

Dear _____:

Thank you for your recent letter.

America's libraries support our nation's efforts to preserve and protect the many hard-fought freedoms we enjoy as Americans. Librarians also have a responsibility to protect the privacy of our patrons while responding to legitimate national security concerns. In 49 of fifty states, most librarians are obligated by law to protect the confidentiality of patrons' library records and to require that a law enforcement agent provide a court order before releasing patrons' library records.

The American Library Association is concerned about the provisions of the U.S.A. Patriot Act that allow the FBI to seek information on Americans' reading habits, as if it were possible to determine what someone might do based upon what he or she has read. This wide-ranging federal surveillance of library records is a troubling development that will have a chilling effect on the public's use of library resources.

When someone checks out a book or looks at the Internet, it does not mean they agree with the information they find or that they intend to act on that information. Librarians will continue to fight for their patrons' First Amendment right to read and receive information without government interference.

Maurice J. (Mitch) Freedman
President, American Library Association