

Committee on Professional Ethics  
**REPORT TO COUNCIL**

2021 Virtual Annual Council Meeting

As chair of the Committee on Professional Ethics (COPE), I am pleased to report on the committee's activities since the virtual Midwinter event in January 2021.

## Charge

The council committee on professional ethics shall augment the *Code of Ethics* ([ala.org/tools/ethics](http://ala.org/tools/ethics)) by explanatory interpretations and additional statements, prepared by this committee or elicited from other units of ALA. When units of the association develop statements dealing with ethical issues, a copy will be sent to the committee on professional ethics for review so that it may be compared to the existing ALA *Code of Ethics* in order to determine whether or not conflicts occur.

## COPE Subgroup on Social and Racial Justice

In collaboration with member groups supported by the Office for Diversity, Literacy and Outreach, COPE created a subgroup in June 2020 that produced a new ninth principle of the *ALA Code of Ethics* for ALA Council consideration. Group members included Nicole Cooke, Alexandra Gomez, Sarah Houghton, Liladhar Pendse, Jennifer Shimada, and the group was co-chaired by Andrew Harant and Sheri Edwards.

The subgroup has been active throughout the year. They have sought input from a broad array of groups including the ODLOS Advisory Committee, the Committee on Diversity, the Intellectual Freedom Committee, ALA Divisions and the entire membership of ALA. The principle was posted on ALA Connect to invite member feedback, and was shared with ALA Council and Executive Board. The subgroup discussed the comments received and whether to adopt any suggested changes. It submitted a final draft for consideration by the Committee on Professional Ethics. On May 11, the members of the Committee on Professional Ethics unanimously approved

the ninth principle to be proposed to ALA Council for adoption as an addition to the *ALA Code of Ethics*. The “*ALA Code of Ethics Ninth Principle*” is included in this report as an action item.

The subgroup, which will disband after COPE's meeting at the 2021 ALA Annual Conference, has made some recommendations to COPE about how to proceed if the ninth principle is adopted. These include revision of the preamble to the *ALA Code of Ethics* principles to add context for the racial and social justice principle; the development of interpretations or Q&As addressing ableism and sexism; and guidance for collection development practices that balance the *Code of Ethics*' second principle (censorship) and the proposed ninth principle (social and racial justice).

COPE wishes to thank all the members of this devoted and effective subgroup, with a special thank you to the co-chairs Andrew Harant and Sheri Edwards.

## Intellectual Freedom and Social Justice Subgroup

The Social Justice and Intellectual Freedom Subgroup continues to develop messaging and a framework that proactively demonstrates the interdependence of intellectual freedom and social justice. It is also reviewing neutrality rhetoric and devising an alternative as charged by the “Resolution to Condemn White Supremacy and Fascism as Antithetical to Library Work,” passed by ALA Council at the 2021 Midwinter Meeting. The subgroup has representation from many groups across the association, including IFC, COPE, the National Associations of Librarians of Color, Committee on Diversity, Accessibility Assembly, Rainbow Round Table, and Social Responsibilities Round Table.

## ALA Reorganization

COPE continues to monitor the developments within ALA to make fundamental changes in the governance structure. It has been our goal to ensure that these three ALA values and endeavors maintain an ongoing presence within the structure of ALA. Until looming questions are addressed and definitively answered, it will be difficult to build the structure that will support an ongoing, vital Intellectual Freedom, Privacy, and Professional Ethics entity. We will continue to monitor developments and advocate for a committee that supports the purposes and essential work of IFC and COPE in a viable format.

## Cataloguing Code of Ethics

One of the charges to the ALA Committee on Professional Ethics is “When units of the association develop statements dealing with ethical issues, a copy will be sent to the committee on professional ethics for review so that it may be compared to the existing ALA code of ethics in order to determine whether or not conflicts occur.”

In January, 2021, the Cataloging Ethics Steering Committee — under the leadership of co-chairs Beth Shoemaker (Emory University) and Karen Snow (Dominican University), who were representing ALA ALCTS CaMMS on an international subgroup to produce a cataloging code of ethics — asked COPE to determine if there were any significant conflicts between the ALA *Code of Ethics* and the Cataloging Code of Ethics (CCE) that they were producing. Several members of COPE examined the CCE, and COPE determined that there were no conflicts observed. On April 14, 2021, we informed the Cataloging Ethics Steering Committee, now working within ALA CORE, that we had found no conflicts.

## Professional Ethics Liaisons

The opening line of the *Code of Ethics of the American Library Association* states,

“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.”

To this end, COPE relies on the time and energy devoted by liaisons of divisions, round tables, and affiliates. Thank you to Nancy Bolt (RMRT Liaison); Ben Hall (RUSA Liaison); DaNae Leu (ALSC Liaison); Annice Sevett (NMRT Liaison); Jill Sordt (ACRL Liaison); Kelvin Watson (PLA Liaison); and Eboni Henry (ALA Executive Board Liaison).

COPE is seeking additional liaisons to assist in crafting resources, developing and presenting programs, providing feedback on documents and professional ethics concerns, and sharing updates from their particular group. Please see the COPE roster to view the list of representatives ([ala.org/groups/committees/ala/ala-profethic](https://ala.org/groups/committees/ala/ala-profethic)). Those interested can contact COPE Staff Liaison Kristin Pekoll at [kpekoll@ala.org](mailto:kpekoll@ala.org).

## Action Item

The Committee on Professional Ethics moves the adoption of the following action items:

CD #24.2 ALA Code of Ethics Ninth Principle

In closing, the Committee on Professional Ethics thanks the OIF staff for their commitment, assistance, and hard work. COPE thanks President Julius Jefferson Jr. and the Executive Board for their confidence in the committee and for allowing them to serve ALA.

Respectfully Submitted,

## ALA Committee on Professional Ethics

Stephen Matthews (Chair)  
Natasha Harper  
Sarah Houghton  
Alexia Hudson-Ward

Rory Patterson  
Catherine Smith  
Sheri Edwards (Committee Associate)  
Ellen Spring (Committee Associate)

## *ALA Code of Ethics* Ninth Principle

We affirm the inherent dignity and rights of every person. We work to recognize and dismantle systemic and individual biases; to confront inequity and oppression; to enhance diversity and inclusion; and to advance racial and social justice in our libraries, communities, profession, and associations through awareness, advocacy, education, collaboration, services, and allocation of resources and spaces.

# COMMITTEE INFORMATION UPDATE (CIU)

## Committee on Professional Ethics Annual Report

**Committee Name:** Committee on Professional Ethics

**Conference Year:** 2020-2021

**Committee Chair:** Stephen Matthews

**Staff Liaison:** Kristin Pekoll

**Committee Members:**

Stephen Matthews (Chair)  
Natasha Harper  
Sarah Houghton  
Alexia Hudson-Ward

~~Nancy Kirkpatrick (Resigned 3/8/2021)~~  
Rory Patterson  
Catherine Smith  
Sheri Edwards (Committee Associate)  
Ellen Spring (Committee Associate)

Date of meeting(s)	Meeting format (in-person or virtual)	Members present	Liaisons present	Guests present
January 23, 2021	Virtual	6/9	2/7	24
May 11, 2021	Virtual	6/8	2/7	1
June 26, 2021	Virtual			

**Committee Charge:**

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for review so that it may be compared to the existing ALA code of ethics in order to determine whether or not conflicts occur.

**Objectives of the committee for this conference year, including any planned activities:**

1. Draft an additional article for the ALA Code of Ethics that states our profession's responsibility to support and advance racial and social justice and its obligation to ensure equity, diversity, and inclusion.
2. Review the Cataloging Code of Ethics presented by ALCTS.

**Describe interactions with other units within ALA:**

Extensive circulation of drafts of the ninth principle of *ALA's Code of Ethics* for feedback to divisions, round tables, staff, members, and leadership.

**Synthesis of activities (summarize discussions, decision(s) or motion(s) reached, and note follow-up action(s) required:**

1. Approval of the draft the new article
2. Future interpretations and Q&A's to the code of ethics. Subgroups will be formed at our next meeting in June or July.
3. Discussion of COPE's future in ALA and the reorganizing of the internal governance structure

**If unable to achieve desired committee outcomes, what hampered the ability to achieve stated goals (lack of resources, member participation, communication issues, procedural delays, etc.?)**

Objectives are in progress.

**Priorities/recommendations for the upcoming year:**

Continued focus on resources to support the profession's and the association's commitment to equity, diversity, and inclusion.

**Other comments/information you believe will help the Association in its work:**

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**Submitted by:** Kristin Pekoll

**Date Submitted:** May 24, 2021