

TO: ALA Council

DATE: January 23, 2023

RE: (select one)

- ACTION REQUESTED
- INFORMATION
- REPORT

ACTION REQUESTED/INFORMATION/REPORT: (add below)

Report: ALA Intellectual Freedom Committee

Action requested from Councilors is to cast their vote to: (if applicable)

None.

ACTION REQUESTED BY: (add committee name)

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BACKGROUND: (add information)

**ALA INTELLECTUAL FREEDOM COMMITTEE
REPORT TO COUNCIL
2022 LIBLEARNX CONFERENCE
NEW ORLEANS, LOUISIANA**

The ALA Intellectual Freedom Committee (IFC) is pleased to present this update of its activities since the ALA Annual Meeting in June 2022:

IFC PRIVACY SUBCOMMITTEE

In September, 2022, the IFC Privacy Subcommittee successfully initiated the Vendor and Library Privacy Community of Practice. The community of practice is an outcome of the work done by the Privacy Subcommittee's Vendor Privacy Resolution Working Group. This working group was formed by a resolution adopted by ALA Council and was tasked with the following:

- Completing a study of current vendor privacy policies and identifying key issues.
- Developing a shared set of privacy guidelines.
- Exploring the requirements for turning guidelines into standards supported by ALA.
- Exploring the creation of a transparent online resource where libraries can view vendors' alignment with the standards.
- Drafting any additional guidelines and/or resources deemed necessary by the joint working group. establishing the community following an initial meeting with vendors and the IFC Privacy Subcommittee at ALA Annual.

The Community of Practice is an opportunity to address concerns shared by library workers and vendors related to privacy, as well as those concerns that are specific to library workers and vendors. For library workers, this means being good stewards of institutional resources and minimizing risks for library users when libraries work with service providers while advocating for users' right to pursue their own intellectual paths and their rights to privacy. For service providers to libraries, it means a commitment to clearly understand the library community's expectations around privacy practices and policies to ensure we're investing in the right improvements while balancing that work against our organizations' existing objectives and initiatives.

To date 18 vendors and 11 library workers have agreed to join this Community of Practice. It is the hope of the working group that once the foundation of trust has been established, the Community of Practice will continue to grow and spur the creation of new working groups that will address transparency, policy development, and guidelines.

The Privacy Subcommittee has also formed a number of smaller working groups to develop new guidelines and disseminate information and updates about privacy to the library community. One item – the document, "Protecting Patron Access to Reproductive Health Information," developed this fall by members of the Privacy Subcommittee - will serve as the foundation for a program on that topic at ALA Annual in Chicago.

PRIVACY FIELD GUIDES

The Privacy Field Guides are available in a new format!

The [Ultimate Privacy Field Guide: A Workbook of Best Practices](#) is now available in both print and electronic formats through ALA Editions and the Office for Intellectual Freedom. The workbook brings together all seven privacy field guides in one volume and provides structured exercises that will help library workers implement privacy changes at their institutions. Edited by Erin Berman and Bonnie Tijerina, reviewers have called the workbook “a very useful handbook for librarians looking to increase patron privacy protections at their libraries.”

The individual Privacy Field Guides remain available for download on the ALA website, at <https://www.ala.org/advocacy/privacy/fieldguides>. Library workers who visit this site to access the individual privacy field guides will find a link to a dedicated interactive website that will .

CHALLENGES TO CRT AND DIVERSITY TRAINING TOOLKIT

The Challenges to CRT and Diversity Training Toolkit subgroup, under the able leadership of Rhonda Evans, has nearly completed the final draft of the toolkit. The toolkit will be an aid to library workers addressing censorship resulting from challenges to "critical race theory" claimed to be in school and university curricula, as well as challenges to anti-racist materials and staff trainings addressing equity, diversity, and inclusion. The subgroup will present their draft to the Intellectual Freedom Committee for review and approval at ALA's Annual Conference in Chicago, Illinois.

JOINT PROFESSIONAL VALUES PROGRAMMING SUBGROUP

The Joint Professional Values Programming Subgroup, comprised of members from the Intellectual Freedom Committee, IFC Privacy Subcommittee, COPE, IFRT, and FTRF, meets regularly to share resources and planning for conference programs addressing intellectual freedom and privacy.

Intellectual Freedom and Privacy programming at LibLearnX 2023 included the following items:

How Librarians Can Strengthen Children's Privacy Literacy; Difficult Conversations: Dealing with Hostility and De-escalating Conflict in the Library; Building Strong Trustee Relationships during Book Challenges; Book Bans, Libraries, and the Law: Standing Up to Library Censorship in Louisiana and Beyond; Building a Practical Toolkit for Censorship and Challenges at your Public Library; and The Intellectual Freedom Syllabus.

INTELLECTUAL FREEDOM AND SOCIAL JUSTICE WORKING GROUP

The Intellectual Freedom and Social Justice Working Group completed its work on its report to the Executive Board that responds to the charge from the ALA Council to identify alternatives to neutrality rhetoric, as instructed by the "Resolution on White Supremacy and Fascism Being Antithetical to Librarianship" adopted by ALA Council at ALA's 2021 Virtual Midwinter Meeting. The report reflects the months of deliberation by members of the working group, who met throughout the winter and spring in 2022.

The [final report of the Intellectual Freedom and Social Justice Working Group](#) was delivered to the ALA Executive Board in July, 2022. It is available online on the ALA Governance website. The report explores the concepts and beliefs associated with neutrality in libraries, and identifies three alternatives to neutrality for discussion, including radical empathy, trauma-informed response, and cultural humility. It also reports on the feedback obtained by the working group in a number of conversations with members.

The report concludes:

“The ALA's core values are anything but neutral. The positions and policy statements in the ALA Policy Manual spell out specific ethical commitments demanding that sides be taken in contentious situations. It is important to be explicit about our beliefs and how they inform our work. As library workers, we should:

- *advance and fully implement equity, diversity, inclusion, justice, and belonging in hiring, mentoring, supporting, and promoting library staff; and advocate for equity, diversity, inclusion, justice, and belonging in relationships with library vendors.*
- *promote equitable access to information, providing more assistance to those who need it most.*
- *provide a diversity of perspectives in our collections and resources highlighting communities that have historically been underrepresented or excluded.*
- *listen actively to recommendations of individuals from marginalized groups; ensure and advance equity in providing access to facilities, resources, and services; educate ourselves and our users about the critical evaluation of information and the structures in which it is created; and champion social*

justice, taking action to combat discrimination and systemic racism.

To succeed in these goals we propose adopting an approach based on these frameworks that meets the goal of building trust with our communities rather than using neutrality as our guiding value. In doing so, libraries and library workers will be prioritizing the defense and support of the humanity of our users.”

The ALA Executive Board is determining next steps for this initiative. Under the guidance of President Lessa Pelayo-Lozada and President-Elect Emily Drabinski, representatives from the Intellectual Freedom Committee and the Office for Diversity and Literacy Services (ODLOS) have begun to collaborate to identify further actions to advance ALA’s work in this area.

BANNED BOOKS WEEK

In 2022, Banned Books Week carried forward the theme "Books Unite Us. Censorship Divides Us," to amplify the message that the politically motivated campaign to silence marginalized voices and censor books by diverse authors was wholly intended to sow distrust and separate communities from community institutions like libraries and schools.

The 2022 honorary chair of Banned Books Week was frequently banned author George M. Johnson, author of *All Boys Aren’t Blue*. In addition, the Banned Book Week Coalition launched a youth honorary chair program, naming high school student Cameron Samuels as the first honorary youth chair. Cameron was a key figure in the protest of censorship in Katy, Texas. Both George and Cameron participated almost daily in Banned Books Week events, including ALA Banned Books Week programming.

Banned Books Week 2022 programming had a strong theme of community and youth organizing, with many people expressing a desire for more. Programming offered by ALA and the Office for Intellectual Freedom included:

- **Free Expression for Young Adults**, with **Jarrett Dapier**, librarian and author of *Wake Now in the Fire*, an upcoming graphic novel about the censorship of Marjane Satrapi’s *Persepolis* by CPS; **Ryan Estrada**, co-author of *Banned Book Club*; **Varian Johnson**, author of *Playing the Cards You’re Dealt* and *The Parker Inheritance*; and award-winning educator and reading advocate **Donalyn Miller**.
- **How to Fight Book Bans in Your Community**, with **Cameron Samuels**; **Jen Cousins** and **Stephana Ferrell**, co-founders of the Florida Freedom to Read Project; and **Carolyn Foote**, co-founder of Freedom Fighters.

- **Practical Strategies for Defending Books in Your Library**, with **Moni Barrette** (President, GNCRT), **Jamie Gregory** (Upper School Librarian, Christ Church Episcopal School), **Val Nye** (Library Director, Santa Fe Community College), and **Jack Phoenix** (Manager of Collection Development and Technical Services at Cuyahoga Falls Library).
- **A Conversation with Jennifer Niven and Pat Scales**, with **Jennifer Niven**, *New York Times* bestselling author of challenged books *All the Bright Places* and *Breathless*, and retired educator and librarian, ALA author, and intellectual freedom expert **Pat Scales**.

In addition to the strong interest in programming in the library community, there was also unprecedented interest in Banned Books Week by major news outlets and local and regional press. Among these were CNN, MSNBC, NBC News, ABC News, USA Today, the New York Times, the Washington Post, the Guardian, the Atlantic, HuffPo, Vice, Salon, the Associated Press, Reuters, and Publishers' Weekly.

ALA and OIF also saw unprecedented pushback to Banned Books Week, with multiple events, particularly drag story time events, canceled due to threats against performers and institutions. OIF also received several public and private reports of libraries and schools not being allowed to participate in Banned Books Week because the event or concept was deemed too “controversial” or “political,” and some social media posts and displays marking the week were censored.

OIF offered products on both the ALA Store and the ALA Graphics Gift Shop via Spreadshirt, with support from ALA Production Services and Rachel Johnson. Materials and merchandise included posters, bookmarks, reports, digital assets, t-shirts, and other items.

We want to thank Betsy Gomez, interim Program Manager at OIF, for her dedication and her thoughtful and creative work to organize and promote ALA's Banned Books Week initiatives for 2022.

BOOK CHALLENGES AND CENSORSHIP

Challenge support remains a priority for the staff of the Office for Intellectual Freedom, as the volume of challenges reported to OIF remains at a record high number. Between January 1 and November 30, 2022, librarians, educators, and members of the public reported 1,059 attempts to ban or restrict library resources to the Office for Intellectual Freedom; these challenges targeted 2,081 unique titles. A notable trend are demands by political advocacy groups to remove multiple titles from libraries all at once, based on lists pulled from social media posts shared among political advocacy groups. Diverse books – books reflecting the lives and experiences of LGBTQIA persons, or addressing their concerns, and books reflecting the lives and experiences of BIPOC persons – remain the primary targets of the censor.

The ongoing coordinated political campaign to censor and restrict library resources via book challenges, legislation, and legal actions is being reflected in a growing number of pre-filed bills in state legislatures intended to restrict or ban access to books and other library resources. OIF staff continues to work in partnership with the Public Policy & Advocacy Office to assist state chapters addressing adverse state legislation by identifying and advising on substantive legal issues and assisting with advocacy.

The IFC is pleased to welcome Eric Stroshane, MLIS, to the OIF team. Eric will be providing challenge support to members, library workers, and educators in addition to managing the banned books database and continuing his work as news editor for the OIF Blog and the *Journal of Intellectual Freedom and Privacy*. Eric previously worked at the North Dakota State Library and the Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh and is a past president of the Mountain Plains Library Association.

Additionally, we want to remind ALA members and all library workers that there are online challenge support and advocacy tools on the [Fight Censorship](#) resource page, and the [Leroy C. Merritt Humanitarian Fund](#) is available to provide support and assistance to library workers facing discrimination or loss of employment due to their defense of intellectual freedom.

UNITE AGAINST BOOK BANS

[Unite Against Book Bans](#), ALA's public facing grassroots advocacy campaign, continues to grow its comprehensive program of advocacy and outreach intended to mobilize and empower individuals and community groups fighting to protect the right to read in their communities.

The campaign, administered jointly by the Office for Intellectual Freedom and the Public Policy and Advocacy Office, now draws on the expertise and resources provided by 65 national partners and 53 state and local partners to support the thousands of individual advocates who have pledged to oppose book censorship in their communities. Unite Against Book Bans is providing direct support and advice to local library supporters organizing to counter censorship campaigns in cities and counties across the country. The campaign is also working with our national partners to amplify opposition to adverse state legislation.

Your support – and the support of your colleagues, neighbors, and networks – is crucial to continuing to grow UABB and its powerful leverage for grassroots advocacy opposing book bans and censorship. If you have not joined, please do so at this link, and invite your neighbors, community groups, or networks to join.

In closing, the Intellectual Freedom Committee thanks the division and chapter intellectual freedom committees, the Intellectual Freedom Round Table, the unit liaisons, and the members of the OIF staff, recognizing the tireless work of the Office for Intellectual Freedom and the

Freedom to Read Foundation. In particular, we thank Joyce McIntosh, Karen Gianni, Eric Stroshane for their support of our members and colleagues who are fighting censorship and other challenges to intellectual freedom in their communities.

Respectfully Submitted,
ALA Intellectual Freedom Committee

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