
Resolution in support of whistleblower Edward Snowden

Whereas, since 1939 the American Library Association (ALA) has affirmed the right to privacy in its Code of Ethics, which currently states, “We protect each library user’s right to privacy and confidentiality with respect to information sought or received and resources consulted, borrowed, acquired or transmitted”;

Whereas in “Principles for the Networked World” in 2002 ALA included among the “principles of privacy” the fact that “privacy is a right of all people and must be protected in the networked world” and the recognition that “the rights of anonymity and privacy while people retrieve and communicate information must be protected as an essential element of intellectual freedom”;

Whereas in 2002 in “Privacy: An Interpretation of the Library Bill of Rights” ALA recognized that “privacy is essential to the exercise of free speech, free thought, and free association”;

Whereas in 2003 in its “Resolution on the USA Patriot Act and Related Measures that Infringe on the Rights of Library Users” ALA criticized the “USA PATRIOT Act and other recently enacted laws, regulations, and guidelines” on the grounds that they “increase the likelihood that the activities of library users, including their use of computers to browse the Web or access e-mail, may be under government surveillance without their knowledge or consent” (CD#20.1, 2003);

Whereas in 2004 ALA passed a “Resolution on Securing Government Accountability through Whistleblower Protection” affirming its “support for accountable government and the role of whistleblowers in reporting abuse, fraud, and waste in governmental activities” (CD#20.7, 2004);

Whereas in 2005 in its “Resolution on Radio Frequency Identification (RFID) Technology and Privacy Principles” ALA insisted that “user privacy and confidentiality has long been an integral part of the mission of libraries” (CD#19.1, 2005);

■ KEYWORDS: American Library Association – Council; Freedom of speech – United States; Government accountability; National Security Agency; PATRIOT Act of 2001; Privacy; Right to privacy; USA PATRIOT Act; Whistleblowers.

Whereas in 2008 ALA passed a “Resolution Commending the FBI Whistleblower Who Exposed Abuses on the Use of Exigent National Security Letters” which called on Congress to “protect the rights of whistleblowers against retaliation”(CD#20.5, 2008);

Whereas since 2010 ALA has sponsored “Choose Privacy Week,” an initiative “that invites library users into a national conversation about privacy rights in a digital age” and a campaign that “gives libraries the tools they need to educate and engage users, and gives citizens the resources to think critically and make more informed choices about their privacy;

Whereas Edward Snowden, a technical specialist for contractors employed by the National Security Agency, has admitted to providing classified information to reporters for *The Guardian* and *The Washington Post* newspapers;

Whereas this information revealed that, under a FISA court order issued in April 2013, the National Security Agency is collecting the telephone records of millions of U.S. customers of Verizon;

Whereas this information further revealed that since 2007 under its PRISM program the NSA has been collecting huge quantities of data on internet usage, including internet search histories, email, video and voice chat, videos, photos, voice-over-IP chats, file transfers, and social networking details, from internet service providers in the United States;

Whereas Edward Snowden has explained that his “sole motive” in revealing this information was “to inform the public as to that which was done in their name and that which is done against them”; and

Whereas Edward Snowden is now facing extradition and prosecution for releasing this information; now, therefore be it

Resolved, that the American Library Association (ALA):

1. commends Edward Snowden as a whistleblower who has performed a valuable service in support of the principles of privacy, free speech, free thought, and free association; and
2. opposes any attempts by the United States government to extradite or prosecute Edward Snowden.

Passed by ALA Council, 30 June 2013.

Withdrawn for reconsideration by ALA Council, 1 July 2013.

Made null and void with substitute resolution by ALA Council, 2 July 2013 (see page 119).

POLICY CITATIONS

1939 Code of Ethics for Librarians.

<http://www.ala.org/Template.cfm?Section=History1&Template=/ContentManagement/ContentDisplay.cfm&ContentID=8875>

2008 Amended Code of Ethics.

<http://www.ala.org/advocacy/sites/ala.org.advocacy/files/content/proethics/codeofethics/Code%20of%20Ethics%20of%20the%20American%20Library%20Association.pdf>

2002 “Principles for the Networked World”.

<http://www.ala.org/offices/sites/ala.org.offices/files/content/oitp/publications/issuebriefs/principles/principles.pdf>

2002 “Privacy: An Interpretation of the Library Bill of Rights”.

<http://www.ala.org/Template.cfm?Section=interpretations&Template=/ContentManagement/ContentDisplay.cfm&ContentID=132904>

CD # 20.1, 2003.

<http://www.ala.org/Template.cfm?Section=ifresolutions&Template=/ContentManagement/ContentDisplay.cfm&ContentID=11891>

CD#20.7, 2004.

<http://www.ala.org/offices/sites/ala.org.offices/files/content/wo/reference/colresolutions/PDFs/000002-CD20.7.pdf>

CD#19.1, 2005.

<http://www.ala.org/Template.cfm?Section=ifresolutions&Template=/Contentmanagement/ContentDisplay.cfm&ContentID=85331>

CD#20.5, 2008.

<http://www.ala.org/offices/sites/ala.org.offices/files/content/wo/reference/colresolutions/PDFs/COL%20Resolution%20on%20Ba.pdf>

Choose Privacy Week.

<http://chooseprivacyweek.org/>