

**ALA Intellectual Freedom Committee  
Report to Council  
2014 Annual Conference  
Las Vegas, NV  
Tuesday, July 1, 2014**

The ALA Intellectual Freedom Committee (IFC) is pleased to present this update of its activities.

**INFORMATION**

Lemony Snicket Prize for Noble Librarians Faced with Adversity

The first-ever Lemony Snicket Award for Noble Librarians Faced with Adversity was presented to Laurence Copel, youth outreach librarian and founder of the Lower Ninth Ward Street Library, by author Daniel Handler during the ALA Awards Reception. Handler, also known as Lemony Snicket, presented the citation to Copel, along with a platter designed by Mo Willem.

Fencing Out Knowledge: Impacts of the Children’s Internet Protection Act 10 Year’s Later

The Office for Intellectual Freedom and the Office for Information Technology Policy in announced the publication of "Fencing Out Knowledge: Impacts of the Children's Internet Protection Act 10 Years Later," a report detailing how overfiltering has negatively impacted education and the right to receive information. The report is based on a year-long study that included a two-day symposium during the summer 2013 and other research. It is available online through the ALA website at [connect.ala.org/files/cipa\\_report.pdf](http://connect.ala.org/files/cipa_report.pdf).

Speaking About “The Speaker”

The Intellectual Freedom Committee was pleased to cosponsor a program with the Association of American Publishers, Black Caucus of the American Library Association, and Library History Round Table on the 1977 IFC-produced film *The Speaker ... A Film About Freedom*. The program was two years in the making, and proved to be a powerful, interesting, and provocative hour and a half session.

IFC presented the program in the context of larger issues that ALA continues to deal with: issues of race and diversity in libraries and our communities; encouraging deliberative and respectful dialogue; intellectual freedom and ongoing challenges to speakers, library and school resources and programs, and the presentation of controversial and disfavored ideas. Mark McCallon gave background on the genesis of the film and discussed his research on contemporary responses to it, particularly over 500 surveys filled out by ALA Conference goers who gave their opinions on the film in Detroit in 1977. Attendees viewed the *60 Minutes* segment about the controversy

recorded during the 1978 Midwinter Meeting in Chicago and aired in April 1978. Beverly Lynch discussed how she uses the film to teach LIS students at UCLA both about ALA's structure and to get them to consider how to approach collection and presentation of difficult ideas. Robert Wedgeworth talked publically for the first time about his perspective about the film as then-Executive Director of ALA.

The discussion that followed—like the discussions following the two screenings of the film earlier in the conference—was thoughtful and valuable. There was a general consensus that discussing all the issues raised around the film and the program was essential.

We encourage all ALA members who are interested in this part of ALA's history to explore the pathfinder created by the ALA Library and available at [www.ala.org/tools/speaker](http://www.ala.org/tools/speaker). OIF and ALA Library staff will continue to add resources as they come to their attention; if you know of resources that should be included please send them to [jokelley@ala.org](mailto:jokelley@ala.org).

Our thanks to the program cosponsors, speakers, and everyone who has participated in the conversation online and in person.

## **PROJECTS**

### Choose Privacy Week

Choose Privacy Week 2014 was held May 1 – 7 2014. This year's observance featured a new digital privacy webinar and guest bloggers discussing privacy topics ranging from surveillance to the art of developing library privacy policies. The webinar was presented by North Dakota State Library staff librarian Eric Stroshane who discussed "Defence Against the Digital Dark Arts," an introduction to key online privacy concepts and strategies designed to help librarians act as better stewards of patrons' privacy as well as their own. Helen Adams and Ann Crewdsen also introduced the new edition of the Privacy Toolkit (<http://www.ala.org/advocacy/privacyconfidentiality/toolkitsprivacy/privacy>).

### Banned Books Week

Banned Books Week will be held September 21–27, 2014. This year's theme will focus on graphic novels and censorship.

On Saturday, June 28, and Sunday, June 29, SAGE and ALA's Office for Intellectual Freedom hosted a Banned Books Video Readout during ALA's Annual Conference in Las Vegas. Over 200 volunteers read a short passage from their favorite banned book and then spoke from the heart about why that book matters. The videos will be posted to the Banned Books Week YouTube channel during Banned Books Week, September 21-27, 2014.

BBW merchandise—including posters, bookmarks, and t-shirts—are sold and marketed through the ALA Store ([www.alastore.ala.org/](http://www.alastore.ala.org/)). The tagline for this year's merchandise is "Have You Seen Us?." The artwork is prominently featured on [ala.org/bbooks](http://ala.org/bbooks).

More information on Banned Books Week can be found at [www.ala.org/bbooks](http://www.ala.org/bbooks).

## **ACTION ITEMS**

### Intellectual Freedom Manual—Ninth Edition

The Office for Intellectual Freedom is working with ALA Editions toward publication of the ninth edition of the *Intellectual Freedom Manual*. Publication of this book is scheduled to coincide with the 2015 Annual Conference. In preparation for the new edition, the Intellectual Freedom Committee reviewed ALA's intellectual freedom policies including the Interpretations to the Library Bill of Rights.

The Committee revised the following Interpretations: "Prisoners' Right to Read"; "Restricted Access to Library Materials"; "The Universal Right to Free Expression"; "Challenged Materials"; "Expurgation of Library Materials"; "Access to Resources and Services in the School Library Media Program"; "Free Access to Libraries for Minors"; "Minors and Internet Interactivity"; "Diversity in Collection Development"; "Labeling and Rating Systems"; "Exhibit Spaces and Bulletin Boards"; "Importance of Education to Intellectual Freedom"; "Intellectual Freedom Principles for Academic Libraries;" and "Privacy." After thorough discussion of these policies, the Committee approved the documents as amended.

Proposed revisions to the Interpretations were emailed on April 22, 2014, to the ALA Executive Board, Council, Divisions, Council committees, Round Tables, and Chapter Relations. The IFC considered comments received both prior to and during the 2014 Annual Conference and now is moving adoption of 14 policies:

1. "Access to Library Resources and Services for Minors" (formerly "Free Access to Libraries for Minors"); the IFC moves the adoption of its revisions to this policy, CD #19.4;
2. "Access to Resources and Services in the School Library (formerly "Access to Resources and Services in the School Library Media Program"); the IFC moves the adoption of this policy, CD #19.5;
3. "Advocating for Intellectual Freedom" (formerly "Importance of Education to Intellectual Freedom"); the IFC moves the adoption of its revisions to this policy, CD #19.6;
4. "Challenged Resources" (formerly "Challenged Materials"); the IFC moves the adoption of this policy, CD #19.7;
5. "Diversity in Collection Development"; the IFC moves the adoption of this policy, CD #19.8;
6. "Exhibit Spaces and Bulletin Boards"; the IFC moves the adoption of this policy, CD #19.9;
7. "Expurgation of Library Resources" (formerly "Expurgation of Library Materials"); the IFC moves the adoption of this policy, CD #19.10;
8. "Intellectual Freedom Principles for Academic Libraries"; the IFC moves the adoption of this policy, CD#19.11;
9. Labeling and Rating Systems"; the IFC moves the adoption of this policy, CD #19.12;

10. “Minors and Internet Activity” (formerly “Minors and Internet Interactivity”); the IFC moves the adoption of this policy, “CD #19.13;
11. “Prisoners’ Right to Read”; the IFC moves the adoption of this policy, CD #19.14;
12. “Privacy”; the IFC moves the adoption of this policy, CD #19.15
13. “Restricted Access to Library Materials”; the IFC moves the adoption of this policy, CD #19.16;
14. “The Universal Right to Free Expression”; the IFC moves the adoption of this policy, CD #19.17

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In closing, the Intellectual Freedom Committee thanks the division and chapter intellectual freedom committees, the Intellectual Freedom Round Table, the unit liaisons, and the OIF staff for their commitment, assistance, and hard work.

Respectfully Submitted,

ALA Intellectual Freedom Committee

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**Access to Library Resources and Services for Minors**  
An Interpretation of the *Library Bill of Rights*

Library policies and procedures that effectively deny minors equal and equitable access to all library resources and services available to other users violate the American Library Association’s *Library Bill of Rights*. The American Library Association opposes all attempts to restrict access to library services, materials, and facilities based on the age of library users.

Article V of the *Library Bill of Rights* states, “A person’s right to use a library should not be denied or abridged because of origin, age, background, or views.” The “right to use a library” includes free access to, and unrestricted use of, all the services, materials, and facilities the library has to offer. Every restriction on access to, and use of, library resources, based solely on the chronological age, educational level, literacy skills, or legal emancipation of users violates Article V.

Libraries are charged with the mission of providing services and developing resources to meet the diverse information needs and interests of the communities they serve. Services, materials, and facilities that fulfill the needs and interests of library users at different stages in their personal development are a necessary part of library resources. The needs and interests of each library user, and resources appropriate to meet those needs and interests, must be determined on an individual basis. Librarians cannot predict what resources will best fulfill the needs and interests of any individual user based on a single criterion such as chronological age, educational level, literacy skills, or legal emancipation. Equitable access to all library resources and services shall not be abridged through restrictive scheduling or use policies.

Libraries should not limit the selection and development of library resources simply because minors will have access to them. Institutional self-censorship diminishes the credibility of the library in the community and restricts access for all library users.

Children and young adults unquestionably possess First Amendment rights, including the right to receive information through the library in print, sound, images, data, games, software, and other formats.<sup>1</sup> Constitutionally protected speech cannot be suppressed solely to protect children or young adults from ideas or images a legislative body believes to be unsuitable for them.<sup>2</sup> Librarians and library governing bodies should not resort to age restrictions in an effort to avoid actual or anticipated objections because only a court of law can determine whether or not content is constitutionally protected.

The mission, goals, and objectives of libraries cannot authorize librarians or library governing bodies to assume, abrogate, or overrule the rights and responsibilities of parents and guardians.

As “Libraries: An American Value” states, “We affirm the responsibility and the right of all parents and guardians to guide their own children’s use of the library and its resources and services.” Librarians and library governing bodies cannot assume the role of parents or the functions of parental authority in the private relationship between parent and child. Librarians and governing bodies should maintain that only parents and guardians have the right and the responsibility to determine their children’s—and only their children’s—access to library resources. Parents and guardians who do not want their children to have access to specific library services, materials, or facilities should so advise their children.

Librarians and library governing bodies have a public and professional obligation to ensure that all members of the community they serve have free, equal, and equitable access to the entire range of library resources regardless of content, approach, or format. This principle of library service applies equally to all users, minors as well as adults. Lack of access to information can be harmful to minors. Librarians and library governing bodies must uphold this principle in order to provide adequate and effective service to minors.

*Note*

1. See *Brown v. Entertainment Merchant’s Association, et al.* 564 U.S. 08-1448 (2011): a) Video games qualify for First Amendment protection. Like protected books, plays, and movies, they communicate ideas through familiar literary devices and features distinctive to the medium.. And ‘the basic principles of freedom of speech . . . do not vary’ with a new and different communication medium.”

2. See *Erznoznik v. City of Jacksonville*, 422 U.S. 205 (1975): “Speech that is neither obscene as to youths nor subject to some other legitimate proscription cannot be suppressed solely to protect the young from ideas or images that a legislative body thinks unsuitable for them. In most circumstances, the values protected by the First Amendment are no less applicable when government seeks to control the flow of information to minors.” See also *Tinker v. Des Moines School Dist.*, 393 U.S.503 (1969); *West Virginia Bd. of Ed. v. Barnette*, 319 U.S. 624 (1943); *AAMA v. Kendrick*, 244 F.3d 572 (7th Cir. 2001).

Adopted June 30, 1972, by the ALA Council; amended July 1, 1981; July 3, 1991; June 30, 2004; and July 2, 2008.

## **Access to Resources and Services in the School Library**

### *An Interpretation of the Library Bill of Rights*

The school library plays a unique role in promoting, protecting, and educating about intellectual freedom. It serves as a point of voluntary access to information and ideas and as a learning laboratory for students as they acquire critical thinking and problem-solving skills needed in a pluralistic society. Although the educational level and program of the school necessarily shape the resources and services of a school library, the principles of the American Library Association's *Library Bill of Rights* apply equally to all libraries, including school libraries. Under these principles, all students have equitable access to library facilities, resources, and instructional programs.

School librarians assume a leadership role in promoting the principles of intellectual freedom within the school by providing resources and services that create and sustain an atmosphere of free inquiry. School librarians work closely with teachers to integrate instructional activities in classroom units designed to equip students to locate, evaluate, and use a broad range of ideas effectively. Intellectual freedom is fostered by educating students in the use of critical thinking skills to empower them to pursue free inquiry responsibly and independently. Through resources, programming, and educational processes, students and teachers experience the free and robust debate characteristic of a democratic society.

School librarians cooperate with other individuals in building collections of resources that meet the needs as well as the developmental and maturity levels of students. These collections provide resources that support the mission of the school district and are consistent with its philosophy, goals, and objectives. Resources in school library collections are an integral component of the curriculum and represent diverse points of view on both current and historical issues. These resources include materials that support the intellectual growth, personal development, individual interests, and recreational needs of students.

While English is, by history and tradition, the customary language of the United States, the languages in use in any given community may vary. Schools serving communities in which other languages are used make efforts to accommodate the needs of students for whom English is a second language. To support these efforts, and to ensure equitable access to resources and services, the school library provides resources that reflect the linguistic pluralism of the community.

Members of the school community involved in the collection development process employ educational criteria to select resources unfettered by their personal, political, social, or religious views. Students and educators served by the school library have access to resources and services

free of constraints resulting from personal, partisan, or doctrinal disapproval. School librarians resist efforts by individuals or groups to define what is appropriate for all students or teachers to read, view, hear, or access regardless of technology, formats or method of delivery.

Major barriers between students and resources include but are not limited: to imposing age, grade-level, or reading-level restrictions on the use of resources; limiting the use of interlibrary loan and access to electronic information; charging fees for information in specific formats; requiring permission from parents or teachers; establishing restricted shelves or closed collections; and labeling. Policies, procedures, and rules related to the use of resources and services support free and open access to information.

It is the responsibility of the governing board to adopt policies that guarantee students access to a broad range of ideas. These include policies on collection development and procedures for the review of resources about which concerns have been raised. Such policies, developed by persons in the school community, provide for a timely and fair hearing and assure that procedures are applied equitably to all expressions of concern. It is the responsibility of school librarians to implement district policies and procedures in the school to ensure equitable access to resources and services for all students.

Adopted July 2, 1986, by the ALA Council; amended January 10, 1990; July 12, 2000; January 19, 2005; and July 2, 2008.



**Advocating for Intellectual Freedom**  
An Interpretation of the Library Bill of Rights

Educating the American public, including library staff, on the value of intellectual freedom is fundamental to the mission of libraries of all types. Intellectual freedom is a universal human right that involves both physical and intellectual access to information and ideas. Libraries provide physical access through facilities, resources, and services and foster awareness of intellectual freedom rights within the context of educational programs and instruction in essential information skills.

The universal freedom to express information and ideas is stated in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Article 19:

Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive, and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers.

The importance of education to the development of intellectual freedom is expressed in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Article 26:

- (1) Everyone has the right to education. Education shall be free, at least in the elementary and fundamental stages. . . .
- (2) Education shall be directed to the full development of the human personality and to the strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. It shall promote understanding, tolerance and friendship among all nations, racial, or religious groups, and shall further the activities of the United Nations for the maintenance of peace.

In addition, Article I of the American Library Association’s *Library Bill of Rights* “affirms that all libraries are forums for information and ideas.” Physical access to information is listed as the first principle:

Books and other library resources should be provided for the interest, information, and enlightenment of all people of the community the library serves. Materials should not be excluded because of the origin, background, or views of those contributing to their creation.

Article II of the *Library Bill of Rights* emphasizes the importance of fostering intellectual access to information by providing materials that allow users to evaluate content and context and find information representing multiple points of view:

Libraries should provide materials and information presenting all points of view on current and historical issues. Materials should not be proscribed or removed because of partisan or doctrinal disapproval.

Libraries of all types foster education by promoting the free expression and interchange of ideas, leading to empowered lifelong learners. Libraries use resources, programming, and services to strengthen intellectual and physical access to information and thus build a foundation of intellectual freedom: developing collections (both real and virtual) with multiple perspectives and individual needs of users in mind; providing programming and instructional services framed around equitable access to information and ideas; and teaching of information skills and intellectual freedom rights integrated appropriately throughout the spectrum of library programming.

Through educational programming and instruction in information skills, libraries empower individuals to explore ideas, access and evaluate information, draw meaning from information presented in a variety of formats, develop valid conclusions, and express new ideas. Such education facilitates intellectual access to information and offers a path to a robust appreciation of intellectual freedom rights.

Adopted July 15, 2009, by the ALA Council.

## Challenged Resources

### An Interpretation of the *Library Bill of Rights*

“Libraries: An American Value” states, “We protect the rights of individuals to express their opinions about library resources and services.” The American Library Association declares as a matter of firm principle that it is the responsibility of every library to have a clearly defined written policy for collection development that includes a procedure for review of challenged resources. Collection development applies to print and media resources or formats in the physical collection. It also applies to digital resources such as databases, e-books and other downloadable and streaming media.

Content filtering is not equivalent to collection development. Content filtering is exclusive, not inclusive, and cannot effectively curate content or mediate access to resources available on the internet. This should be addressed separately in the library’s acceptable use policy. These policies reflect the American Library Association’s *Library Bill of Rights* and are approved by the appropriate governing authority.

Challenged resources should remain in the collection and accessible during the review process. The *Library Bill of Rights* states in Article I that “Materials should not be excluded because of the origin, background, or views of those contributing to their creation,” and in Article II, that “Materials should not be proscribed or removed because of partisan or doctrinal disapproval.” Freedom of expression is protected by the Constitution of the United States, but constitutionally protected expression is often separated from unprotected expression only by a dim and uncertain line. The Supreme Court has held that the Constitution requires a procedure designed to examine critically all challenged expression before it can be suppressed.<sup>1</sup> This procedure should be open, transparent, and conform to all applicable open meeting and public records laws. Resources that meet the criteria for selection and inclusion within the collection should not be removed.

Therefore, any attempt, be it legal or extra-legal,<sup>2</sup> to regulate or suppress resources in libraries must be closely scrutinized to the end that protected expression is not abridged.

#### Notes

1. *Bantam Books, Inc. v. Sullivan*, 372 U.S. 58 (1963).

2. “Extra-legal” refers to actions that are not regulated or sanctioned by law. These can include attempts to remove or suppress materials by library staff and library board members that circumvent the library’s collection development policy, or actions taken by elected officials or

library board members outside the established legal process for making legislative or board decisions. “Legal process” includes challenges to library materials initiated and conducted pursuant to the library’s collection development policy, actions taken by legislative bodies or library boards during official sessions or meetings, or litigation undertaken in courts of law with jurisdiction over the library and the library’s governing body.

Adopted June 25, 1971; amended July 1, 1981; January 10, 1990; and January 28, 2009, by the ALA Council.

## **Diversity in Collection Development**

### An Interpretation of the *Library Bill of Rights*

Collection development should reflect the philosophy inherent in Article II of the American Library Association's *Library Bill of Rights*: "Libraries should provide materials and information presenting all points of view on current and historical issues. Materials should not be proscribed or removed because of partisan or doctrinal disapproval."

Library collections must represent the diversity of people and ideas in our society. There are many complex facets to any issue, and many contexts in which issues may be expressed, discussed, or interpreted. Librarians have an obligation to select and support access to content on all subjects that meet, as closely as possible, the needs, interests, and abilities of all persons in the community the library serves.

Librarians have a professional responsibility to be inclusive in collection development and in the provision of interlibrary loan. Access to all content legally obtainable should be assured to the user, and policies should not unjustly exclude content even if they are offensive to the librarian or the user. This includes content that reflect a diversity of issues, whether they be, for example, political, economic, religious, social, ethnic, or sexual. A balanced collection reflects a diversity of content, not an equality of numbers.

Collection development responsibilities include selecting content in different formats produced by independent, small and local producers as well as information resources from major producers and distributors. Content should represent the languages commonly used in the library's service community and should include formats that meet the needs of users with disabilities. Collection development and the selection of content should be done according to professional standards and established selection and review procedures. Failure to select resources merely because they may be potentially controversial is censorship, as is withdrawing resources for the same reason.

Over time, individuals, groups, and entities have sought to limit the diversity of library collections. They cite a variety of reasons that include prejudicial language and ideas, political content, economic theory, social philosophies, religious beliefs, sexual content and expression, and other potentially controversial topics. Librarians have a professional responsibility to be fair, just, and equitable and to give all library users equal protection in guarding against violation of the library patron's right to read, view, or listen to content protected by the First Amendment, no matter what the viewpoint of the author, creator, or selector. Librarians have an obligation to protect library collections from removal of content based on personal bias or prejudice.

Intellectual freedom, the essence of equitable library services, provides for free access to all expressions of ideas through which any and all sides of a question, cause, or movement may be explored. Librarians must not permit their personal beliefs to influence collection development decisions.

Adopted July 14, 1982, by the ALA Council; amended January 10, 1990; and July 2, 2008.

### **Exhibit Spaces and Bulletin Boards**

#### An Interpretation of the *Library Bill of Rights*

Libraries often provide exhibit spaces and bulletin boards in physical and/or electronic formats. The uses made of these spaces should conform to the American Library Association's *Library Bill of Rights*: Article I states, "Materials should not be excluded because of the origin, background, or views of those contributing to their creation." Article II states, "Materials should not be proscribed or removed because of partisan or doctrinal disapproval." Article VI maintains that exhibit space should be made available "on an equitable basis, regardless of the beliefs or affiliations of individuals or groups requesting their use."

In developing library exhibits, staff members should endeavor to present a broad spectrum of opinion and a variety of viewpoints. Libraries should not shrink from developing exhibits because of controversial content or because of the beliefs or affiliations of those whose work is represented. Just as libraries do not endorse the viewpoints of those whose work is represented in their collections, libraries also do not endorse the beliefs or viewpoints of topics that may be the subject of library exhibits.

Exhibit areas often are made available for use by community groups. Libraries should formulate a written policy for the use of these exhibit areas to assure that space is provided on an equitable basis to all groups that request it. Written policies for exhibit space use should be stated in inclusive rather than exclusive terms. For example, a policy that the library's exhibit space is open "to organizations engaged in educational, cultural, intellectual, or charitable activities" is an inclusive statement of the limited uses of the exhibit space. This defined limitation would permit religious groups to use the exhibit space because they engage in intellectual activities, but would exclude most commercial uses of the exhibit space.

A publicly supported library may designate use of exhibit space for strictly library-related activities, provided that this limitation is viewpoint neutral and clearly defined.

Libraries may include in this policy rules regarding the time, place, and manner of use of the exhibit space, so long as the rules are content neutral and are applied in the same manner to all groups wishing to use the space. A library may wish to limit access to exhibit space to groups within the community served by the library. This practice is acceptable provided that the same rules and regulations apply to everyone, and that exclusion is not made on the basis of the doctrinal, religious, or political beliefs of the potential users.

The library should not censor or remove an exhibit because some members of the community may disagree with its content. Those who object to the content of any exhibit held at the library

should be able to submit their complaint and/or their own exhibit proposal to be judged according to the policies established by the library.

Libraries may wish to post a permanent notice near the exhibit area stating that the library does not advocate or endorse the viewpoints of exhibits or exhibitors.

Libraries that make bulletin boards available to public groups for posting notices of public interest should develop criteria for the use of these spaces based on the same considerations as those outlined above. Libraries may wish to develop criteria regarding the size of material to be displayed, the length of time materials may remain on the bulletin board, the frequency with which material may be posted for the same group, and the geographic area from which notices will be accepted.

Adopted July 2, 1991, by the ALA Council; amended June 30, 2004.



**Expurgation of Library Resources**  
An Interpretation of the *Library Bill of Rights*

Expurgating library resources is a violation of the American Library Association’s *Library Bill of Rights*. Expurgation as defined by this interpretation includes any deletion, excision, alteration, editing, or obliteration of any part of a library resource by administrators, employees, governing authorities, parent institutions (if any), or third party vendors when done for the purposes of censorship. Such action stands in violation of Articles I, II, and III of the *Library Bill of Rights*, which state that “Materials should not be excluded because of the origin, background, or views of those contributing to their creation,” “Materials should not be proscribed or removed because of partisan or doctrinal disapproval,” and “Libraries should challenge censorship in the fulfillment of their responsibility to provide information and enlightenment.”

The act of expurgation denies access to the complete work and the entire spectrum of ideas that the work is intended to express. This is censorship. Expurgation based on the premise that certain portions of a work may be harmful to minors is equally a violation of the *Library Bill of Rights*.

Expurgation without permission from the rights holder may violate the copyright provisions of the United States Code.

The decision of rights holders to alter or expurgate future versions of a work does not impose a duty on librarians to alter or expurgate earlier versions of a work. Librarians should resist such requests in the interest of historical preservation and opposition to censorship. Furthermore, librarians oppose expurgation of resources available through licensed collections. Expurgation of any library resource imposes a restriction, without regard to the rights and desires of all library users, by limiting access to ideas and information.

Adopted February 2, 1973, by the ALA Council; amended July 1, 1981; January 10, 1990; and July 2, 2008.

**2013–2014 ALA CD#19.11\_63014\_act**  
**2014 ALA Annual Conference**

**Intellectual Freedom Principles for Academic Libraries:**

An Interpretation of the *Library Bill of Rights*

A strong intellectual freedom perspective is critical to the development of academic library collections, services, and instruction that dispassionately meet the education and research needs of a college or university community. The purpose of this statement is to outline how and where intellectual freedom principles fit into an academic library setting, thereby raising consciousness of the intellectual freedom context within which academic librarians work. The following principles should be reflected in all relevant library policy documents.

1. The general principles set forth in the [\*Library Bill of Rights\*](#) form an indispensable framework for building collections, services, and policies that serve the entire academic community.
2. The privacy of library users is and must be inviolable. Policies should be in place that maintains confidentiality of library borrowing records and of other information relating to personal use of library information and services.
3. The development of library collections in support of an institution's instruction and research programs should transcend the personal values of the selector. In the interests of research and learning, it is essential that collections contain materials representing a variety of perspectives on subjects that may be considered controversial.
4. Preservation and replacement efforts should ensure that balance in library materials is maintained and that controversial materials are not removed from the collections through theft, loss, mutilation, or normal wear and tear. There should be alertness to efforts by special interest groups to bias a collection through systematic theft or mutilation.
5. Licensing agreements should be consistent with the *Library Bill of Rights*, and should maximize access.
6. Open and unfiltered access to the internet should be conveniently available to the academic community in a college or university library. Content filtering devices and content-based restrictions are a contradiction of the academic library mission to further research and learning through exposure to the broadest possible range of ideas and information. Such restrictions are a fundamental violation of intellectual freedom in academic libraries.
7. Freedom of information and of creative expression should be reflected in library exhibits and in all relevant library policy documents.
8. Library meeting rooms, research carrels, exhibit spaces, and other facilities should be available to the academic community regardless of research being pursued or subject being discussed. Any restrictions made necessary because of limited availability of space should be based on need, as reflected in library policy, rather than on content of research or discussion.

9. Whenever possible, library services should be available without charge in order to encourage inquiry. Where charges are necessary, a free or low-cost alternative (e.g., downloading to disc rather than printing) should be available when possible.
10. A service philosophy should be promoted that affords equal access to information for all in the academic community with no discrimination on the basis of race, age, values, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity, cultural or ethnic background, physical, sensory, cognitive or learning disability, economic status, religious beliefs, or views.
11. A procedure ensuring due process should be in place to deal with requests by those within and outside the academic community for removal or addition of library resources, exhibits, or services.
12. It is recommended that this statement of principle be endorsed by appropriate institutional governing bodies, including the faculty senate or similar instrument of faculty governance.

*Approved by ACRL Board of Directors: June 29, 1999 and adopted July 12, 2000, by the ALA Council*

## Labeling and Rating Systems

### An Interpretation of the *Library Bill of Rights*

Libraries do not advocate the ideas found in their collections or in resources accessible through the library. The presence of books and other resources in a library does not indicate endorsement of their contents by the library. Likewise, providing access to digital information does not indicate endorsement or approval of that information by the library. Labeling and rating systems present distinct challenges to these intellectual freedom principles.

Many organizations use or devise rating systems as a means of advising either their members or the general public regarding the organizations' opinions of the contents and suitability or appropriate age for use of certain books, films, recordings, websites, games, or other materials. The adoption, enforcement, or endorsement of any of these rating systems by a library violates the American Library Association's *Library Bill of Rights* and may be unconstitutional. If enforcement of labeling or rating systems is mandated by law, the library should seek legal advice regarding the law's applicability to library operations.

Viewpoint-neutral directional labels are a convenience designed to save time. These are different in intent from attempts to prejudice or discourage users or restrict their access to resources. Labeling as an attempt to prejudice attitudes is a censor's tool. The American Library Association opposes labeling as a means of predisposing people's attitudes toward library resources.

Prejudicial labels are designed to restrict access, based on a value judgment that the content, language, or themes of the resource, or the background or views of the creator(s) of the resource, render it inappropriate or offensive for all or certain groups of users. The prejudicial label is used to warn, discourage, or prohibit users or certain groups of users from accessing the resource. Such labels sometimes are used to place materials in restricted locations where access depends on staff intervention.

Viewpoint-neutral directional aids facilitate access by making it easier for users to locate resources. Users may choose to consult or ignore the directional aids at their own discretion.

Directional aids can have the effect of prejudicial labels when their implementation becomes proscriptive rather than descriptive. When directional aids are used to forbid access or to suggest moral or doctrinal endorsement, the effect is the same as prejudicial labeling.

Libraries sometimes acquire resources that include ratings as part of their packaging. Librarians should not endorse the inclusion of such rating systems; however, removing or destroying the

ratings—if placed there by, or with permission of, the copyright holder—could constitute expurgation (see “Expurgation of Library Materials: An Interpretation of the *Library Bill of Rights*”). In addition, the inclusion of ratings on bibliographic records in library catalogs is a violation of the *Library Bill of Rights*.

Prejudicial labeling and ratings presuppose the existence of individuals or groups with wisdom to determine by authority what is appropriate or inappropriate for others. They presuppose that individuals must be directed in making up their minds about the ideas they examine. The fact that libraries do not advocate or use proscriptive labels and rating systems does not preclude them from answering questions about them. The American Library Association affirms the rights of individuals to form their own opinions about resources they choose to read or view.

Adopted July 13, 1951, by the ALA Council; amended June 25, 1971; July 1, 1981; June 26, 1990; January 19, 2005; and July 15, 2009.

## **Minors and Internet Activity**

### An Interpretation of the *Library Bill of Rights*

The digital environment offers opportunities for accessing, creating, and sharing information. The rights of minors to retrieve, interact with, and create information posted on the internet in schools and libraries are extensions of their First Amendment rights. (See also other interpretations of the American Library Association’s *Library Bill of Rights*, including “Access to Digital Information, Services, and Networks,” “Access to Library Resources and Services for Minors.”)

Academic pursuits of minors can be strengthened with the use of interactive web tools, allowing young people to create documents and share them online; to upload pictures, videos, and graphic material; to revise public documents; and to add tags to online content to classify and organize information. Instances of inappropriate use of such academic tools should be addressed as individual behavior issues, not as justification for restricting or banning access to interactive technology. Schools and libraries should ensure that institutional environments offer opportunities for students to use interactive web tools constructively in their academic pursuits, as the benefits of shared learning are well documented.

Personal interactions of minors can be enhanced by social tools available through the internet. Social networking websites allow the creation of online communities that feature an open exchange of information in various forms, such as images, videos, blog posts, and discussions about common interests.

Interactive web tools help children and young adults learn about and organize social, civic, and extra-curricular activities. Many interactive sites invite users to establish online identities, share personal information, create Web content, and join social networks. Parents and guardians play a critical role in preparing their children for participation in online activity by communicating their personal family values and by monitoring their children’s use of the internet. Parents and guardians are responsible for what their children—and only their children—access on the internet in libraries.

The use of interactive web tools poses two competing intellectual freedom issues—the protection of minors’ privacy and the right of free speech. Some have expressed concerns regarding what they perceive to be an increased vulnerability of young people in the online environment when they use interactive sites to post personally identifiable information. In an effort to protect minors’ privacy, adults sometimes restrict access to interactive web environments. Filters, for example, are sometimes used to restrict access by youth to interactive social networking tools, but at the same time deny minors’ rights to free expression on the internet. Prohibiting children

and young adults from using social networking sites does not teach safe behavior and leaves youth without the necessary knowledge and skills to protect their privacy or engage in responsible speech. Instead of restricting or denying access to the internet, librarians and teachers should educate minors to participate responsibly, ethically, and safely.

The First Amendment applies to speech created by minors on interactive sites. Use of these social networking sites in a school or library allows minors to access and create resources that fulfill their interests and needs for information, for social connection with peers, and for participation in a community of learners. Restricting expression and access to interactive web sites because the sites provide tools for sharing information with others violates the tenets of the *Library Bill of Rights*. It is the responsibility of librarians and educators to monitor threats to the intellectual freedom of minors and to advocate for extending access to interactive applications on the internet.

As defenders of intellectual freedom and the First Amendment, libraries and librarians have a responsibility to offer unrestricted access to internet interactivity in accordance with local, state, and federal laws and to advocate for greater access where it is abridged. School and library professionals should work closely with young people to help them learn skills and attitudes that will prepare them to be responsible, effective, and productive communicators in a free society.

Adopted July 15, 2009, by the ALA Council.

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**Prisoners' Right to Read**

An Interpretation of the *Library Bill of Rights*

The American Library Association asserts a compelling public interest in the preservation of intellectual freedom for individuals of any age held in jails, prisons, detention facilities, juvenile facilities, immigration facilities, prison work camps and segregated units within any facility. As Supreme Court Justice Thurgood Marshall wrote in *Procunier v. Martinez* [416 U.S. 428 (1974)]:

When the prison gates slam behind an inmate, he does not lose his human quality; his mind does not become closed to ideas; his intellect does not cease to feed on a free and open interchange of opinions; his yearning for self-respect does not end; nor is his quest for self-realization concluded. If anything, the needs for identity and self-respect are more compelling in the dehumanizing prison environment.

Participation in a democratic society requires unfettered access to current social, political, economic, cultural, scientific, and religious information. Information and ideas available outside the prison are essential to prisoners for a successful transition to freedom. Learning to be free requires access to a wide range of knowledge, and suppression of ideas does not prepare the incarcerated of any age for life in a free society. Even those individuals that a lawful society chooses to imprison permanently deserve access to information, to literature, and to a window on the world. Censorship is a process of exclusion by which authority rejects specific points of view. That material contains unpopular views or even repugnant content does not provide justification for censorship. Unlike censorship, selection is a process of inclusion that involves the search for resources, regardless of format, that represent diversity and a broad spectrum of ideas. The correctional library collection should reflect the needs of its community.

Libraries and librarians serving individuals in correctional facilities may be required by federal, state, or local laws; administrative rules of parent agencies; or court decisions to prohibit material that instructs, incites, or advocates criminal action or bodily harm or is a violation of the law. Only those items that present an actual compelling and imminent risk to safety and security should be restricted. Although these limits restrict the range of resources available, the extent of limitation should be minimized by adherence to the American Library Association's *Library Bill of Rights* and its Interpretations.



These principles should guide all library services provided to prisoners:

- Collection management should be governed by written policy, mutually agreed upon by librarians and correctional agency administrators, in accordance with the *Library Bill of Rights*, its Interpretations, and other ALA intellectual freedom documents.
- Correctional libraries should have written procedures for addressing challenges to library resources, including a policy-based description of the disqualifying features, in accordance with “Challenged Resources” and other relevant intellectual freedom documents.
- Correctional librarians should select resources that reflect the demographic composition, information needs, interests, and diverse cultural values of the confined communities they serve.
- Correctional librarians should be allowed to purchase resources that meet written selection criteria and provide for the multi-faceted needs of their populations without prior correctional agency review. They should be allowed to acquire resources from a wide range of sources in order to ensure a broad and diverse collection. Correctional librarians should not be limited to purchasing from a list of approved resources.
- Age is not a reason for censorship. Incarcerated children and youth should have access to a wide range of library resources, as stated in “Access to Library Resources and Services for Minors.”
- Correctional librarians should make all reasonable efforts to provide sufficient resources to meet the information and recreational needs of prisoners who speak languages other than English.
- Equitable access to information should be provided for persons with disabilities as outlined in “Services to People with Disabilities.”
- Media or materials with non-traditional bindings should not be prohibited unless they present an actual compelling and imminent risk to safety and security.
- Resources with sexual content should not be banned unless they violate state and federal law.
- Correctional libraries should provide access to computers and the internet.

When free people, through judicial procedure, segregate some of their own, they incur the responsibility to provide humane treatment and essential rights. Among these is the right to read. The right to choose what to read is deeply important, and the suppression of ideas is fatal to a democratic society. The denial of the right to read, to write, and to think—to intellectual freedom—diminishes the human spirit of those segregated from society. Those who cherish their full freedom and rights should work to guarantee that the right to intellectual freedom is extended to all incarcerated individuals.

Adopted June 29, 2010, by the ALA Council.

## Privacy

### An Interpretation of the *Library Bill of Rights*

#### Introduction

Privacy is essential to the exercise of free speech, free thought, and free association. The courts have established a First Amendment right to receive information in a publicly funded library.<sup>1</sup> Further, the courts have upheld the right to privacy based on the Bill of Rights of the U.S. Constitution.<sup>2</sup> Many states provide guarantees of privacy in their constitutions and statute law.<sup>3</sup> Numerous decisions in case law have defined and extended rights to privacy.<sup>4</sup>

In a library (physical or virtual), the right to privacy is the right to open inquiry without having the subject of one’s interest examined or scrutinized by others. Confidentiality exists when a library is in possession of personally identifiable information about users and keeps that information private on their behalf.<sup>5</sup> Confidentiality extends to “information sought or received and resources consulted, borrowed, acquired or transmitted” (*ALA Code of Ethics*), including, but not limited to: database search records, reference questions and interviews, circulation records, interlibrary loan records, information about materials downloaded or placed on “hold” or “reserve,” and other personally identifiable information about uses of library materials, programs, facilities, or services.

Protecting user privacy and confidentiality has long been an integral part of the mission of libraries. The ALA has affirmed a right to privacy since 1939.<sup>6</sup> Existing ALA policies affirm that confidentiality is crucial to freedom of inquiry.<sup>7</sup> Rights to privacy and confidentiality also are implicit in the *Library Bill of Rights*<sup>8</sup> guarantee of free access to library resources for all users.

#### Rights of Library Users

The *Library Bill of Rights* affirms the ethical imperative to provide unrestricted access to information and to guard against impediments to open inquiry. Article IV states: “Libraries should cooperate with all persons and groups concerned with resisting abridgement of free expression and free access to ideas.” When users recognize or fear that their privacy or confidentiality is compromised, true freedom of inquiry no longer exists.

In all areas of librarianship, best practice leaves the user in control of as many choices as possible. These include decisions about the selection of, access to, and use of information. Lack

of privacy and confidentiality has a chilling effect on users' choices. All users have a right to be free from any unreasonable intrusion into or surveillance of their lawful library use.

Users have the right to be informed what policies and procedures govern the amount and retention of personally identifiable information, why that information is necessary for the library, and what the user can do to maintain his or her privacy. Library users expect and in many places have a legal right to have their information protected and kept private and confidential by anyone with direct or indirect access to that information. In addition, Article V of the *Library Bill of Rights* states: "A person's right to use a library should not be denied or abridged because of origin, age, background, or views." This article precludes the use of profiling as a basis for any breach of privacy rights. Users have the right to use a library without any abridgement of privacy that may result from equating the subject of their inquiry with behavior.<sup>9</sup>

### **Responsibilities in Libraries**

The library profession has a long-standing commitment to an ethic of facilitating, not monitoring, access to information. This commitment is implemented locally through the, adoption of and adherence to library privacy policies that are consistent with applicable federal, state, and local law.

Everyone (paid or unpaid) who provides governance, administration, or service in libraries has a responsibility to maintain an environment respectful and protective of the privacy of all users. Users have the responsibility to respect each others' privacy.

For administrative purposes, librarians may establish appropriate time, place, and manner restrictions on the use of library resources.<sup>10</sup> In keeping with this principle, the collection of personally identifiable information should only be a matter of routine or policy when necessary for the fulfillment of the mission of the library. Regardless of the technology used, everyone who collects or accesses personally identifiable information in any format has a legal and ethical obligation to protect confidentiality.

Libraries should not share personally identifiable user information with third parties or with vendors that provide resources and library services unless the library has obtained the permission of the user or has entered into a legal agreement with the vendor. Such agreements should stipulate that the library retains control of the information, that the information is confidential, and that it may not be used or shared except with the permission of the library.

Law enforcement agencies and officers may occasionally believe that library records contain information that would be helpful to the investigation of criminal activity. The American judicial system provides a mechanism for seeking release of such confidential records: a court order issued following a showing of good cause based on specific facts by a court of competent

jurisdiction. Libraries should make such records available only in response to properly executed orders.

## Conclusion

The American Library Association affirms that rights of privacy are necessary for intellectual freedom and are fundamental to the ethics and practice of librarianship.

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<sup>1</sup>Court opinions establishing a right to receive information in a public library include *Board of Education v. Pico*, 457 U.S. 853 (1982); *Kreimer v. Bureau of Police for the Town of Morristown*, 958 F.2d 1242 (3d Cir. 1992); and *Reno v. American Civil Liberties Union*, 117 S.Ct. 2329, 138 L.Ed.2d 874 (1997).

<sup>2</sup>See in particular the Fourth Amendment's guarantee of "[t]he right of the people to be secure in their persons, houses, papers, and effects, against unreasonable searches and seizures," the Fifth Amendment's guarantee against self-incrimination, and the Ninth Amendment's guarantee that "[t]he enumeration in the Constitution, of certain rights, shall not be construed to deny or disparage others retained by the people." This right is explicit in Article Twelve of the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*: "No one shall be subjected to arbitrary interference with his privacy, family, home or correspondence, nor to attacks upon his honour and reputation. Everyone has the right to the protection of the law against such interference or attacks." See: <http://www.un.org/Overview/rights.html>. This right has further been explicitly codified as Article Seventeen of the *International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights*, a legally binding international human rights agreement ratified by the United States on June 8, 1992. See: [http://www.unhchr.ch/html/menu3/b/a\\_ccpr.htm](http://www.unhchr.ch/html/menu3/b/a_ccpr.htm).

<sup>3</sup>Ten state constitutions guarantee a right of privacy or bar unreasonable intrusions into citizens' privacy. Forty-eight states protect the confidentiality of library users' records by law, and the attorneys general in the remaining two states have issued opinions recognizing the privacy of users' library records. See: State Privacy Laws.

<sup>4</sup>Cases recognizing a right to privacy include: *NAACP v. Alabama*, 357 U.S. 449 (1958); *Griswold v. Connecticut* 381 U.S. 479 (1965); *Katz v. United States*, 389 U.S. 347 (1967); and *Stanley v. Georgia*, 394 U.S. 557 (1969). Congress recognized the right to privacy in the Privacy Act of 1974 and Amendments (5 USC Sec. 552a), which addresses the potential for government's violation of privacy through its collection of personal information. The Privacy Act's "Congressional Findings and Statement of Purpose" states in part: "the right to privacy is a personal and fundamental right protected by the Constitution of the United States." See: [http://caselaw.lp.findlaw.com/scripts/ts\\_search.pl?title=5&sec=552a](http://caselaw.lp.findlaw.com/scripts/ts_search.pl?title=5&sec=552a).

<sup>5</sup>The phrase "personally identifiable information" was established in ALA policy in 1991. See: Policy Concerning Confidentiality of Personally Identifiable Information about Library Users. Personally identifiable information can include many types of library records, including: information that the library requires an individual to provide in order to be eligible to use library services or borrow materials, information that identifies an individual as having requested or obtained specific materials or materials on a particular subject, and information that is provided by an individual to assist a library staff member to

answer a specific question or provide information on a particular subject. Personally identifiable information does not include information that does not identify any individual and that is retained only for the purpose of studying or evaluating the use of a library and its materials and services. Personally identifiable information does include any data that can link choices of taste, interest, or research with a specific individual.

<sup>6</sup>Article Eleven of the *Code of Ethics for Librarians* (1939) asserted that “It is the librarian’s obligation to treat as confidential any private information obtained through contact with library patrons.” See: *Code of Ethics for Librarians* (1939). Article Three of the current Code (1995) 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.”

<sup>7</sup>See these ALA Policies: “Access for Children and Young People to Videotapes and Other Nonprint Formats”; “Free Access to Libraries for Minors”; “Freedom to Read” (<http://www.ala.org/alaorg/oif/freeread.html>); “Libraries: An American Value”; the newly revised “Library Principles for a Networked World”; “Policy Concerning Confidentiality of Personally Identifiable Information about Library Users”; “Policy on Confidentiality of Library Records”; “Suggested Procedures for Implementing Policy on the Confidentiality of Library Records.”

<sup>8</sup>Adopted June 18, 1948; amended February 2, 1961, and January 23, 1980; inclusion of “age” reaffirmed January 23, 1996, by the ALA Council.

<sup>9</sup>Existing ALA Policy asserts, in part, that: “The government’s interest in library use reflects a dangerous and fallacious equation of what a person reads with what that person believes or how that person is likely to behave. Such a presumption can and does threaten the freedom of access to information.” Policy Concerning Confidentiality of Personally Identifiable Information about Library Users

<sup>10</sup>See: “Guidelines for the Development and Implementation of Policies, Regulations and Procedures Affecting Access to Library Materials, Services and Facilities.”

Adopted June 19, 2002, by the ALA Council.

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**Restricted Access to Library Materials**  
An Interpretation of the *Library Bill of Rights*

Libraries are a traditional forum for the open exchange of information. Restricting access to library materials violates the basic tenets of the American Library Association's *Library Bill of Rights*.

Some libraries block access to certain materials by placing physical or virtual barriers between the user and those materials. For example, materials are sometimes labeled for content or placed in a "locked case," "adults only," "restricted shelf," or "high-demand" collection. Access to certain materials is sometimes restricted to protect them from theft or mutilation, or because of statutory authority or institutional mandate.

In some libraries, access is restricted based on computerized reading management programs that assign reading levels to books and/or users and limit choices to titles on the program's reading list. Titles not on the reading management list have been removed from the collection in some school libraries. Organizing collections by reading management program level, ability, grade, or age level is another example of restricted access. Even though the chronological age or grade level of users is not representative of their information needs or total reading abilities, users may feel inhibited from selecting resources located in areas that do not correspond to their assigned characteristics.

Physical restrictions and content filtering of library resources and services may generate psychological, service, or language skills barriers to access as well. Because restricted materials often deal with controversial, unusual, or sensitive subjects, having to ask a library worker for access to them may be embarrassing or inhibiting for patrons desiring access. Even when a title is listed in the catalog with a reference to its restricted status, a barrier is placed between the patron and the publication. (See also "Labeling and Rating Systems.") Because restricted materials often feature information that some people consider objectionable, potential library users may be predisposed to think of labeled and filtered resources as objectionable and be discouraged from asking for access to them.

Federal and some state statutes require libraries that accept specific types of federal and/or state funding to install content filters that limit access to internet resources for minors and adults. Internet filter are applied to internet resources in some libraries may prevent users from finding targeted categories of information, much of which is constitutionally protected. The use of internet filters must be addressed through library policies and procedures to ensure that users receive information and that filters do not prevent users from exercising their First Amendment

rights. Users have the right to unfiltered access to constitutionally protected information. (See also “Access to Digital Information, Services, and Networks.”)

Library policies that restrict access to resources for any reason must be carefully formulated and administered to ensure they do not violate established principles of intellectual freedom. This caution is reflected in ALA policies, such as “Evaluating Library Collections,” “Free Access to Libraries for Minors,” “Preservation Policy,” and the ACRL “Code of Ethics for Special Collections Librarians.”

Donated resources require special consideration. In keeping with the “Joint Statement on Access” of the American Library Association and Society of American Archivists, libraries should avoid accepting donor agreements or entering into contracts that impose permanent restrictions on special collections. As stated in the “Joint Statement on Access,” it is the responsibility of a library with such collections “to make available original research materials in its possession on equal terms of access.”

A primary goal of the library profession is to facilitate access to all points of view on current and historical issues. All proposals for restricted access should be carefully scrutinized to ensure that the purpose is not to suppress a viewpoint or to place a barrier between users and content. Libraries must maintain policies and procedures that serve the diverse needs of their users and protect the First Amendment right to receive information.

Adopted February 2, 1973, by the ALA Council; amended July 1, 1981; July 3, 1991; July 12, 2000; June 30, 2004; and January 28, 2009.

**The Universal Right to Free Expression**  
An Interpretation of the *Library Bill of Rights*

Freedom of expression is an inalienable human right and the foundation for self-government. Freedom of expression encompasses the freedoms of speech, press, religion, assembly, and association, and the corollary right to receive information without interference and without compromising personal privacy.

The American Library Association endorses this principle, which is also set forth in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, adopted by the United Nations General Assembly. The Preamble of this document states that “. . . recognition of the inherent dignity and of the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family is the foundation of freedom, justice, and peace in the world. . .” and “. . . the advent of a world in which human beings shall enjoy freedom of speech and belief and freedom from fear and want has been proclaimed as the highest aspiration of the common people. . . .”

Article 12 of this document states:

No one shall be subjected to arbitrary interference with his privacy, family, home or correspondence, nor to attacks upon his honor or reputation. Everyone has the right to the protection of the law against such interference or attacks.

Article 18 of this document states:

Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion; this right includes freedom to change his religion or belief, and freedom, either alone or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief in teaching, practice, worship and observance.

Article 19 states:

Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media regardless of frontiers.

Article 20 states:

1. Everyone has the right to freedom of peaceful assembly and association.
2. No one may be compelled to belong to an association.



On December 18, 2013, the United Nations General Assembly adopted a resolution reaffirming that the right to personal privacy applies to the use of communications technology and digital records, and requiring the governments of member nations to “respect and protect” the privacy rights of individuals.

We affirm our belief that these are inalienable rights of every person, regardless of origin, age, background, or views. We embody our professional commitment to these principles in the *Library Bill of Rights* and *Code of Ethics*, as adopted by the American Library Association.

We maintain that these are universal principles and should be applied by libraries and librarians throughout the world. The American Library Association’s policy on International Relations reflects these objectives: “. . . to encourage the exchange, dissemination, and access to information and the unrestricted flow of library materials in all formats throughout the world.”

We know that censorship, ignorance, and manipulation are the tools of tyrants and profiteers. We support the principles of net neutrality, transparency, and accountability. We maintain that both government and corporate efforts to suppress, manipulate, or intercept personal communications and search queries with minimal oversight or accountability, and without user consent, is oppressive and discriminatory. The technological ability of commercial and government interests to engage in the massive collection and aggregation of personally identifiable information without due process and transparency is an abuse of the public trust and inimical to privacy and free expression. We believe that everyone benefits when each individual is treated with respect, and ideas and information are freely shared, openly debated, and vigorously tested in the market of public experience.

The American Library Association is unswerving in its commitment to human rights, but cherishes a particular commitment to privacy and free expression; the two are inseparably linked and inextricably entwined with the professional practice of librarianship. We believe that the rights of privacy and free expression are not derived from any claim of political, racial, economic, or cultural hegemony. These rights are inherent in every individual. They cannot be surrendered or subordinated, nor can they be denied, by the decree of any government, or corporate interest. True justice and equality depend upon the constant exercise of these rights.

We recognize the power of information and ideas to inspire justice, to restore freedom and dignity to the exploited and oppressed, to change the hearts and minds of the oppressors, and to offer opportunities for a better life to all people.

Courageous people, in difficult and dangerous circumstances throughout human history, have demonstrated that freedom lives in the human heart and cries out for justice even in the face of threats, enslavement, imprisonment, torture, exile, and death. We draw inspiration from their example. They challenge us to remain steadfast in our most basic professional responsibility to promote and defend the rights of privacy and free expression.

There is no good censorship. Any effort to restrict free expression and the free flow of information through any media and regardless of frontiers aids discrimination and oppression. Fighting oppression with censorship is self-defeating. There is no meaningful freedom for the individual without personal privacy. A society that does not respect the privacy of the individual will be blind to the erosion of its rights and liberties.

Threats to the privacy and freedom of expression of any person anywhere are threats to the privacy and freedom of all people everywhere. Violations of these human rights have been recorded in virtually every country and society across the globe. Vigilance in protecting these rights is our best defense.

In response to these violations, we affirm these principles:

The American Library Association opposes any use of governmental prerogative that leads to the intimidation of individuals that prevents them from exercising their rights to hold opinions without interference, and to seek, receive, and impart information and ideas. We urge libraries and librarians everywhere to resist such abuse of governmental power, and to support those against whom such governmental power has been employed.

The American Library Association condemns any governmental effort to involve libraries and librarians in restrictions on the right of any individual to hold opinions without interference, and to seek, receive, and impart information and ideas. Such restrictions, whether enforced by statutes or regulations, contractual stipulations, or voluntary agreements, pervert the function of the library and violate the professional responsibilities of librarians.

The American Library Association rejects censorship in any form. Any action that denies the inalienable human rights of individuals only damages the will to resist oppression, strengthens the hand of the oppressor, and undermines the cause of justice.

The American Library Association will not abrogate these principles. We believe that censorship corrupts the cause of justice, and contributes to the demise of freedom.

Adopted January 16, 1991, by the ALA Council.