



Tor Exit Nodes in Libraries - Pilot (phase one)

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Hello Tor Community!

We first [introduced](#) you to the [Library Freedom Project](#) back in February after we won the Knight News Challenge on Libraries. Since then, we've been hard at work bringing privacy education to libraries across the United States, with stops in the UK and Ireland, virtual trainings in Canada and Australia, and more plans to visit international libraries in the works.

Today, we're excited to announce a new initiative, a collaboration between the Library Freedom Project and Tor Project: Tor exit [relays](#) in libraries. [Nima Fatemi](#), the Tor Project member who's already helped Library Freedom Project in a number of ways, is our main partner on this project. This is an idea whose time has come; libraries are our most democratic public spaces, protecting our intellectual freedom, privacy, and unfettered access to information, and Tor Project creates software that allows all people to have these rights on the internet. We're excited to combine our efforts to help libraries protect internet freedom, strengthen the Tor network, and educate the public about how Tor can help protect their right to digital free expression.

Libraries have been committed to intellectual freedom and privacy for decades, outlining these commitments in the [ALA Core Values of Librarianship](#), the [Freedom to Read Statement](#), and the [ALA Code of Ethics](#). They're also centers of education in their local communities, offering free classes on a variety of subjects, including computer instruction. Libraries serve a diverse audience; many of our community members are people who need Tor but don't know that it exists, and require instruction to understand and use it.

Some of these patrons are part of vulnerable groups, like domestic violence survivors, racial and ethnic minorities, student activists, or queer and trans communities. Others belong to local law enforcement or municipal government. All of them could benefit from learning about Tor in a trusted, welcoming environment like the library.

Bringing Tor exit relays into libraries would not only be a powerful symbolic gesture demonstrating our commitment to a free internet, but also a practical way to help the Tor network, and an excellent opportunity to help educate library patrons, staff, boards of trustees, and other stakeholders about the importance of Tor. For libraries that have already installed Tor Browser on library PCs, running a relay is the obvious next step toward supporting free expression in their communities and all over the world.

As public internet service providers, libraries are shielded from some of the [legal concerns](#) that an individual exit relay operator might face, such as trying to explain to law enforcement that the traffic leaving her exit is not her own. Furthermore, libraries are protected from DMCA takedowns by [safe harbor provisions](#). Importantly, librarians know their rights and are ready to fight back when those rights [are challenged](#).

In order to begin this new project, we needed a pilot, and we had just the library in mind – [Kilton Library](#) in Lebanon, New Hampshire, one of two Lebanon Libraries. Chuck McAndrew is the IT librarian there, and he's done amazing things to the computers on his network, like running them all on GNU/Linux distributions. Why is this significant? Most library environments run Microsoft Windows, and we know that Microsoft participated in the NSA's [PRISM](#) surveillance program. By choosing GNU/Linux and installing some privacy-protecting browser extensions too, Chuck's helping his staff and patrons opt-out of pervasive government and corporate surveillance. Pretty awesome.



Kilton Library is not only exemplary because of its GNU/Linux computer environment; it's also beautiful and brand-new, LEED Gold-certified, with an inviting and sunny open floor plan and an outdoor community garden. It's an example of the amazing potential inherent in libraries. We drove up

to New Hampshire last week to start phase one.



We decided to set our pilot up as a middle relay to start – we want to ensure that it is stable and doesn't interfere in any way with the library's other network traffic. We nicknamed the new relay LebLibraries, and you can check out how our relay is doing [here, on Globe](#).



After the *LebLibraries* relay is up for a few months, we'll return for phase two of the project and convert it into an exit node. Our goal is to make exit relay configuration a part of the Library Freedom Project's privacy trainings for librarians; we'll meet with library directors and boards of trustees to talk about how Tor fits into the mission of libraries as beacons of intellectual freedom, and how libraries are perfectly positioned not only to help our patrons use Tor Browser, but are the ideal location to run Tor exit relays to help give back to the Tor community.

We need more libraries to join us in this initiative. Want your local library to be our next exit relay site? Know an awesome librarian who wants to help protect free expression locally and globally? Please have them contact [us](#) with the answers to this [questionnaire](#). We're also looking for libraries to host FOSS [seedboxes](#). And as always, we want libraries to install and run the Tor Browser on library computers.

Want to support this project and more like it? You can make a donation to the [Library Freedom Project](#), or donate directly to [Tor Project](#). And stay tuned for phase two of our pilot with Kilton Library.



Alison Macrina and Nima Fatemi

A version of this post also appeared on [The Library Freedom Project's blog](#)

Note: This post was drafted by Alison. (Thank you!)