

USA PATRIOT Act FAQ

• *What is the USA PATRIOT Act?*

The *Uniting and Strengthening America by Providing Appropriate Tools Required to Intercept and Obstruct Terrorism Act of 2001* (“USA Patriot Act”) became law on October 26, 2001 in the wake of the events of September 11, 2001. The Act expanded federal authorities’ access to personal records – including library records - and extended the laws governing wiretaps and “trap and trace” phone devices to Internet and electronic communication. **The USA PATRIOT Act supersedes state laws and county policies, making library records and computer equipment subject to federal access and confiscation.**

While the Marin County Free Library makes every effort to protect your privacy, the USA PATRIOT Act (Public Law 107-56) broadly empowers federal agents to compel the surrender of library records and to monitor and/or confiscate library computers. This law also prohibits library staff from informing you if such actions occur.

• *What is the Marin County Free Library’s (MCFL) Policy on Patron Privacy?*

All patron information in the MCFL database is confidential by law of the State of California. All MCFL employees sign confidentiality agreements upon being hired.

MCFL staff may NOT:

- Use library files for any purpose except to check out or reclaim library materials.
- Look up a patron record for that patron without his/her library card number or photo ID
- Provide patron information to anyone unless the information is being sent to the County Collections Department to reclaim library materials or under court order.
- Place any information in a patron file that is not essential to library services.

Patron records of checked out materials are erased when materials are returned, provided there are no unpaid fines and the patron has not selected the “My Reading History” option. A patron may choose to retain, access or erase records of material checked out using the “My Reading History” option but staff cannot view this list at any time.

Library Online Internet and Word Processing logon records are retained for 24 hours only. A print job can only be accessed by the patron who created it. Print jobs are retained in a print queue until the patron pays for a printout, opts to delete the print job or until closing time on the day the print job was created.

Records of online activity such as the computer cache and history file are deleted each time a user logs out of a Library Online computer.

• *Where can I get more information about the USA PATRIOT Act and libraries?*

Visit the [Librarians Index to the Internet](#) and search the keywords “Patriot Act”. For more detail on how specific sections of the PATRIOT Act impact libraries, please visit the [American Library Association website](#).

• *How can I express my opinion regarding the USA PATRIOT Act?*

Contact your elected Federal Representatives – [Senator Dianne Feinstein](#), [Senator Barbara Boxer](#) and [Congresswoman Lynn Woolsey](#). For further information on patron privacy and public use computers, please refer to the [MARINet Privacy Policy](#) as well as the Marin County Free Library [Patron Privacy Policy](#), [Public Use Computer Policy](#) and [Public Use Computer Policy FAQ](#).