

**TO:** ALA Executive Board

**RE:** Office for Intellectual Freedom (OIF) Report, EBD #12.27

**ACTION REQUESTED/INFORMATION/REPORT:**

**Report / Information**

**ACTION REQUESTED BY:** N/A

**CONTACT PERSON:**

**Deborah Caldwell-Stone**  
**Director**  
**Office for Intellectual Freedom**  
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**DRAFT OF MOTION:** N/A

**DATE:** January 12, 2022

**ATTACHMENTS:** None

## **Advocacy, Policy Development, and Outreach**

### **Book Censorship**

The Office for Intellectual Freedom and Public Policy and Advocacy worked cooperatively to draft a position statement addressing ongoing organized efforts to censor diverse books and materials in school and public libraries. The ALA Executive Board approved the [ALA Statement on Book Censorship](#) on November 29, 2021.

### **Adverse Legislation**

In October, ALA's Public Policy and Advocacy Office and Office for Intellectual Freedom, with support from other ALA offices and member leaders, convened a gathering of 147 participants, including representatives of 43 states plus the District of Columbia; 62 state organizations; 18 ALA member groups; and three external partners. The purpose of the state legislative summit was to examine adverse trends in state legislation that threaten libraries, library workers, or the ability of patrons to freely access information—and determine a course of action that leverages the full strength of the library ecosystem in responding to those trends.

Participants in the summit committed to sharing information with their respective organizations and serving as conduits for ongoing collaboration to address adverse legislation. Based on conversations during and following the summit, and in addition to ongoing direct support for states dealing with adverse legislation, we have identified four areas for focus:

- Messaging—both public facing and for the library ecosystem;
- Infrastructure—ensuring that ALA is fully leveraging internal and external relationships to strengthen the reach and impact of our work;
- Visibility—getting the broad and varied work of ALA and libraries in front of decision makers and public audiences to refocus the library narrative; and
- Legal assistance—in the short term, reviving Lawyers for Libraries; longer term, providing support on legal cases.

In late November, PPA and OIF launched a rapid response team comprised of stakeholder (staff and member) representation from across and beyond the association that will advise staff on messaging and outreach. With the beginning of a new year and new legislative sessions across the country, PPA and OIF are tracking several adverse bills similar to those discussed during the legislative summit. In early January, PPA and OIF released the [State Legislative Toolkit](#), a public-facing resource with member access to sensitive or proprietary information. The toolkit will continue to evolve based on member feedback and legislative activity.

## **Intellectual Freedom and Social Justice Working Group**

The Intellectual Freedom and Social Justice Working Group re-convened in September 2021 following the Executive Board's July 2021 vote to extend the term of the working group through July 2022. The working group continues to draft the body of a report that is responsive to the ALA Council's charge 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.

In response to members of the Executive Board's request that the working group create opportunities for members to discuss and consider the intersection of intellectual freedom and social justice, the working group will be hosting *50+ Years in the Making: Claiming Social Justice as a Core Value* at the ALA Virtual LibLearnX event in January 2022. The program will serve to introduce the text of the draft report addressing neutrality rhetoric with ALA members and gather feedback on the draft report. The program will use facilitated small-group dialogues to engage participants in a conversation about the role of neutrality in libraries and to explore options for centering social justice as a guiding principle.

## **Intellectual Freedom Committee**

Members of the Intellectual Freedom Committee met throughout the fall of 2021 to work on a number of projects:

- **Challenges to CRT and Diversity Training Toolkit:** a subgroup of the IFC members and volunteers are drafting a toolkit to equip library workers with essential strategies and resources that will prepare them to address censorship challenges to "critical race theory" in curricula, anti-racist materials, and diversity staff trainings. The toolkit will serve as an adjunct to the ALA's Statement on Censorship of Information Addressing Racial Injustice, Black American History, and Diversity Education, approved by the ALA Executive Board in August of 2021.
- **Addressing Challenges To Books By Problematic Authors: Q&A:** Throughout the past year, a subgroup of members of the Intellectual Freedom Committee have worked with OIF staff to develop a question-and-answer document to clarify how library staff and educators should handle authors and content creators who are deemed "problematic" – that is, authors whose books are challenged not because of the content of their books, but because of the author's words or deeds in real life that are unrelated to the authors' published works. On January 7, 2022, the Intellectual Freedom Committee voted to approve the document, which will be published online on the main ALA website following LibLearnX.

- **Joint Professional Values Programming Subgroup**: The Intellectual Freedom Committee is now a participating member of the Joint Professional Values Subgroup, comprised of representatives from the IFC, the IFC Privacy Subcommittee, Committee on Professional Ethics, the Intellectual Freedom Roundtable, and the Freedom to Read Foundation. The group meets in advance of conferences to share resources and planning for conference programs addressing intellectual freedom and privacy. The group met twice virtually in the Fall of 2021 and three of its proposals were accepted for LibLearnX: *50+ Years in the Making: Claiming Social Justice as a Core Value*, *Problematic Authors and Problematic Works - An Intellectual Freedom Q&A* and *Advancing Social Justice Through the 9th Principle of the Code of Ethics*.
- **The IFC Privacy Subcommittee**: The working group formed to address the charge from ALA Council via its “Resolution on Forming a Working Group to Align Vendor Privacy Policies with ALA Policies and Ethics” is working on developing solutions to the problem, “*How might we create an open, shared community of practice that fosters a mindset of continual improvement around library user privacy?*” that includes vendors as well as libraries. The working group plans to provide its report in the spring of 2022.
- **Privacy Field Guides**: Seven [Privacy Field Guides](#) have been completed and are available on the main Privacy page on the ALA website. They include *How to Talk About Privacy*, *Digital Security Basics*, *Non-Tech Privacy*, *Data Lifecycles*, *Privacy Audits*, *Privacy & Vendors*, and *Privacy Policies*. Creation of the guides, led by Erin Berman and Bonnie Tijerina, was funded by a grant from the Institute of Museum and Library Sciences, in partnership with the American Library Association. Marketing and promotion of the guides will take place throughout the spring of 2022, with limited distribution of physical copies to library workers and promotional events at the PLA conference and ALA Annual.

### **Committee on Professional Ethics**

The Committee on Professional Ethics has initiated work on three different projects for the 2021-2022 year:

- **Q&A on Ableism**: A subgroup of COPE members and volunteer liaisons from various ALA units, roundtables, and committees are drafting a Q & A guideline to provide information about concerns and questions related to accessibility and inclusion of people with disabilities, particularly inspired by the *Code of Ethics*’ ninth principle.

- **Q&A on Sexism**: A second subgroup of COPE members and liaisons representing various ALA units, roundtables, and committees are developing a Q&A guideline to provide guidance to ethical issues on sexism through the ALA Code of Ethics.
- **Code of Ethics Preamble**: A third subgroup of COPE members is reviewing the language of the preamble to the ALA Code of Ethics in order to add language that will provide greater context for the new ninth principle of the Code of Ethics that addresses social justice.

COPE is also working on digitizing past programs and kits and developing an ethics bibliography.

### **Office for Intellectual Freedom**

#### **Public Challenges and Case Support**

The Office for Intellectual Freedom received an unprecedented number of challenge reports throughout the fall of 2021. From September 1 through December 1, 2021, 330 unique cases were reported to it, with December's reports still to be tallied. This can be compared to the 156 unique cases reported to OIF in 2020, a year marked by school and library closures, and the 377 unique cases reported to OIF in 2019 for the entire twelve months of that year.

OIF staff provided confidential counsel in 275 of those cases, consulting on policy and procedure, providing legal information related to case law and legislation, and sharing information about challenged titles.

#### **Staff Advocacy and Speaking Engagements**

##### **Director Deborah Caldwell-Stone**

- ALA Legislative Summit for State Chapters and Member Leaders, 10/16/2021 (Sponsored by the Public Policy and Advocacy Office and the Office for Intellectual Freedom)
- "After Banned Books Week: Intellectual Freedom Programming Throughout the Year," AASL National Conference, 10/23/2021
- Trustee Training, Grand Marais Public Library, 11/03/2021
- "Intellectual Freedom Update: Audits, Challenges, Legislation," New Hampshire Library Association 11/04/2021
- "Censorship/Challenges in Texas Libraries," Partners Library Action Network, November 18, 2021

- "Managing and Addressing Book Challenges in Your Community: Law, Policy, Advocacy," Freedom to Read Foundation, 12/09/2021
- United for Libraries' Learning Live: Building Strong Library Policies, 12/14/2021
- Assistant Director Kristin Pekoll
  - ALA Legislative Summit for State Chapters and Member Leaders, 10/16/2021 (Sponsored by the Public Policy and Advocacy Office and the Office for Intellectual Freedom)
  - "After Banned Books Week: Intellectual Freedom Programming Throughout the Year," AASL National Conference, 10/23/2021
  - AASL Town Hall: Book Challenges, 12/08/21
  - "Managing and Addressing Book Challenges in Your Community: Law, Policy, Advocacy," Freedom to Read Foundation, 12/09/2021
  - "Prepare to Defend Your Comics/Graphic Novels/Manga and Anime," C2E2 Comic-Con, 12/13/2021
  - "2020 Censorship by the Numbers," on-demand "News You Can Use" session, ALA's Virtual Annual Conference
  - Long Island Library Pride Alliance 9/14/21
  - AASL Affinity Group 9/15/21

### **Continuing Education**

The Office for Intellectual Freedom partnered with the new ALA Learning Solutions unit to offer "Conducting A Privacy Audit," a new live webinar, on January 12, 2021. The webinar will provide participants with information and resources to advocate for, and initiate, a privacy audit in their libraries. Webinar faculty include Erin Berman, chair of the IFC Privacy Subcommittee and Division Director of the Learning Group for the Alameda County Library in California and Julie Oborny, a member of Privacy Subcommittee who is Web Librarian for the San Jose Public Library.