Inspired Passion?

I have always strongly supported the individual's right to privacy… but until recently, I could never prove why I supported it, nor could I articulate my views on this topic with any degree of credibility. I've always sensed that the question, "what do you have to hide?" was a shallow counter, a foolish retort to someone who simply wanted to keep certain aspects of their private lives under their own control. Initially, my goal with this paper was to crush the silly arguments of those who like to meddle in others' affairs, and to refute the nonsense spouted by the typical supporters of the Patriot Act. What I found was startling to say the least.

In the process of researching this topic, I attempted to see the argument from both sides (the negatives and positives of retaining the right to privacy). The librarians at the Bankier Library were extremely helpful, and guided me to the subscription databases available to the class. I was familiar with many of them already, and Academic ASAP looked promising, but I wanted to find something more encompassing than just a listing of focused articles. As it turned out, for my topic, the articles were so sparse and diverse, that it was virtually impossible to find the materials I needed to develop my argument. It would seem that privacy is a very general term that applies to various topics, but my research was a bit more focused on the individual's personal privacy at home than on, for example, privacy in the workplace. After browsing the databases, the librarian encouraged us to look at CQ Researcher. I had never used the service before, so I typed in my subject of interest (privacy), and was given four lengthy, but very informative articles attacking privacy from various angles such as: privacy on the internet,
privacy in government, and privacy with private companies. I find CQ Researcher to be an effective source as it tends to show the pros and cons of an issue, and if one were to scroll down to the citations, they would be able to find rich and reputable sources to utilize.

I wanted to develop the privacy argument beyond that of the Patriot Act and the potential of identity theft online. I wanted to develop the argument so that the concept of privacy goes beyond media like the internet, and develop an understanding of what privacy is for any situation. Therefore, I utilized the history gathered from a CQ Researcher article entitled “Privacy in Peril.” I began by explaining the origins of this country and the importance of having privacy and freedom in the home. I then segued into technology, beginning with the mailing system, and continuing with the telegraph and the telephone, and then ending with the internet. By utilizing CQ Researcher, I was able to access more articles via the citations at the end of each article. Doing so expanded my view of the topic, gave me a central point from which to branch my ideas, and provided me with the proper materials to support my paper. However, there was a problem with this approach: I didn’t have an exact definition; I needed first to define what privacy was. I found myself going back to Academic ASAP to search for anything on the topic of privacy. I only scrolled through the articles that had a portable document format so that I could readily grab the article offline. I even narrowed my searches utilizing "and/or" modifiers to narrow down results for the definitions of privacy. It was in Academic ASAP that I found an article that defined privacy. This was utilized for the initial part of my paper, and eventually became the topic of importance (ultimately becoming the thesis of my paper). I quickly reverted back to another CQ Researcher article titled “Online Privacy” to find privacy law that was implemented. That article provided me with the evidence to prove that health privacy legislation (such as the Health Insurance and Portibility Act) was fairly easy for corporations to work
around. It was that same CQ Researcher article that allowed me to talk about the amount of information being shared between financial institutions, and how the laws that restrict those movements (such as the Gramm-Leach-Bliley Act) are padded by complex opt-out pamphlets and booklets. Through the citations at the end of one of these all-encompassing CQ Researcher articles, I was able to find another article that allowed me to learn about the legislation involved with data retention. This led me to search the laws associated with data retention in relation to cable service providers via “findlaw.com.” I eventually concluded my essay with a question that I hoped would appeal and relate to everyone.

After writing this paper, I found myself more scrutinizing of the world around me. I find myself ever more curious about various laws, corporate movements, and daily life activities, such as making transactions at my local bank. I wonder how my information is used, and weigh how that impacts the service I’m given. I’m ever more interested in the legislation that is passed and how that affects the general public; and I'm trying to see beyond the generalizations and sugar coatings, and evaluate something for what it is.