

ALA Committee/Taskforce Report Form to Council

TO: ALA Council

DATE: January 7, 2026

RE: *(select one)*

ACTION REQUESTED

INFORMATION

X REPORT

ACTION REQUESTED/INFORMATION/REPORT:

Report: ALA Intellectual Freedom Committee

Action requested from Councilors is to cast their vote to: *(if applicable)*

Not applicable.

ACTION REQUESTED BY Intellectual Freedom Committee:

Not applicable.

CONTACT PERSON: *(add chair information)*

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ALA Committee/Taskforce Report Form to Council

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BACKGROUND:

ALA Committee/Taskforce Report Form to Council

ALA INTELLECTUAL FREEDOM COMMITTEE

REPORT TO COUNCIL

2026 Mid-Winter

Virtual

The ALA Intellectual Freedom Committee (IFC) is pleased to present this update of its activities since the ALA's 2025 Annual Conference held in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania in June 2026:

Work of the Intellectual Freedom Committee

A subcommittee is creating justification for intellectual freedom and the freedom to read that goes beyond the First Amendment. This is in response to the Little vs. Llano case that may go before the Supreme Court. Committee members believe that protecting intellectual freedom and the freedom to read are imperative to the health of our libraries, and our democracy. These are fundamental beliefs held by libraries throughout the United States and justification of these beliefs are widely supported by the American people.

The committee is exploring how it can best support rural libraries, where many intellectual challenges are being fought. Many rural library staff cannot access and use ALA resources without facing significant blowback from community members. How can we make sure these libraries have the support they need to protect intellectual freedom? This is a question the committee continues to explore.

A subcommittee is exploring how content controls from eBook and eAudio providers are negatively impacting patrons' freedom to read. The subcommittee is researching the issue and next steps to make sure providers do everything they can to protect intellectual freedom.

Several committee members participated in the Artificial Intelligence working group to ensure that the work of the group addresses intellectual freedom.

ALA Committee/Taskforce Report Form to Council

The American Library Association informed the committee that there would be no new edition of the “A History of ALA Policy on Intellectual Freedom,” because of high cost and low demand. The committee is writing a report to document changes made to policies and interpretations for the 11th edition of the “Intellectual Freedom Manual” to ensure that future committee members have the context they need to understand why and how policies and interpretations were updated. They are exploring with ALA staff how to make sure that this information is easily accessible and digestible for future committees.

The committee discussed the recommendation from the ALA Committee on Organizations to make the Committee on Professional Ethics a subcommittee of IFC. The committee understands this change is being proposed to reduce resources needed to support multiple committees. The committee does not object to this change.

Finally, the committee discussed the consideration proposed by the ALA Committee on Organizations, that the Intellectual Freedom Committee be renamed the Professional Values Committee. The Intellectual Freedom Committee is not in favor of this consideration. To quote the Freedom to Read statement: “The freedom to read is essential to our democracy. It is continuously under attack.” At this moment in history, this statement has never been truer. There is no better path for demonstrating the American Library Association’s values, mission, and policies today than to continue the Intellectual Freedom Committee under its current name and charge.

The Intellectual Freedom Committee’s charge is:

“To recommend such steps as may be necessary to safeguard the rights of library users, libraries, and librarians, in accordance with the First Amendment to the United States Constitution and the Library Bill of Rights as adopted by the ALA Council. To work closely with the Office for Intellectual Freedom and with other units and officers of the Association in matters touching intellectual freedom and censorship.”

This charge goes beyond library staff professional values and, with its work with the Office of Intellectual Freedom, with the Freedom to Read Foundation, and with Unite Against Book Bans, it extends beyond the American Library Association. The committee is saddened by this year’s dismissal of the Office of Intellectual Freedom’s director and the Association for Library Service to Children’s retirement of their Intellectual Freedom

ALA Committee/Taskforce Report Form to Council

Committee. The committee worries that these changes may signal to the wider world that the American Library Association is moving away from its support for this fundamental right – the right to read – rooted in all this nation’s libraries. The committee calls upon the ALA Council to protect the important work and focus of the Intellectual Freedom Committee by preserving its name and charge.

Intellectual Freedom Manual, 11th Edition

At the ALA Annual conference in 2025, the Council voted to approve all of the remaining interpretations brought forward by the IFC. The eleventh edition of the *Intellectual Freedom Manual* then entered the final phases of editing. The manuscript was completed in August and sent to ALA Editions for copyediting and publication. The manual is scheduled to be published on February 27, 2026.

Work of the Privacy Subcommittee

Since August 2025 the ALA Intellectual Freedom Committee’s Privacy Subcommittee has been holding monthly meetings via Zoom, along with utilizing ALA Connect for asynchronous discussion and coordination. Per our charge, we monitored ongoing privacy developments, discussing topics like government surveillance around libraries, privacy breaches from AI vendors, and age verification as invasions of privacy.

We are continuing to monitor developments in the Llano court case along with IFC. In response to a request from the OIF, an explainer document on the potential privacy implications of IP addresses as sensitive PPI is being drafted for the Intellectual Freedom Blog. We will be working on reviewing the Privacy Field Guides website

Members of the subcommittee have worked with members of other ALA committees including IFC and IFRT to develop two program proposals for ALA Annual 2026 on the history of member-driven documents (Library Bill of Rights and Intellectual Freedom Manual) and navigating the tension between personal beliefs and professional values in library work. Work on publishing the findings and proceedings of the National Forum for Privacy Literacy Standards and Competencies is ongoing (subcommittee chair is a member of that working group).

BOOK CHALLENGES AND CENSORSHIP

ALA Committee/Taskforce Report Form to Council

The Office for Intellectual Freedom continues to receive reports about actual or attempted efforts to restrict or remove books, cancel programming, or end access to other library resources in schools and public libraries. From September 2025 through November 2025, OIF has documented 244 challenge reports and support requests. 114 of those were from public libraries, and 107 were from schools and school libraries. There were 15 documented incidents that included threats and harassment of library workers. 101 of the reports were book challenges, in which 864 books were challenged. (Those books included 607 unique book titles). As in past quarters, most challenged and censored books were titles including content, themes, or characters reflecting LGBTQIA+ and BIPOC identities, or that were written by LGBTQIA and BIPOC authors.

All ALA members are urged to report censorship to the Office for Intellectual Freedom and share documentation of library censorship whenever possible. Reports are confidential and can be sent to oif@ala.org

OFFICE FOR INTELLECTUAL FREEDOM

The Office for Intellectual Freedom continues to prioritize confidential support for library workers, school librarians, and community members addressing book bans and other challenges in their communities, while engaging in advocacy and educational activities that respond to members' requests and uphold ALA's core values of intellectual freedom and privacy. Our programs include:

- Intellectual Freedom Helplines: Five recipients of the State Intellectual Freedom Helpline grants have launched or are preparing to launch their state-level programs. These programs provide challenge support to library workers and community members facing intellectual freedom challenges in their state. They establish confidential challenge support for those in need of conferral, and refer cases to OIF as appropriate. IF Helpline leaders will gather at ALA's Annual Conference to distribute promotional materials and discuss their efforts to share information with their colleagues.
- Law for Librarians/Lawyers for Libraries: The Law for Librarians program is preparing to welcome its second cohort of trainers. These trainers have taken nine online courses introducing them to legal topics relevant to libraries, including First

ALA Committee/Taskforce Report Form to Council

Amendment Law, Copyright Law, and Privacy Law. They have also learned about the fundamentals of law and presenting. They will join our existing cohort of over 100 librarians from 45 states, who have trained thousands of library workers and community members across the nation. Law for Librarians is also facilitating a writing symposium for law librarians and other library workers who submitted abstracts and were selected to develop and workshop their pieces. They will be finalizing their pieces for publication at an in-person workshop prior to ALA's Annual Conference in 2026. L4L is also preparing a handbook containing educational materials. This resource will be completed in 2026 and available to members at ALA's Annual Conference.

- Writers' Workshops: OIF works with the Writers Guild Initiative and Amanda Jones to facilitate writing opportunities for library workers. We will be hosting our third writers' workshop session in the spring and hope to have a reading activity at ALA's Annual Conference in 2026.

In closing, the Intellectual Freedom Committee would like to acknowledge and thank the unit liaisons and representatives for their commitment and contributions and also thank the OIF staff for their commitment, assistance, and hard work, with particular thanks to Sarah Lamdan for supporting the work of the committee.

Respectfully Submitted,

ALA Intellectual Freedom Committee

Johannah Genett, Chair

Glen Benedict, IFC Privacy Subcommittee Chair

Matt Beckstrom

Kim Dare

Lori Fisher

Tiffeni Fontno

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Michelle Gibeault

Sonnet Ireland

Ray James

William Marden

Amanda Sand

Kestrel Ward

Amanda Jones, Committee Associate

Justin Wasterlain, Committee Associate

And

Erin Jones, editor of Intellectual Freedom Manual, 11 edition