

Questions for discussion

1. You are the chairman of the town's board of library trustees. The library allows local organizations to use its meeting room, free of charge, subject to certain restrictions. One of the organizations that use the facility is the local chamber of commerce, which meets there once a month. You happen to be a member of the chamber.

At this month's chamber of commerce meeting, the town's state senator has been invited to talk about what's going on at the legislature. As the meeting begins, several activists from the opposing political party show up with video cameras. The president of the chamber intercepts them and says they're welcome to attend the meeting as guests, but they may not record it. One of them says, "Look, you're using a public library, so the Right-to-Know Law applies, and I have a right to record this meeting."

The chamber's president is not an expert on the Right-to-Know Law, but of course you are, so he asks you whether he has to let them record the meeting. What is the answer? Why?

2. You are on a three-person board of library trustees. You have been working with the librarian on a proposal to buy new computer equipment, and you send an e-mail to the other two trustees laying out the proposal. At the beginning of the e-mail, you write, "Please do not reply to this message. We will discuss the proposal at the next meeting." The other two members do not reply. Have you violated the law?

- Same facts, but one of the other trustees does respond with a number of criticisms, and you respond to his comments. Is there a violation of the law?
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3. You are the chairman of a five-member board of trustees. Over the last year, you have noticed that other members of the board are spending increasing amounts of time using their electronic devices—cell phones, iPads, and laptops—during meetings. Some are more active than others, but each member is occasionally seen typing what appears to be an e-mail or text message.

What should you do?

4. A local citizen is mounting an unusually aggressive election challenge to a member of the library's board of trustees. One day the challenger walks into the library director's office and demands to know how many board meetings each of the trustees has attended in the past year. The director replies that he does not know. The citizen says, "But you could find out easily enough by going through the minutes. I want a list of the trustees and how many meetings each of them has attended." What is the director's obligation?

- Same facts, except that the library director does happen to know the answer, because he has an amazing memory for those kinds of details, but there is no physical document that includes the information. What is his obligation now?
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5. A woman goes to the library's circulation desk and asks whether the library has Tolstoy's *War and Peace*. The assistant checks and says yes, it is available. The woman says, "Great. I would like to make a copy." The assistant, somewhat confused, says, "Well, you can *borrow* the book if you have a library card." The woman says, "No, I want to make a copy that I can keep. I'll pay the photocopying charge."

Assuming that, for whatever reason, she is actually willing to pay the library's 25-cent-per-page charge to photocopy *War and Peace*, does she have the right to copy it?

6. Which of the following items are "governmental records"?

- a) A letter from a selectman to one library trustee complaining about the library's budget. Yes _____ No _____
- b) An e-mail from one library trustee (on a three-person board) to the other two trustees, relating to the library's budget. Yes _____ No _____
- c) An e-mail from one trustee to two others (on a five-person board) forwarding political commentary about immigration policy. Yes _____ No _____
- d) A message in the library director's voice mail from a library user complaining about one of the library employees. Yes _____ No _____
- e) An e-mail from one library trustee to the library director about a matter that is on the agenda for the next meeting. Yes _____ No _____
- f) The board clerk's handwritten notes taken during a meeting, which he will use to prepare the minutes. Yes _____ No _____
- g) An e-mail from one library trustee to the other members relating to library business, but sent from his home computer and using his personal account. Yes _____ No _____