

The Care & Feeding of *Data and Devices* in Trying Times

A practical reference for librarians and patrons — **agency, not avoidance.**

WHAT'S INSIDE

- I The thesis — agency, not avoidance
- II Practice — the five moves
- III Widen — what each move opens onto
- IV Amplify — the challenge of flying solo
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I · THE FRAME

The story we *refuse* — and the one we tell.

The inherited privacy story says *you've nothing to hide, privacy is dead anyway*, and quietly — *it's a race you win or lose alone*. That story manufactures despair. Watch how hard the old vocabulary tries to sneak back in.

Privacy hides in the fine print — papers, dashboards, policy, the ToS you never opened, the e-bill autopay, the loyalty swipe at checkout, the free trial you forgot to cancel. We translate it into a move a nervous first-year, a researcher under IRB, or a retiree with a new phone can actually make.

The currency we hold isn't our technical fluency; it's **trust**. Library work still holds a social capital a tech company can only envy: it's why patrons ask *us* the awkward questions, and act on the answers.

Your digital footprint is the source of both community and peril. The goal is not disappearance, but informed, intentional sharing — agency, not avoidance.

"Delete everything" is bad advice and patrons know it. "Choose what you share, and with whom" is advice they can keep.

A move you can make today — and the *practitioner's lens* that keeps it proportionate.

There is no "private." Only **private from whom, for what.**

THE PRACTITIONER'S LENS · FROM EFF

The four questions

1. **What am I protecting?** The asset — the reading list, the location, the draft.
2. **From whom?** The interested party — advertiser, ex-partner, employer, state.
3. **How likely is the exposure?** Proportion the response. Don't overreact or under-react.
4. **What's the cost of failure?** And the cost, in effort, of protecting?

The reference interview with a privacy lens. It stops you handing every patron the same checklist they'll never finish.

FIVE MOVES · MOST PROTECTION PER MINUTE

The portable PII stack

#	MOVE	WHY THIS ONE EARNS ITS PLACE
1	Password manager Unique passwords for every account. Bitwarden, Proton Pass, KeePassXC.	Removes the cheapest, commonest attack — credential stuffing across reused passwords.
2	Two-factor (2FA) Via authenticator app or passkey — not SMS.	SMS is interceptable; app codes and passkeys aren't.
3	Check what's been leaked Free at haveibeenpwned.com — rotate any exposed passwords.	Universal: anyone with an email. Pairs with move 1.
4	Opt out of people-search sites	CA: one DROP request. Elsewhere: DataBrokersWatch one-click .
5	Lock down social & ad-tracking defaults Ad-personalization off; profile-by-default to private.	Cuts the broker pipeline at its source.

At the desk: offer **one move to start**, not the whole list. A single done move beats a five-item list that's abandoned.

TYRANNY OF THE DEFAULT · CAREY PARKER, FIREWALLS DON'T STOP DRAGONS

Defaults are never neutral.

The company picks them in its own favor, counting on the fact that **almost no one ever changes them**. Proof: identical humans in opt-out organ-donor countries vs. opt-in ones produce wildly different donation rates (Johnson & Goldstein, *Science*, 2003). The strongest move? **Change the default.**

THE ONE-SWITCH CON

Three "privacy" products that aren't.

INCOGNITO MODE

Still tracked by the site, the network, and your account. Google settled *Brown v. Google*. Deleted billions of records.

THE FREE VPN

The provider sees everything your ISP did. Facebook's Onavo Protect: 33M installs, pulled 2018–19.

"PRIVACY" BROWSER / EXTENSION

Sold the data anyway. Avast / Jumpshot: FTC, \$16.5M, banned (2024).

Reputable VPNs do have real uses — untrusted Wi-Fi, ISP shielding, censorship evasion. For high-risk patrons: **Mullvad** or **Proton VPN** (no-logs, anonymous payment, published audits).

TRIAGE · SORT BY HARM, NOT BY FOLDER

What lives where, and the question that decides.

Critical **Could a bundle of this endanger a body, a freedom, or a livelihood?**

Reproductive & health · location · immigration · whistleblower contact

Sensitive **Who could infer something I didn't mean to disclose?**

PII · reading history · drafts · social graph

Routine **Did I choose to make this public, on purpose?**

Published work · deliberately public posts

These tiers are *starting points*. A stalking survivor's address moves up; a published bio's address moves down. **The triage is the questions, not the labels.**

Each move opens onto a *people-first idea* — and a question of power.

A checklist is scales, not the song. The moment a perfect score becomes the goal, you've optimized the humanity right out of it.

PRACTICE MOVE

OPENS ONTO...

Defaults aren't neutral

Privacy by design

— choices made *for* the patron without consent.

Compartmentalize email

Contextual integrity

— and its breach, *context collapse* (Nissenbaum).

The five-move stack

You still cast a

data shadow

— what the moves can't reach (Gandy; Zuboff).

"You can't delete yourself"

Privacy is

relational.

It can't be only you.

That last row is *the turn*: at the limit of acting alone, the conversation has to widen.

SIX PRIVATE I'S · HARTMAN-CAVERLY & CHISHOLM, ACRL 2023

Respect for *persons*, not protection for *data*.

Privacy modeled as concentric zones — boundaries growing more permeable outward.

- **Identity** — the core self · least disclosed
- **Intellect** — freedom to think, read, change your mind
- **Integrity** — contextual and bodily; the frontier where surveillance becomes harm
- **Intimacy** — the closest relationships
- **Interaction** — group, professional, and civic life
- **Isolation** — the right to be left alone · the social rim, most permeable

Core → rim runs from the individual to the social — **the same path this talk takes.**

CARE VS FAIR · INDIGENOUS DATA GOVERNANCE

FAIR optimizes for reuse. CARE asks *who benefits and who controls*.

FAIR · THE REUSE STANDARD

Findable · Accessible · Interoperable · Reusable. Optimizes the data *for* the next user.

CARE · THE GOVERNANCE COMPLEMENT

Collective benefit · Authority to control · Responsibility · Ethics. Asks what FAIR leaves out.

THE JUSTICE CORE

Surveillance touches everyone — but *falls unevenly*.

The same systems fall first and hardest on people already marginalized. The better question isn't "is my data private?" — it's "*whose data is most weaponized?*"

- **Examine power. Challenge power.** *Data Feminism* principles 1–2 (D'Ignazio & Klein, 2020).
- **Racializing surveillance** — Browne, *Dark Matters* (2015); Benjamin, *Race After Technology* (2019); Noble, *Algorithms of Oppression* (2018).
- **Intersectionality / matrix of domination** — Crenshaw (1989); Collins (1990). Overlapping systems compound.
- **Examine information privilege.** An explicit ACRL disposition (*Framework*, 2015). Name your own.

BACK TO THE MISSION

Being watched narrows what people will read and think.

The *chilling effect*: surveillance shrinks the spectrum of what we'll explore. Intellectual privacy is the precondition for free inquiry — which makes this the same fight libraries have always fought.

The 2026 edition wears a boring name. "Age verification" increasingly means **showing government ID to read** — even to use your device. It's deanonymization with a friendlier label, plus a record of who looked at what. The Supreme Court let the first one stand (*Free Speech Coalition v. Paxton*, 2025). Don't let the dull name hide the **data harvesting**.

Richards on intellectual privacy (2015); Brandeis's *Olmstead* dissent on the chilling effect (1928); PEN America on campus free expression (2024); ALA's *Privacy: An Interpretation of the Library Bill of Rights* (amended June 2025).

One move, multiplied across a community, *becomes a norm.*

Play it loud enough and the room picks up the riff.

THE CHALLENGE OF FLYING SOLO

Privacy is a co-op, not a purchase.

Think of a food co-op, a credit union, a rural electric line: **member-owned, one member one vote, only ever as strong as its membership.** You don't buy your way to privacy — you join it and help sustain it.

RELATIONAL DATA GOVERNANCE

Data's harm is population-level; the task is collective, democratic governance — not individual control (Viljoen, 2021).

GOVERNING THE COMMONS

Shared resources can be stewarded collectively — neither privatized nor surrendered. Co-ops are the classic case (Ostrom, 1990).

The library is already that kind of institution: **a co-op of knowledge, held in common.**

HOW NORMS ACTUALLY SHIFT

The mechanism, with scope stated.

~25% TIPPING POINT · COORDINATION EXPERIMENTS

Past a committed minority of roughly a quarter, a group's convention can flip (Centola et al., Science, 2018).

~3.5% PARTICIPATION · CIVIL RESISTANCE

No nonviolent campaign mobilizing ~3.5% at its peak had failed (Chenoweth, 2013).

Scope: these are findings about *norm change* and *regime change*, not magic numbers for any campaign. The deeper move is the **Overton window** — what becomes expected and demandable.

SPECTRUM OF ALLIES · BATMO

You don't overpower the system. You shift support, *one notch at a time.*

Every patron moved from *resigned* to *changed one default* is a notch shifted from *passive opposition* toward *passive ally*. You're not defeating the system single-handed; you're moving people one notch, many times over.

RECEIPTS · 2018–2025

Every privacy protection we have was *demande*d, not granted.

- **GDPR (2018)** — Followed years of public pressure, not the reverse.
- **CA Delete Act & DROP** — One deletion request to 500+ brokers; live Jan 2026.
- **FTC broker & health actions (2020–2024)** — Brokers: Mobilewalla, X-Mode. Health: GoodRx, BetterHelp.
- **Flo v. Meta verdict (2025)** — A jury, after public demand made it matter.

The move your patron makes today is a data point in the demand that makes the next protection possible. **Cynicism, answered with receipts.**

PROOF FROM THIS YEAR

It was chosen. *It can be un-chosen.*

- **Flock cameras, off the streets** — 60+ cities on the DeFlock tracker killed ALPR contracts in 2025–26 after residents packed council meetings.
- **Right to repair, now law** — Bills in all 50 states; electronics laws enacted in NY, CA, MN, OR, CO, WA. About 1 in 4 Americans live in a covered state.
- **Surveillance pricing, on the back foot** — FTC's 2025 study exposed it; NY now mandates an "algorithmic pricing" label; WA moved to freeze digital shelf tags.

Cory Doctorow calls the rot *enshittification*: products decay into data-extracting traps once the four forces that discipline them (competition, regulation, interoperability, worker power) are stripped away. Restore them and it reverses. It was "made in living memory, by named individuals" — so it can be un-chosen (Doctorow, *Enshittification*, Verso, 2025).

THE CALL · EXAMINE → USE

You hold information privilege. *Spend it.*

You're institutionally trusted. You're non-commercial. You're research-trained. **Be a contributor, not a consumer.**

SUPPORT

Personal-PII clinics. Privacy office hours. Patron-clinic role-play with staff. Pocket pamphlets in the rack.

ORGANIZE

Vendor contract review. Patron-data audit. Local Community Control Over Police Surveillance ordinance. State right-to-repair / data-broker advocacy.

Set the volume. *Hold both.*

Two methodological commitments that keep the work honest at any scale.

THE DECIBEL DIAL

Every mechanism here has a *volume*. Plain information literacy, or turned up — your patrons, your call. You don't have to deliver the whole arc at full volume. Pick your time, pick your place.

HOLD BOTH

Individual moves matter. Collective action matters. Neither cancels the other. Practice the moves; organize the moves; never let despair about the system erase the work.

Toolkits, triage, and the references behind them.

Curated entry points you can hand a patron at the desk.

Patron toolkits

EFF Surveillance Self-Defense

ssd.eff.org

Per-audience guides (journalists, students, activists). Most trustworthy single starting point.

Data Detox Kit

datadetoxkit.org

Free, CC-licensed, 40+ languages. Printable booklets; great for branch displays.

Consumer Reports Security Planner

securityplanner.consumerreports.org

Quiz-driven, plain-English. Good for first-time patrons; not for high-risk situations.

DataBrokersWatch one-click

databrokerswatch.org/top-ten

Opt-out forms for the largest brokers. Free; sends opt-out requests on the patron's behalf.

ToS;DR — Terms, decoded

tosdr.org

Plain-English A–E grades of services' terms, with a browser extension.

consumerrights.wiki

consumerrights.wiki

Catalog of enshittification practices and the campaigns reversing them.

FOR PATRONS IN IMMEDIATE DANGER

NNEDV Safety Net — techsafety.org — <https://techsafety.org> — tech-safety guidance for survivors of stalking, intimate-partner abuse, and tech-facilitated abuse. **Not a toolkit; a triage path.** Pairs with the *Critical* tier of the harm-based triage on page 2.

For the profession

ALA Privacy Guidelines

ala.org/advocacy/privacy

Library Privacy Guidelines for vendors, e-resources, and patron records.

Core / LITA library tech checklists

via ALA Core Technology Services

Vendor contract clauses, log retention policies, RFP language.

Library Freedom Project

libraryfreedom.org

Curriculum, organizing support, patron handouts.

Penn State Libraries privacy series

guides.libraries.psu.edu/berks/privacyseries

Public-facing programming kit — replicable as-is.

Citations behind every move and frame in this handout.

Books for the bedside table; papers for the deeper questions; court cases for the receipts.

Frameworks & methodologies

- § **Six Private I's** — Hartman-Caverly & Chisholm, "Privacy literacy: from doomscrolling to digital wellness," *portal: Libraries and the Academy* (2023).
- § **CARE Principles for Indigenous Data Governance** — Carroll et al., *Data Science Journal* 19:43 (2020).
- § **Threat modeling** — EFF, *Surveillance Self-Defense*: ssd.eff.org/module/your-security-plan.
- § **BATMo (Beautiful Trouble Approaches Toolbox)** — Beautiful Trouble / smartMeme. CC-licensed.
- § **Data Feminism** — D'Ignazio & Klein, MIT Press (2020).
- § **ACRL Framework for Information Literacy** — "Information Has Value" disposition (2015).

Books & major essays

- § Doctorow, *Enshittification: Why Everything Suddenly Got Worse and What to Do About It*, Verso (2025).
- § Centola, *Change: How to Make Big Things Happen*, Little, Brown Spark (2021).
- § Chenoweth, *Civil Resistance: What Everyone Needs to Know*, Oxford UP (2021).
- § Browne, *Dark Matters: On the Surveillance of Blackness*, Duke UP (2015).
- § Benjamin, *Race After Technology*, Polity (2019).
- § Noble, *Algorithms of Oppression*, NYU Press (2018).
- § Lamdan, *Data Cartels: The Companies That Control and Monopolize Our Information*, Stanford UP (2022).
- § Nissenbaum, *Privacy in Context*, Stanford UP (2009).
- § Ballou, *When Companies Run the Courts* (2026).

Evidence & cases

- § **Default-effect study** — Johnson & Goldstein, "Do Defaults Save Lives?," *Science* 302:1338–39 (2003).
- § **Relational data governance** — Viljoen, "A Relational Theory of Data Governance," *Yale Law Journal* 131 (2021).
- § **Governing the commons** — Ostrom, *Governing the Commons*, Cambridge UP (1990).
- § **Social tipping points** — Centola, Becker, Brackbill & Baronchelli, *Science* 360:1116–19 (2018).
- § **Civil resistance / 3.5%** — Chenoweth & Stephan, *Why Civil Resistance Works*, Columbia UP (2011); Chenoweth (2013).
- § **Right to read anonymously** — Cohen, *Connecticut Law Review* 28:981 (1996).

- § **Age verification PII risk** — Scheffler, "Age Verification Systems Will Be a PII Nightmare," *Communications of the ACM* 67(7):31–33 (2024).

- § **Carpenter v. United States** — 585 U.S. 296 (2018). The warrant requirement the broker loophole bypasses.

- § **Free Speech Coalition v. Paxton** — Texas age-verification statute upheld, 6-3 (2025).

- § **Brown v. Google** — Incognito-mode tracking class settlement (2023–24).

- § **Library as data controller** — Jones & Salo, "Learning Analytics and the Academic Library," *C&RL* 79(3) (2018).

TAKE IT WITH YOU

The deck, the slides, the speaker notes, and updates.

elliesberlinkey.com – <https://elliesberlinkey.com>

Companion slides, references with DOIs and stable URLs, and the most current versions of the patron toolkits live there. The full talk lives there too.

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