



ALA debuts resource on ‘Hateful Conduct in Libraries: Supporting Library Workers and Patrons’

During the recent ALA Mid-winter Meeting in Seattle, the Office for Diversity, Literacy and Outreach Services (ODLOS) and the Office for Intellectual Freedom (OIF) launched a new resource, “Hateful Conduct in Libraries: Supporting Library Workers and Patrons.”

This document, which can be found at www.ala.org/advocacy/hatefulconduct, created collaboratively by the two offices, responds to requests and inquiries by ALA members seeking to address a spike in reported hate crimes in libraries across the United States, which the two offices began tracking in 2016. Jody Gray, director for the Office for Diversity, Literacy and Outreach, and Kristin Lahurd, assistant director for Continuing Education and Literacy stated, “Since we began our partnership in looking at hate crimes in libraries, OIF and ODLOS have interwoven our missions, strengths, and expertise to ensure that library workers know and understand their legal obligations and considerations, while also being aware of and responsive to the trauma that impacts their staff and the community.”

These requests and inquiries raised

many questions regarding patron behavior as well as questions about the requirements of the First Amendment, and the “Hateful Conduct in Libraries” resource aims to address these complicated issues in a format designed to evolve in response to new controversies and changing conditions.

The “Hateful Conduct in Libraries” resource outlines best practices on how to create environments that discourage hate speech and hateful conduct in the library, example steps of what library workers should do after an incident, and how libraries can better meet community needs. This document is expected to serve as a living resource with updates from both ALA offices.

Please continue to report hate crimes in libraries at www.ala.org/tools/challengesupport/report.

Questions regarding the “Hateful Conduct in Libraries: Supporting Library Workers and Patrons” resource can be directed to the Office for Diversity, Literacy and Outreach Services at diversity@ala.org.

Questions regarding library policies and workplace speech can be directed to the Office for Intellectual Freedom at oif@ala.org.

The Office for Diversity, Literacy and Outreach Services (ODLOS) – The ALA Office for Diversity, Literacy and Outreach Services supports library and information science workers in creating responsible and all-inclusive spaces that serve and represent the entire community. To accomplish this, we de-center power and privilege by facilitating conversations around access and identity as they impact the profession and those we serve. We use a social justice framework to inform library and information science workers’ development of resources. We strive to create an association culture where these concerns are incorporated into everybody’s everyday work.

The Office for Intellectual Freedom (OIF) - The ALA Office for Intellectual Freedom is charged with implementing ALA policies concerning the concept of intellectual freedom as embodied in the Library Bill of Rights, the Association’s basic policy on free access to libraries and library materials. OIF provides guidance, information, and resources on a range of intellectual freedom subjects related to libraries and provides confidential support to anyone undergoing a material or service challenge.

Creating a job description for your library director

BY DEBRA CAPLAN

The purpose of the library director’s job description is to clearly state the scope and limits of the director’s responsibilities and authority. The description defines the qualifications and experience of the ideal candidate and forms the basis for future performance reviews.

In a rural library, the director may be the only regularly scheduled employee and may handle everything from locking the doors to paying the bills. In a large urban library, the “city librarian” or director may oversee a staff of dozens and many branches and departments.

Remember that the position does not exist in a vacuum. When writing the job description, ask for input from key constituencies (i.e. city/town administration, finance, maintenance, Friends, donors, staff, area schools, civic organizations, etc.) to arrive at the most comprehensive description possible.

A typical library director job description will contain most, if not all, of the following topic areas: a statement on the general purpose and key responsibilities of the job; responsibilities related to policy development; the director’s role in board meetings, library planning and management, budget preparation,

collection development; technology and multi-media collection and programming; library advocacy and legal issues; staff hiring and supervision; continuing education; as well as a section that addresses qualifications and experience needed and working conditions.

The description should spell out the overarching duties of the role, to whom the position reports (typically the Board of Trustees) and the number of staff reporting to the director. Under each specific area of responsibility, the description should articulate the main responsibilities. For example, relating

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Revised Library Bill of Rights interpretations adopted at Midwinter Meeting

ALA Council adopted revisions to three *Library Bill of Rights* interpretations proposed by the Intellectual Freedom Committee (IFC) at the Midwinter Meeting in Seattle. On Jan. 29, Council approved the proposed changes to “Challenged Resources,” “Prisoners’ Right to Read” and “Meeting Rooms.” To view all the *Library Bill of Rights interpretations*, visit www.ala.org/advocacy/intfreedom/librarybill/interpretations.

“I want to acknowledge and thank the IFC members, appointed liaisons and volunteers for their hard work on revising these three interpretations,” said IFC Chair Julia Warga. “I would also like to thank the library community for their thoughtful feedback during our writing process. Council’s votes to approve these interpretations reinforces the IFC’s decision to revise and update these documents.”

“Challenged Resources” was adopted by ALA Council in 1971 and amended in 1981, 1990, 2009 and 2014. The revised interpretation incorporates a footnote on the distinction between legal and extralegal actions within the text, and includes a statement on library services for students and minors.

“Prisoners’ Right to Read” — adopted in 2010 and amended in 2014 — has an expanded citation section

and a statement on library services provided to people who are incarcerated or detained, regardless of citizenship status or conviction status. The word “prisoners” throughout the text was changed to “people who are incarcerated or detained,” “people who are incarcerated” and “incarcerated people.”

“Meeting Rooms” was revised to address concerns from the library community. In August, ALA Council voted to rescind the meeting rooms interpretation adopted at the Annual Conference in New Orleans, restoring the 1991 version. The IFC formed a working group that brought multiple voices and a broad range of perspectives to the table from throughout the association to revise the document. The introduction to the interpretation references the “Resolution on Libraries as Responsible Spaces.”

“The presence and activities of some groups in public spaces, while constitutionally protected, can cause fear and discomfort in some library users and staff,” states the interpretation. “Libraries should adopt and enforce user behavior policies that protect library users and staff from harassment while maintaining their historic support for the freedom of speech.”

The IFC is also creating a meeting rooms Q&A, with questions ranging

from policy and public forum, to commercial sales and fees.

At the Midwinter Meeting, ALA Council also adopted a provision to the *Library Bill of Rights* that recognizes and defends library users’ privacy.

The three interpretation revisions and privacy article will be included in the 10th edition of the *Intellectual Freedom Manual*, edited by Martin Garnar and Trina Magi.

About the ALA Intellectual Freedom Committee

The ALA Intellectual Freedom Committee, a committee of Council, recommends policies, practices and procedures to safeguard the rights of patrons, libraries and librarians, in accordance with the First Amendment and the Library Bill of Rights.

About the ALA Office for Intellectual Freedom

The ALA Office for Intellectual Freedom is charged with implementing ALA policies concerning the concept of intellectual freedom as embodied in the Library Bill of Rights. Established in 1967, the office provides library resources on a range of intellectual freedom subjects. OIF supports the work of the Intellectual Freedom Committee.

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to responsibility for Legal Issues, Advocacy and Government Relations, the description might read: “The director must remain current on all library legal regulations; keep the board informed of any legal developments; advocate for the library through regular contact with the general public, civic organizations and public/town officials; attend and represent the library’s interests at city council and/or other city or town meetings and, work to secure adequate funds to carry out the library’s services.”

The job description format can be borrowed from other town/city departments, other libraries, or using a format that can be found on the American Li-

brary Association website, or other “job description” websites on the internet.

It is a best practice to review the director’s job description annually to reflect changing priorities. You can ask the incumbent director for input and updates to the job description. Having an up-to-date job description for your library director (as well as up-to-date descriptions for other roles in your library) creates clarity for the trustees, the librarian and all library staff.

Debra Caplan provides individuals and organizations with out-placement consulting, webinars and seminars, one-on-one coaching and management search

advisory services to municipal boards. She has worked extensively with those who care reentering the work force or changing jobs. Her services can be provided in-person or virtually and also in English or Spanish. More information can be found on her website www.dccareercoaching.com. Deb also serves as an alternate on the Peterborough (N.H.) Library Board of Trustees.

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