

Council Report on ALA Core Values Task Force- June 2023

We are pleased to present the report on the progress and current status of the ALA Core Values Task Force, as per the charge given by the ALA Council during the Annual Conference 2021. The task force was established to review the existing ALA Core Values listed in ALA Policy Manual B.1.1 for their relevance within the profession and provide recommendations to Council. This report highlights the actions taken by the task force, the definitions developed for values, ethics, and rights, the chosen core values, and the current stage of the process.

Background and Charge of the Group

During the Annual Conference in 2021, the ALA Council approved Action Item 1 of the Forward Together Resolutions, mandating the formation of the ALA Core Values Task Force. The task force was entrusted with the responsibility of reviewing the current ALA Core Values and presenting recommendations to Council by the June 2022 meeting.

At the LibLearnX conference in January 2023, the Council expanded the charge of the task force. The new charge had the task force consider how the core values worked in partnership with the Library Bill of Rights, Code of Ethics, and Libraries: An American Value. In order to ensure a broader range of knowledge and experience, ALA Council approved the addition of new members to the task force and extended the deadline to June 2023.

Members of the Task Force

The following individuals have been diligently serving as members of the ALA Core Values Task Force:

- Gladys Bell
- Erin Berman (Chair)
- Melissa Cardenas-Dow
- Wendy Cornelisen
- Carrie Cornelius
- Peter Coyl
- Sara Dallas (Chair)
- Sandra Farag
- Aliqae Geraci
- Annesley Gersztoff
- Andrew Harant
- Megan Janicki (ALA staff)
- Kevin King
- Emily Knox
- Tomas Lipinski
- Sarah McHone-Chase
- Dale McNeill

- Samantha Oakley (ALA staff)
- Johana Orellana Cabrera
- 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
- Executive Board
- All ALA Division Boards
- SustainRT
- RRT
- IFRT
- SRRT
- IFC
- COPE
- Sustainability Committee
- Diversity
- Accreditation Committee Members
- ALA Past Presidents
- State Librarians - COSLA
- Accessibility Assembly
- AILA
- AASL Past Presidents

The survey results, which are attached to this report, 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
- 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 other component statements of belief for this organization.

Current Status of Definitions

The task force is currently engaged in finalizing the language for the definitions of the selected core values. Emphasis has been placed on ensuring the definitions are concise and employ plain language¹, allowing for broader comprehension and accessibility.

A preamble is being developed to clarify that these values pertain to the practice of librarianship or library workers, rather than being confined to physical library spaces. These are the values of library workers and librarianship, not ALA as a professional organization.

Additionally, sustainability will encompass responsible stewardship and sustainable funding, while race equity will be explicitly incorporated into the core values. Intellectual property will be addressed either within the context of intellectual freedom or access.

Proposed Timeline and Next Steps

To facilitate the completion of this important task, the task force requests an extension until January 2024. The proposed timeline for the remaining stages of the process is as follows:

- July to August: Small working groups will draft the definitions, ensuring they are circulated to the connect group at least 1.5 weeks before the September meeting.
- Beginning of September: The larger group will convene to discuss and finalize the definitions, aiming to conclude by the end of the month.
- October: Council feedback will be sought to gather additional perspectives and insights.
- November: Membership feedback will be obtained to ensure broader stakeholder engagement.
- December: Finalizing the definitions.
- January: Present core values to Council at LibLearnX.

By adhering to this timeline, the task force aims to ensure a comprehensive and inclusive approach, considering the input from both Council and the broader ALA membership.

Conclusion

The ALA Core Values Task Force has made substantial progress in reviewing the ALA Core Values and developing recommendations. The task force has engaged in productive discussions, gathered valuable survey data, and identified the core values that will serve as guiding principles for the profession. The task force is actively working on finalizing the definitions and ensuring that they are easily understandable. The proposed timeline and next steps outlined in this report will allow for further input and feedback before the finalization of the revised core values.

The ALA Core Values Task Force expresses its sincere gratitude to the Governing Council for its support and guidance throughout this process. We remain committed to fulfilling our charge and providing recommendations that align with the evolving needs of the profession. We look forward to sharing the finalized core values with the Council and the broader ALA membership.

Footnote:

1. <https://www.plainlanguage.gov/>

Q1 - What do you feel are the top five professional values of librarianship? Please select from the list provided.

Field	213 Responses Choice Count
Intellectual Freedom	147
Access	141
Equity	76
Inclusion	67
Privacy	61
Public Good	51
Education	51
Service	46
Empowerment	40
Democracy	39
Integrity	35
Diversity	34
Knowledge	33
Sustainability	29
Stewardship	29
Preservation	28
Welcoming	24
Impartiality	23
Engagement	15
Representation	11
Leadership	11
Curiosity	11

Authenticity	10
Transparency	9
Empathy	8
Wisdom	4
Fairness	3

Q2 - If you feel there are any core values missing from this list, add them here.

34 Responses

If you feel there are any core values missing from this list, add them here.

Community, Opportunity

curation

Literacy though that could fall into education

Honesty; Forward-Thinking/Progressive; Pragmatism; Openness

Equity of access. The Greater Good.

assessing the accuracy of information

EDI is one value; I add professionalism.

Professionalism, Cultural Awareness

Accessibility

leadership

I might also have added Community Development, but that might come in under Empowerment

Restorative

Respect

Literacy

Wisdom, inclusion

Literacy and the right to read

Confidentiality; freedom of expression

passion

Resilience

Innovation, continuous growth & improvement (public and profession)

Q3 - Tell us more about where you work. Select all options that apply. - Selected Choice

Field	Choice Count
Public Library	79
Other	63
Academic Library (postsecondary)	54
School Library (K-12)	27
Special Library	10

Q5 - Anything else you'd like to share with us?

Anything else you'd like to share with us?

Core values are hard to articulate at that level, but keeping the values of liberalism in the traditional sense is important!

I think we need to be clear are these the values of ALA as an organization or the values for our communities. I also think 12 is too many. I think fewer that are simple and more manageable and understandable by our community. Mahalo for the opportunity to share my thoughts. Stacey Aldrich, Hawaii.

Ideally, fundamental matters such as these--what we're about, as librarians, and what we're after--can be part of a literal conversation held between those concerned. We can't all truly talk to each other at once, but perhaps ALA would be interested in engaging in such a conversation with each state library agency, then each of these might go to each of the state's library systems, and so for to every branch and employee. It is a benefit, I think, for everyone working in libraries to get to consider the "why" and "to what end" of what we do and a conversation, particularly for those not already steeped in these matters, may be the best way to spread, catalyze, and develop a robust, if not common, sentiment here. Thank you for your work!

Thank God for librarians.

Libraries should strive to serve everyone in their community, even and especially, those with different values and worldviews than the librarians themselves.

I was tempted to add non-partisanship to the list of values. To the extent that librarians tackle social justice issues, I think they need to be squarely in the realm of libraries' missions to support fair, equitable, inclusive information access and intellectual freedom. I also think we need to consider how concepts of privacy are changing in our social media rich world.

I think that there are additional core values based on the "type" of library - as a school librarian I also include among my core values collaboration, continuous professional development and performance assessment to improve practice and ongoing advocacy.

Libraries and the persons who are responsible for their management and services are the last bulwark in a democracy. This means EVERY library whether in a school or public library building, any university. It may be called, by different names now and in the future, but they must survive and the leaders who manage them must make sure their clientele have accurate, relevant, useful, and free information.

I honestly do not understand the obsession with "core values." I do not know of any other profession that is always in such a state of confusion in terms of what they are about. For the most part, I think this is a giant distraction that just helps make librarians appear clueless and irrelevant.

Thank you for conducting this survey which I hope will refresh our continual thinking on CORE VALUES as they continue to be refined and evolving in our changing professional environment and experience.

I am presently retired from school librarianship, but when working, I felt confidentiality was extremely important. After i received two Masters Degrees from Pratt institute, I then became an Adjunct Professor; in addition, Pratt awarded me an Honorary Doctorate, Doctor of Humane Letters. Pratt, therefore, was aware of how important librarianiship is to education.

SRRT differs from ALA in our ferocity of defense of the marginalized. While the status quo holds an important function in stable societies, I believe that many people do not live in ideal conditions and the status quo as endorsed by ALA must continually be challenged. That is my role with SRRT. Thank you for your interest.

Thanks

Impartiality and neutrality are the scourge of the profession. They should not be anywhere near the values of libraries.

I'm not sure courage is a value, but librarians need that now. Courage to stand up and advocate for libraries and library service.

Thank you for your work!

Social responsibility and social justice is critical to our values.

I'm interested in how the many challenges faced by community members overlap with each other and intersect with the work done by libraries. There can be a tendency to focus on one challenge, such as racism, and not look at the many ramifications of it, such as health, housing, access to nutritious food, and so on.

None of this matters if we can't get more than lip service.

My hope is that this exercise results in core values that are implemented and adhered to when ALA develops policy and plans for the future.