Libraries Host Videoconference on USA Patriot Act and Anti-Terrorism Measures

By Kari Smith

Columbia Libraries recently hosted over 70 people for the American Libraries of Research Libraries sponsored videoconference, “Safeguarding Our Patron’s Privacy: What Every Librarian Needs to Know About the USA Patriot Act and Related Anti-Terrorism Measures.”

University Librarian James G. Neal was one of four panelists for the two-hour videoconference broadcast from Washington, D.C. Over 250 locations across the United States hosted the broadcast with over 7,000 viewers. Following the broadcast, two of Columbia’s law librarians answered questions from the audience assembled in Butler Library’s Tauber Room.

Doris MacMillan moderated the informative session with James Neal, Gary Strong, director, Queensborough Public Library, Tracy Mitrano, policy advisor and director of Computer Law and Policy at Cornell and Thomas Susman, partner, Ropes & Gray, Washington, D.C.

Susman opened with basics about the USA Patriot Act, FBI guidelines and Homeland Security legislation. Neal and Strong then discussed the implications of this policy on libraries. Following a call-in question and answer session, Mitrano discussed policies, protocols, and procedures per the PATRIOT Act. The four speakers discussed how libraries and librarians should respond. In the final discussion on issues and concerns; Mitrano addressed Constitutional issues, Neal and Strong spoke about library values, and Susman laid out legislative realities.

Responding to a question on types of information that library patron records might be requested by law enforcement agencies, Neal said, “There is nothing in the law which requires us to authenticate any individuals as they act to use collections or electronic information. There is nothing which dictates what information we need to collect.”

Both Neal and Strong stressed that records and computer data could only be seized by warrant—an extreme situation. The USA Patriot Act applies not only to library patron information but also to computer and internet data exchanges. Neal recommended that people “Follow existing privacy policies and always call your supervisor immediately when a law enforcement officer asks for patron or operational information.”

Columbia’s Representative Committee of Librarians (RCL) along with the Information Services Division Training and Staff Development office were local sponsors for the event.

Jeff Carroll, president of the RCL, said, “This is an example of the types of quality programs that can be brought to Columbia and delivered to a large number of professional staff in a cost-effective way.”

He continued, “It is also exemplary of how Columbia University Libraries can exert a leadership roll on the national scene.”

Carroll also commented on the local arrangements for the videoconference, “This event revealed the depth of resources from which we have to draw here at Columbia.”

New York’s Secretary of State Randy Daniels Visits Medical Center

At the invitation of Columbia’s Office of Community Relations, New York Secretary of State Randy Daniels, center, toured the Thelma C. Davidson Adair Medical and Dental Center on January 7, 2003.

With a focus on senior citizens, the center, which is an initiative of Columbia University Health Care, Inc., uniquely provides medical and dental care under one roof to patients with Medicare or major commercial insurance. “The Adair Center is a state-of-the-art facility that responds impressively to the needs of Northern Manhattan residents,” Daniels said. Joining the Secretary of State are Assistant Vice President of Government and Community Relations Larry Deis, left, and Allan Formicola, vice dean of Columbia’s School of Dental and Oral Surgery.

Playwriting Student Wins Liberace Scholarship

By Kristin Sterling

Although he is a first-year playwriting student in the School of the Arts (SOA), Brandon “Paul” Cohen has already had international theatre experience. While in the Peace Corps in Malawi, Africa, besides teaching math, English and geography, Cohen also edited and produced Shakespeare’s “Twelfth Night,” adapting it for a Central African audience.

After a few years of various jobs, including working on the 2000 census, Cohen returned to his passion of playwriting, enrolling in the SOA’s Theatre Arts program. Thanks to a grant from the Liberace Foundation for the Performing and Creative Arts, Cohen is Columbia’s 2002-03 Liberace Scholar.

The merit-based review process is limited to promising and deserving graduate students in the playwriting program who demonstrate exceptional talent, drive and artistic potential.

“The Liberace Foundation is one of the major supporters of emerging artists nationwide, and we are honored to have received this prestigious award again this year, enabling us to recognize the work of our most promising students,” said Bruce Ferguson, SOA dean.

This is the second consecutive year that the SOA was awarded a grant from the Liberace Foundation. Last year’s Liberace Scholar, Bashsheba Doran, had her play “Until Morning” produced by BBC Radio 4 in April. She also adapted Henrik Ibsen’s “Peer Gynt” for production in November as an MFA Thesis project.

Since 1976 the Liberace Foundation for the Performing and Creative Arts has provided more than $4.5 million in scholarships grants, benefiting more than 1,400 students.

Liberace considered the Foundation on of his greatest achievements. In his book, “The Things I Love,” Liberace wrote “a lot of good things have happened to me in show business and I want to do what I can to give others just starting out a career boost.”

During his career Liberace, an internationally renowned pianist and showman, performed with major symphonies from the London Philharmonic to the Boston Pops and entertained audiences with classical and popular music as well as stage and television shows.