

Professional Ethics

"Intellectual freedom can exist only where two essential conditions are met: first, that all individuals have the right to hold any belief on any subject and to convey their ideas in any form they deem appropriate, and second, that society makes an equal commitment to the right of unrestricted access to information and ideas regardless of the communication medium used, the content of work, and the viewpoints of both the author and the receiver of information." - Intellectual Freedom Manual, 7th edition

ALA's Code of Ethics is the responsibility of the Committee on Professional Ethics (/groups/committees/ala/ala-profethic) (COPE). The Code of Ethics is the document that translates the values of intellectual freedom that define the profession of librarianship into broad principles that may be used by individual members of that profession as well as by others employed in a library as a framework for dealing with situations involving ethical conflicts.

- Copyright: An Interpretation of the *Code of Ethics* (<http://www.ala.org/tools/ethics/copyright>) (amended January 29, 2019)
- Conflicts of Interest Q&A (<http://www.ala.org/tools/ethics/conflictsofinterestqa>) (amended April 30, 2019)
- Enforcement of the *Code of Ethics* Q&A (<http://www.ala.org/tools/ethics/enforcementqa>) (amended January 28, 2019)
- Ethics and Social Media Q&A (<http://www.ala.org/tools/ethics/socialmediaqa>) (amended January 28, 2019)
- Speech in the Workplace Q&A (<http://www.ala.org/tools/ethics/workplacespeechqa>) (amended April 30, 2019)

Code of Ethics

As members of the American Library Association, we recognize the importance of codifying and making known to the profession and to the general public the ethical principles that guide the work of librarians, other professionals providing information services, library trustees and library staffs.

Ethical dilemmas occur when values are in conflict. The American Library Association Code of Ethics states the values to which we are committed, and embodies the ethical responsibilities of the profession in this changing information environment.

We significantly influence or control the selection, organization, preservation, and dissemination of information. In a political system grounded in an informed citizenry, we are members of a profession explicitly committed to intellectual freedom and the freedom of access to information. We have a special obligation to ensure the free flow of information and ideas to present and future generations.

The principles of this Code are expressed in broad statements to guide ethical decision making. These statements provide a framework; they cannot and do not dictate conduct to cover particular situations.

1. We provide the highest level of service to all library users through appropriate and usefully organized resources; equitable service policies; equitable access; and accurate, unbiased, and courteous responses to all requests.
2. We uphold the principles of intellectual freedom and resist all efforts to censor library resources.
3. We protect each library user's right to privacy and confidentiality with respect to information sought or received and resources consulted, borrowed, acquired or transmitted.
4. We respect intellectual property rights and advocate balance between the interests of information users and rights holders.

5. We treat co-workers and other colleagues with respect, fairness, and good faith, and advocate conditions of employment that safeguard the rights and welfare of all employees of our institutions.
6. We do not advance private interests at the expense of library users, colleagues, or our employing institutions.
7. We distinguish between our personal convictions and professional duties and do not allow our personal beliefs to interfere with fair representation of the aims of our institutions or the provision of access to their information resources.
8. We strive for excellence in the profession by maintaining and enhancing our own knowledge and skills, by encouraging the professional development of co-workers, and by fostering the aspirations of potential members of the profession.

Adopted at the 1939 Midwinter Meeting by the ALA Council; amended June 30, 1981; June 28, 1995; and January 22, 2008.