

(1979; Rev. 1988; Rev. 2022)

Library Services Guideline 23
Position on Challenged Materials

The Leonard H. Axe Library and the Kansas Technology Center Library (hereinafter referred to as Library Services) of Pittsburg State University endorse the philosophy of the American Library Association's "Library Bill of Rights" and "Freedom to Read Statement". These, and related statements, indicate that libraries should provide materials and information presenting all points of view on current and historical issues and materials should not be proscribed or removed because of partisan or doctrinal disapproval. Any materials purchased or held by Library Services will meet the criteria of its established materials selection policies (See Guideline 22). If there are requests for reconsideration of any library materials, the request will be handled through a written complaint form available at the Information Desk in the Leonard H. Axe Library and at the Reference Desk in the Kansas Technology Center Library. Reconsideration of materials in the collection will follow the procedures outlined in the Office of Academic Affairs Memorandum titled "Guidelines and Procedures for Responding to Challenged Materials."

Appendices:

Office of Academic Affairs Memorandum, Guidelines and Procedures for Responding to Challenged Materials.

Request for Reconsideration of Library Material

American Library Association, Library Bill of Rights

American Library Association, Interpretations of the Library Bill of Rights

American Library Association, Freedom to Read Statement

American Library Association, Freedom to View Statement

American Library Association, Statement on Book Censorship

American Library Association, Statement on Censorship of Information Addressing Racial Injustice, Black American History, and Diversity Education

Guidelines and Procedures for Responding to Challenged Materials

Introduction:

Pittsburg State University is committed to the free flow of information and ideas that enable the search for knowledge and truth. The University is firm in its commitment to follow wherever that search leads. This commitment is nowhere more apparent than in the Library, where instructional, reference, and research materials should be provided, as far as is practicable, that present all points of view on current and historical issues. Also, materials should be representative of the national, ethnic, social, political, and religious views of those contributing to their creation.

Guidelines:

1. Books and other library resources shall not be excluded because of the origin, background, or views of those contributing to their creation.
2. Books and other library resources shall not be proscribed or removed because of partisan or doctrinal disapproval.
3. Library Services will challenge censorship of the materials or resources in its collection on any grounds and will not place circulating items in restricted access status other than normal faculty reserve materials.
4. The right of individuals to use Library Services materials or resources and, specifically, the Leonard H. Axe Library or Kansas Technology Center Library facilities, shall not be denied or abridged because of national, ethnic, social, political, religious, or other views.
5. Librarians and library staff shall not be required to endorse the principles, ideas, opinions, views, etc., of library resources or the information they provide.
6. No library resources in the collections of Library Services shall carry any type of label addressing the potential impact of that resource on the user.
7. All materials and resources acquired by Library Services will meet the established materials selection policy. (See Guideline 22)
8. Any challenges of materials or resources held or provided by Library Services will be processed utilizing the procedures as set forth in this Office of Academic Affairs Memorandum.

Procedures:

An individual, or the representative of an organization challenging library materials or resources, will complete a "Request for Reconsideration of Library Material" form which may be obtained from the Information Desk at the Leonard H. Axe Library or the Reference Desk at the Kansas Technology Center Library. The form must be completed and returned to the Office of the Dean of Library Services (Axe 109). Within five class days of receipt of the completed request for reconsideration, the Dean of Library Services will request the appropriate library liaison (library faculty, subject area specialist) to re-evaluate the purchase or acceptance of the challenged material and to respond in writing to the request for reconsideration. The library liaison shall submit such responses to the Dean of Library Services within five class days of the Dean's request for a response.

The Dean of Library Services, within five class days of receipt of the library liaison's written response, will meet with the individual or with the representative of the organization requesting reconsideration. The subject of this meeting will be limited to the request for reconsideration and to the response of the library liaison.

If the challenge is not resolved by these procedures, the Dean of Library Services will write a report of the actions taken to this point and, with the challenged materials or resources, submit within five class days of the conference, the request for reconsideration and the Dean's report to the chairperson of the Library Services committee of the Faculty Senate.

At its next meeting, which shall be held not later than ten class days after the receipt of the Dean's report, the Library Services committee will consider all of the data submitted and meet with all parties it deems relevant in an attempt to resolve the request for reconsideration.

On the fifth class day after its meeting, if the Library Services committee has not resolved the challenge, the Dean's report and all associated documents shall be forwarded to the Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs whose decision shall be final.

Dr. Howard Smith
Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs

Date

(Please complete this form and submit to the Office of the Dean of Library Services, Axe 109)

Request for Reconsideration of Library Materials

Date: _____

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State/Zip: _____

Phone: _____ Email: _____

Do You Represent Yourself? _____ Or an Organization? / Name _____

Resource Type on Which You are Commenting:

_____ Book/E-Book _____ Movie _____ Magazine _____ Audio Recording

_____ Digital Resource _____ Textbook _____ Newspaper _____ Other

Author/Creator: _____

Title: _____

Publisher, Date: _____

1. What brought this resource to your attention? _____

2. Have you examined the entire resource? If not, what sections did you review? _____

3. What concerns you about the resource? _____

4. Are there resource(s) you suggest to provide additional information and/or other viewpoints on this topic or the theme of the work? _____

5. What action are you requesting Library Services to consider? _____

Signature of Requester _____ Date _____

Library Bill of Rights

The American Library Association affirms that all libraries are forums for information and ideas, and that the following basic policies should guide their services.

I. Books and other library resources should be provided for the interest, information, and enlightenment of all people of the community the library serves. Materials should not be excluded because of the origin, background, or views of those contributing to their creation.

II. Libraries should provide materials and information presenting all points of view on current and historical issues. Materials should not be proscribed or removed because of partisan or doctrinal disapproval.

III. Libraries should challenge censorship in the fulfillment of their responsibility to provide information and enlightenment.

IV. Libraries should cooperate with all persons and groups concerned with resisting abridgment of free expression and free access to ideas.

V. A person's right to use a library should not be denied or abridged because of origin, age, background, or views.

VI. Libraries which make exhibit spaces and meeting rooms available to the public they serve should make such facilities available on an equitable basis, regardless of the beliefs or affiliations of individuals or groups requesting their use.

VII. All people, regardless of origin, age, background, or views, possess a right to privacy and confidentiality in their library use. Libraries should advocate for, educate about, and protect people's privacy, safeguarding all library use data, including personally identifiable information.

Adopted June 19, 1939, by the ALA Council; amended October 14, 1944; June 18, 1948; February 2, 1961; June 27, 1967; January 23, 1980; January 29, 2019.

Inclusion of "age" reaffirmed January 23, 1996.

Although the Articles of the *Library Bill of Rights* are unambiguous statements of basic principles that should govern the service of all libraries, questions do arise concerning application of these principles to specific library practices. See the documents designated by the Intellectual Freedom Committee as [Interpretations of the Library Bill of Rights](#).

Interpretations of the Library Bill of Rights

Although the Articles of the *Library Bill of Rights* are unambiguous statements of basic principles that should govern the service of all libraries, questions do arise concerning application of these principles to specific library practices.

Following are those documents designated by the Intellectual Freedom Committee as Interpretations of the [Library Bill of Rights](#) and background statements detailing the philosophy and history of each. For convenience and easy reference, the documents are presented in alphabetical order. These documents are policies of the American Library Association, having been adopted by the [ALA Council](#).

[Access to Digital Resources and Services](#): Digital resources and services allow libraries to significantly expand the scope of information available to users. Like all resources and services provided by the library, provision of access to digital resources and services should follow the principles outlined in the *Library Bill of Rights* to ensure equitable access regardless of content or platform. Amended 2019

[Access to Library Resources and Services for Minors](#): Library policies and procedures that effectively deny minors equal and equitable access to all library resources available to other users violate the *Library Bill of Rights*. The American Library Association opposes all attempts to restrict access to library services, materials, and facilities based on the age of library users. Amended 2019

[Access to Library Resources and Services Regardless of Sex, Gender Identity, Gender Expression, or Sexual Orientation](#): The American Library Association stringently and unequivocally maintains that libraries and librarians have an obligation to resist efforts that systematically exclude materials dealing with any subject matter, including sex, gender identity, or sexual orientation. Amended 2020

[Access to Resources and Services in the School Library](#): The school library plays a unique role in promoting intellectual freedom. It serves as a point of voluntary access to information and ideas and as a learning laboratory for students as they acquire critical thinking and problem-solving skills needed in a pluralistic society. Although the educational level and program of the school necessarily shapes the resources and services of a school library, the principles of the Library Bill of Rights apply equally to all libraries, including school libraries. Amended 2014

[Challenged Resources](#): ALA declares as a matter of firm principle that it is the responsibility of every library to have a clearly defined written policy for collection development that includes a procedure for review of challenged resources. Amended 2019

Diverse Collections: Collection development should reflect the philosophy inherent in Article I of the *Library Bill of Rights*: “Books and other library resources should be provided for the interest, information, and enlightenment of all people of the community the library serves. Materials should not be excluded because of the origin, background, or views of those contributing to their creation.” A diverse collection should contain content by and about a wide array of people and cultures to authentically reflect a variety of ideas, information, stories, and experiences. Amended 2019

Economic Barriers to Information Access: All resources provided directly or indirectly by the library, regardless of format or method of delivery, should be readily and equitably accessible to all library users. Imposing any financial barrier may disadvantage users, and libraries of all types—public, school, and academic—should consider eliminating barriers that limit access to library resources and other services. Amended 2019

Education and Information Literacy: Libraries and library workers foster education and lifelong learning by promoting free expression and facilitating the exchange of ideas among users. Libraries use resources, programming, and services to strengthen access to information and thus build a foundation of intellectual freedom. In their roles as educators, library workers create an environment that nurtures intellectual freedom in all library resources and services. Amended 2019

Equity, Diversity, Inclusion: Libraries are essential to democracy and self-government, to personal development and social progress, and to every individual’s inalienable right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. To that end, libraries and library workers should embrace equity, diversity, and inclusion in everything that they do. Adopted 2017

Evaluating Library Collections: Libraries continually develop their collections by adding and removing resources to maintain collections of current interest and usefulness to their communities. Libraries should adopt collection development and maintenance policies that include criteria for evaluating materials. Amended 2019

Expurgation of Library Materials: Expurgating library materials is a violation of the Library Bill of Rights. Expurgation as defined by this interpretation includes any deletion, excision, alteration, editing, or obliteration of any part(s) of books or other library resources by the library, its agent, or its parent institution (if any). Amended 2014

Internet Filtering: The negative effects of content filters on Internet access in public libraries and schools are demonstrable and documented. Consequently, consistent with previous resolutions, the American Library Association cannot recommend filtering. However the ALA recognizes that local libraries and schools are governed by local decision makers and local considerations and often must rely on federal or state funding for computers and internet access. Because adults and, to a lesser degree minors, have First Amendment rights, libraries and schools that choose to use content filters should implement policies and procedures that mitigate the negative effects of filtering to the greatest extent possible. The process should encourage and allow users to ask for filtered websites and content to be unblocked, with minimal delay and due respect for user privacy. Adopted 2015

Intellectual Freedom Principles for Academic Libraries: A strong intellectual freedom perspective is critical to the development of academic library collections and services that dispassionately meet the education and research needs of a college or university community. The purpose of this statement is to outline how and where intellectual freedom principles fit into an academic library setting, thereby raising consciousness of the intellectual freedom context within which academic librarians work. Amended 2014

Labeling Systems: Prejudicial labeling systems assume that the libraries have the institutional wisdom to determine what is appropriate or inappropriate for its users to access. They presuppose that

individuals must be directed in making up their minds about the ideas they examine. The American Library Association opposes the use of prejudicial labeling systems and affirms the rights of individuals to form their own opinions about resources they choose to read, view, listen to, or otherwise access. Adopted 2015

Library-Initiated Programs and Displays as a Resource: Library-initiated programs and displays utilize library worker expertise for community interests, collections, services, facilities, and providing access to information and information resources. They introduce users and potential users to library resources and the library's role as a facilitator of information access. Concerns, questions, or complaints about library-initiated programs and displays are handled according to the same written policy and procedures that govern reconsiderations of other library resources. These policies should apply equally to all people, including, but not limited to, library users, staff, and members of the governing body. Amended 2019

Meeting Rooms: Many libraries provide meeting rooms and other spaces designated for use by the public for meetings and other events as a service to their communities. Article VI of the Library Bill of Rights states, "Libraries which make ... meeting rooms available to the public they serve should make such facilities available on an equitable basis, regardless of the beliefs or affiliations of individuals or groups requesting their use." Amended 2019

Minors and Online Activity: The online environment offers opportunities for accessing, creating, and sharing information. The rights of minors to retrieve, create, and interact with information posted on the Internet in schools and libraries are extensions of their First Amendment rights. Amended 2019

Politics in American Libraries: The Library Bill of Rights specifically states that "all people" and "all points of view" should be included in library materials and information. There are no limiting qualifiers for viewpoint, origin, or politics. Adopted 2017

Prisoners' Right to Read: ALA asserts a compelling public interest in the preservation of intellectual freedom for individuals of any age held in jails, prisons, detention facilities, juvenile facilities, immigration facilities, prison work camps, and segregated units within any facility, whether public or private. Amended 2019

Privacy: All people, regardless of origin, age, background, or views, possess a right to privacy and confidentiality in their library use. The American Library Association affirms that rights of privacy are necessary for intellectual freedom and are fundamental to the ethical practice of librarianship. Amended 2019

Rating Systems: Rating systems are tools or labels devised by individuals or organizations to advise people regarding suitability or content of materials. Rating systems appearing in library catalogs or discovery systems present distinct challenges to intellectual freedom principles. The American Library Association affirms the rights of individuals to form their own opinions about resources they choose to read or view. Amended 2019

Religion in American Libraries: The First Amendment guarantees the right of individuals to believe and practice their religion or practice no religion at all and prohibits government from establishing or endorsing a religion or religions. Thus the freedom of, for and from religion, are similarly guaranteed. Adopted 2016

Restricted Access to Library Materials: Libraries are a traditional forum for the open exchange of information. Attempts to restrict access to library materials violate the basic tenets of the Library Bill of Rights. Amended 2014

Services to People with Disabilities: Libraries should be fully inclusive of all members of their community and strive to break down barriers to access. The library can play a transformational role in helping facilitate more complete participation in society by providing fully accessible resources and services. Amended 2018

Universal Right to Free Expression: Freedom of expression is an inalienable human right and the foundation for self-government. Freedom of expression encompasses the freedoms of speech, press, religion, assembly, and association, and the corollary right to receive information. Amended 2014

User-Generated Content in Library Discovery Systems: Libraries offer a variety of discovery systems to provide access to the resources in their collections. Such systems can include online public access catalogs (OPAC), library discovery products, institutional repositories, and archival systems. With the widespread use of library technology that incorporates social media components, intelligent objects, and knowledge-sharing tools comes the ability of libraries to provide greater opportunities for patron engagement in those discovery systems through user-generated content. These features may include the ability of users to contribute commentary such as reviews, simple point-and-click rating systems (e.g. one star to five stars), or to engage in extensive discussions or other social interactions. This kind of content could transform authoritative files, alter information architecture, and change the flow of information within the library discovery system. Amended 2019

User-Initiated Exhibits, Displays, and Bulletin Boards: Libraries may offer spaces for exhibits, displays, and bulletin boards in physical or digital formats as a benefit for their communities. The use of these spaces should conform to the American Library Association's *Library Bill of Rights*. Amended 2019

Visual and Performing Arts in Libraries: Visual images and performances in the library should not be restricted based on content. Librarians and library staff should be proactive in seeking out a wide variety of representational and abstract artwork and performance art, with limitations or parameters set only with respect to space, installation, fiscal, and technical constraints. Adopted 2018

The Freedom to Read Statement

The freedom to read is essential to our democracy. It is continuously under attack. Private groups and public authorities in various parts of the country are working to remove or limit access to reading materials, to censor content in schools, to label "controversial" views, to distribute lists of "objectionable" books or authors, and to purge libraries. These actions apparently rise from a view that our national tradition of free expression is no longer valid; that censorship and suppression are needed to counter threats to safety or national security, as well as to avoid the subversion of politics and the corruption of morals. We, as individuals devoted to reading and as librarians and publishers responsible for disseminating ideas, wish to assert the public interest in the preservation of the freedom to read.

Most attempts at suppression rest on a denial of the fundamental premise of democracy: that the ordinary individual, by exercising critical judgment, will select the good and reject the bad. We trust Americans to recognize propaganda and misinformation, and to make their own decisions about what they read and believe. We do not believe they are prepared to sacrifice their heritage of a free press in order to be "protected" against what others think may be bad for them. We believe they still favor free enterprise in ideas and expression.

These efforts at suppression are related to a larger pattern of pressures being brought against education, the press, art and images, films, broadcast media, and the Internet. The problem is not only one of actual censorship. The shadow of fear cast by these pressures leads, we suspect, to an even larger voluntary curtailment of expression by those who seek to avoid controversy or unwelcome scrutiny by government officials.

Such pressure toward conformity is perhaps natural to a time of accelerated change. And yet suppression is never more dangerous than in such a time of social tension. Freedom has given the United States the elasticity to endure strain. Freedom keeps open the path of novel and creative solutions, and enables change to come by choice. Every silencing of a heresy, every enforcement of an orthodoxy, diminishes the toughness and resilience of our society and leaves it the less able to deal with controversy and difference.

Now as always in our history, reading is among our greatest freedoms. The freedom to read and write is almost the only means for making generally available ideas or manners of expression that can initially command only a small audience. The written word is the natural medium for the new idea and the untried voice from which come the original contributions to social growth. It is essential to the extended discussion that serious thought requires, and to the accumulation of knowledge and ideas into organized collections.

We believe that free communication is essential to the preservation of a free society and a creative culture. We believe that these pressures toward conformity present the danger of limiting the range and variety of inquiry and expression on which our democracy and our culture depend. We believe that every American community must jealously guard the freedom to publish and to circulate, in order to preserve its own freedom to read. We believe that publishers and librarians have a profound

responsibility to give validity to that freedom to read by making it possible for the readers to choose freely from a variety of offerings.

The freedom to read is guaranteed by the Constitution. Those with faith in free people will stand firm on these constitutional guarantees of essential rights and will exercise the responsibilities that accompany these rights.

We therefore affirm these propositions:

1. *It is in the public interest for publishers and librarians to make available the widest diversity of views and expressions, including those that are unorthodox, unpopular, or considered dangerous by the majority.*

Creative thought is by definition new, and what is new is different. The bearer of every new thought is a rebel until that idea is refined and tested. Totalitarian systems attempt to maintain themselves in power by the ruthless suppression of any concept that challenges the established orthodoxy. The power of a democratic system to adapt to change is vastly strengthened by the freedom of its citizens to choose widely from among conflicting opinions offered freely to them. To stifle every nonconformist idea at birth would mark the end of the democratic process. Furthermore, only through the constant activity of weighing and selecting can the democratic mind attain the strength demanded by times like these. We need to know not only what we believe but why we believe it.

2. *Publishers, librarians, and booksellers do not need to endorse every idea or presentation they make available. It would conflict with the public interest for them to establish their own political, moral, or aesthetic views as a standard for determining what should be published or circulated.*

Publishers and librarians serve the educational process by helping to make available knowledge and ideas required for the growth of the mind and the increase of learning. They do not foster education by imposing as mentors the patterns of their own thought. The people should have the freedom to read and consider a broader range of ideas than those that may be held by any single librarian or publisher or government or church. It is wrong that what one can read should be confined to what another thinks proper.

3. *It is contrary to the public interest for publishers or librarians to bar access to writings on the basis of the personal history or political affiliations of the author.*

No art or literature can flourish if it is to be measured by the political views or private lives of its creators. No society of free people can flourish that draws up lists of writers to whom it will not listen, whatever they may have to say.

4. *There is no place in our society for efforts to coerce the taste of others, to confine adults to the reading matter deemed suitable for adolescents, or to inhibit the efforts of writers to achieve artistic expression.*

To some, much of modern expression is shocking. But is not much of life itself shocking? We cut off literature at the source if we prevent writers from dealing with the stuff of life. Parents and teachers have a responsibility to prepare the young to meet the diversity of experiences in life to which they will be exposed, as they have a responsibility to help them learn to think critically for themselves. These are affirmative responsibilities, not to be discharged simply by preventing them from reading works for which they are not yet prepared. In these matters values differ, and values cannot be legislated; nor can machinery be devised that will suit the demands of one group without limiting the freedom of others.

5. *It is not in the public interest to force a reader to accept the prejudgment of a label characterizing any expression or its author as subversive or dangerous.*

The ideal of labeling presupposes the existence of individuals or groups with wisdom to determine by authority what is good or bad for others. It presupposes that individuals must be directed in making up their minds about the ideas they examine. But Americans do not need others to do their thinking for them.

6. *It is the responsibility of publishers and librarians, as guardians of the people's freedom to read, to contest encroachments upon that freedom by individuals or groups seeking to impose their own standards or tastes upon the community at large; and by the government whenever it seeks to reduce or deny public access to public information.*

It is inevitable in the give and take of the democratic process that the political, the moral, or the aesthetic concepts of an individual or group will occasionally collide with those of another individual or group. In a free society individuals are free to determine for themselves what they wish to read, and each group is free to determine what it will recommend to its freely associated members. But no group has the right to take the law into its own hands, and to impose its own concept of politics or morality upon other members of a democratic society. Freedom is no freedom if it is accorded only to the accepted and the inoffensive. Further, democratic societies are more safe, free, and creative when the free flow of public information is not restricted by governmental prerogative or self-censorship.

7. *It is the responsibility of publishers and librarians to give full meaning to the freedom to read by providing books that enrich the quality and diversity of thought and expression. By the exercise of this affirmative responsibility, they can demonstrate that the answer to a "bad" book is a good one, the answer to a "bad" idea is a good one.*

The freedom to read is of little consequence when the reader cannot obtain matter fit for that reader's purpose. What is needed is not only the absence of restraint, but the positive provision of opportunity for the people to read the best that has been thought and said. Books are the major channel by which the intellectual inheritance is handed down, and the principal means of its testing and growth. The defense of the freedom to read requires of all publishers and librarians the utmost of their faculties, and deserves of all Americans the fullest of their support.

We state these propositions neither lightly nor as easy generalizations. We here stake out a lofty claim for the value of the written word. We do so because we believe that it is possessed of enormous variety and usefulness, worthy of cherishing and keeping free. We realize that the application of these propositions may mean the dissemination of ideas and manners of expression that are repugnant to many persons. We do not state these propositions in the comfortable belief that what people read is unimportant. We believe rather that what people read is deeply important; that ideas can be dangerous; but that the suppression of ideas is fatal to a democratic society. Freedom itself is a dangerous way of life, but it is ours.

This statement was originally issued in May of 1953 by the Westchester Conference of the American Library Association and the American Book Publishers Council, which in 1970 consolidated with the American Educational Publishers Institute to become the Association of American Publishers.

Adopted June 25, 1953, by the ALA Council and the AAP Freedom to Read Committee; amended January 28, 1972; January 16, 1991; July 12, 2000; June 30, 2004.

A Joint Statement by:

[American Library Association](#)
[Association of American Publishers](#)

Freedom to View Statement

The **FREEDOM TO VIEW**, along with the freedom to speak, to hear, and to read, is protected by the First Amendment to the Constitution of the United States. In a free society, there is no place for censorship of any medium of expression. Therefore these principles are affirmed:

1. To provide the broadest access to film, video, and other audiovisual materials because they are a means for the communication of ideas. Liberty of circulation is essential to insure the constitutional guarantee of freedom of expression.
2. To protect the confidentiality of all individuals and institutions using film, video, and other audiovisual materials.
3. To provide film, video, and other audiovisual materials which represent a diversity of views and expression. Selection of a work does not constitute or imply agreement with or approval of the content.
4. To provide a diversity of viewpoints without the constraint of labeling or prejudging film, video, or other audiovisual materials on the basis of the moral, religious, or political beliefs of the producer or filmmaker or on the basis of controversial content.
5. To contest vigorously, by all lawful means, every encroachment upon the public's freedom to view.

This statement was originally drafted by the Freedom to View Committee of the American Film and Video Association (formerly the Educational Film Library Association) and was adopted by the AFVA Board of Directors in February 1979. This statement was updated and approved by the AFVA Board of Directors in 1989.

Endorsed January 10, 1990, by the ALA Council

ALA Statement on Book Censorship

The American Library Association opposes widespread efforts to censor books in U.S. schools and libraries

CHICAGO - Due to a dramatic uptick in book challenges and outright removal of books from libraries, ALA's Executive Board and the Boards of Directors for all of ALA's eight divisions have released the following joint statement regarding attempts to remove materials that focus on LGBTQIA+ issues and books by Black authors or that document the Black experience or the experiences of other BIPOC individuals:

In recent months, a few organizations have advanced the proposition that the voices of the marginalized have no place on library shelves. To this end they have launched campaigns demanding the censorship of books and resources that mirror the lives of those who are gay, queer, or transgender, or that tell the stories of persons who are Black, Indigenous or persons of color. Falsely claiming that these works are subversive, immoral, or worse, these groups induce elected and non-elected officials to abandon constitutional principles, ignore the rule of law, and disregard individual rights to promote government censorship of library collections. Some of these groups even resort to intimidation and threats to achieve their ends, targeting the safety and livelihoods of library workers, educators, and board members who have dedicated themselves to public service, to informing our communities, and educating our youth.

ALA strongly condemns these acts of censorship and intimidation.

We are committed to defending the constitutional rights of all individuals, of all ages, to use the resources and services of libraries. We champion and defend the freedom to speak, the freedom to publish, and the freedom to read, as promised by the First Amendment of the Constitution of the United States.

We stand opposed to censorship and any effort to coerce belief, suppress opinion, or punish those whose expression does not conform to what is deemed to be orthodox in history, politics, or belief. The unfettered exchange of ideas is essential to the preservation of a free and democratic society.

Libraries manifest the promises of the First Amendment by making available the widest possible range of viewpoints, opinions, and ideas, so that every person has the opportunity to freely read and consider information and ideas regardless of their content or the viewpoint of the author. This requires the professional expertise of librarians who work in partnership with their communities to curate collections that serve the information needs of all their users.

In 1953, when confronted with comparable threats to our democratic values, the American Library Association issued the Freedom to Read Statement, a declaration in support of freedom to think or believe as one chooses, the freedom to express one's thoughts and beliefs without fear or retaliation, and the right to access information without restriction. ALA's Executive Board, staff, and member leaders reaffirm not only the principles of the Freedom to Read statement but also the daily practices that ensure it continues to

inform the profession and that library workers and library trustees have the training, information, tools, and support they need to celebrate and defend their communities' right to read and to learn.

With the freedom to read under threat, the ALA, including its Executive Board, Divisions, Roundtables, and other units stand firmly with our members, the entire library community, allied organizations, and all those across this country who choose to exercise their own right to read and access information freely, and we call on others to do the same.

ALA Statement on Censorship of Information Addressing Racial Injustice, Black American History, and Diversity Education

On August 18, 2021, the American Library Association (ALA) Executive Board issued a [statement](#) opposing initiatives to censor information resources, curricula, and programs addressing racial injustice, Black American history, and diversity education. The full statement follows:

The American Library Association is committed to upholding our core values, which include equitable access to knowledge, social justice, and intellectual freedom. As members of a profession committed to free and equitable access to information and the pursuit of truth, we stand firm in opposing any effort to suppress knowledge, to label “controversial” views, or dictate what is orthodox in history, politics, or belief.

At present, efforts to censor any consideration or discussion of racism, slavery, Black American history, and related issues and concerns in our schools, colleges, and universities pose a real and present threat to libraries’ ability to fulfill their role as trusted community institutions that provide factual and accurate information that reflects the breadth of the American experience about these topics.

A commitment to intellectual freedom and social justice requires that libraries not only protect the truth from suppression, but also prevent its distortion. Consequently, the American Library Association has [joined other educational institutions and civil liberties organizations](#) in opposing any legislative proposal or local initiative intended to ban instruction, consideration, or discussion about the role of racism in the history of the United States or how systemic racism manifests itself in our schools, workplaces, and government agencies.

ALA member leaders and staff pledge to join with library workers, libraries, and state and regional library associations to oppose any proposal to censor information resources, curricula, or programs addressing racial injustice, Black American history, and diversity education. We commit to supporting libraries, library workers, schools, and universities facing these challenges and developing tools that will prepare library workers to defend their collections, counter falsehoods, and engage their communities in important conversations about racial injustice and empowering everyone to fully participate in our democratic society.

