

Welcome to Tuesday Topics, a monthly series covering topics with intellectual freedom implications for libraries of all types. Each message is prepared by a member of OLA's Intellectual Freedom Committee or a guest writer. Questions can be directed to the author of the topic or to the [IFC committee](#).



Let's Encrypt and Choose Privacy Week

Does your library's URL begin with HTTPS? If not, you're not alone. Even states are having trouble keeping up with installing this important privacy protection on their sites. As of early March, more than [half of state governments](#) (including Oregon) had not encrypted the front pages of their websites (Miller, 2018).

But with [Choose Privacy Week](#) coming up in May, now is the time to step up your privacy protection efforts! Why?

As the ALA stated so eloquently, "HTTP communication is vulnerable to potential eavesdropping and content hijacking from unauthorized third parties. HTTPS helps protect against these problems by establishing an encrypted connection between the user's browser and a library website or service, or between two library servers that are communicating with each other" (ALA, n.d.).

ALA has made the process for implementing HTTPS and strong privacy policies as effortless as possible by providing:

- "[Recipes](#)" (found at the bottom of that page) to help library IT staff install SSL certificates (required for creating the secure connection) on several different server types, including Apache and SirsiDynix systems
- Links to free tools available from [Let's Encrypt](#), a service that manages SSL/TSL certificates that permit HTTPS connections
- [Privacy checklists](#) that address policy and technical issues

And while you're at it, communicate to your patrons how much you care about their privacy by sharing your policies and promoting [Choose Privacy Week](#), which occurs annually May 1-7. Host an event, create a display, or proudly post web icons on your social media. Teach your patrons they can control how their data is shared. Find ideas and resources on the [programs page](#). Then share what you're doing on the Intellectual Freedom Committee's "[Celebrate the Freedom to Read](#)" Facebook page. (Yes, the irony. We hope Facebook will get the message we care about privacy!) Regardless, the IFC would love to hear from you!

With data breaches at Equifax, Facebook, and Under Armour at the forefront of the news over the last several months, citizens are becoming more aware of the weaknesses of online systems and potential exposure of their personal data. Let us, as a library community, be proactive in our efforts to prevent compromised systems.

References and Additional Information

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