

## **Importance of Education to Intellectual Freedom:**

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

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. Libraries foster intellectual access through educational programs and instruction in essential information skills.

Article I of the *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.

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 intellectual freedom.

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.

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

Education in support of intellectual freedom is fundamental to the mission of libraries.