

TO: ALA Council

DATE: 1/2/24

RE: (select one)

- ACTION REQUESTED
- INFORMATION
- REPORT

**ACTION REQUESTED/INFORMATION/REPORT:** (add below)

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

*On behalf of the ALA Core Values Task Force, we move to amend the ALA Policy Manual by striking the current policy and inserting the Core Values of Librarianship as presented in document CD ##*

*On behalf of the ALA Core Values Task Force, we strongly recommend the ALA Executive Board assign working groups, committees, or round tables to write interpretations for each Core Value.*

**ACTION REQUESTED BY:** (add committee name)

Core Values Task Force

**CONTACT PERSON:** (add chair information)

Erin Berman ([erinberman@aclibrary.org](mailto:erinberman@aclibrary.org)) & Sara Dallas ([sdallas@sals.edu](mailto:sdallas@sals.edu))

**STAFF LIAISON CONTACT:**

**BACKGROUND:** (add information)

The foundation of modern librarianship rests on an essential set of core values that define, inform, and guide our professional practice. In these challenging times, it is essential to reaffirm our Core Values to address the increasing threats faced by library workers, advocates, library trustees, and ALA itself nationwide. By adopting more concise and memorable Core Values, we can better equip our community to stand up for these values and navigate the current climate effectively.

The ALA Core Values Task Force has made significant progress in its mission to review and refine the existing ALA Core Values. The following report provides an overview of the actions taken, key developments, and the current status of the Core Values revision process.

### **Background and Charge of the Group**

The ALA Council approved the formation of the Core Values Task Force during the Annual Conference in 2021, charging it with the responsibility of evaluating the relevance of the current ALA Core Values listed in ALA Policy Manual B.1.1 and providing recommendations to the Council by June 2022.

In January 2023, at the LibLearnX conference, the Council expanded the Task Force's charge. This extended charge required the Task Force to consider the interplay between the Core Values and the Library Bill of Rights, Code of Ethics, and Libraries: An American Value. Additional members were welcomed to ensure diverse perspectives, and the deadline was extended to June 2023. At the June 2023

Council session, the Task Force requested one further extension to January 2024. This allowed the Task Force time to refine the definitions and gather further feedback from stakeholders.

### **Members of the Task Force**

The Core Values Task Force comprises member leaders who have diligently served to fulfill the group's mission. These members represent a broad cross-section of expertise in the library and information sciences profession:

- Gladys Bell
- Erin Berman
- Melissa Cardenas-Dow
- Wendy Cornelisen
- Carrie Cornelius
- Peter Coyl
- Sara Dallas
- Aliqae Geraci
- Annesley Gersztoff
- Andrew Harant
- Megan Janicki
- Kevin King
- Emily Knox
- Tomas Lipinski
- Sarah McHone-Chase
- Dale McNeill
- Samantha Oakley
- Johana Orellana Cabrera
- Jose (Miguel) Ruiz
- Karen Snow
- Rene Tanner

### **Definitions of Values, Ethics, and Rights**

The task force engaged in discussions to formulate definitions for the terms "values," "ethics," and "rights" to guide their work. The definitions developed are as follows:

**VALUES:** Guiding principles or ideals that serve as aspirations for the profession.

**ETHICS:** The practical application of guiding principles in professional conduct.

**RIGHTS:** Entitlements granted to individuals within a system or social convention. These definitions provided a solid foundation for the task force's subsequent endeavors.

### **Survey Outreach and Engagement**

To ensure a comprehensive and inclusive approach, the task force sent a survey to library leaders across the country. The survey had over 200 responses and was distributed to the leadership from the following groups:

- JCLC Board

- ALA Executive Board
- All ALA Division Boards
- SustainRT
- RRT
- IFRT
- SRRT
- IFC
- COPE
- Sustainability Committee
- Diversity Committee
- Accreditation Committee
- ALA Past Presidents
- State Librarians/COSLA
- Accessibility Assembly
- AILA
- AASL Past Presidents

The survey results provided valuable insights into the perspectives around core values. The data gathered informed the task force's deliberations and selection of five core values.

### **Chosen Core Values**

After careful consideration and analysis, the task force identified the following core values to be included in the revised ALA Professional Core Values:

- Access
- Equity
- Intellectual Freedom & Privacy
- Public Good
- Sustainability

These values were deemed crucial in reflecting the essence and practice of librarianship and the dedicated work of library workers. The task force chose to have five core values as a reasonable number for people to remember and serve as the foundation for the American Library Association's other component statements of belief.

### **Developing Definitions and Gathering Feedback**

Comprehensive definitions were formulated for each Core Value following the Task Force's expansion. The definitions were crafted in plain language to ensure accessibility and understanding. These definitions were shared with the same groups participating in the initial survey. The feedback received, totaling 40 comments, informed further refinements of the Core Values. The final version of the Core Values, including a preamble, is attached to this report.

### **Recommendations for Interpretations**

To provide a deeper understanding of the Core Values, the Task Force recommends the working groups tasked with writing interpretations of each Core Value. These interpretations will offer expanded insights for those interested in the values' meaning and significance.

## **Conclusion**

In an era where libraries and library workers face unprecedented challenges and threats, the ALA must fortify our profession's bedrock - our Core Values. The ALA Core Values Task Force has dedicated itself to this critical mission, and our progress to date underscores the urgency and significance of this endeavor.

By refining and streamlining our Core Values, we are not merely simplifying a list; we are equipping ourselves, our advocates, and our communities with potent tools to safeguard the principles that define us. These Core Values are not abstract ideals but our shield and guiding light in the face of adversity.

In the battle to protect and advance our profession, concise and memorable Core Values are our most potent allies. They form the moral compass that guides our work and the ideals that inspire us to reach higher. The time has come to reaffirm our commitment to these values, not as abstract principles but as the very essence of our profession.

The ALA Core Values Task Force, on behalf of library workers, trustees, friends, and advocates nationwide, remains steadfast in its dedication to this cause. We urge the ALA Council to embrace these refined Core Values, not as mere words but as the embodiment of our unwavering commitment to the communities we serve.

\*(please see attached Core Values definitions and preamble text)

## **DRAFT 12/20/23**

The American Library Association's Core Values articulate the profession's principles and highest aspirations. They guide and unite library workers, including staff, volunteers, trustees, advocates, and others who contribute their talents, expertise, and dedication to furthering the library mission.

The Core Values uplift and support other foundational documents, the Library Bill of Rights, the Code of Ethics, and Libraries: An American Value. These foundational documents represent the common ground upon which we can build policies, make decisions, set goals, and prioritize actions to bring equitable library access to all users. The Core Values describe the rights we seek to protect and the ethical guidelines we look to for direction.

Our Core Values are for the people who make libraries work, not the buildings they reside in or the American Library Association itself. They declare a shared set of ideals and professionalism that unites and motivates library workers, volunteers, trustees, and advocates throughout the nation.

### **Access**

Access provides opportunities for everyone in the community to obtain library resources and services with minimal disruption. Library workers create systems that ensure members of their community can freely access the information they need for learning, growth, and empowerment regardless of technology, format, or delivery methods.

### **Equity**

Library workers play a crucial role in fostering equity by actively working to dismantle barriers and create spaces that are accessible, welcoming, and beneficial for all. This is accomplished by recognizing and addressing systemic barriers, biases, and inequalities to create inclusive library environments where everyone can benefit from the library's offerings and services.

### **Intellectual Freedom and Privacy**

Intellectual freedom empowers people to think for themselves and to make informed decisions while respecting each individual's dignity and independence. Library workers encourage people to cultivate curiosity and form ideas by questioning the world and accessing information from diverse viewpoints and formats without restrictions or censorship. The right to privacy is a crucial safeguard to this freedom, ensuring everyone has the right to develop their thoughts and opinions free of surveillance.

# ALA Committee/Taskforce Report Form to Council

## **Public Good**

Public good is working to improve society and protect the rights to education, literacy, and intellectual freedom. Libraries are an essential public good and are fundamental institutions in democratic societies. Library workers provide the highest service levels to create informed, connected, educated, and empowered communities.

## **Sustainability**

Sustainability means making choices that are good for the environment, make sense economically, and treat everyone equitably. Sustainable choices preserve physical and digital resources and keep services useful now and into the future. By supporting climate resiliency, library workers create thriving communities and care for our common good for a better tomorrow.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>“ALA Task Force on United Nations 2030 Sustainable Development Goals,” ALA, accessed November 28, 2023, <https://www.ala.org/aboutala/ala-task-force-united-nations-2030-sustainable-development-goals>.