

Library Information [School Libraries in Canada: Students' Privacy Rights in School](#)

[Libraries: Balancing Principles, Ethics and Practices](#); [OIPCO: If you wanted to know: What are the privacy responsibilities of public libraries?](#)

Bill is a student who is questioning his sexuality and wants to read *Eight Seconds* (Ferris) which tackles tolerance, homosexuality and self-discovery. He wonders how many people will learn that he is reading the story, if his name and the title of the book will be posted on a list of overdue books or even if his parents could request a record of the books he borrowed.

The list of books that Bill has read should be considered as personal information. However questions need to be asked, given certain longstanding practices related to school libraries. These days, school librarians (and school administrators) need to balance efficiency with access, confidentiality and disclosure. In-charge individuals must develop policies and practices to effectively accomplish this. Since children enjoy the same rights as adults under MFIPPA, their records must be treated as personal information. Posting "sensitive" personal information, as in Bill's case, may be a violation of privacy or might even cause harm. Just as their children have a right to do, custodial parents may ask for access to library records for a child less than 16 years of age, but their motives and interests should be questioned. MFIPPA also makes provision for disclosure of personal information in the event of a law enforcement investigation (S. 32 (g)). The school librarian could make a decision to release records in this case, and bypass the need to comply with a subpoena being issued to override MFIPPA.

Principal's Best Practice: Make your community aware of such privacy/confidentiality considerations by including this in a presentation about Internet safety.