact library information storage and sharing).

In addition, adding privacy related resources to library collections including privacy plugins and browsers for children to utilize or implement on public computers while adding programs to celebrate Choose Privacy Week, Data Privacy Day, and Teen Tech Week will assist in youth agency regarding their own data.

How can policies and procedures in assessing impact, relevancy, and accuracy of youth services programs change so that libraries don't collect unnecessary data on the community? Libraries should clearly state in privacy policies what information is collected and justify why said information is relevant to library operations. That way the library proactively is avoiding storing and risking additional data from being breached and accessed by unauthorized individuals. Also, such data should be locked so that only authorized users, such as department managers or event managers should be able to see the unencrypted data. Or libraries can avoid having access to unencrypted community data by having cybersecurity procedures in place to remove any identifiable data.

How can the work in improving patron and community protections be accomplished without the burden of othering or burdening librarians of said communities? Library systems can easily access and follow the ALA checklists that were accessed as the backbone for this thesis project and complete all steps before reaching out to community for feedback. The most important step is having policies and procedures in place easily findable for employees and patrons to access, alongside staff training – particularly with law enforcement records request procedures.

How can those who are from vulnerable populations who are connected and invested in improving/increasing access also have protection/privacy of themselves be prioritized in institutional policy? Libraries should have trainings that understand which information is more identifiable regarding certain demographics. All policies should be available in a language that patrons should be able to understand, meaning accurate translations should be provided for users. Demographic data that is not being used for a specific purpose of library functions should not be stored by library systems, and library management systems should be updated to allow “fuzz” information to be used instead of specifics, such as not requiring date of birth to determine if a user is a minor or not. Libraries could also just ask for zip code information instead of street address for proof of county residency.

On public access computers, in addition to setting computers to purge records after patron sign-outs, library computers should have Tor browsers available for patrons to use. Library programs regarding personal privacy and protection practices should be offered alongside tutoring and resume building.

Research Questions and Hypotheses

In this thesis I plan to focus on one question, given the current state of digital patron privacy and security: Can existing library Services, Policies, Procedures in public libraries in the state of North Carolina protect youth communities from inadvertent harm?

My hypothesis is that library policies and procedures can be updated to at least the minimum requirements outlined by the ALA checklists as Priority 1 actions as a starting point for increasing privacy and protection for minor patrons. I also hypothesized that the county population density impacted the level that libraries could meet the existing checklists for privacy and security outlined on the ALAs website. Further, such compliance relies on staffing resources, budget, and current use of digital resources utilized by patrons. As such it is my premeditated conclusion that rural county systems would have met less of the library checklists than other county library systems. Using this logic will mean that urban counties have met most of the checklist requirements as outlined by the ALA.

Methodology

I looked to county library systems in the state of North Carolina, in which there are 100 counties. Using census total population in a county and world population for population density, I organized the counties into sections/strata of urban, suburban, and rural. Using that total percentage number, I was able to create a close equivalent sample size of 25 total counties with a similar percentage breakdown between urban, suburban, and rural to the state. My rationale for doing a content text analysis of public facing policies was based on time constraints, as such, further research projects would look towards a larger sample size and a methodology that utilized more of a mixed methods approach. My content analysis methodology did not involve any human interaction in the form of surveys or interviews, so internal documents were not provided to me.

I also looked to existing laws regarding library data use in NC, and ALA and YALSA checklists for libraries and youth departments. Being mindful that the most frequently verifiable checklist items were the priority 1 items, my content analysis focused on how many public facing documents within the sample met the checklist items. I also only looked to library websites, I did not analyze mobile sites or mobile library apps.

I used NC general statutes chapter 125 (General Statute Sections - North Carolina General Assembly) to specify what a library was and what a library record was to clarify difference between confidentiality of library records.

“1) “Library” means a library established by the State; a county, city, township, village, school district, or other local unit of government or authority or combination of local units of governments and authorities; community college or university; or any private library open to the public.” (Article 3)

(2) “Library record” means a document, record, or other method of storing information retained by a library that identifies a person as having requested or obtained specific information or materials from a library.

“Library record” does not include nonidentifying material that may be retained for the purpose of studying or evaluating the circulation of library materials in general.”

(a) Disclosure. --A library shall not disclose any library record that identifies a person as having requested or obtained specific materials, information, or services, or as otherwise having used the library, except as provided for in subsection (b).

(b) Exceptions. --Library records may be disclosed in the following instances:

(1) When necessary for the reasonable operation of the library.

(2) Upon written consent of the user; or

(3) Pursuant to subpoena, court order, or where otherwise required by law.” (§ 125-19)

Positionality / Researcher Role

My role in this project was of sole analyzer. I am a youth services focused public librarian. Interacting with and supporting vulnerable populations is something that my job requires me to do as someone who is interested in becoming an employee of a county library system. My job prospects influenced my interest in pursuing this topic, even knowing that policy production would not fall in my job description as a youth services librarian and not a library manager or administrator.

I believe that citizens who utilize a free public resource intended to serve the community deserve to be strongly protected while interacting with the service. I assume that while most patrons will not be knowledgeable about how their information is or is not protected by the library, the library still has a responsibility to do all it can to protect the privacy and agency of community members of all ages.

Sample / Research Participants

I determined that a total sample size of 25 counties would allow me to collect an appropriate and feasible amount of data to answer my research questions. After using the latest 2020 census data, and county population density information, I stratified the 100 counties in NC into three categories: rural, suburban, and urban settings. A total of 77 of the 100 counties were classified as rural, which I synthesized to three quarters of the counties. To attempt to create a sample that is representative of the state, I systematically

selected 18 rural counties (spread across the population range within that category equally) 4 suburban counties, and 3 urban counties. See Table 1 below.

Table 1: Selected Sample Counties

County System	Population Stratification
Hyde	Lower Rural
Tyrrell	Lower Rural
Washington	Lower Rural
Beaufort	Lower Rural
Macon	Lower Rural
Dare	Lower Rural
Alexander	Middle Rural
Lenoir	Middle Rural
Chatham	Middle Rural
Hoke	Middle Rural
McDowell	Middle Rural
Haywood	Middle Rural
Harnett	Upper Rural
Wayne	Upper Rural
Wilson	Upper Rural
Cleveland	Upper Rural
Brunswick	Upper Rural
Randolph	Upper Rural
Gaston	Suburban
Lee	Suburban
Orange	Suburban
Iredell	Suburban
Guilford	Urban
New Hanover	Urban
Mecklenburg	Urban

The benefits of using census data and then population density data meant that the 100 counties in North Carolina could be separated according to naturally occurring distinct gaps in population. Another benefit of utilizing a state with 100 counties is it was easy to break down sample sizes that were manageable. Limitations of the sampling method meant that there was very little that could be done to anonymize the sample size as I was creating all the stratification criteria. While this sampling strata could be

replicable in other states or regions, it would be difficult to easily stratify urban, suburban, and rural designations on a nationwide scale.

Data Collection Methods

In collecting the data for this project, I went through each checklist provided by the ALA, starting with General Privacy, Digital Content Privacy, Public Access Computer Privacy, Library Management Systems Privacy, Student Privacy, and ending at OPAC Service Privacy. From each library system's website, I would first locate the policies, and then read to see if any of the existing policies met the checklist sections before counting how many of the actionable items were met.

Benefits of using the checklists as the base standard to critique the policies meant there was a standard scale to rank policies against. A stark limitation of such a process is that there is no standard policy format, link to follow, or language that every library system follows. As such, there was not a specific place to look or a specific phrase to notice in public facing documents, which garnered the data collected, subject to word choice and implied intentions behind documents.

Data Analysis Methods

I searched through the library websites of selected counties to look for any policies, long or short form that would answer the questions regarding patron use, security, and privacy/protection. Most of these policies were located from the home page, under an About Us tab, where Library Policies could be clicked on. If some policies weren't located there, they could also be located under Resources or Internet Use.

I also looked to the ALA guidelines for privacy, children, and vendors, OPACs, public access computers, websites, and library management systems. Even though ALA

guidelines are not enforceable, they are used as a benchmark for standards to meet before addressing further data protection procedures for the purpose of this analysis.

Not all actionable items on the checklist were able to be verified during this process, so I stuck to coding items that the public could find out on their own as a patron instead of as an internal staff member. The full checklists are available on the ALA website.

Research Quality and Ethical Considerations

The credibility of this research is informed by the proximity of population data to the National Census. However, any population informed data analysis is subject to population migration, especially around large city centers. It is also important to note that with some library systems of over 20 branches in a county, one library could be considered a different stratum than another in a same library system through city population density data.

This research project is tied intrinsically to the location of libraries and community members, the strata and the sample size was organized specifically around the state composition of North Carolina and the counties that reside within the city boundaries. The project can work for independent and municipal library systems as well.

As such, the strata could easily be transferred to larger scale or smaller scale for further research. However, the minutia of specific numerical values per strata will need to be altered for the purposes of research generalizability.

The reliance on public facing documents as the source of data collection and analysis makes the research easy to confirm. By design, the reliance on public facing documents inherently affects how many people can verify the documents. The fact that the sample size is regarding library systems tied to county governments, makes it so anyone with a phone or laptop can access the same public facing documents. Further

research into the existence of internal policy documents would make it possible to validate the conclusion to this stage of the research.

It is my belief that the focus on policy documents increases the observance of objectivity in the research. Increased objectivity can be achieved in further research installments should policies be developed to include standard location and phrasings of digital public facing policies.

Ethical considerations will be necessary to consider in any further research, as the project will continue with more direct interaction with library administrations inquiring about the adequacy of existing policies, requesting information about internal policies, and inquiring about any plans to update library policies. As this stage of the research did not directly interact with individuals, only requiring that websites were visited, the only ethical considerations would be if any personal information regarding residents within library systems is at risk due to information shared about the current limitations of digital protections.

Results and Discussion

Overall Findings

Of the 25 library systems in my sample, 24% of libraries have a general privacy statement that is available to the public. None have publicly available policies in place for third party vendors, and only 12% have policy procedures for record requests through laws and law enforcement. Beyond acknowledging CIPA, only 1 out of the 25 provided resources for youth to learn about and protect their own data. There were no mentions of privacy policies regarding data privacy and patron security on OPACs. By all accounts, the state is failing to protect patron privacy rights.

Content Analysis Highlights

In summary, for Urban Library Systems, within the sample, all three of the libraries had general privacy policies, but only one had a policy in place regarding law enforcement requests for records, and none of the systems had policies regarding third party vendors, though all of them utilized third party vendor use as a resource that was accessible by library card. In the same vein, none had publicly available policies regarding OPACs despite having access to NCWise, NC Cardinal, and others. One of the urban library systems did have resources available for children to learn about the importance of personal data protections, with links to educational resources and plugins to explore.

Only one (out of four) of the suburban library systems had a public facing privacy policy. As such, none had LMS privacy policies regarding law enforcement requests for records, though, all of them had internet privacy policies that mentioned CIPA. Again, none had policies for third party vendors, though again they all used vendors as a resource. None of the suburban systems I explored provided additional resources for child data protection, and none had a policy regarding the use of OPACs. Only two of the eighteen of the rural library systems even had a public facing privacy policy. The content of these policies is discussed in more detail below.

Looking at this information, the digital divide, library budgets, and community use heavily influence information on library websites. All of which are resources necessary for libraries to be successful. When library budgets, determined at the county government level don't adequately provide staffing coverage (such as being able to hire an expansive IT department), cost of digital upkeep, and knowledge to break down the digital divide, then library patrons might not rely on the digital interface for adequate information. As such, it is important to note that such resources could be provided in analog format at library branch locations in the rural counties.

Urban

For Urban Library System 1 (Mecklenburg) regarding their general privacy policy, they had a privacy policy that was public facing which included information about what information is gathered, and why, but did not have information about how long the information is kept. They did mention which conditions had to be met for any information to be shared. There was no mention of paper record usage. For the policy links, they used HTTPS and mentioned the use of SSL. There was no mention of a

process to address breaches, including the fact that users should be notified. If any policy exists for periodic purges of information, it is not public facing and was therefore not coded for. They did mention sources containing information on how to protect one's own data as a patron.

There was no policy regarding the privacy policies for digital content such as third party vendors though they did mention that they used other vendors that had to follow the library privacy protections.

Regarding computer use and Wi-Fi connections, they did mention that the connection was insecure, as I could not go to each county system in person during the duration of this process, I could not see what plugins or browsers had been set up for patron privacy.

Regarding their own LMS, they provided information about what personal identification information is collected, but there was no information about the privacy policy. There was also no information mentioned about processes in place when law enforcement or subpoenas/laws requested patron information.

They did have a privacy policy regarding student-age patrons, citing CIPA. And they did not have OPAC or Discovery Services privacy policies that were public facing, though one could refer to the general patron privacy policy in place. All in all, they met most of the ALA guidelines but not all of them, leaving room for improvement on patron privacy and security.

For Urban Library System 2 (New Hanover) they had a front facing general privacy statement though it did not have information regarding duration of how long information would be stored or what specifically would be collected. They did not follow

the opt-in method that is recommended by the ALA for services as the default setting, instead users must opt-out if they are worried about their privacy and data. The policy did mention that vendors were not held to the library policies, instead they had their own policies (which were not linked on the library website). However, they did have a policy and procedure in place in their LMS regarding how librarians responded to law enforcement/subpoena requests for library records.

The last system, Urban Library System 3 (Guilford) did have a public facing privacy policy. They did not mention which information was kept, did not have information about third party vendor policies, did not mention their own LMS privacy policy, but did specify that their Wi-Fi and public computers were insecure connections.

Suburban

Suburban Library Systems 1 (Gaston), 2 (Lee), and 3 (Iredell), did not have public facing privacy statements in place. Suburban Library System 4 did have a privacy policy that mentioned what information was tracked, especially regarding WIFI use and information on minors. The policy did mention that each third party vendor did have their own privacy policies, not linked on the library website, and that the library privacy policies could differ from those in place by the vendors.

Rural

Rural Library Systems 1 (Hyde), and 2 (Dare), did not have front facing privacy policies in place. Rural Library System 3 (Macon) has a front facing library privacy policy which mentions what information is stored, why, and for how long. It clarifies what information is used for library card usage, and it mentions the procedures should

law enforcement request records. They do specify the policy only is used on the library site, not on linked sites, which ostensibly includes 3rd party vendors.

Rural Library Systems 4 (Beaufort), 5 (Washington), and 6 (Tyrrell) don't have privacy policies. Rural Library System 7 (Alexander) does have privacy and confidentiality policy which does have a procedure for law enforcement requests for records policy in place. Rural Library Systems 8 (Haywood), 9 (McDowell), 10 (Hoke), 11 (Chatham), 12 (Lenoir), 13 (Harnett), and 14 (Randolph) had no public facing policy. Two of those systems did have an internet use agreement policy. System 15 (Brunswick) had a privacy policy on the county government site, which could be assumed to include county libraries as part of the government system. Systems 16 (Cleveland), 17 (Wilson), and 18 (Wayne) did not have any public facing privacy policies.

Impact, Limitations, and Conclusions

Impact

The impact of these findings is to influence library systems to put more effort into updating and providing public facing policies. There are plenty of resources namedropped by the ALA in their checklists, and it would be simple to integrate said checklists into library policies and procedures. The existing ALA Priority Actions should not be considered the complete standard of protection, and should be used as is intended, a guideline for a basic standard.

As more library systems integrate those actions into their interfaces, the impact of having such a standard be rewritten as accepted policy would be a further impact of understanding the gaps in current protections. Though technology increases the need for further protection, technology is also able to provide said protection.

Another impact of this research is the importance for financially supported libraries, fully staffed, robust IT departments, the budget to support assistive technologies, and the power to stand behind library policies and utilize them in vendor contracts. When all those structural supports are in place, then the next research steps on the quality of protection of digital privacy and patron protection policies can begin to be investigated: on how patrons can be actively protected by policies.

Limitations

In the desire to increase transparency, I will be forthcoming with pitfalls I discovered in this search; that I had to rely on policies available on library websites without understanding what analog versions of policies were available to patrons, I did not talk to any librarians in the administration of the counties, I focused on county government library systems instead of municipal, as such there were multiple branch locations in each library system that might have their own resources available at location. I focused mainly on priority 1 actions of the ALA guidelines, since those included most of the public facing actions, as such I'm not aware of any cybersecurity, encryption, purging details, internal documents, or IT infrastructure.

It was not possible for me to access public computers in library systems to see what plugins, browsers, virus protection etc. the libraries can have implemented as part of their internet policies. I was also not able to verify what digital vendor contracts look like, only see what information that should be made public is not currently in place.

It is also important to note that since I focused on county library systems, a lot of the policies are county (or counties) wide, and created by upper administration, and many librarians working in branch locations don't have the ability to change policies on their own. This thesis serves as a wake-up call as something library administrations should be spending resources to fix and update.

Conclusion

This project is not a finished point, it is a place to start addressing further research on digital privacy practices in public libraries especially when interacting with vulnerable populations such as youth individuals.

Research Question 1: Can existing library Services, Policies, Procedures in public libraries in the state of North Carolina protect youth communities from inadvertent harm?

As it currently stands, none of the library systems in the sample size for this thesis adequately protect youth communities from inadvertent harm. Most of the library systems only went as far as working within CIPA parameters, due to the public access computers. However, only one had information available for individual privacy protection, and none covered privacy policies with 3rd party vendors, making it impossible to assess what data digital and eAudio book circulation utilizes.

My conclusion that rural county systems would have met less of the library checklists than other county library systems and urban counties have met most of the checklist requirements as outlined by the ALA was proved correct by my sample size data analysis. Further, I conclude that by increasing checklist completion, library systems will protect adults and thereby also protecting youth patrons. However, YALSA and ALA standards need to include more information on protecting youth outside of school systems.

Further research questions to explore related to this topic include:

1. Is there a way for public libraries to protect personal data information of patrons who are minors that are utilizing the services of 3rd party vendors?

2. With the face of public libraries and youth services being rebranded as a safe community space for diverse, vulnerable populations, how can the current policies be revised to assist youth in managing, understanding, and using their data their way?
3. How can policies and procedures in assessing impact, relevancy, and accuracy of youth services programs change so that libraries don't collect unnecessary data on the community?
4. How can the work in improving patron and community protections be accomplished without the burden of othering or burdening librarians of said communities?
5. How can those who are from vulnerable populations who are connected and invested in improving/increasing access also have protection/privacy of themselves be prioritized in institutional policy?

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