

Project Proposal: My Reading Log

Proposed by: TLN Technology Committee

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Overview: We, the TLN Technology Committee – along with endorsements from other TLN committees – propose to offer a new service to TLN member libraries and their users. We would like to create an online system (database) that could be used by library staff and patrons to track their own use of library materials – specifically what they have read and what they would like to read. The use of this system is completely voluntary, but it is intended to provide an electronic way for library users to track their own reading (and listening and viewing) preferences.

Scope of project: This online database would be completely separate from any library automation system, allowing both shared-system and stand-alone member libraries to participate. This database would be stored on a separate server at TLN, to provide central administration of the system. This database could be used to track any type of library materials – print, audio, or visual. Each user that signs up for the system will have a user login and password, and he or she will only have access to his or her own list, providing privacy and individual control of what is recorded. The system will only record the login information and the items the user enters into his or her record. There will be no connection between a login and an actual person or a patron record. This system is designed with the anticipation that additional capabilities may be added at a later date. Members of the TLN Technology Committee will review and approve all requests for changes and enhancements to this system.

Need for project: As observed by reference librarians on the TLN Technology Committee (and reinforced by TLN Adult Services Committee librarians, TLN Youth Services Committee librarians, TLN Young Adult Services Committee librarians, and colleagues of these committee members), it is often difficult for library users to track which library materials they have already read and which they want to read. Often people are told of “must read” books and when they come into the library, cannot remember the title or author. Or, they scribbled the title and/or author down on a piece of paper that is nowhere to be found. “My Reading Log” gives library users the opportunity to add books to a list that is easily accessible at home and within the library. Although this will not completely solve this dilemma, it will provide an alternative for those who wish to use the system.

Technical Plan: Since this database will be accessible by patrons and staff throughout TLN, it should be housed at TLN headquarters. Members of the TLN Technology Committee will provide most administration, support, design decisions, and maintenance. Physically, it may be necessary for TLN personnel to restart the computer at times. Equipment upgrade will be addressed when it is deemed necessary and cost will be assessed based on success of the project and willingness by the TLN member libraries to continue the service.

Policy Impact: Recognizing privacy concerns, the use of this database is anonymous in the sense that username is generated from a random series of letters and numbers, and users create their own password. There is no connection with patron records, and individuals cannot be positively identified if subpoenaed or if security is compromised. User registration for the "My Reading Log" system will be limited (by IP address) to only those located in a TLN library. After registering, users will be able to login with their username and password from any Internet connection. This procedure will limit the use to TLN library users. The only information that can be tracked in the server logs is the IP address of the user. The Technology Committee recommends that TLN should obtain a formal legal opinion on whether or not the records stored in the My Reading Log database would be covered by the Library Privacy Act. We do not feel qualified to determine what might be accessible in the event of a subpoena, in light of the USA Patriot Act. The TLN Internet Policy and any other applicable policies will cover the use of this database.

Budget: At present, expense to TLN is negligible. The server currently used for the testing phase is one that is no longer used for any other purpose. Anticipated TLN staff time for maintenance would be the amount of time it takes to reboot the computer when necessary. Assistance in initial setup by TLN technology staff in conjunction with Technology Committee members may be required. As this would be a free service for patrons and staff, no revenue is expected. When it is determined that service upgrades are required, it may be necessary for participating member libraries to defray costs. If TLN agrees that a formal legal opinion is needed to determine the policy impact on the My Reading Log database, there may be expenses incurred for this legal opinion.

Demo: My Reading Log is currently available online for demonstration purposes at <http://www.myreadinglog.org>. This demo is only available for access from within a TLN library; it is not available remotely at this time. The Technology Committee has taken the project through a number of iterations during the design phase to get to the current stage. Feel free to take a look for yourself at what we have in mind.

Endorsements: Members of the TLN Technology Committee have presented this project idea to the TLN Adult Services Committee, the TLN Youth Services Committee, and the TLN Young Adult Services Committee. All three committees are in favor of continuing the project. Enclosed with this proposal are copies of their feedback on the project.

Appendices:

We have also included some additional documents to govern the terms of service and privacy concerns for this database. At this time, these attached documents are in DRAFT form.

Appendix A – My Reading Log Terms of Service

Appendix B – My Reading Log Privacy Statement