

Code of Conduct Committee Report – Code of Conduct Recommendations for the American Library Association

Background:

The American Library Association currently maintains three separate codes of conduct, creating potential confusion for members navigating conduct expectations across different engagement contexts. To address this fragmentation while preserving the distinct purposes each code serves, we recommend a three-phase approach focusing on accessibility, alignment, and governance clarity.

DRAFT OF MOTION:

Motion to approve the establishment of a task force to comprehensively review all existing codes of conduct and address inconsistencies and gaps between the in-person, virtual meeting, and online codes of conduct.

Three-Phase Implementation Overview

Phase	Focus	Timeline	Key Actions
Phase 1: Immediate Action	Enhanced Accessibility	Immediate	Consolidate display of all three codes on ALA website; streamline user navigation
Phase 2: Working Group/Taskforce Formation	Analysis & Alignment	3-6 months	Establish working group/taskforce; conduct comprehensive review of all codes; identify gaps and inconsistencies
Phase 3: Implementation	Standardization & Governance	6-12 months	Implement working group/taskforce recommendations; clarify

			responsibilities; update policies
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Code of Conduct Committee Project Work Timeline: September 2025 - January 2026

Month	Phase	Activities
September	Project Initiation	Project kickoff; establish review framework
September - October	Initial Review	Comprehensive review of all three codes of conduct; identify areas of overlap and divergence
October - November	Analysis	Gap analysis; stakeholder consultation; identify inconsistencies and emerging needs
November - December	Recommendations Development	Draft recommendations; develop alignment strategies; propose governance approach
December - January	Finalization	Refine recommendations; committee vote on approach; production of committee report

Rationale for This Approach

The Code of Conduct Committee has identified a critical misalignment between its formal charge and the expanding expectations for code of conduct oversight within ALA. The committee's current charge specifically designates responsibility for the ALA Online Code of Conduct; however, stewarding three separate codes of conduct represents significant scope creep beyond this original mandate. Furthermore, the current composition of the committee does not have the capacity to manage oversight of multiple codes across diverse engagement contexts effectively, and committee members may not possess the necessary specialized knowledge and expertise to appropriately investigate and resolve in-person or virtual meeting code of conduct issues, which often require different skills and

protocols than online conduct matters. This approach ensures that code of conduct governance is appropriately distributed among committees and staff with the relevant expertise, capacity, and formal authority to fulfill these critical responsibilities.

Critical Issues to Be Addressed

The current code of conduct framework faces several significant governance and operational gaps:

- **Lack of Oversight Structure:** Two of the three codes of conduct (Statement of Appropriate Conduct and Virtual Meeting Code of Conduct), do not have designated ALA Member committees or staff liaisons responsible for their oversight and enforcement
- **Absence of Incident Reporting Mechanisms:** There is no formal intake process for reporting in-person or virtual conduct incidents, creating barriers for members who experience or witness violations
- **No Formal Resolution Procedures:** There are no established policies and procedures to investigate and resolve in-person or virtual code of conduct incidents, leading to inconsistent responses and potential accountability gaps

Code of Conduct Committee Recommendations

Phase 1: Immediate Action - Enhanced Accessibility

- Display all three codes of conduct prominently together in a dedicated section of the ALA website
- Create a streamlined user experience that allows members to quickly locate and understand applicable conduct standards regardless of their participation mode

Phase 2: Primary Recommendation - Establish a Working Group/Taskforce

We advocate for the formation of a dedicated working group or taskforce to comprehensively address inconsistencies and gaps between the in-person, virtual meeting, and online codes of conduct. This group's charge would include five critical objectives:

- Clarify definitions and refine the titles and purposes of each code of conduct

- Evaluate whether maintaining three distinct codes remains necessary or if consolidation is feasible
- Standardize language across codes where overlap exists to reduce redundancy and confusion
- Establish clear scope for code applicability, particularly regarding emerging communication platforms like Discord, designated official ALA-monitored communication channels such as ALA Connect and physical/virtual actions for in-person conferences or virtual meetings
- Determine the responsible party for the oversight and enforcement of each code, noting that the Code of Conduct Committee is currently charged with responsibility for the ALA Online Code of Conduct

Working Group/Taskforce Composition

To ensure comprehensive representation and expertise, the working group should include members from:

- Code of Conduct Committee (CoC)
- Council Operations Office (COO)
- Intellectual Freedom Committee (IFC)
- Membership division
- Round Table Coordinating Assembly (RTCA) or a representative who can address round table platforms for engagement
- Interest Groups
- Policy Manual Committee (PMC)

This diverse composition will ensure that all perspectives on member engagement, policy implementation, and organizational governance inform the final recommendations, creating codes of conduct that are both practical and reflective of ALA's evolving communication landscape.

Phase 3: Post-Task Force Implementation - Potential Recommendations

Following the Working Group's or Taskforce's completion of its analysis and recommendations, Phase 3 will focus on operationalizing the approved changes.

Anticipated implementation tasks include:

Governance and Oversight

- Assign Board committee and staff liaisons for each code of conduct or consolidated code
- Develop clear charges and responsibilities for oversight bodies
- Establish reporting relationships between codes of conduct stewards and ALA leadership
- Create coordination mechanisms between stewards if multiple codes remain

Incident Management Infrastructure

- Design and implement formal incident intake processes for in-person and virtual meeting violations
- Create accessible reporting channels (online forms, confidential email, etc.)
- Develop methods to track incidents from report through resolution
- Establish timelines for acknowledgment, investigation, and resolution of complaints

Policies and Procedures

- Draft comprehensive investigation protocols for each code of conduct
- Create clear procedures for evidence gathering, witness interviews, and documentation
- Establish fair hearing processes that protect both complainants and respondents
- Develop graduated response frameworks with defined consequences for violations
- Create appeals processes and mechanisms for review of decisions

Training and Education

- Develop training programs for stakeholders, ALA committee persons, and staff responsible for code enforcement
- Create educational materials for members explaining codes, reporting processes, and expectations
- Implement onboarding materials for new members, volunteers, and leaders
- Design periodic refresher training for ongoing compliance

Communication and Transparency

- Update ALA website with consolidated code information and reporting mechanisms
- Develop annual reporting framework to share aggregate data on incidents and outcomes (while protecting confidentiality)
- Create communication protocols for notifying relevant parties of investigation outcomes
- Establish regular review cycles to assess code effectiveness and recommend updates

Technology and Platform Considerations

- Implement technical solutions for monitoring designated official communication channels
- (Potential) Establish partnerships or protocols for emerging platforms like Discord
- Use current or create digital tools for incident reporting and case tracking for in-person and virtual events
- Develop secure systems for maintaining confidential investigation records

These implementation activities will ensure that ALA's code of conduct framework is not only clearly articulated but also effectively enforced, creating a safer and more inclusive environment for all members across all engagement modalities.