

## Committee on Professional Ethics

# REPORT TO COUNCIL

### 2008 Midwinter Meeting — Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

As chair of the Committee on Professional Ethics, I am pleased to report on the committee's activities since the 2007 Annual Conference:

#### Proposed Revisions to the ALA Code of Ethics – Action Item

In anticipation of the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the ALA Code of Ethics, the Committee on Profession Ethics (COPE) has been exploring whether the Code of Ethics should be revised, in light of the new issues confronting the profession and the numerous new policies adopted by the ALA. COPE relied upon a series of programs and hearings held from 2004 through 2006 to consider whether the Code should be revised and to listen to ALA members' views.

COPE reviewed each article of Code of Ethics in light of the comments we had received. Prior to this conference we circulated a proposal with two minor language changes and an expansion of Article IV reflecting the importance of balance between the holders of intellectual property rights and the rights of information users. A hearing was held at this conference.

The Committee proposes adoption of the following changes to the Code of Ethics:

Article III: A comma was added to Article III, otherwise the text remained unchanged.

The proposed version reads:

**"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."**

Article IV: The proposed revision reads:

**"We respect intellectual property rights and advocate balance between the interests of information users and rights holders."**

Article V: A comma was added to Article V, otherwise the text remained unchanged.

The proposed new version of Article V reads:

**"We treat co-workers and other colleagues with respect, fairness, and good faith, and advocate conditions of employment that safeguard the rights and welfare of all employees of our institutions."**

(An annotated copy of the Code that identifies the proposed changes is attached to this report.)

After the adoption of a revised Code, COPE will develop publications and programs that will educate libraries and librarians about why it is important to incorporate the Code of Ethics into the library's set of governing policies.

In closing, the Committee on Professional Ethics thanks the unit liaisons and the Ethics Committee staff for their commitment, assistance, and hard work.

Respectfully Submitted,

ALA Committee on Professional Ethics  
Candace D. Morgan (Chair)  
M. Veanna Baxter  
Patricia Clark  
Diedre Conkling  
John DeSantis  
Wanda D. Dole  
Nancy Zimmerman  
Robbie Sittel (intern)

## Code of Ethics of the American Library Association

As members of the American Library Association, we recognize the importance of codifying and making known to the profession and to the general public the ethical principles that guide the work of librarians, other professionals providing information services, library trustees and library staffs.

Ethical dilemmas occur when values are in conflict. The American Library Association Code of Ethics states the values to which we are committed, and embodies the ethical responsibilities of the profession in this changing information environment.

We significantly influence or control the selection, organization, preservation, and dissemination of information. In a political system grounded in an informed citizenry, we are members of a profession explicitly committed to intellectual freedom and the freedom of access to information. We have a special obligation to ensure the free flow of information and ideas to present and future generations.

The principles of this Code are expressed in broad statements to guide ethical decision making. These statements provide a framework; they cannot and do not dictate conduct to cover particular situations.

- I. **We provide the highest level of service to all library users through appropriate and usefully organized resources; equitable service policies; equitable access; and accurate, unbiased, and courteous responses to all requests.**
- II. **We uphold the principles of intellectual freedom and resist all efforts to censor library resources.**
- III. **We protect each library user's right to privacy and confidentiality with respect to information sought or received and resources consulted, borrowed, acquired,<sup>[e1]</sup> or transmitted.**
- IV. **~~We recognize and respect intellectual property rights.~~ We respect intellectual property rights and advocate balance between the interests of information users and rights holders.<sup>[e2]</sup>**
- V. **We treat co-workers and other colleagues with respect, fairness,<sup>[e3]</sup> and good faith, and advocate conditions of employment that safeguard the rights and welfare of all employees of our institutions.**
- VI. **We do not advance private interests at the expense of library users, colleagues, or our employing institutions.**
- VII. **We distinguish between our personal convictions and professional duties and do not allow our personal beliefs to interfere with fair representation of the aims of our institutions or the provision of access to their information resources.**
- VIII. **We strive for excellence in the profession by maintaining and enhancing our own knowledge and skills, by encouraging the professional development of co-workers, and by fostering the aspirations of potential members of the profession.**

Adopted June 28, 1995, by the ALA Council