

NotebookLM for Policy Work

NotebookLM: A Research Assistant for Policy Development

Sources:

- Google NotebookLM official site: <https://notebooklm.google>
 - Google Workspace NotebookLM: <https://workspace.google.com/products/notebooklm/>
 - Google NotebookLM Help Center: <https://support.google.com/notebooklm/>
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What NotebookLM Is

NotebookLM is Google's AI-powered research and note-taking tool, built by Google Labs and powered by Gemini models. It is designed to function as a research assistant that interacts only with the documents you upload to it. Unlike general-purpose chatbots like ChatGPT or Gemini, NotebookLM uses Retrieval Augmented Generation (RAG) — it answers questions strictly from the sources you provide, with inline citations linking each statement back to the originating passage.

As of 2026, NotebookLM runs on Gemini 3 models.

Why It Fits Library Policy Work

Most library policy work requires the same kinds of inputs:

- **Existing local policies** (your current policy manual)
- **Authoritative national guidance** (ALA Library Bill of Rights and interpretations)
- **State law** (NH RSAs — 202-A, 91-A, 201-D)
- **Local context** (your town's bylaws, your community demographics)
- **Peer library examples** (what libraries in similar communities have adopted)
- **Professional commentary** (Library Journal, NHLTA newsletters, state library guidance)

Most of these documents are PDFs, web pages, or Word files. They live in different folders, on different websites, in different filing cabinets. The traditional way to develop a policy is to assemble them, read through them, take notes, draft, circulate, revise.

NotebookLM doesn't change *what* you read — it changes *how fast you can synthesize it*.

Three properties matter for policy work:

- **1. Source-grounding.** NotebookLM answers only from your uploaded sources. It will tell you when something is not in the sources rather than inventing it. This is the opposite of ChatGPT's behavior and is the single most important feature for governance work.
- **2. Inline citations.** Every claim is linked back to a specific passage in a specific source. Trustees can verify any output by clicking through. This is essential when adopting policy under public scrutiny.

- **3. Privacy posture.** Google's published terms state that uploads to NotebookLM are not used to train Google's foundation AI models. This is the default for the product, not a setting users must find and toggle.
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Supported Source Types

NotebookLM accepts:

- PDFs (most policy manuals, RSA texts, ALA documents)
- Google Docs
- Google Slides
- Microsoft Word documents
- Plain text and Markdown files
- Web URLs (links to public web pages)
- Public YouTube video URLs (analyzes the transcript — useful for NHLTA conference recordings)
- Audio files
- EPUB files
- Copy-pasted text

A single notebook can hold many sources, allowing you to combine your existing policy manual, peer library policies, ALA guidance, NH RSAs, and meeting transcripts in one workspace.

What You Can Do With It

Chat with Citations

Ask questions of your sources in natural language. Every answer includes inline citations pointing to the exact passage.

Example questions for policy work:

- *"What does ALA's Meeting Rooms Interpretation say about content-neutral access?"*
- *"Compare what our existing meeting room policy and ALA guidance each say about fee structures."*
- *"What gaps exist between our current Reconsideration Policy and current ALA guidance?"*
- *"Draft a revised Confidentiality Policy that incorporates both RSA 201-D:11 and ALA Article VII."*

Studio Panel — Outputs

The Studio panel transforms your sources into different formats with one click:

- **Audio Overviews** — Two-host AI-podcast-style summaries. Customizable: "deep dive," "brief," "critique," or "debate" formats. Available in 80+ languages. Useful for trustees who want to absorb a topic on a commute.
- **Video Overviews** — Narrated visual slide-style videos.
- **Mind Maps** — Visual diagrams showing how concepts in your sources connect.

- **Study Guides** — Structured outlines and briefing documents.
- **Briefing Documents** — Concise summaries for board packets.
- **Reports** — Tailored written reports based on your sources and a custom prompt.
- **Slide Decks** — Auto-generated presentations, exportable as .pptx.
- **Infographics** — Multiple style options.
- **Flashcards and Quizzes** — Useful for new trustee orientation.

Saved Conversation History

Conversations are now automatically saved per-notebook and remain private to you. You can close a session and resume it later. In shared notebooks, your chat history is visible only to you.

Sharing and Collaboration

Notebooks can be shared with collaborators (e.g., a board, a policy committee, a working group). Multiple people can work on a shared notebook simultaneously.

Privacy and Data Handling

Personal Google Accounts (notebooklm.google.com)

- Uploads, queries, and model responses are NOT used to train Google's AI models. This is the default behavior, not a toggle.
- Audio and video overviews are NOT fed back into Google's training pipeline.
- Sources you upload remain in a notebook for as long as the notebook exists. Deleting a source removes it from the active index near-immediately.

Workspace Accounts (Business, Education, Enterprise)

- All of the above PLUS additional protections under the Google Cloud Data Processing Addendum.
- Uploads, queries, and model responses are NOT reviewed by human reviewers — even when the user provides thumbs-up/thumbs-down feedback — and are NOT used to train AI models.

Feedback and Human Review (Personal Accounts Only)

If a personal-account user clicks thumbs-up or thumbs-down on a NotebookLM response, that interaction may be reviewed by specially trained Google teams to improve the product. Retained for up to 3 years, disconnected from the user's Google Account. Workspace users are NOT subject to this human review.

NotebookLM Enterprise

For organizations needing additional compliance, NotebookLM Enterprise runs in a Google Cloud-compliant environment. Data stays within the customer's Google Cloud project and cannot be shared externally. VPC-SC compliant.

Important Caveats

- NotebookLM is built to be source-grounded, but it can still misinterpret or summarize incorrectly. **Outputs require human review**, especially for policy work that will be adopted by a board.
 - NotebookLM should never replace **legal review by counsel** for any policy that interprets state law or contractual obligations.
 - Audio Overview hosts use a casual, conversational tone. For formal documents, you can specify a focus area or formal style to compensate.
 - The free tier has daily chat and source limits.
 - For users under 18, NotebookLM has stricter content policies and some features may be unavailable.
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What NotebookLM Is Not

- It is **not** a substitute for trustee judgment.
 - It is **not** a substitute for legal review.
 - It is **not** a substitute for community input.
 - It is **not** a one-shot policy generator. Drafts are *drafts*. Boards still vote.
 - It is **not** appropriate for storing patron personally identifiable information. Even with NotebookLM's privacy posture, patron records belong in the Library's authorized systems, not in a research notebook.
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Pricing and Access (as of 2026)

- **Free:** Available to anyone with a personal Google Account, with daily limits.
- **NotebookLM Plus:** Bundled with the Google AI Premium plan. Higher limits, longer document support, collaborative notebooks.
- **Workspace plans:** Most users with a business or school Workspace account have access; admins can turn it on or off.
- **Workspace for Education:** NotebookLM is a Core Service with enterprise-grade data protection.
- **NotebookLM Enterprise:** Available via Google Cloud for organizations needing VPC-SC compliance.