WHAT IS THE PATRIOT ACT?

Following the events of September 11th 2001, Congress passed the USA PATRIOT Act of 2001 (PL 107-56). This act expands the investigative powers of the Federal government so that it may counteract terrorist activity more effectively. The name USA PATRIOT is an acronym which stands for Uniting and Strengthening America by Providing Appropriate Tools Required to Intercept and Obstruct Terrorism.

The PATRIOT Act allows law enforcement access to information that could assist in an investigation to protect against terrorism or foreign intelligence activities. Information that law enforcement could access under the PATRIOT Act includes patron library records, papers, documents and other miscellaneous items.

It also allows the federal government to install various wiretap devices if it believes that the device will yield information “relevant to an ongoing criminal investigation.” This applies to “any person or entity providing wire or electronic communication service in the United States” and as such, may include the Thousand Oaks Library.

Under the PATRIOT Act, if a federal or other law enforcement agent obtains a valid court order, the agent can go to a library and request an individual patron’s library or Internet record. The library must then provide the requested information to the requesting agency. The library cannot disclose that a request was made.

LIBRARY CIRCULATION RECORDS

The Library gathers and verifies basic personal information about individual patrons when they apply for library cards, such as name, address, and telephone number. This information is stored with the patron’s barcode in his or her record. A checked out item appears on a patron’s record only for the circulation period of that item. When it is checked in, it is erased from the record. The Library has no record of circulation history for individual items except the current and previous borrower of the item.
An individual patron’s circulation record contains only the items currently checked out, pending holds or requests, and outstanding fines and fees. Once an item is returned, and any applicable fines are paid, it is automatically removed from the patron’s record.

**LIBRARY INTERNET ACCESS**

With a patron’s library card, Reference Desk staff can establish an Internet account for a patron that is completely independent of his or her circulation records. An Internet account has the patron’s name, library card number, phone number, login, and password. This account enables a patron to schedule a time to use an Internet workstation. The record of who used which workstation resides on the server for 24 hours. Print records are maintained for 3 hours.

The Thousand Oaks Library has no monitoring software on the public Internet computers, and keeps no records of websites accessed. Additionally, each time the computer is rebooted, the memory, Internet history, and temporary files are erased. This removes any record tying an individual workstation and user to a particular website.

Patron Internet records, therefore, consist solely of their username records and whether they have a reservation, have had a reservation within the past 24 hours, or are currently using an Internet workstation.

**OUR PRIVACY POLICY**

Library registration and circulation records are confidential records and generally may not be disclosed to the public or local or state agencies. Under California law and the PATRIOT Act, this information may be disclosed to law enforcement if a valid court order is obtained. The Thousand Oaks Library intends to comply with any lawful requests made under this Act.

**USEFUL LINKS**

**US Department of Justice**: http://www.usdoj.gov/ (General Information)

http://www.lifeandliberty.gov/ (Specific to the PATRIOT Act)