

**ALA Intellectual Freedom Committee
Report to Council
2018 ALA Midwinter
Denver, Colorado
Tuesday, February 13, 2018**

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

INFORMATION

Online Learning

Since ALA Annual Conference, the ALA Office for Intellectual Freedom has offered several webinars. In preparation for Banned Books Week in September, OIF Program Officer Ellie Diaz and media specialists from the New York Public Library and University of North Florida's library outlined dynamic strategies on harnessing the power of social media during Banned Books Week in the webinar "Get GIFy With It." OIF Assistant Director Kristin Pekoll offered solutions to confronting controversy with Banned Books Week events in the PLA-sponsored webinar "Making Banned Books Week Work in Your Community." In response to recent disinvited speaker incidents at universities, OIF collaborated with the Index on Censorship and SAGE Publishing to offer perspectives from disinvited speakers and university staff professors on campus safety and academic freedom in a September webinar. The Freedom to Read Foundation-sponsored webinar "Privacy to Pornography: What Staff Need to Know about Intellectual Freedom" featured intellectual freedom consultant Joyce Hagen-McIntosh, who reviewed real-world examples of controversial situations library staff may face and highlighted ALA resources that provide guidance on responding to those situations.

Journal of Intellectual Freedom and Privacy

Volume 2, Number 2 of the *Journal of Intellectual Freedom and Privacy* featured Emily J.M. Knox's article "Indoctrination and Common Sense Interpretation of Texts," on the Tucson Unified School District book banning and Cecilia Parks' "Beyond Compliance: How College Students Understand Their FERPA Rights." The articles were accompanied by commentaries by Kyle M.L. Jones and Robert Doyle and several book reviews.

The journal also included extensive news reports on censorship, First Amendment issues, and success stories compiled by Henry Reichman, professor of history at California State University at East Bay. It was his last issue; Hank decided to retire as the news editor for the *Journal on Intellectual Freedom and Privacy*. We thank Hank for his dedication and hard work first as an editor for the Newsletter on Intellectual Freedom and then as news editor for *JIFP*. It is work he has done faithfully and well for over 32 years, a remarkable tenure. We wish him the best as he begins his next adventure.

Intellectual Freedom & Advocacy Bootcamp

The Advocacy and Intellectual Freedom Bootcamp was initiated in 2016 by the ALA Office for Library Advocacy and the Office for Intellectual Freedom in response to anti-library trends. The workshop confronts brutal facts about the current environment, while offering proven strategies on promoting libraries as fundamental building blocks of democracy. More than 300 library leaders from 11 chapter conferences have been trained in intellectual freedom library messaging, networking, and community engagement.

OIF and OLA hosted a successful Bootcamp at Midwinter on Friday, Feb. 9, with a follow-up session titled “Recruit and Rally” for those interested in training the next generation of library leaders. More information can be found in the American Libraries article “[Community-centric Advocacy](#).” Eleven more bootcamps are scheduled across the country in 2018.

IFC Privacy Subcommittee and Choose Privacy Week

The IFC Privacy Subcommittee selected the theme “Big Data is Watching You” for the upcoming Choose Privacy Week 2018 (May 1-7). The subcommittee is also re-theming the website to “Choose Privacy Every Day,” to encourage librarians and the public to visit and use the privacy resources available through the website throughout the year. Volunteers will also redesign the website to improve accessibility and discovery of the website’s content.

At its Midwinter meeting, the Privacy Subcommittee formed working groups to draft three new privacy guidelines and checklists. The proposed guidelines will advise libraries on protecting patron privacy when employing data analytics and assistive technologies, as well as offering guidance on drafting vendor agreements that assure reader privacy.

At ALA Annual 2018, the Privacy Subcommittee will partner with the Intellectual Freedom Round Table to present “Big Data in Libraries: Friend or Foe?,” a debate to air various perspectives on libraries’ collection, use, and analysis of “big data” and its possible consequences for patron privacy. The Privacy Subcommittee will also co-sponsor a second panel at ALA Annual 2018, “Defense Against the Digital Dark Arts,” which will identify practical tools that librarians and libraries can use to defend patron privacy.

Banned Books Week

Featuring the theme “Words Have Power,” the 2017 Banned Books Week campaign encouraged readers around the world to celebrate the right to read, with a special focus on initiating conversations about censorship on social media. OIF coordinated with 340 libraries and nonprofits to host a Rebel Reader Twitter Tournament, an activity that invited readers to complete banned book-themed tasks on Twitter for a chance to win prizes that ranged from signed copies of banned books to art lithographs. The tournament received more than 2,500 entries, and the hashtag #BannedBooksWeek was trending on Twitter on Monday morning and Monday afternoon of Banned Books Week.

OIF also collaborated with SAGE Publishing to release and promote 170 videos of ALA conference-goers participating in the "Stand for the Banned" booth at ALA's Annual Conference in Chicago, and 150 additional readers submitted their own read-out videos to the office to be featured on the Banned Books Week YouTube channel.

The office presented this year's Banned Books Week 2018 design to the Intellectual Freedom Committee during Midwinter. The 2018 theme reflects the growing awareness to speak out when censorship happens. As OIF Director James LaRue has said, "Censorship thrives in silence; silence is its aim."

CENSORSHIP ISSUES

OIF estimates, based on several studies in 2011, that 82-97% of challenges remain unreported. To tackle this high rate of unreported censorship, OIF Assistant Director Kristin Pekoll collaborated with state intellectual freedom committee chairs to distribute cohesive messaging to state chapter members, which publicized the importance of reporting censorship. The office has received responses from more than 30 states.

The number of challenges in 2017 surpasses the number of challenges documented in 2016. From June 1, 2017 - Dec. 20, 2017, OIF tracked 162 challenges to 242 materials. The Top 10 Challenged Books of 2017 will be announced during National Library Week in April. The following are a few notable cases of public challenges OIF has tracked since June 1, 2017:

Material Challenges

In November 2017, a Texas school superintendent disregarded the school's policy when he removed *The Hate U Give* from school libraries after a parent complained. OIF worked with the Texas Library Association and publicized tangible ways readers could protest the banning. The challenge was reported in major news outlets. Local students created their own Twitter profile to encourage community members to attend the January board meeting. In January 2017, the YA novel was returned to the shelves but can only be checked out with parental permission.

After a parent complained her son was uncomfortable with the N-word in *To Kill a Mockingbird*, the book was removed from the 8th grade curriculum of a Mississippi school while the students were reading it for class. Administrators did not follow existing policy.

A couple requested *This Day in June* be removed from the children's section of an Illinois public library after they discovered their child reading it. The Illinois Family Institute urged people to attend the local board meeting to oppose the "propaganda." More than 150 people packed into the boardroom, many speaking in favor of the book and holding handmade signs. The board voted 6-1 to keep the book in the library's children's section.

A Michigan public library patron asked the library to hide the cover of the August issue of *Vanity Fair* magazine. The patron said the image "exposes [youth] to thoughts that could be premature and that they not be able to understand." The library decided to retain the magazine.

In November, a parent wrote a letter to a library complaining that the graphic novel his 10-year-old child had checked out — *How to Talk to Girls at Parties* by Neil Gaiman — was inappropriate for youth. He questioned why it was placed in the library’s young adult graphic novel section and indicated he would keep the book checked out to keep it from other patrons.

Buck: A Memoir by MK Asante was removed from a Maryland high school’s reading curriculum after receiving complaints from parents that the content and language was too graphic for teenagers. A teacher from the high school wrote an opinion piece for the Baltimore Sun stating, “When we take away literature that reflects the realities of many students’ lives, we say to them that their voices do not matter.”

Policy

A superintendent of a Florida school issued a statement to the district ordering that no instructional materials should include profanity or inappropriate subject matter. The ban included textbooks, classroom novels, and library books.

Hate Crimes

In September 2017, a noose was found hanging from a tree in the courtyard of a New York public library branch. In response, residents gathered outside the library branch for a series of poetry readings, songs, and speeches that denounced messages of hate.

A Minnesota public library found several Holocaust books defaced with profanity. The branch manager said that in some cases, the vandalism was so extensive the books had to be thrown away. A Massachusetts public library also found a swastika drawn on the library’s furniture. Police and town officials commented that the incident is part of an “ongoing and concerning problem” in the town.

A Kansas public library and Vermont public library reported similar hate crimes in July. Both libraries found swastika graffiti in library restrooms.

OIF has documented more than 40 instances of hate crimes since November 2016. The office partnered with the ALA Office for Diversity, Literacy, and Outreach Services to ensure those who request help find the support they need. The two offices also crafted a hate crimes information webpage (ala.org/advocacy/intfreedom/hate), addressing hate crime litigation, hate crime vs. hate speech, and ALA statements on the subject.

Displays

In a Maryland public library, patrons complained about the library’s Banned Books Week display of covered books, with one patron telling county commissioners that the display showed “malicious intent on the part of the library staff.”

An exhibit of 20 posters protesting threats to freedom was removed from a Massachusetts public library, following complaints of it including inappropriate content. A library visitor noticed blank frames hanging up and leaning on the wall where the exhibit once stood.

Programs

A “Know Your Rights” program, catering to undocumented residents, was canceled in September 2017 at an Illinois public library after staff received threatening phone calls. One caller suggested ICE agents would be present at the event and another caller said they would sue the library.

An Ohio public library canceled a program by author, journalist and Rolling Stone contributor Matt Taibbi. The November program was on Taibbi's new book, *I Can't Breathe*. The library's cancellation was in response to the 2000 book *The Exile: Sex, Drugs and Libel in the New Russia*. The library stated, “Unfortunately, the Library cannot ignore the misogynistic content of Mr. Taibbi's previous work, and has decided to cancel the program.”

Trends and IFC Response

The Intellectual Freedom Committee identified trends and issues in the evolving censorship landscape. These issues may be addressed in new interpretations, resolutions, essays in the *Intellectual Freedom Manual*, and guidelines:

- There is an increased awareness about **policy challenges**, rather than challenges to individual materials. OIF has tracked several challenges where administrators have requested that books that touch on a specific subject (for example, books that include suicide) be removed from collections or not be purchased at all.
- There have been recent discussion about what constitutes **self-censorship** emerging on social media, in publications, and in Q&As after programs. Is deciding not to purchase historically inaccurate texts self-censorship, even if there is a public demand for them?
- OIF has been tracking more instances of **administrators bypassing their selection and reconsideration policies**, and ordering the removal of materials, as in the Katy Independent School District, above.
- There were several high profile cases of **campus protests** in 2017, some involving violence, including disruptions following a cancelled engagement by Milo Yiannopoulos at Berkeley.

INTELLECTUAL FREEDOM MANUAL

A 10th edition of the *Intellectual Freedom Manual* is in the works. The 10th edition will include new interpretations, guidelines, and other IF documents that have been published since 2015, along with revised and new essays by intellectual freedom leaders. IFC will be working with Editor Martin Garnar and Assistant Editor Trina Magi (reversing their roles from the 9th edition) to incorporate the most updated language and documents into the comprehensive resource, as well as capturing the evolving issues in the intellectual freedom community. As part of this

process, the IFC will be reviewing each *Library Bill of Rights* interpretation and other official statements and guidelines for updating. A working group was formed at Midwinter to begin the process.

IFC CONFERENCE PROGRAMMING

The IFC proposed an engaging panel program that was accepted for ALA Annual Conference 2018. Moderated by OIF Director James LaRue, “Fake News or Free Speech: Is there a right to be misinformed?” brings fake news to the forefront by asking fundamental questions: Is fake news protected by the First Amendment? Can fake news undermine democracy? Freedom to Read Foundation general counsel Theresa Chmara, assistant professor at the University of Illinois’ School of Information Sciences Nicole Cooke, Director of Community Partnerships and Engagement at the News Literacy Project Damaso Reyes and assistant teaching professor of library and information science at Rutgers University Joyce Valenza will discuss their views.

COMPLETED AND CONTINUING PROJECTS

During ALA Annual 2017, IFC activated five new working groups to address growing concerns within the library community, ranging from Net Neutrality to social media censorship.

“Selection & Reconsideration Policy Toolkit”

“Selection & Reconsideration Policy Toolkit for Public, School, & Academic Libraries” is a revamped version of the decades-old Workbook on Selection Policy Writing on the ALA website, which catered only to school libraries. The comprehensive toolkit includes policy examples for school, academic, and public libraries on a range of topics, including donations, book challenges, weeding, and collection development. It can be found on the ALA website: ala.org/tools/challengesupport/selectionpolicytoolkit. The toolkit is a product of two years of editing and writing from six librarians: April Dawkins (school), Helen Adams (school), Jean Duncan McFarren (public), Kristin Whitehair (public), Lisa Errico (academic), Valerie Nye (academic), with help from OIF Assistant Director Kristin Pekoll. The resource was thoroughly reviewed and vetted by IFC members, and six outside IF leaders were consulted. IFC officially endorsed the toolkit at Midwinter Meeting 2018.

At the ALA Midwinter Symposium on the Future of Libraries session “The Front Lines of Intellectual Freedom: Protecting Your Pages With Policy,” toolkit authors walked more than 60 attendees through the highlights of the resource and answered questions from the audience. Each attendee received a print copy of the 54-page toolkit. In the near future, print copies will be available for sale through the ALA Store.

“Services to People with Disabilities: An Interpretation of the *Library Bill of Rights*”

In response to comments from ASCLA on “Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion: An Interpretation of the *Library Bill of Rights*,” a working group was initiated to create an interpretation addressing library services and inclusion issues for people with disabilities. After reviewing ALA policy documents, the committee decided to revise the 2009 *Library Bill of Rights* interpretation “Services to Persons with Disabilities.” The revised interpretation will incorporate ADA definitions and make a clear connection to the *Library Bill of Rights* articles and services to people with disabilities. The committee’s goal is to obtain comments from the wider library community and present the document to ALA Council at ALA Annual Conference 2018.

Disinvited Speakers and Authors Q&A

With recent events of speaker and author disinvitations to campuses and schools, IFC is dedicated to providing a resource that answers frequently asked questions about four topics: inviting controversial speakers to libraries, dealing with protests and speakers, security, and representation of all views at library programs. The resource is based on best practices from recent instances, and the committee hopes to approve it at ALA Annual Conference 2018.

Social Media Guidelines

An IFC working group is crafting guidelines on what a library should and should not do with its public and user-oriented social media. It will address whether a library can moderate or exclude a user’s comment and include a definition of limited public forum. The committee hopes to approve the document at ALA Annual Conference 2018.

“Net Neutrality: An Intellectual Freedom Issue” Position Paper

In June, ALA President Jim Neal asked the IFC to draft a position paper on Net Neutrality from an intellectual freedom perspective, with the expectation that the document will be used as talking points in the anticipated long fight for Net Neutrality. IFC initiated a working group that presented a statement draft to Jim Neal. The position paper was shared with the ALA Executive Board, Washington Office’s Kathy Kromer, ALA Council, Intellectual Freedom Round Table board, Committee on Legislation, IFC Privacy Subcommittee, American Association of School Librarians board, and the Committee on Professional Ethics, and a revised document was presented at Council Forum at Midwinter, incorporating suggested changes.

The Committee on Legislation, Intellectual Freedom Round Table, Committee on Professional Ethics, the American Association of School Librarians, and IFC Privacy Subcommittee endorsed the position paper.

“Visual and Performing Arts in Libraries: An Interpretation of the *Library Bill of Rights*”

“Visual and Performing Arts in Libraries: An Interpretation of the *Library Bill of Rights*” emphasizes the role art plays in libraries and in people’s lives, and takes a strong stance that libraries should present a broad spectrum of viewpoints in developing art exhibits and programs. This position is supported by the *Library Bill of Rights*. The interpretation was written over 18 months with assistance from artists, theater experts, and librarians. The interpretation has incorporated feedback from the wider library community given in November 2017 and February 2017, as well as ALA Council. During Midwinter, several examples of the need for this interpretation in public and school libraries surfaced during discussions of the interpretations.

The Intellectual Freedom Round Table endorsed this interpretation in principle because changes were still being made to the document based on feedback given at ALA Council Forum.

ACTION ITEMS

The Intellectual Freedom Committee moves the adoption of the following action items:

CD # 19.1, “Net Neutrality: An Intellectual Freedom Issue”

CD # 19.2, “Visual and Performing Arts in Libraries: An Interpretation of the *Library Bill of Rights*”

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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Net Neutrality: An Intellectual Freedom Issue

The American Library Association (ALA) affirms that Net Neutrality is essential to the promotion and practice of intellectual freedom and the free exercise of democracy.

Definition

Net Neutrality is the principle that Internet Service Providers (ISPs) should enable access to all content and applications regardless of the source, and without favoring or blocking particular products or websites. Under this principle, ISPs should not “throttle” (restrict, impair, or degrade) network speed or traffic on the basis of content, applications, services, or mobile devices. Such interference with internet traffic, favoring some sources and limiting others, impedes the free flow of information and profoundly disrupts both the right of individuals to participate in public discourse, and the full functioning of a library.

Libraries, the *Library Bill of Rights*, and the Internet

In the *Library Bill of Rights*, ALA affirms that all libraries are forums for information and ideas. Today most libraries provide internet access, and for many individuals and communities, this is their sole point of access to the internet. Libraries’ provision of internet access opens doors to many important aspects of our culture, including news, social media, job opportunities, entertainment, and civic dialogue and participation. The internet has become not only a source of information, but also a vital platform for self-expression, learning, communication, and political participation. Net Neutrality is a precondition of the open information infrastructure upon which libraries depend, in which all services are accessible on an equitable basis.

Net Neutrality and Democracy

A well-functioning democracy requires an informed citizenry with access to information from many viewpoints and sources, as well as the opportunity to exchange ideas with others through civic engagement. The internet is essential for people to have a voice in the political process and to access the viewpoints of others. Publicly supported institutions such as libraries, universities, and K-12 schools provide equal access to the internet to their community members. Limiting access means users’ rights to participate in democracy are diminished, and the foundation of a nation’s democracy is undermined.

Net Neutrality, Intellectual Freedom, and Censorship

“The freedom to read is of little consequence when the reader cannot obtain matter fit for that reader's purpose. What is needed is not only the absence of restraint, but also the positive provision of opportunity for the people to read the best that has been thought and said.”

-[The Freedom to Read Statement](#)

In the 21st century, much of the speech in our society and the publications of the press are transmitted via the internet. Net Neutrality ensures that the transmission of all “digital speech” is treated equally, regardless of origin, content, or purpose. Eliminating Net Neutrality would abridge equality of access for those who want to express their ideas and those who choose to receive that information.

Net Neutrality guarantees the right to distribute and receive ideas without limitation or discrimination via the internet. Without the protection of Net Neutrality, tiered access limits diversity and blocks ideas and opinions. Additionally, it creates an internet in which only the companies that can afford to pay more for prioritized access can get their content through to consumers. Allowing ISPs to determine which speech receives priority access and which speech can be delayed, or even blocked, based on commercial and financial interests impairs intellectual freedom. This leads inevitably to censorship of voices without economic or political power.

Article III of the *Library Bill of Rights*¹ states, “Libraries should challenge censorship in the fulfillment of their responsibility to provide information and enlightenment.” Favoring some sources of information over others effectively suppresses certain viewpoints and activities, such as local news outlets or participation in small social media platforms. Libraries and library users must have access to networks in which all content is treated equitably.

In order to protect intellectual freedom, society must defend the right of every individual to both access and explore any information from all points of view without restriction.

Equitable Access to Ideas and Information

Net Neutrality aligns with ALA’s core value of access to information. Article I of the *Library Bill of Rights* states, “Materials should not be excluded because of the origin, background, or views of those contributing to their creation.” If internet services are limited because of their source (as in a competing news agency, application, or entertainment company), or others are favored because of special payments to ISPs, access to the full range of ideas of our society will be compromised. Net Neutrality is the only condition under which equitable access to information can be guaranteed for libraries and all users.

Article IV of the *Library Bill of Rights* states, “Libraries should cooperate with all persons and groups concerned with resisting abridgment of free expression and free access to ideas.” Many organizations traditionally responsible for delivering access to vital news and civic engagement support Net Neutrality, among them news organizations, journalists, civil liberty groups, and museums. Moreover, hundreds of librarians, in separate filings with the Federal Communications Commission, have expressed their strong defense of the principles of Net Neutrality.

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.” Libraries bridge the digital divide, providing the opportunity for even the most disenfranchised people to seek an education, search for jobs, research important issues, and express their views. Net Neutrality ensures that all ISP users, including library users, have access to the broadest possible content, rather than pre-selected, favored content and services that vary according to the location or economic profile of a community.

Conclusion

We acknowledge Council Resolutions in 2006², 2014³ the work of the Washington Office⁴ and other ALA advocacy efforts to defend Net Neutrality. In alignment with ALA’s Code of Ethics, and to fulfill the vision of the *Library Bill of Rights*, all those using, employed by, or working with libraries should commit to the preservation of and advocacy for Net Neutrality.

1. [*Library Bill of Rights*](#), Adopted June 19, 1939, by the ALA Council; amended October 14, 1944; June 18, 1948; February 2, 1961; June 27, 1967; January 23, 1980; inclusion of “age” reaffirmed January 23, 1996
2. “[Resolution Affirming ‘Network Neutrality,’](#)” adopted June 28, 2006
3. “[Resolution Reaffirming Support for National Open Internet Policies and ‘Network Neutrality,’](#)” adopted July 1, 2014
4. “[Network Neutrality,](#)” American Library Association

Endorsed by the Committee on Legislation, Intellectual Freedom Round Table, Committee on Professional Ethics, American Association of School Librarians, and IFC Privacy Subcommittee

Visual and Performing Arts in Libraries: An Interpretation of the *Library Bill of Rights*

Visual and performing arts can transform understanding and appreciation of the world in all its cultural diversity. The American Library Association affirms that visual and performing arts can be powerful components of library collections and services. The arts play a vital role in our ability to communicate a broad spectrum of ideas to all people. Developing an understanding and appreciation of visual and performing arts promotes artistic literacy. Libraries should offer opportunities for the community to experience art.

Art can serve personal, political, and aesthetic functions, including personal expression, and social, historical, or political messaging. It may enhance day-to-day living, create visual delight, or challenge the status quo. For the purposes of this interpretation of the *Library Bill of Rights*, art is defined as work created or designated by an artist, with the ability to provoke an aesthetic response, or affect the human senses in some way. Ultimately art is a product combining the artist's creativity, the viewer's perception, and a representation of the culture and time in which the work was produced.

Visual art is created with the implication of human manufacture. Visual art includes but is not limited to painting, sculpture, photography, design, digital, fiber, and decorative arts involving a wide variety of visual media. Visual art has visible properties (whether or not it is seen) and there are always some aspects of the formal elements of art – line, shape, color, form, texture, etc. Performance art is defined as physical movement, placement, or theatrical activity involving people in defined space, with the explicit or implicit application of artistic direction, choreography, curatorial planning, or design. Performance art may include aspects or elements of music, dance, mime, and acting, with attributes of professional or amateur stagecraft. As with the visual arts, performance art may either confirm or challenge cultural familiarity, and as stated in Article I of the *Library Bill of Rights*, contributes to the “interest, information, and enlightenment of all people of the community the library serves.”¹

Libraries may choose to provide both physical and virtual spaces for the community to experience and interact with artistic content and programs or to create their own art. Works of visual and performing art may be temporary exhibits, permanent installations, programs or performances offered in the library, or parts of a library's viewable or archived collections.

In developing library arts exhibits and programs, libraries should present a broad spectrum of opinions and viewpoints as codified in the *Library Bill of Rights*, Articles I and II. Libraries should not avoid developing exhibits or programs because of controversial content, or because of the beliefs or affiliations of those whose work is represented. Libraries do not endorse the viewpoints of the artists themselves, the artwork owners, or the exhibit organizers, whether or not they are internal or external contributors to library programs and collections.²

Libraries that choose to make gallery or performing space available for use by community groups or individuals should formulate a written policy for the use of these areas and may adopt time, place, and manner rules for such use. Libraries may wish to develop such criteria as the size of the artwork to be displayed, space requirements including for an audience, the length of time the work may remain on display or in performance, the frequency with which material may be displayed from the same group, or whether to accept work only from local constituents or stakeholders.

Such policies should also ensure that space is provided on an equitable basis to all who request it and should be stated in inclusive rather than exclusive terms. Policies and publicity should be written to encourage use of library public display, exhibit, and performance spaces by a broad range of organizations and individuals.³

However, as with any meeting space, a publicly funded library may instead choose to restrict use of display, exhibit, and performance spaces to “strictly ‘library-related activities’ provided that the limitation is clearly circumscribed and is viewpoint neutral.”⁴

The library’s policies for arts programming and exhibits should be readily available to the public. Behavior policies should not be used to limit access to art or performances in the library. If users object to a particular work of art or performance there should be a method of recourse, similar to a reconsideration policy, for expressing their concerns.

All art in the library’s permanent or exhibit holdings is an integral part of the library’s collections just the same as literary, film, eBooks, and all other material types. Collection development policies should include the collection of, and access to, art where possible. The library should provide a welcoming and content-rich environment for all users to engage with visual art or to create their own projects. Libraries are encouraged to be intentional in including diverse voices, be it through creative projects, performances, or exhibits from many cultural traditions. When the library plans exhibitions or performances, the selection should consider all of the communities served and should provide diverse points of view.

State and federal law may mandate that libraries use internet filters.⁵ Such filters may block moving and still images and can be especially problematic when users seek information on the visual arts. Library policy should therefore offer and encourage library users to ask for unfiltered access to websites, and for content to be unrestricted with due respect for user privacy. Libraries should consult the Internet Filtering interpretation⁵ for more information on CIPA. There should be no barriers to child or teen access to visual and performing arts within the library.

In summary, visual images and performances in the library should not be restricted based on content. Librarians and library staff should be proactive in seeking out a wide variety of representational and abstract artwork and performance art, with limitations or parameters set only with respect to space, installation, fiscal, and technical constraints. The same criteria for access to literature of all kinds for all people are relevant to visual media and performing arts in libraries.

1. [*Library Bill of Rights*](#), Article I, Adopted June 19, 1939, by the ALA Council; amended October 14, 1944; June 18, 1948; February 2, 1961; June 27, 1967; January 23, 1980; inclusion of “age” reaffirmed January 23, 1996
2. “[*Politics in American Libraries: An Interpretation of the Library Bill of Rights*](#),” Endorsed by the ACRL Professional Values Committee in June 2017, Adopted June 27, 2017, by the ALA Council
3. “[*Exhibit Spaces and Bulletin Boards: An Interpretation of the Library Bill of Rights*](#),” Adopted July 2, 1991, by the ALA Council, amended June 30, 2004, and July 1, 2014
4. “[*Meeting Rooms: An Interpretation of the Library Bill of Rights*](#),” Adopted July 2, 1991, by the ALA Council
5. “[*Internet Filtering: An Interpretation of the Library Bill of Rights*](#),” Adopted June 30, 2015, by the ALA Council

Endorsed in principle by the Intellectual Freedom Round Table