



First Amendment Audit Policy

NOTE: First Amendment audits are carried out by individuals who arm themselves with video cameras and enter public spaces under the auspices of the First Amendment's right to free speech in order to record staff violations. They may claim a right to film in any space accessible to the public, arguing that they're entitled to do so as taxpayers and citizen journalists.

Even though libraries are public places, libraries, and those who work for libraries, should strive to protect users' privacy when they are using library resources in the library. The library clearly identifies all non-public spaces in the library as not open to the public or where users have an expectation of privacy, such as restrooms, reservable private study spaces, offices, break room and work areas.

Library staff should not engage with First Amendment auditors who are filming in accordance with policy and are not violating library policies that protect library users' privacy or that prohibit behaviors that constitute harassment of users and staff. Allowing them to film without incident means that they will not obtain the videos that support their social media accounts.

The behavior of the "auditor" may rise to the level of harassment of staff and library users. This can include a claimed right to interrogate and demand answers from any individual inside the library or invading the privacy of library users by filming and recording their reading or browsing activity in the library. Harassment and abusive behaviors should be addressed as provided in the library's Acceptable Behavior Standards as written in the General Policies.

General guidance for staff includes:

- Be professional and polite. If they say they don't need help, do your best to ignore them and go back to your duties.
- Be calm. The best defense is patience.
- Be aware of your tone and body language.
- Don't tell them they can't photograph or video unless in a clearly marked area where it is prohibited.
- Never try to take their camera.
- Don't argue, use profanity or physically touch anyone.