

Grassroots Protest Ideas

(from the ALA Intellectual Freedom discussion list)

-----Original Message-----

From: John Gear <jmgear@ameritech.net>
To: ALA Office for Intellectual Freedom List <alaoif@ala1.ala.org>
Date: Monday, June 24, 2002 8:29 PM
Subject: [ALAOIF:23463] Re: FBI Begins Visiting Libraries

1) What about a large notice posted at the entrance to each library -- kind of like the one at the beginning of movies you rent? Someone would have to word it but it could be very powerful just by playing it straight ... something like :

NOTICE TO PATRONS –

the PATRIOT ACT (USC xxx) gives the Federal Bureau of Investigation the authority to demand to see your library record with no probable cause and with no warrant from a magistrate. Further, by law, if the FBI demands a patron record from us, we are not permitted to notify that patron of that fact. Thus all library patrons should please be informed that we no longer guarantee the privacy of the materials you view or borrow from us.

(Since the statement should be 100% accurate, you would want to have lawyers for the ACLU or similar vet the wording to ensure accuracy. I just dashed that off from the top of my head so it may be totally inaccurate.)

2) Same disclosure should now be put on all library card applications with a place to initial to indicate that the warning has been given.

3) Same disclosure should now be put on all library internet terminals sign-on screens (if the library doesn't permit anonymous signons).

-----Original Message-----

From: Mary Ann Meyers <ljmam@hypermall.net>
To: ALA Office for Intellectual Freedom List <alaoif@ala1.ala.org>
Date: Monday, June 24, 2002 9:49 PM
Subject: [ALAOIF:23466] Re: FBI Begins Visiting Libraries

I can't get my library district to post a notice that they are being watched by cameras. I still would like to stay independent of the institutions, and register my opinions as a professional librarian *and* as a taxpayer.

What about a taxpayer/librarian carrying a sign in front of the library with something like: "The FBI is watching you in the library." And "The FBI can demand your record without a warrant at any time." "Your Freedom to Read is Being Monitored by the FBI."

Call it a National Patriot Day at the Library.

Mary Ann Meyers
ljmam@hypermall.net

-----Original Message-----

From: Mary Ann Meyers <ljmam@hypermall.net>
To: ALA Office for Intellectual Freedom List <alaoif@ala1.ala.org>
Cc: John Gear <jmgear@acd.net>; John Gear <jmgear@ameritech.net>; Chuck0 <chuck@tao.ca>
Date: Tuesday, June 25, 2002 8:29 AM
Subject: [ALAOIF:23469] FBI Surveillance

A friend of mine has suggested -- and I think it is a great idea, viable even for *armchair demonstrators* -- that we try the Gandhian approach of overwhelming the library investigations, i.e. that we all request every book in all our local, regional, and state collections that has as its subjects either political radicalism, or bomb-making, or other "terrorist"-related items -- multiple holds from different patrons, ILL requests, etc.

He suggests that choosing a single day for doing this throughout the nation might be a good idea.

I think someone should go to IFRT members and SRRT members (but perhaps not as an ALA initiative?) to sign them up for independent action on this.

Anyone out there able to do this or suggest something else?

Mary Ann Meyers
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-----Original Message-----

From: Brian Hartman <bhartman24@yahoo.com>
To: ALA Office for Intellectual Freedom List <alaoif@ala1.ala.org>
Date: Tuesday, June 25, 2002 11:47 AM
Subject: [ALAOIF:23476] Re: FBI Begins Visiting Libraries

"To Our Patrons:

Federal law requires that all patron information regarding library use, including, but not limited to, Internet use and book borrowing, be supplied to federal authorities upon their request. This information may be used as part of a criminal prosecution pursuant to the Patriot Act of 2001.

P.S - Please direct questions or comments concerning this policy to your local congressperson."

Does that sound explicit enough?

- > How do we warn our patrons without completely alienating them from the institution?
 - >
 - > Christie
 - > Queens Borough Public Library
-

-----Original Message-----

From: Mary Ann Meyers <ljmmam@hypermall.net>
To: ALA Office for Intellectual Freedom List <alaoif@ala1.ala.org>
Date: Tuesday, June 25, 2002 1:38 PM
Subject: [ALAOIF:23489] Re: FBI Begins Visiting Libraries

I agree that we can't act in isolation; however I think we can make a commitment as individuals gathered together to register disagreement with FBI violations of the First Amendment. What we need is a structure for gathering individual signatures of protest, or as a group decide to protest the FBI actions with information overload on a particular day by requesting "suspicious" collection items -- or by some other means. The Fourth of July or thereabouts would be a good day for everyone to put in a request to their local libraries for items the FBI might consider "suspicious."

Mary Ann Meyers
ljmmam@hypermall.net

-----Original Message-----

From: Mary Ann Meyers <ljmmam@hypermall.net>
To: ALA Office for Intellectual Freedom List <alaoif@ala1.ala.org>
Date: Wednesday, June 26, 2002 11:24 AM
Subject: [ALAOIF:23527] Re: FBI Surveillance

I support any ideas that draw participation and have a chance of working. I suggested the idea of proactive free citizen use of their libraries because an attorney friend suggested that it was an application of the principle that when someone tries to limit your freedom, an appropriate response is to express *more* of that threatened freedom.

I was talking about a one-day protest -- not keeping materials away from those who would read them--especially not over and over as you suggested. In fact, the point is to *increase* these materials and encourage people in the exercise of their right to read. (An ILL request has the added benefit of pointing out to your library that patron demand exists in an under-collected area.)

I think this suggestion would be more quickly implemented if it occurs extra-library institution. I can't predict how effective this statement of freedom to read will be; but if we act as a group of individuals doing the same peaceful action on the same day it has the following benefits:

1. We show solidarity with each other -- no one acts in isolation.
2. It allows those who are not capable of more freedom activity in terms of time commitments or physical inability to participate.
3. It allows participation by those who are not librarians or library staff.
4. If it is extra-library institution, the freedom activity does not have to win over institutional participation/approval one-by-one across the country.
5. It encourages *more* exploration of alternative viewpoints in collections, *more* circulation, *more* demand for subjects not collected locally.
6. The idea is to protect the reader by creating enough "paper" so that unconstitutional secret warrants are no longer viable tools against innocent citizens.

You replied: "I like the idea of a library Just Saying No, or blabbing to the media. We need to get this act into the courts."

I think those also are good things to do -- but they don't negate the potential effectiveness of my attorney friend's suggestion, nor do they include or encourage citizen participation in a demonstration of a constitutionally-protected freedom to read.

Mary Ann Meyers
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----- Original Message -----

From: "Roger Sutton" <rsutton@hbook.com>
To: "ALA Office for Intellectual Freedom List" <alaoif@ala1.ala.org>
Sent: Wednesday, June 26, 2002 8:15 AM
Subject: [ALAOIF:23515] Re: FBI Surveillance

> I probably should have called it "anarchistic"--using a grass roots, uncoordinated campaign of overwhelming the government through creative chaos. Chuck, which word sounds right to you?

>

> If in fact the government chooses to use the Patriot Act as a fishing expedition in libraries, Mary Ann's suggestion could be very effective. But bear in mind that it would also bite our professional goals in the ass. It is disingenuous to call this technique "an ordinary use of intellectual freedom" particularly in the fact that such a campaign would prevent those patrons who actually DO want to read the materials from finding them on the shelves. It's an exact

parallel with the technique used by people who don't approve of Daddy's Roommate--they keep checking it out over and over to keep the book off the shelf. The only way to get your turn is to place a hold--something not everyone is comfortable doing with controversial material AND creating another piece of paper that the feds can get their mitts on.

>

> I like the idea of a library Just Saying No, or blabbing to the media. We need to get this act into the courts.

> Roger Sutton

>

-----Original Message-----

From: Robert Lanxon <rlanxon@lincc.lib.or.us>

To: ALA Office for Intellectual Freedom List <alaoif@ala1.ala.org>

Date: Wednesday, June 26, 2002 1:00 PM

Subject: [ALAOIF:23543] Re: FBI Surveillance

I think part of the problem is that while we've been very good at "fighting" for the rights of our patrons, we have been very poor in informing them of what their rights are. We seem, sometimes, to adopt a "we know better attitude". If we had been advising the public of their rights in the library all along, perhaps we would have seen a much more vocal response. As it is, many of our patrons probably don't know what their rights are, and what is changing. What about a FAQ type publication that enunciated what those rights were... and how they have changed. Something that could be added to the pile of books when a patron checks out. Also, an FAQ for library workers, as Chuck suggested, that explains our rights and obligations.. such as can we tell anyone that the FBI was investigating (but not give the name of the person being investigated). Or.. is the very fact that they are investigating a secret too? Some legal opinion in this would be nice.

How about a "Stop reading over my shoulder" campaign. You could have a sticker or a button with a person looking annoyed while an "agent" type person is peering over their shoulder at the book they're reading. Or... hmmm.... "I don't check your gun, don't be checking my card." These are lame, but I'm just thinking here. LOLOL.. or a cartoon.. I can't draw, but how about for the caption: "Excuse me Agent Scully, but if you want to be read to, why don't you just ask?" Oh, that just leads into a whole new set of humor.. use the X-files. We could design our own special "Read" poster. Maybe someone under the covers with a flashlight: "Is this the only safe place to read left?" LOL. Or.. yet another idea... You could have the agent asking the patron "Hey, would you mind turning the page?"

Robert Lanxon

-----Original Message-----

From: Robert Lanxon <rlanxon@lincc.lib.or.us>

To: ALA Office for Intellectual Freedom List <alaoif@ala1.ala.org>

Date: Wednesday, June 26, 2002 2:40 PM

Subject: [ALAOIF:23556] Re: FBI Surveillance

How about a new booklist? Instead of banned books, we could have: "books to get you investigated" Or, how about a giant read in? Now there is my idea of a protest. Sit down on the capital steps.. and read a book. In fact, just make your own Jacket Cover of whatever book you think would torque the Feds the most, and put it on whatever book you really want to read. We could have the FBI Seal of Approval: "This book has been determined to be so bland and inconsequential, we don't care if you read it"

Maybe a little gold seal, with a "thumbs up".

[from dc: Folks on the list have contributed a number of possible titles for such a list but I am not including that information here.]

-----Original Message-----

From: Robert Lanxon <rlanxon@lincc.lib.or.us>

To: ALA Office for Intellectual Freedom List <alaoif@ala1.ala.org>

Date: Wednesday, June 26, 2002 2:51 PM

Subject: [ALAOIF:23558] Re: FBI Surveillance

LOL.. web site.. Federal Book Investigators?? Run by J. Edgar Prufrock?

-----Original Message-----

From: Mary Ann Meyers [SMTP:ljmam@hypermall.net]

Sent: Wednesday, June 26, 2002 2:01 PM

To: ALA Office for Intellectual Freedom List

Subject: [ALAOIF:23553] Re: FBI Surveillance

Great ideas, Robert -- now we need ways to implement as many of these ideas as we can.

First, does anyone have experience with online activism? Does anyone want to approach ALA about producing an FAQ on intellectual freedom? And another for library workers? Anyone with cartooning ability and anyone who could put together a web parody site?

Mary Ann Meyers

ljmam@hypermall.net
