

Committee on Professional Ethics  
**REPORT TO COUNCIL**

2021 Virtual Midwinter Council Meeting

As chair of the Committee on Professional Ethics (COPE), I am pleased to report on the committee's activities since the virtual event in June 2020.

## 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 Working Group on Social and Racial Justice

At the PLA Conference in February, COPE, under the leadership of Past-Chair, Andrew Harant, presented a program entitled, "What Would You Do? Ethical Issues in Public Libraries." One of the goals of this program was to demonstrate how ALA's Code of Ethics encompasses and supports Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion along with Intellectual Freedom.

In reviewing the responses to the program, it became clear that the *ALA Code of Ethics* does not address specifically the profession's responsibility to support and advance social justice, especially in regard to racial justice and the professional obligation to ensure equity, diversity, and inclusion.

At its July 6th meeting, the ALA Committee on Professional Ethics voted to establish a working group to explore the creation of a new article of the *ALA Code of Ethics* to address social and racial justice.

In collaboration with member groups of the Office for Diversity, Literacy and Outreach, a working group was created. Current members include Nicole Cooke, Alexandra Gomez, Sarah Houghton, Nancy Kirkpatrick, Liladhar Pendse, Jennifer Shimada, and is co-chaired by Andrew Harant and Sheri Edwards.

## ALA Reorganization

COPE continues to review proposed changes outlined in the Forward Together documents and is monitoring the new developments in overall ALA reorganization as they emerge.

## Professional Ethics Liaisons

Stephen Matthews serves as COPE's liaison to the ALA Intellectual Freedom Committee. This is a pivotal year for ALA given the reorganization and the need for the IFC and COPE to visibly act and work together. He has actively raised ethical issues and concerns in email conversations, in comments on documents, and in IFC meetings.

During its monthly meetings, the IFC has begun to discuss the intersection of social justice and intellectual freedom. The committee is forming a working group including COPE representative Sarah Houghton and representatives from groups connected to ODLOS. The purpose of the working group is to develop messaging and a framework that proactively demonstrates the interdependence of intellectual freedom and social justice.

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 Sadt (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](http://ala.org/groups/committees/ala/ala-profethic)). Those interested can contact COPE Staff Liaison Kristin Pekoll at [kpekoll@ala.org](mailto:kpekoll@ala.org).

## Thank You

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

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

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

Date of meeting(s)	Meeting format (in-person or virtual)	Number of members present	Guest Presenters, Speakers
July 6, 2020	Virtual	5	0
January 23, 2021	Virtual		0

**Committee Charge:**

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**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.

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

Annual conference program proposals with ALA's Intellectual Freedom Committee

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

1. Working group formed to draft the new article.
2. 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:**

Reaffirm the profession's and the association's commitment to equity, diversity, and inclusion with a new article to the ALA Code of Ethics.

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

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**Submitted by:** Kristin Pekoll

**Date Submitted:** January 8, 2021