

**2024-2025 ALA CD #35.1
2025 ANNUAL CONFERENCE**

To: ALA Council

RE: ALA Core Values Interpretations

ACTION REQUESTED/INFORMATION/REPORT: Core Values Interpretations Working Groups Combined Report

ACTION REQUESTED BY: Core Values Interpretations Working Groups: 1. Access; 2. Equity; 3. Intellectual Freedom & Privacy; 4. Public Good; & 5. Sustainability

CONTACT PERSON: Sara Dallas, Core Values Interpretations Working Groups Executive Board Liaison; saraedallas@gmail.com

DRAFT OF MOTION(S):

Action 1: To approve the recommended interpretation provided by Core Values Interpretations Working Group: Access (Appendix 1)

Action 2: To approve the recommended interpretation provided by Core Values Interpretations Working Group: Intellectual Freedom & Privacy (Appendix 2)

Action 3: To approve recommended interpretation provided by Core Values Interpretations Working Group: Sustainability (Appendix 3)

Action 4: To approve extensions for Core Values Interpretations Work Group: Equity & Public Good until the January 2026 Council meeting. (Appendix 4 & 5)

DATE: June 28, 2025

BACKGROUND:

As voted on by Council on January 21, 2024, these working groups were created to further expand on each Core Values description. These interpretations will provide opportunities for further expansion and clarification of the values, addressing concerns about the potential loss of nuance.

See also CD 34 for more information.

ATTACHMENTS: Individual working group reports are attached.

The Access Working Group began their work in August 2024. The working group is made up of twelve members representing public, academic, special, and school libraries as well as SLIS programs and an ALA staff liaison. We used the [Library Bill of Rights](#) (including the [School Library Interpretation](#)), [Code of Ethics](#), and [Libraries: An American Value](#) as our foundational documents. We also referred to the [Intellectual Freedom Manual Style Guide](#).

The working group met monthly via Zoom and used shared Google Docs for planning and writing. We completed our first draft in October and shared it with the Working Group Chairs Community for feedback. A second draft was completed and shared in January 2025. In May 2025, the draft was shared with the Chair of the Intellectual Freedom Committee (IFC), the Social Responsibilities Round Table (SRRT) Action Council, and the American Association of School Librarians (AASL) Board.

Interpretation for ALA Core Value: Access

Access provides opportunities for everyone in the community to obtain library resources and services with minimal disruption. Library workers create systems that ensure members of their community can freely get the information they need for learning, growth, and empowerment regardless of technology, format, or delivery methods.

- Access applies to the whole library community which is composed of, at minimum, its users and workers, including staff, volunteers, trustees, and advocates.
- Libraries provide equitable access to physical and digital spaces, services, collections, resources, technology, and programs regardless of age, affiliation, background, disability status, ethnicity, gender expression, gender identification, housing status, immigration status, language, race, religious beliefs, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, or views.
- Libraries strive to provide welcoming, inclusive, respectful, and professional environments.
- Libraries serve their communities through equitable policies and practices.
- Library workers provide accurate, unbiased responses to all requests. They do not allow their personal beliefs to interfere with, limit, or deny services or access.
- Libraries have a social responsibility to remove barriers and disruptions that prevent members of their communities from accessing the resources they need.
 - Barriers may include accessibility, closed collections or restricted shelves, financial, grade- or reading-level restrictions, and physical or technological limitations on access to information.
 - Barriers may also include systemic and individual biases as well as negative assumptions.
- Libraries support a democratic society by providing collections representing diverse points of view on both current and historical issues.
- Libraries further support a democratic society by ensuring equitable access to education, learning, instructional, and other library programs.
- Libraries support the personal development, individual interests, educational and recreational needs of all of their communities.

Members of the Working Group for Access:

Adriana Blancarte-Hayward, Michelle Colquitt, Kim Copenhaver, Danielle De Jager-Loftus, Amy Dissmeyer, Shanna Hollich, Jamie Kurumaji, Katherine Lester, Hillary Pearson (ALA Staff Liaison), Roxane Pickens, April Sheppard (Chair), Andrew Smith

ALA Core Values Interpretations Working Group: Intellectual Freedom & Privacy

June 2025

The Intellectual Freedom and Privacy working group is pleased to present to ALA Council its interpretation for ALA's Core Value associated with Intellectual Freedom and Privacy. Work on this interpretation began almost one year ago. Working group members represent a variety of library types, disciplines and geography. All members have previously contributed to committees and initiatives related to intellectual freedom.

ALA documents, publications, and professional articles on intellectual freedom were reviewed to create the interpretation. These included but are not limited to the Intellectual Freedom Manual, the Library Bill of Rights, ALA's Code of Ethics, and Libraries an American Value. The working group conducted sessions with thorough discussions and comprehensive editing to produce the result. Invaluable help was provided throughout the process by the Office for Intellectual Freedom staff. A copy of the final draft has been circulated to related ALA committees and divisions.

The working group feels that the interpretation presented to Council is a clear statement in support of the Core Value. We ask that you adopt this interpretation.

Thank you for your consideration.

Intellectual Freedom Working Group Members

Gordon Baker

Matt Beckstrom

Deborah Caldwell-Stone

Dorcas Hand

Jennifer Keyser

Rebeca Moorman

Kent Oliver (Co-Chair)

Rachel Patton

Kristin Pekoll (Co-Chair)

Aimee Quinn

Amanda Sand

Intellectual Freedom Core Value Statement

4/21/2025

Intellectual Freedom empowers people to think for themselves and to make informed decisions while respecting each individual's dignity and independence. Library workers encourage people to cultivate curiosity and form ideas by questioning the world and accessing information from diverse viewpoints and formats without restrictions or censorship. The right to privacy is a crucial safeguard to this freedom, ensuring everyone has the right to develop their thoughts and opinions free of surveillance.

Interpretation

- Intellectual freedom is fundamental to the practice of librarianship and information professions and remains an essential cornerstone of libraries. It encompasses a respect for the inherent autonomy and dignity of the individual and their right to think independently. Intellectual freedom empowers individuals to form their own ideas and opinions through free and open inquiry.
- Libraries and library workers support intellectual freedom as the foundation on which individuals can become lifelong learners – informed, literate, and culturally enriched.
- The core attributes of intellectual freedom include the ability to access, hold, receive, and disseminate ideas and information, as well as the creation of conditions that safeguard freedoms such as the right to privacy and the freedom of belief.
- In any pluralistic government that values and protects the personal rights and freedoms of each individual, intellectual freedom creates an environment where libraries celebrate the right of everyone to freely access information while making available the widest possible range of viewpoints, opinions, and ideas without the fear of retribution. Libraries are a bedrock of democracy.
- The rights associated with intellectual freedom are implicit in the First Amendment of the Bill of Rights of the United States Constitution which codifies and defines those rights. It expressly protects the freedom of religion, the freedom of speech, the freedom of the press, and the rights to assemble and to petition the government to correct injustice and the curtailment of rights.

- Free access to information enables individuals to contribute to their communities and participate in political processes.
- Librarianship endorses the premise that without free access to differing points of view on topics of personal and community interest, individuals cannot inform themselves or insightfully contribute to global understanding and knowledge.
- Privacy is crucial for intellectual freedom, enabling individuals to engage in open inquiry without fear or limitation. Libraries and library workers strive to safeguard privacy and confidentiality in resource and service use.
- Library workers play an essential role in selecting, organizing, preserving, and distributing information. They have a duty to oppose censorship and facilitate the free exchange of information and ideas for current and future generations.
- In upholding Intellectual Freedom, libraries formulate and implement operational policies for service delivery which adhere to the ethics of librarianship. They include but are not limited to the following policies:
 - collection development
 - reconsideration of materials and resources
 - internet use
 - meeting rooms and exhibit spaces
 - protecting users' privacy and right to confidentiality.
- All those entrusted to govern libraries have an obligation to uphold tenets of intellectual freedom by adherence to the law and to the professional ethics of librarianship.

**Summary Report
Core Value Interpretation Working Group: Sustainability
May 27, 2025**

Members of the Working Group for Sustainability:

Matthew Bollerman, Deborah Doyle, Jennifer Ferriss, Zee Hinz, Lisa Kropp, Nicole LaMoreaux, René Tanner (chair), and Hannah Weinberg (ALA staff liaison)

Purpose of the Working Groups:

The Core Value Interpretation Working Groups were established through a vote by the ALA Council on January 21, 2024. The working groups were tasked with developing interpretations to expand on the [Core Value](#) descriptions to provide opportunities for further expansion and clarification of the values, addressing concerns about the potential loss of nuance.

Summary of Working Group for Sustainability Process:

The Working Group for Sustainability began their work on July 11, 2024, and continued monthly meetings through May 13, 2025, for a total of 10 meetings. One of the outreach efforts was to educate others about the role of sustainability in libraries. To do this, three members of the working group presented “Harnessing the Power of Education for Climate Work: Libraries Chart a Path for the Future” at the ALA LibLearn X 2025 conference on January 26, 2025, in Phoenix, AZ.

Another outreach effort was to invite leaders on the topic of sustainability to comment on the draft interpretation. In February 2025, the draft interpretation was shared with board members for the ALA Sustainability Committee and the steering committee for the ALA Sustainability Round Table. Multiple comments were received and incorporated into the draft.

The current draft document outlines specific actions libraries can take in areas like disaster preparedness, environmental stewardship, social equity, and economic transition, linking everyday library work with larger sustainability goals. By aligning library activities with issues such as climate change and economic inequality, the interpretation provides a compelling narrative that can be used to develop new library programs, services, and processes to engage in sustainability, as well as advocate for funding, partnerships, and policy support. Finally, the interpretation stresses the importance of staff empowerment and well-being, which reinforces the idea that sustainable libraries begin with sustainable staff.

DRAFT
ALA Core Value Interpretation for Sustainability
May 20, 2025

Libraries are Integral for Sustainable Communities

As trusted institutions, libraries play a vital role in building sustainable communities while adapting to modern challenges. People are at the heart of our work. This involves treating our community with care and advocating for our role in creating a brighter future.

Sustainability means making choices that are good for the environment, make sense economically, and treat everyone equitably. Sustainable choices preserve physical and digital resources and keep services useful now and into the future. By supporting climate resiliency, library workers create thriving communities and care for our common good for a better tomorrow.¹

Environmental Stewardship and Disaster Preparedness

Long before emergencies arise, libraries help their communities. Many offer seed libraries and programs that support local food systems. Others teach mending or lend items beyond books. As inclusive “third spaces” for the community to gather, libraries nurture connections among community members. These connections are essential when facing environmental challenges.

Libraries also play a critical role in disaster preparedness within their communities, particularly in the aftermath of environmental emergencies. They provide crucial services, including information dissemination, referrals for disaster recovery, and emergency assistance during disasters, such as serving as cooling or warming centers.

Sustainable libraries balance access to information with environmental responsibility. This includes reducing the environmental effects of digital and physical collections. Some actions to take include:

Digital Collections and Infrastructure

- Making choices for digital collections and archives to minimize their environmental footprint
- Partnering with stakeholders to transition to renewable energy sources
- Ensuring reliable power and internet access for consistent service delivery

Collections and Facilities

- Developing comprehensive disaster response plans to protect against climate risks such as sea-level rise, flooding, and wildfire
- Implementing "green" building solutions for new and existing facilities

¹ “ALA Task Force on United Nations 2030 Sustainable Development Goals,” ALA, accessed November 13, 2024, <https://www.ala.org/aboutala/ala-task-force-united-nations-2030-sustainable-development-goals>.

- Working with publishers and suppliers to source sustainable products
- Providing items such as calculators, garden seeds, or sewing machines to create a culture of sharing

Sustainable Libraries and Social Equity

Libraries create cohesive communities by valuing social equity. Cohesive communities are known for their resilience. When libraries build community, they create connections, which make recovery efforts go more smoothly and quickly.

Sustainable libraries celebrate equity, diversity, and inclusion. They have inclusive hiring practices and empower their staff to develop collections, programs, and services that truly reflect and serve the diverse needs of their communities.

Sustainable libraries partner with community groups to create programs celebrating different cultures and identities. Sustainable libraries provide services that empower underserved populations. These actions demonstrate the library's commitment to creating inclusive spaces that uplift all people. By centering their communities, libraries fulfill their role as vital public institutions that advance equity and belonging.

Library staff are central to sustainable library systems. To support our community members we start by advocating for those who make it possible. Some actions to support staff include:

- Implementing wellness initiatives to promote staff well-being
- Ensuring fair compensation and positive work environments
- Maintaining solid relationships between stakeholders like associations, administration, advocacy groups, and unions
- Equitable employment policies that grow inclusivity, diversity, and a feeling of belonging

Economic Transition and Community Support

As communities navigate the transition to a sustainable economy, libraries serve as vital resources. Some actions to take include:

- Supplying information about emerging economic opportunities
- Providing reliable internet connections to enable participation in the online economy
- Facilitating community programs that inform and empower attendees
- Partnering with local organizations on climate justice initiatives
- Serving as a model for ways to share resources by investing in local economies and businesses

Strategic Implementation

The ALA and the Sustainable Libraries Initiative collaborated to create the [National Climate Action Strategy for Libraries](#). The implementation guide provides a framework for:

- Reducing greenhouse gas emissions
- Developing internal disaster preparedness plans and strategic goals for community hazard response, before, during, and after an event
- Providing climate justice education
- Building partnerships with climate-focused community organizations

Conclusion

Libraries are at the intersection of social equity, economic sustainability, and environmental stewardship. Through these coordinated efforts, libraries continue evolving as indispensable institutions that preserve our past and help shape a sustainable future for our communities.

Core Values Interpretations WG: Equity

The Core Values Interpretations WG: Equity asks council to provide a six-month extension.

Due to significant health issues of the Co-Chairs Sandra Farag and Catharine Bomhold, we were unable to get work started. Co-Chair Sandra Farag has recovered and will continue to serve as Co-Chair, however, Catharine Bomhold had to resign her position. After meeting with Sara Dallas, Executive Board liaison to the Core Values working groups, and consulting with President Hohl, Rene Tanner was asked and accepted the position of Co-Chair for the Equity group.

Unfortunately, due to the delays, three committee members are no longer able to participate in the WG, and alternates were identified in consultation with President Hohl and President-elect Helmick. These alternates are currently being confirmed. This working group should be able to commence working shortly after Annual Conference 2025.

Submitted,

Co-Chairs Sandra Farag & Rene Tanner

Core Values Interpretations Working Group: Public Good Report to ALA Council

The Core Values Interpretations Working Group: Public Good respectfully requests an extension of its charge for up to six months or until ALA Council next meets after the 2025 Annual Conference.

The Core Values Interpretations Working Group: Public Good first met on July 18, 2024. The working group started with 10 members with a wide variety of library experiences and backgrounds represented, including academic librarians, public librarians, United for Libraries members, and an ALA staff liaison. One member was unable to continue with the working group after the first few meetings.

The working group met seven times overall. All meetings were held on Zoom and were recorded. Google Docs were used for all planning and drafting. The working group reviewed all of the [Core Values of Librarianship](#) and foundational documents, including, [Library Bill of Rights](#), [ALA Code of Ethics](#), and [Libraries: An American Value](#). Working groups members referred to other interpretations and the [Intellectual Freedom Manual Style Guide](#) for guidance. A first draft was reviewed by the working group in December. Creation of a second draft was delayed for approximately three months due to unforeseen and unexpected issues. The second draft was completed in April and reviewed by the working group in May.

The requested six-month extension will provide the working group with the opportunity to share its draft to other members and groups within ALA for feedback which the group will use to refine its current draft. Feedback will be solicited from members of the other core values interpretations working groups, Committee on Professional Ethics, United for Libraries board. The Working Group will meet to review feedback and revise its draft accordingly. A second, broader round of feedback and possible revisions will be solicited from ALA groups yet to be determined.

Respectfully submitted by:

Andrew Harant

Chair, Core Values Interpretations Working Group: Public Good