B.2.1.22

(Old 53.1.22)

At the 2014 ALA Annual Conference, based on recommendation by the Committee on Intellectual Freedom, the ALA Council adopted a revision to title and text of ALA Policy B.2.1.1 Minors and Internet Interactivity: An Interpretation of the *Library Bills of Rights* (*now* titled: Minors and Internet Activity: An Interpretation of the *Library Bills of Rights)*

At the 2015 ALA Midwinter Meeting, the Policy Monitoring Committee (PMC), noted in its report to Council that interpretations are traditionally represented in the ALA *Policy Manual* by means of an abstract, followed by a reference to the Policy Reference File, where the full text of the Interpretations reside. In these cases the latest date of revisions and the parenthetical statements will be updated to reflect the new revision date, and the new existing text of the abstract.

The following abstract was created by the Committee on Intellectual Freedom for incorporated into the ALA *Manual Policy* as follows:

B.2.1.22 Minors and Internet Activity (Old Number 53.1.1)

The First Amendment applies to speech created by minors on interactive sites. Use of these social networking sites in a school or library allows minors to access and create resources that fulfill their interests and needs for information, for social connection with peers, and for participation in a community of learners. Restricting expression and access to interactive web sites because the sites provide tools for sharing information with others violates the tenets of the *Library Bill of Rights*. It is the responsibility of librarians and educators to monitor threats to the intellectual freedom of minors and to advocate for extending access to interactive applications on the Internet. Adopted 2009, amended 2014. (*See* "Policy Reference File": Minors and Internet Activity: An Interpretation of the *Library Bill of Rights*: 2013-2014 ALA CD#19.13_63014_act) – PDF, 6 pgs. ***Formerly titled:*** Minors and Internet Interactivity: An Interpretation of the *Library Bill of Rights).*

2013–2014 ALA CD#19.13_63014_act
2014 ALA Annual Conference

Minors and Internet Activity

An Interpretation of the *Library Bill of Rights*

The digital environment offers opportunities for accessing, creating, and sharing information. The rights of minors to retrieve, interact with, and create information posted on the internet in schools and libraries are extensions of their First Amendment rights. (See also other interpretations of the American Library Association's *Library Bill of Rights,* including "Access to Digital Information, Services, and Networks," "Access to Library Resources and Services for Minors.")

Academic pursuits of minors can be strengthened with the use of interactive web tools, allowing young people to create documents and share them online; to upload pictures, videos, and graphic material; to revise public documents; and to add tags to online content to classify and organize information. Instances of inappropriate use of such academic tools should be addressed as individual behavior issues, not as justification for restricting or banning access to interactive technology. Schools and libraries should ensure that institutional environments offer opportunities for students to use interactive web tools constructively in their academic pursuits, as the benefits of shared learning are well documented.

Personal interactions of minors can be enhanced by social tools available through the internet. Social networking websites allow the creation of online communities that feature an open exchange of information in various forms, such as images, videos, blog posts, and discussions about common interests.

Interactive web tools help children and young adults learn about and organize social, civic, and extra-curricular activities. Many interactive sites invite users to establish online identities, share personal information, create Web content, and join social networks. Parents and guardians play a critical role in preparing their children for participation in online activity by communicating their personal family values and by monitoring their children's use of the internet. Parents and guardians are responsible for what their children—and only their children—access on the internet in libraries.

The use of interactive web tools poses two competing intellectual freedom issues—the protection of minors' privacy and the right of free speech. Some have expressed concerns regarding what they perceive to be an increased vulnerability of young people in the online environment when they use interactive sites to post personally identifiable information. In an effort to protect minors' privacy, adults sometimes restrict access to interactive web environments. Filters, for example, are sometimes used to restrict access by youth to interactive social networking tools, but at the same time deny minors' rights to free expression on the internet. Prohibiting children and young adults from using social networking sites does not teach safe behavior and leaves youth without the necessary knowledge and skills to protect their privacy or engage in responsible speech. Instead of restricting or denying access to the internet, librarians and teachers should educate minors to participate responsibly, ethically, and safely.

The First Amendment applies to speech created by minors on interactive sites. Use of these social networking sites in a school or library allows minors to access and create resources that fulfill their interests and needs for information, for social connection with peers, and for participation in a community of learners. Restricting expression and access to interactive web sites because the sites provide tools for sharing information with others violates the tenets of the *Library Bill of Rights.* It is the responsibility of librarians and educators to monitor threats to the intellectual freedom of minors and to advocate for extending access to interactive applications on the internet.

As defenders of intellectual freedom and the First Amendment, libraries and librarians have a responsibility to offer unrestricted access to internet interactivity in accordance with local, state, and

federal laws and to advocate for greater access where it is abridged. School and library professionals should work closely with young people to help them learn skills and attitudes that will prepare them to be responsible, effective, and productive communicators in a free society.

Adopted July 15, 2009, amended July 1, 2014, by the ALA Council.

53.1.22

At the 2009 ALA Annual Conference, upon recommendation by the Intellectual Freedom Committee, the ALA Council adopted 2008-2009 ALA CD#19.8, Minors and Internet Interactivity: An Interpretation of the *Library Bill of Rights.*

At the 2010 ALA Midwinter Meeting, upon recommendation by the Council Policy Monitoring Committee, the ALA Council voted to INSERT the new ALA Policy 53.1.22, Minors and Internet Interactivity: An Interpretation of the Library Bill of Rights, into the ALA Policy Manual.

> The First Amendment applies to speech created by minors on interactive sites. Usage of these social networking sites in a school or library allows minors to access and create resources that fulfill their interests and needs for information, for social connection with peers, and for participation in a community of learners. Restricting expression and access to interactive Web sites because the sites provide tools for sharing information with others violates the tenets of the Library Bill of Rights. It is the responsibility of librarians and educators to monitor threats to the intellectual freedom of minors and to advocate for extending access to interactive applications on the Internet. Adopted 2009. (See Policy Reference File: Minors and Internet Interactivity: An Interpretation of the Library Bill of Rights: 2008-2009 ALA CD# 19.8)

Minors and Internet Interactivity:
An Interpretation of the *Library Bill of Rights*

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Adopted by the ALA Council at the 2009 ALA Annual Conference.