TO: ALA Executive Board

RE: ALA Online Code of Conduct

ACTION REQUESTED/INFORMATION/REPORT:
Action requested: Adoption of the new ALA Online Code of Conduct

ACTION REQUESTED BY:
Elisa Rodrigues and T.J. Lamanna
Co-chairs, Working Group to Finalize and Implement ALA's Online Code of Conduct

CONTACT PERSON:
David Sheffieck, ALA Community Engagement Manager
Staff Liaison, Working Group to Finalize and Implement ALA's Online Code of Conduct
Email: dsheffieck@ala.org

DRAFT OF MOTION:
The Executive Board adopts the ALA Online Code of Conduct, which will apply to all online platforms used by ALA in a consistent and transparent manner.

DATE: June 7, 2021

BACKGROUND:
With hundreds of active groups and channels, each with thousands of active posts by staff, members, and non-members each month, ALA needs a consistent approach for dealing with incidents and establishing a culture of useful, inclusive communication.

Currently, ALA's different units and channels use a wide variety of conflicting practices and policies managed by ALA staff – and the way these policies are administered is equally inconsistent. This fragmented approach has created a landscape that is confusing and opaque to members and resource-intensive for staff to maintain. To resolve these issues, President Julius Jefferson, Jr., and the ALA Executive Board appointed a Working Group to Finalize and Implement ALA's Online Code of Conduct. The group has worked since January 2021 to develop a member-driven, comprehensive, and standardized ALA Online Code of Conduct that builds on the many existing Codes across the association (such as the Spectrum Scholars Guidelines) as well as examples from other organizations (including Tor Project, Mozilla, and Geek Feminism).

After completing and refining a draft, the Working Group solicited input from ALA members, Division and Round Table Boards, ALA Council, Affiliates, Chapters, and others. It conducted this open feedback period from May 5th to May 21st, 2021, attracting over 300 comments. The group reviewed this feedback in depth and incorporated much of it into the new ALA Online Code of Conduct.

This ALA Online Code of Conduct will apply to ALA Connect, blogs and websites, social media, and other channels across ALA, including those managed by Divisions and Round Tables. It will replace all existing

codes/guidelines for all online channels. In the near future, ALA expects to also use it as the first step toward standardizing policies for in-person events.

The Executive Board will vote to adopt the new ALA Online Code of Conduct, while ALA Council will vote on the creation of a standing committee to administer and apply the new ALA Online Code of Conduct.

Working Group members:
T.J. Lamanna, Co-chair
Elisa Rodrigues, Co-chair
Miranda Bennett
Nicanor Diaz
Catie Sahadath
Bianca Spurlock
Jessamyn West
Karen G. Schneider, Executive Board Liaison
David Sheffieck, Staff Liaison

ATTACHMENTS:
ALA Online Code of Conduct

ALA Online Code of Conduct

Statement of Intent

The American Library Association (ALA) is committed to an open, inclusive, and collaborative environment. ALA members do not tolerate harassment in any form. We are colleagues and we treat each other with respect.

The Online Code of Conduct (Code of Conduct) is a living document subject to changes and will be updated as new issues and situations arise. It is not exhaustive: violations of the spirit of the document are not allowed.

Purpose

The goal of this Code of Conduct is to establish a culture of professional, courteous, respectful, and inclusive communication among all participants on all online platforms used by ALA. We are each responsible for the content we post on these platforms.

This Code of Conduct complements the [ALA Virtual Meeting Code of Conduct](#), which applies to professional conferences and meetings held by ALA.

What to Do and What Not to Do

Harassment is unacceptable and includes, though is not limited to, comments, non-verbal expressions, or imagery that demeans or disparages a person or group based on:

- race, ethnicity, or native language
- sex, gender, gender identity or expression
- language
- sexual orientation
- physical or mental disability
- physical appearance, body size, or presentation
- age
- religious or political beliefs, including lack of religious beliefs
- marital or family status
- nationality, citizenship status, or geographic location
- employment or military status
- socioeconomic status

Don't post sexually explicit, violent, or discriminatory content.

Don't engage in intimidation, stalking, sustained disruption, inappropriate **physical or virtual contact, or unwelcome attention, including sexual attention.**

Foster useful and dynamic discussions and engage in a respectful dialogue. Accept critique and offer it constructively; approach discussions with an open mind and be willing to learn. Thousands of people may eventually see the messages you post, which may stay online in perpetuity and be seen by colleagues, employers, and patrons alike.

Respect freedom of expression. We encourage spirited discussion and debate. Disagreeing with an idea is different from attacking an individual, especially since discussion topics can sometimes be challenging. ALA promotes genuine inquiry that can build trusting relationships and a safe, respectful, and supportive environment, even in times of complex change. Every member is on an individual journey of education and understanding and should communicate candidly and respectfully about difficult topics. Be willing to acknowledge privileges and to learn from the community.

Respect intellectual property and give credit where it is due. It is the user's responsibility to obtain permission for any material they post that is not their own. Please include copyright notices where appropriate, ask for creator information where unknown, and be prepared to include credits if they are found after you post.

Take responsibility for the impact of communications. Impact matters more than intent, especially when the absence of nonverbal cues or voice tone means that statements (humor in particular) can easily be interpreted as aggressive or negative.

Listen as much as you share and remember that other participants may have expertise you are unaware of. Make sure conversations are inclusive, and practice active listening.

When you see content that is problematic, you may address it either publicly or privately. Acknowledge that your response is part of a respectful discussion. Pointing out factually erroneous or offensive comments keeps the space safe and helps build a stronger community. These are opportunities to educate – and to learn.

Speak from your own experience and avoid making generalizations. If you're not sure whether something is correct, you can ask the community for resources.

Respect other people's pronouns – often seen in their profile or signature – preferred names, and forms of address. Consider using gender-neutral collective nouns/pronouns when addressing groups. For example, try "everyone" or "folks" instead of "guys."

Don't spam the community with paid products, events, services, or job posts. If you'd like to reach all ALA members and others in the profession with your career-related opportunities, you can use JobLIST career center or Core Jobs Service.

Don't endorse or otherwise promote any local, state, or federal candidates for political office. Don't encourage boycotts. These limits are because of IRS restrictions for tax-exempt organizations; detailed information can be found on the ALA Legal Framework page.

Ensure your content is as accessible as possible. Use alt text [will link to Connect FAQ section] for images, caption video content where possible, and use high-contrast color schemes when using color. To learn more about accessibility, helpful resources include the DLF Guide to Creating Accessible Presentations, Contrast Ratio, and the World Wide Web Consortium (W3C) Accessibility page.

Post as yourself. Do not impersonate any other people or entities that you are not affiliated with.

Where to Go for Help

If you think you have seen activity that violates the letter or the spirit of this Code of Conduct, please alert our moderators:

- Click here to report a post: connect.ala.org/report
- Use the "Report" button on a specific discussion post
- [Replace above with other methods specific to a channel/platform]
- Email the moderation team at report@ala.org

Anonymous reports are allowed. Please note that anonymous reporting may limit moderators' ability to fully respond to conflicts, particularly if it prevents follow-up.

The moderators will confirm receipt of all reports as promptly as they can, usually within the next business day.

What to Expect When Reporting

Moderators will reach out to both the user reporting the incident and the user reported upon, but confidentiality may prevent moderators from sharing details of an issue's resolution. Moderators may delete content that violates the Code of Conduct and in extreme cases may temporarily suspend access for violators prior to making a decision about an incident. The severity of the offense will dictate the ramifications, which can range from engaging in a discussion about the topic at hand to full suspension from a platform or platforms.

The Code of Conduct will be used equitably. Different situations will require different resolutions; moderators will give significant weight to context and impact when making decisions. They will strive to prioritize accountability and depending on the wishes of the individuals involved in an incident. If violators are suspended, the length of the suspension will be clearly described in writing.

Anyone involved in an incident may appeal a decision by sending an email to appeal@ala.org. Appeals must be submitted within 60 days of the date the moderators' decision was communicated and must describe the reason for the appeal and why the decision should be changed. The ALA Executive Committee will oversee the appeal process.

Who the Code of Conduct Covers

The Code of Conduct applies to any user on any platforms used by ALA, including websites, blogs, online publications, ALA Connect, and ALA-managed social media channels. This includes members, organizations, employers, and anyone else who registers on the platforms. Violations of the Code of Conduct on one platform may result in consequences on other platforms.

Who Applies the Code of Conduct

The Code of Conduct is a living document that is meant to be updated iteratively and reflect new developments concerning all platforms. ALA has a [standing committee [will link to roster]](#) of moderators in charge of resolving violations of the Code of Conduct. Committee members are themselves subject to the Code of Conduct.

Updates to the Code of Conduct

Moderators will review the Code of Conduct annually to address issues in the community or larger online trends. They may also revise as needed based on any issues discovered when addressing specific incidents.

Changes to the Code of Conduct will be communicated via email to all ALA Connect members, as well as via posts to other ALA channels as applicable.

Acknowledgements

This Code of Conduct has been partially adapted from [ALA Spectrum Community Guidelines](#), [Geek Feminism Anti-harassment policy](#), [Mozilla Community Participation Guidelines](#), and [Tor Project Code of Conduct](#).