POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

RESPONDING TO LAW ENFORCEMENT REQUESTS FOR PATRON INFORMATION

Should an individual or individuals representing themselves as law enforcement agents approach you and ask you to provide library records involving patron data or information about library users with or without any form of written authorization, do not disclose any information. Contact any of the following members of the Library Executive Group, who will make the necessary communication to University Counsel's Office and the University Librarian. Also, contact the supervisor in your unit.

Library Executive Group Contact Information

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1. Antiterrorist legislation signed into law in October 2001 and popularly known as the USA PATRIOT Act creates new responsibilities for required disclosures of business records to law enforcement. Cornell University Library needs to follow the advice of University Counsel on how to respond to requests for disclosure of library records.

2. Cornell University Library subscribes to the American Library Association Code of Ethics (http://www.ala.org/alaorg/oif/codeofethics.pdf), which recognizes that we protect each library user’s right to privacy and confidentiality.

3. The fact of an information request, the nature of the request, and the names of library patrons are to be treated in the strictest confidence and are not to be discussed or revealed, according to the requirements of the USA PATRIOT Act.

4. Library records, which may be the focus of law enforcement requests, include electronic, print, and other forms of patron information. CUL and its unit libraries need to retain specific information for the regular operation of library business. Archives of information that reveal identities of individuals should be kept only when clearly necessary.

5. An exception to this policy provided for by the USA PATRIOT Act allows voluntary disclosure for emergency situations, which are likely to be rare in the library. Should a staff member, in the course of business, reasonably believe he has accessed information about an emergency involving immediate danger of death or serious physical injury, he should contact the university police immediately; then contact any member of the Library Management Team and the supervisor in the unit.

6. Each unit is responsible for adherence to this policy and procedure. All library staff, including student assistants, are to be fully informed on this policy and procedure and need to understand their own role if such situations arise.

7. Any questions about these procedures should be addressed to the Associate University Librarian for Administrative Services at (607) 255-5181.

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