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Information Access Post September 11: What Librarians Need to Know

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Introduction

In June 1941 President Roosevelt spoke at the American Library Association Annual Conference and eloquently reflected on the significance of libraries and their keepers, especially during wartime:

Libraries are directly and immediately involved in the conflict which divides our world, and for two reasons: first, because they are essential to the functioning of a democratic society; second, because the contemporary conflict touches the integrity of scholarship, the freedom of mind, and even survival of culture, and libraries are the great tools of scholarship, the great repositories of culture, and the great symbols of the freedom of mind.

Sixty-five years later this philosophy still holds true. According to the Library Bill of Rights, one of the primary duties of librarians is to “provide materials and information presenting all points of view on current and historical issues and challenge censorship in the fulfillment of their responsibility to provide information and enlightenment.” [2] And while modern advances in technology such as the Internet have revolutionized the type of services that libraries provide, the desire for “equal and open access to all ideas for all citizens” [3] continues to be the philosophy supporting not only libraries, but a democratic society.

The word “censorship” typically has a negative connotation to library professionals whose main ethos is freedom of information. Because information is disseminated through so many different mediums today, the role of the librarian continues to evolve and become more challenging. Information professionals must understand how certain governmental policies and procedures affect the public’s right to know.

Flow of Information during Wartime

World War II

Wartime often initiates a wealth of conflicting ideas about how information should be disseminated by the government. During World War II, the federal government supported placing restrictions on the type and amount of information made available to the public. President Roosevelt established the Office of Censorship, Executive Order No. 8985 on December 19, 1941. In his announcement to the press, President Roosevelt explained the necessity of the Censorship Office: "All Americans abhor censorship, just as they abhor war. But the experience of this and of all other nations has demonstrated that some degree of censorship is essential in wartime, and we are at war." [4] He stressed that "it is necessary that a watch be set upon our borders, so that no such information may reach the enemy, inadvertently or otherwise, through the medium of the mails, radio or cable transmission or by any other means." [5] Byron Price, the Associated Press's Executive News Editor and Acting Manager, became the nation's first Director of Censorship. Under Price's direction, millions of communications--letters, cablegrams, radiograms, and long distance telephone calls-- that entered or left the United States were examined. [6] The advancement of technology, such as the increased use of cablegrams and radiotelephone, as well as the development of transoceanic airmail lines, contributed to the complexity of Price's duties. The purpose of the Office of Censorship was to "delay or withhold publication of any information that would help our enemies, and to expedite publication of all information [that can] safely be given to the American people and their allies." [7] The government relied on a "patriotic press and radio to abstain voluntarily from the dissemination of detailed information of certain kinds, such as reports of the movements of vessels and troops." [8]

Because the Office of Censorship's goal was to prevent the transfer of information of value to the enemy, communications crossing the borders of the United States were closely monitored and editors and broadcasters were asked to participate in "voluntary" censorship. The War Department, in cooperation with other federal agencies, asked the press not to print sensitive information. In order to clarify what fell under this class of information, Price had written guidelines drawn up. The *Code of Wartime Practices for American Broadcasters* and *Code of Wartime Practices for the American Press* were published by the Government Printing Office. Both codebooks described the principles behind voluntary censorship and urged broadcasters and journalists to use restraint in the handling of news that might be damaging. Subjects that were considered off-limits were details about U.S. troops, ships, planes, and fortifications. Their exact location, destination, schedules, and routes were considered off-limits, as well as exact information regarding schedules or delivery dates of future production, specific nature of contracts, and new or secret military designs and formulas. Journalists were cautioned not to publish photographs conveying

information on ports of embarkation, aerial photos of non-military significance and maps disclosing the location of military depots and war production plants. Weather reports were also a major source of concern. Forecasts could only be officially issued by the Weather Bureau due to the notion that detailed weather reports could unintentionally aid the enemy in attacks along coastlines.[9] Price's office relied heavily on the media's cooperation and their ability to judge whether material was too sensitive to be published or broadcasted and advocated the practice of self-censorship. When in doubt, journalists were encouraged to send material to the Office of Censorship for review. According to Sweeney in his book *Secrets of Victory*, "the code placed the burden of censorship on journalists themselves." [10]

Both the press and the general public supported Price's guidelines. This unanimous backing was due mostly to the popular support of the war following the devastating attack on Pearl Harbor and Price's superior reputation as a journalist and service record during World War I. In fact, as Sweeney notes, "periodic wartime surveys consistently found that two-thirds of the people agreed that they were given as much information as possible and disagreed with the idea that the 'government could give us more information about the fighting in this war without helping the enemy' ". [11] This overwhelming sense of patriotism was also felt by most Americans immediately following the attack on September 11, 2001. [12]

Post September 11

According to a poll performed by Newsweek on May 16-17, 2002, the majority of Americans approved of the way President Bush is handling the War on Terror. [13] It has been a long time since Americans were forced to consider their vulnerability as a nation. The enemy of today's "War on Terror," however, is significantly different from the enemy during World War II. In the words of one World War II veteran, "At Pearl Harbor, we could see them, we knew who they were.... This war is quite different. With the Japanese we knew where they lived and we could go after them." [14] The current administration, on the other hand, defines the current enemy as evildoers, "people motivated by hate or people that [have] no country." [15] The fact that the enemy is indeed so abstract makes the justification for many of the government's actions difficult for many people to accept. While public opinion poll published in July 2005 showed support for the Iraq war at about 50-60 percent, [16] a Pew research poll acknowledges that most Americans are not willing to sacrifice their civil liberties. [17]

Like the Pearl Harbor attack, the events on September 11 forced the Bush administration to re-examine the way the enemy might use information that is readily available to the public. The Internet, akin to the radio during World War II, is one of the most powerful tools used today to relay information to the public. Prior to the advent of the Internet, public and academic libraries

were the main depositories for public data. Material produced by government agencies was sent to depository libraries in print or microfiche format. People relied on the traditional library to access such material as government reports, press releases, federal register announcements, income tax documents, etc. However, the passage of the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995 paved the way for electronic access and spurred the onset of a constant free flow of information. The Act allowed "the dissemination of public information on a timely basis, on equitable terms, and in a manner that promotes the utility of the information to the public and makes effective use of information technology." [18] To accomplish this, "the federal government developed the National Information Infrastructure (NII), a set of guidelines that enabled federal agencies to take advantage of new information technologies by replacing paper and microfiche distribution with electronic distribution." [19]

With Internet access, anyone can easily seek information totally unrelated to the war on terrorism twenty-four hours a day. Popular topics of interest include health and financial advice for the lay person and scholarly research for the student. Since September 11, there has been an onslaught of material being removed from government Web sites, a technique often called "Web scrubbing," as well as a significant shift in public access policies and procedures that support this type of diminished access. A brief look at some key legislation and policies that impact the way information is disseminated will perhaps shed some light on the current debate heating up among some civil rights advocates and legislators.

Key Legislation & Policies Following September 11

FOIA Memorandum

A person's right to access public government information is protected under the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) that was signed into law in 1966 by President Johnson. The Act enabled the public to learn about significant government operations and decisions. To help ensure appropriate implementation, agencies must report annually to the Attorney General about specific FOIA operations. [20] In 1996 the FOIA was amended to include electronic documents. "The Electronic Freedom of Information Act (E-FOIA) created specifically 'Electronic Reading Rooms' to provide electronic access to documents created on or after November 1, 1996." [21] Under the Clinton administration, government agencies were encouraged to post information via their Web sites and public disclosure seemed the trend. However, a change in attitudes and policies began to emerge following the attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon.

On October 12, 2002 Attorney General Ashcroft issued a memorandum to the heads of departments and agencies of the executive branch that stressed that information would undergo vigorous review before being made publicly

accessible. In his memo he stressed that the Bush administration is “committed to full compliance with the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA), 5 U.S.C. § 552 (2000)” and at the same time urged federal agencies to use greater caution in disclosing information.[22] Unlike his predecessor, Attorney General Janet Reno, who favored disclosure of information, Ashcroft stressed that the Justice department would defend decisions to withhold records. Bush’s chief of staff, Andrew Card, released another memo on March 19, 2002 encouraging agencies to “safeguard” certain types of information:

In addition to information that could reasonably be expected to assist in the development or use of weapons of mass destruction, which should be classified or reclassified.... departments and agencies maintain and control sensitive information related to America's homeland security that might not meet one or more of the standards for classification set forth in Part 1 of Executive Order 12958.[23] The need to protect such sensitive information from inappropriate disclosure should be carefully considered, on a case-by-case basis, together with the benefits that result from the open and efficient exchange of scientific, technical, and like information.[24]

In response to this new category of information as “sensitive but unclassified” government agency Web sites have in fact de-published or scrubbed information, often blaming its potential threat to national security. According to librarian and Intranet Web Master at the Bureau of National Affairs (BNA) Laura Gordon-Murnane, “the federal government is employing strategies to keep unclassified information hidden from the American public by creating a whole new class of ill-defined, vague ‘classifications’ that go far beyond the exemptions written into law by FOIA.”[25] OpenTheGovernment.org has compiled a list of 50 such vague classifications.[26] While no official catalog of deleted information exists, Steve Aftergood, Director for the Project on Government Secrecy for the Federation of American Scientists (FAS), provides a representative selection of categories of data that have been withdrawn from public access in his article *The Age of Missing Information*. [27] Specific examples of scrubbed information will be discussed later in this article.

The Homeland Security Act of 2002

In August 2002, the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) was looking to establish some set of guidelines that would address “sensitive but unclassified” information. The Homeland Security Act of 2002[28] that established the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) paved the way for such guidelines. Two provisions of the Act that exempt information from public access are: 1) The Critical Infrastructure Information (CII) policy and 2) The Sensitive but Unclassified (SBU) provisions. According to the OMB Watch, a non-profit advocacy organization that monitors the Office of Management and Budget, both sections “threaten community right-to-know by hiding

information from the public about infrastructure vulnerabilities or any other "sensitive" information." [29] The CII provisions exempt from the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) any information that is voluntarily provided to the federal government by a private party, if the information relates to the security of vital infrastructure. "The definitions of vital infrastructure used in this Act cover everything from information about a potential leak at a chemical plant to a deficiency in a software program used by the Department of Defense." [30] In his report *Secrecy in the Bush Administration*, Representative Henry A. Waxman argues that such provisions demonstrate the Bush administration's move to create new categories of protected information that can be withheld from the public.[31] In response to this new trend, Rep. Waxman and other members of the Government Reform Committee have introduced The Restore Open Government Act of 2004 (H.R. 5073)[32], that would, among other things, "restore the presumption of disclosure, address excessive over-classification, and ease challenging agencies that are improperly withholding information." [33]

There are several other bills pending in congress that address and challenge the provisions of the FOIA.[34] And the Government Accountability Office (GAO) reported in May 2005 that "the number of FOIA requests received by agencies [has actually] increased by 71 percent from 2002 to 2004"[35]. This drastic increase is most likely the result of the over-classification of data. Legislation that currently involves monitoring government information includes the Data Quality Act and the E-Government Act of 2002.

The Data Quality Act

The Data Quality Act [36] came into effect October 2002 and essentially directs the Director of OMB to issue guidelines and standards for Federal agencies when releasing scientific information to the public. Advocates of the Act believe it will promote a better quality of information released by government agencies. However, it also makes it much easier for the government to justify the censoring of scientific data.[37] Opponents of the law worry that the guidelines could delay or manipulate an agency's efforts to release information on issues such as the risks of cancer or global warming.

The E-Government Act of 2002

The E-Government Act of 2002 [38] created an Office of Electronic Government (OEG) within the OMB. Among other purposes, the Act oversees the management of information by the Executive branch and allows the public easier access to government information and service. Section 207 - Accessibility, Usability, and Preservation of Government Information - is intended to ensure that the Internet and other information technologies improve the way government information is organized, preserved, and made available to the public.[39] The American Library Association (ALA) is concerned

with long-term permanent public access to information. While “section 207 (e) is intended to improve the preservation of, and public access to, electronic information by ‘achieving greater compliance with the Federal Records Act’, ALA warns that the desired goal of permanent public access to government information needs to be addressed in future legislation.” [40] Whether or not agencies are sufficiently cataloging and metadata tagging their records allowing for permanent access needs to be tracked.

U.S.A. Patriot Act

The U.S.A. Patriot Act [41] , while not related to the removal of information from Web sites, has forced librarians and information professionals to examine the role government plays in the public’s right to privacy and use of unrestricted data. The Act does not directly deal with the issue of “censoring” or removing information from the public domain, but rather concentrates on accessing personal records and computer trespassing. Section 215 specifically permits the searching of library and bookstore records. Many academic institutions have enacted written policies and guidelines regarding this Act. Cornell University is one of the first universities, under Office of Information Technologies, to create official “Procedure and Protocols under the “USA-Patriot Act.”[42] The American Library Association (ALA) has also taken on the enormous responsibility of developing suggested guidelines for libraries to follow when confronted with legal inquiries regarding patrons’ privacy rights. Sections of the Act were subject to a sunset clause that expired in 2006. In December 2005, the reauthorization of the Act was stopped with a Senate filibuster over concerns that the bill failed to protect civil liberties.[43] However, in February 2006 the House and Senate agreed to renew the provisions and it was signed into law by President Bush on March 9, 2006. The ALA Web site keeps track of pending legislation related to the Patriot Act as well as suggestions on how to interpret the law. [44]

Removal of Information during Wartime

The legislation and policies briefly discussed above warrant a look at the effects of restricting information from the public’s view. As part of his speech to the nation on November 29, 2002, President Bush stated that “we are an open society, but we’re at war. Foreign terrorists and agents must never be allowed to use our freedom against us.”[45] It is almost impossible to argue against this statement. However, in an open society, researchers, students, and the general public are affected by such actions. Retrieving detailed “recipes” on how to make a biological weapon differs significantly from obtaining information on the risks of living near a chemical plant. The wave of restricted access post September 11, no doubt, is causing delays in legitimate research. The OMB Watch currently keeps track of information that has been removed from agency Web sites in response to the September 11 terrorist attacks. Their Web site contains an inventory based on removals reported to

them or written about in the press (see www.ombwatch.org). [46] Information about nuclear power plants, toxic waste sites, and water resources have been removed from the Internet and in some instances actually destroyed.

Libraries first felt the move toward limiting public access as early as October 2001. On October 12, 2001, Superintendent of Documents Francis J. Buckley, Jr. requested Federal depository libraries to withdraw and destroy their depository copies of a USGS CD-ROM entitled *Source Area Characteristics of Large Public Surface-Water Supplies in the Conterminous United States: An Information Resource for Source-Water Assessment, 1999*. [47] Concerns that detailed information about dams and reservoirs could aid in a biological or chemical attack initiated this request. In some instances, FBI agents have made in-person inspections of libraries to ensure that the report has been removed from circulation. [48] Of course, there always remains the chance that copies of the report still exist and will re-surface in the future.

Information available through the World Wide Web is exposed to a much wider audience than data in a CD-ROM format, potentially creating more of an oversight concern. Gary Bass, director of OMB watch, worries that the government will use the terrorists attacks as an excuse to hide valuable information, such as the safety of chemical plants, from the public. Bass's belief that "the biggest battle now is the slippage from right-to-know to need-to-know" [49] is the motivation behind the OMB Watch oversight activities. Because of the wealth of information and Web sites that exist today, it is almost impossible to identify every piece of missing or scrubbed data, but the OMB Watch continues to keep a relatively organized and up-to-date inventory of such instances.

Scrubbing data is not a foolproof option if one wants to make information unattainable. Material posted by one source considered to be sensitive or potentially dangerous is mostly likely available in alternative sources or formats. In defense of his Censorship Office during World War II, Price argued that information should be safeguarded against the enemy. However, screening information proved not always practical or productive. For instance, an article from the *Saturday Evening Post* in February of 1942 entitled, "Wilderness Defense" by Richard Neuberger was one of the first articles censored by the Office of Censorship. The article described power projects in the west and included photographs taken under Army auspices. [50] The *Post* voluntarily submitted the article for review to Price's Office. Although the Office admitted in a letter to the *Saturday Evening Post* that it was possible that the enemy already possessed the information, it stressed that it would be better to assume that the enemy had not actually obtained such well-organized information. Because the run of the magazine had already begun before the *Post* decided to clear it with the Office of Censorship, the publisher was forced to conceal the text of the article with a tint block (shaded text), explaining to readers that an "article on defense of

our Western frontiers by Richard Neuberger had been deleted by request of the Office of Censorship.” [51] The publisher replaced the Neuberger article with another story and Price absolved the *Post* and the author of any formal charges. Ironically, the magazine *Collier* published an article on Western defense the same week.

Today, the de-publishing or scrubbing of material from the public domain in a digital environment also forces one to question the point of such censorship. For example, the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ATSDR) removed a report that revealed security details at chemical plants: "Industrial Chemicals and Terrorism: Human Threat Analysis, Mitigation, and Prevention." But after its apparent removal, this report was located on two non-government sites using the search engine Google, even though in a *Washington Post* article, a Google spokesperson admitted that they are taking a proactive role and removing material that the government has removed from the Web. [52] The Internet, however, keeps data stored in other places such as The Internet Archive. This service provides some access to archived versions of Web pages after material has been removed from the Web. Many reports that have been removed from public access are not promoting terrorism but contain vital information, such as the ATSDR report cited above that identifies the potential threats of exposure to industrial chemicals on human health and infrastructure as well as mitigation and prevention methods.

Geospatial data is a good example of information (maps, nautical charts, aerial and satellite images) that is under scrutiny. For instance, the New York State Interactive Mapping Gateway includes this statement on their Web site: "Due to the presence of 'sensitive content', certain data/imagery is available under the following procedure as directed by the NYS Office of Homeland Security." [53] Requests must include the reason the data is needed along with a copy of valid government issued photo ID. In addition, the National Imagery and Mapping Agency stopped selling large-scale digital maps to the public through its Web site and turned off the search engine on its Web site that allowed customers to download maps from its archives. [54] Many of these maps may in fact be accessed on site in map libraries at universities and special libraries around the country and are most often used by geography and urban planning students. What the government may interpret as helpful to terrorists is often vital to students, researchers and emergency responders.

At the request of the National Geospatial-Intelligence Agency (NGA) and the Department of the Interior's U.S. Geological Survey (USGS), the Rand Corporation's Intelligence Policy Center analyzed how federal agencies' publicly accessible geospatial information could be used by potential terrorists. The study concluded that although publicly accessible geospatial data could aid in locating a target, potential attackers need more reliable, and more detailed and up-to-date information to carry out a strike than is typically publicly accessible. Furthermore, a review of nonfederal sources confirms the same or

similar information can be retrieved from industry, academic institutions, or even private citizens. [55] Decision makers must consider the societal costs before restricting such information. For example, boating, fishing, and oil and gas industries need access to accurate nautical charts. [56] Rand researchers developed a framework that policymakers should use to assess the threat level to national security. The framework is based on three concepts: usefulness-is the information useful for target selection?; uniqueness-can the information be found anywhere else?; societal benefits and costs-what are the security and societal cost of restricting such information? [57]

Librarians during Wartime

As providers of information, librarians occupy an important role during wartime. During World War II, they were actively involved in wartime efforts to keep the public informed. Following the attack on Pearl Harbor in 1941, the American Library Association (ALA) issued a statement of library policy declaring that "every library must officially or unofficially become a war information center that houses the latest facts, reports, directories, regulations, and instructions for public use....The library must disseminate authentic information and sound teachings in the fields of economics, government, history, and international relations." [58] In support of this decree, the ALA issued a six-point "National Platform" for libraries to follow during the war. Point One called for the formation of War Information Centers to provide essential information to the general public. While some public libraries were given "official status" as such centers by the government offices, many were informal centers taking the lead from their library directors on what documents and services they wanted to highlight in support of the war effort.[59]Elmer Davis, Director of the Office of War Information, which served as a clearinghouse for information about the war, expressed that "Librarians in their professional duty are continually concerned with the problem of directing their readers to the materials with which their readers require. In the present war as never before, this duty of librarians assumes a first and pressing importance and librarians in consequence carry a responsibility such as they never carried in our history." [60] Responding to Davis's plea for support, many librarians used the "Exhibit" as a way to provide vital information about the war to the public. For example, the display, "Industrial Knowledge of America's Defense" was displayed at the Rochester Public Library in the fall of 1942.As a result, many patrons requested additional information on the topic. [61]

Similarly, in response to September 11, many librarians immediately assisted the public with gathering war related information. The President of the American Library Association issued a press release on September 12, 2001, offering not only condolences to those affected by the terrorist events, but also encouraging the public to seek out information: "Whether you need to access a computer to learn the latest breaking news, find out where to give

blood in your community, identify a professional who can provide grief counseling, or simply seek out books to help your family understand recent events, libraries in every community in America can help.”[62]Consequently, the Association’s Web site provides information on terrorism and law, civic issues, and coping and grieving. Web subject guides created by public and academic librarians exist to direct readers to news stories and hot topics surrounding the War. And there are a multitude of library exhibits, both online and in-house, that continue to capture people’s recollections and stories about the tragic event. Several grassroots endeavors, such as *The September Project* [63], allow libraries to sponsor civic events about freedom, democracy, and citizenship.

Due to the impact of the Internet on their role as disseminators of information, today’s librarians are faced with even more challenges than those working during World War II. Legislative policies and regulations such as the ones discussed above can affect a librarian’s everyday work and responsibilities. Kirsten L. Allen, an academic librarian at American University in Washington, D.C., advocates in her article on American libraries as democracy’s PR Tools, that librarians must “inherently believe in the core ideals of libraries--namely that access to information and knowledge is a right guaranteed to all;.... And our goal as librarians is to make sure this right is realized for all.”[64] While her commitment to the democracy of ideas is a noble one, it overlooks the realistic need to form some conclusions and recommendations about the dissemination and control of online information during wartime.

Recommendations and Conclusion

So how can legislators and information providers agree about what is too sensitive to release to the public? Should there be some formal guidelines established by the government similar to the guidelines developed by Price’s office during World War II? A report produced by the National Archives and Records Administration, Information Security Oversight Office which was released June 2003, sums up the dilemma of public access versus national security and is worth quoting at length:

Our Nation and our Government are profoundly different in a post 9/11 world. Americans’ sense of vulnerability has increased, as have their expectations of their Government to keep them safe. Information is crucial to responding to these increased concerns and expectations. On the one hand, Americans are concerned that information may be exploited by our country’s adversaries to harm us. On the other hand, impediments to information sharing among Federal agencies and with state, local and private entities need to be overcome in the interests of homeland security. Equally so, the free flow of information is essential if citizens are to be informed and if they are to be successful in holding

the Government and its leaders accountable. In many ways, the Federal government is confronted with the twin imperatives of information sharing and information protection, two notions that contain inherent tension but are not necessarily contradictory....While great emphasis is often placed on the consequences of the improper disclosure of classified information, restrictions on dissemination of information carry their own risks. Whether within the Federal Government or between the Federal Government and state, local and private sector personnel, or with the public, the ability to share information rapidly and seamlessly can make the difference in precluding or responding to the next terrorist event.[65]

While the controversies about what kinds of information to release or hold back continue, suggested standards and guidelines do exist, such the ones recommended by RAND. Additional examples of guidelines include the Internet Content Advisory published by the National Infrastructure Protection Center (NIPC). NIPC asks people to consider before posting information on their sites the following:

1. Has the information been cleared and authorized for public release?
 2. Does the information provide details concerning enterprise safety and security? Are there alternative means of delivering sensitive security information to the intended audience?
 3. Is there any personal data posted (such as biographical data, addresses, etc.)?
 4. How could someone intent on causing harm misuse this information?
 5. Could this information be dangerous if it were used in conjunction with other publicly available data?
 6. Could someone use the information to target your personnel or resources?
 7. Many archival sites exist on the Internet, and information removed from an official site might nevertheless remain publicly available elsewhere.
- [66]

These ideas advocate simple common sense. People deserve the right-to-know, for instance, if a nearby facility is causing health problems in their neighborhood. Whether a person decides to seek this kind of information through his public library or his personal computer via the Web it should be easily accessible.

As information professionals, today's librarians may lead by example in determining how to deal with these access dilemmas. Taking into account the above recommendations will help them confront public access challenges. In addition to the helpful September 11 Web sites listed on their Web page, the American Library Association (ALA) has formed task forces on restrictions on access to government information. For example, GODORT (ALA Government

Documents Round Table) and GIS (ALA Legislation Committee Government Information Subcommittee) recommended that the ALA President appoint an Ad Hoc Committee to gather information and recommend to ALA policy regarding government information issues in light of current security concerns. Issues within the scope of the proposed Ad Hoc Committee include, but are not limited to:

- Maintaining publicly available bibliographic records for publications and web sites removed from public access;
- Obtaining legal advice regarding the government's authority to withdraw or restrict access to government information when the public's right to know and the security and safety concerns of our nation are in conflict;
- Developing clear criteria and procedures for assessing public access to government information;
- Preserving and archiving copies of original government information removed from public access so that after a period of time and subsequent reevaluation, full public access could be restored. [67]

The Legislative Committee of GODORT also maintains a web page that tracks issues affecting access to government information, and provides online versions of important news articles, memoranda, statements, reports, executive orders, bills, and more. [68] Librarians should take advantage of this synthesis of material when confronted with access issues.

Many lessons can be learned from past wars and our nation's leaders. Bryon Price shut down the Office of Censorship and its restriction policies at the end of the Second World War when he felt that the threat to national security had decreased dramatically. Furthermore, "government secrecy was not a major issue after the war because President Trumanand the nation was occupied with sensational war-crime news." [69] Since no end to the War on Terror seems imminent, restrictions on information access probably will continue. It's imperative that information providers keep abreast of changes in legislation that affect not only their personal liberties, but also the rights of their patrons--legitimate researchers, students, scientists, clients, and the general public. With this knowledge librarians can continue to contribute to the free flow of information.

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