

Week 8: The right to privacy

Real time lecture: July 25, 8:30 am Pacific/11:30 am Eastern

Overview

People in the United States technically have a right to privacy guaranteed in the constitution. In practice, the privacy rights of marginalized people have been historically violated. As Angela Davis said, “If they come for me in the morning, they will come for you in the night”, and today in the post-Snowden world, it’s true that we’re all experiencing the loss of our privacy rights. This is of course now doubly true for marginalized people, who are under even more intense surveillance than ever before. This week, ACLU attorney and surveillance law expert Jessie Rossman will talk to us about our privacy rights and how librarians can enforce them.

Learning objectives

- Understand how privacy rights are intended to work and how librarians can enforce them
- Know where to seek legal help when patron privacy is violated
- Learn about historical and current inequities regarding privacy rights
- Learn how to create privacy policies within these contexts

Readings

- The ACLU’s resources on internet privacy (read through some of the subtopics, reports, blogs, and so on) <https://www.aclu.org/issues/privacy-technology/internet-privacy>
- A review of the books *Automating Inequality* and *The Poverty of Privacy Rights* that covers how the poor have never had privacy rights <https://thenewinquiry.com/privacy-for-whom/>
- EFF’s take on how librarians should be protecting privacy rights in the library: <https://www.eff.org/deeplinks/2016/12/librarians-act-now-protect-your-users-its-too-late>
- Library records privacy laws by state: <http://www.ala.org/advocacy/privacy/statelaws>
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Guest lecturer

Jessie Rossman, attorney, ACLU of Massachusetts

<https://aclum.org/about/staff-advocates/jessie-rossman/>

Discussion

- How are your communities affected by the loss of privacy rights?
- How is your library equipped to enforce privacy rights?
- How does your state fare with regard to library privacy law? Does it seem like your local law is sufficient to protect patrons?

Assignment

- Come up with your own outreach idea around the right to privacy: either slides, talking points, or an informal conversation where you bring these points up to staff or patrons. Collaborate with other cohort members if you want!