

MEMORANDUM [ethics]
(ALA Code of Professional Ethics)

TO: Council; Executive Board; Division Presidents and Executive Directors, Committee Chairs, Round Table Chairs and Staff Liaisons; Chapter Presidents and Executive Directors; Public and Academic Adoptees of Code, Those who testified at Ethics Hearings

FROM: Jeanne Isacco, Chair, Committee on Professional Ethics

SUBJ: Draft revision of ALA Code of Professional Ethics

DATE: March 28, 1995

The Committee on Professional Ethics has just completed four years of hearings, study, comments, and soul-searching to revise the ALA Code of Professional Ethics. We are especially grateful for the numerous comments and suggestions which guided our work. Attached is the final draft of the Committee's efforts for your endorsement.

The Committee heard many suggestions from ALA members. Some believed the Code should be prescriptive and enforceable. Others believed it should be broad, leaving significant room for interpretation. "there are valid reasons for both points of view, the Committee chose the latter in its construction of this latest revision of the ALA Code.

The work on the Code has just begun. Two Divisions have already developed Interpretations of the Code for parts of their constituencies. The Committee strongly encourages ALA units to develop Interpretations of the Code to address concerns specific to their constituencies. We will be happy to work with any groups seeking to develop Interpretations.

The Committee further wants to encourage members in individual libraries to use the Code, discuss the implications of each statement in it, and adopt it as a part of their institution's practices. We are heartened by the many institutions which have adopted the existing Code.

Please forward your endorsement to the Committee on Professional Ethics, c/o Office for Intellectual Freedom, American Library Association, 50 E. Huron, Chicago, IL 60611, or e-mail Cynthia.Robinson@ala.org, by June 1. The Committee will present this document to Council for adoption at the Annual Conference in Chicago.

Thank you for your assistance and support on this project.

Jl/cr

ALA Code of Professional Ethics
Proposed Revision
2/7/95

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 Professional 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.

- I. 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.
- II. We uphold the principles of intellectual freedom and resist all efforts to censor library resources.
- III. 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.
- IV. We recognize and respect intellectual property rights.
- V. 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.
- VI. We do not advance private interests at the expense of library users, colleagues, or our employing institutions.
- VII. 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.

VIII. 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.