

Resolution on Libraries as Responsible Spaces

Whereas, libraries have been deemed “safe spaces” for all members of their communities¹, and

Whereas, responsible spaces are defined for the purpose of this resolution as environments in which all people are responsible to one another in advocating for safety in that space, and

Whereas, a study from the Center for the Study of Hate and Extremism has documented a 20% increase in hate crimes in 2016², and

Whereas, the ALA Offices for Intellectual Freedom and Diversity, Literacy, and Outreach Services are now collecting statistics on hate crimes in libraries after a rise in the number of incidents in libraries³, and

Whereas, Article V of the Library Bill of Rights states “A person’s right to use a library should not be denied or abridged because of origin, age, background, or views, and

Therefore, let it be resolved that the American Library Association:

1. Urges libraries to embrace the mantle of responsible spaces by adopting and enforcing user behavior policies that protect patrons and staff from harassment while maintaining our historic support for the freedom of speech.
2. Encourages libraries to develop community partnership programs with and promote services to underrepresented and unacknowledged community members.
3. Encourages libraries to sponsor programs fostering meaningful and respectful dialogue in community.
4. Directs the Committee on Diversity, with the support of the Office for Diversity, Literacy, and Outreach Services and the ODLOS Advisory Committee, to develop, provide, and disseminate materials and programming for libraries that deter hate, foster community, and oppose bigotry toward or oppression against any group.

Approved by the Committee on Diversity, 25 June 2017

¹ <http://www.ala.org/research/librariesmatter/node/565>

² California State University, San Bernardino: <https://csbs.csusb.edu/hate-and-extremism-center>;
<http://www.nbcnews.com/news/us-news/u-s-hate-crimes-20-percent-2016-fueled-election-campaign-n733306>

³ <https://www.nytimes.com/2016/12/08/us/libraries-hate-crimes.html>