



September 20, 2001

Library Community Statement on Freedom of Speech and Access to Information

America's library community mourns the innocent victims of the recent terrorist attacks. We send our deepest sympathy to their families, friends, and other survivors. We also extend our appreciation and heartfelt support to the thousands of police officers, firefighters, volunteers, and other emergency personnel in New York City, Washington, D.C. and Pennsylvania who have sacrificed so much to assist others.

As our Nation and, indeed, the World move forward during this time of mourning and recovery, libraries continue to serve a diverse array of communities across our Nation with information and library services that celebrate the freedom of speech and access to information that we all embrace. By maintaining, on a daily basis, the balance between access to information for all, the privacy rights of our users, and the responsibility to cooperate with law enforcement agencies, libraries continue to be cultural and living symbols for the freedoms that we enjoy.

As stated so eloquently by Abraham Lincoln in a letter to an old friend in Illinois during the final days of the Civil War, "freedom is not some arbitrary right that is bestowed upon us because of the virtuous nature of our national character. It is a right we must protect and defend in both times of promise and peril if we are to remain in the future what we are in the present -- a free and honorable people."

The library associations listed below support the efforts of our Nation's leaders to protect and preserve the freedoms that are the foundation of our democracy. Libraries serve as critical resources for communities, individuals, and institutions and those concerned about the important need for access to information. We welcome the public's continued use of public, academic, research, special and school libraries.

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