

ALA Committee/Taskforce Report Form to Council

TO: ALA Council

DATE: June 5, 2026

RE: *(select one)*

☐ **ACTION REQUESTED**

☐ **INFORMATION**

☒ **REPORT**

ACTION REQUESTED/INFORMATION/REPORT:

Report

Action requested from Councilors is to cast their vote to: *(if applicable)*

No action requested.

ACTION REQUESTED BY Intellectual Freedom Committee:

CONTACT PERSON: *(add chair information)*

Johannah Genett

johannahgenett@gmail.com

612 715 9620

STAFF LIAISON CONTACT:

Sarah Lamdan

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slamdan@ala.org

BACKGROUND:

ALA INTELLECTUAL FREEDOM COMMITTEE

REPORT TO COUNCIL

2026 Mid-Winter

Virtual

The ALA Intellectual Freedom Committee (IFC) is pleased to present this update of its activities since the ALA's 2026 mid-winter Council held virtually in February 2026:

Work of the Intellectual Freedom Committee

A subcommittee has created justification for intellectual freedom and the freedom to read that goes beyond the First Amendment. This statement is intended to strengthen ALA's advocacy for intellectual freedom during a time of unprecedented legal and political challenges for libraries.

Member feedback is vital to ensure the statement reflects the values and experiences of the library community. ALA membership was invited to comment on the draft statement in May of 2026. Membership provided feedback on the statement's clarity, usefulness, alignment with ALA principles, and other aspects of the statement that may guide the profession in this moment.

A new statement is needed because today's censorship efforts are broader, more coordinated, and increasingly driven by government actors. Recent court decisions

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have also weakened long-standing First Amendment protections. While *The Freedom to Read* and *Libraries: An American Value* remain foundational, they do not fully address these new realities or the need to frame library work in terms of liberty, not only access.

“Liberty and the Library” fills this gap by grounding the Freedom to Read in the broader American principle of liberty and reinforcing why libraries are essential to a free society. It is designed to supplement, not replace, existing ALA statements. The current status of the document is that the Intellectual Freedom Committee is reviewing feedback and revising the document. The document will come to Council at a future meeting in 2026 or 2027.

In other work, the committee continues to explore how it can best support rural libraries, where many intellectual challenges are being fought. Many rural library staff cannot access and use ALA resources without facing significant blowback from community members. How can we make sure these libraries have the support they need to protect intellectual freedom?

A subcommittee explored how content controls from eBook and eAudio providers are negatively impacting patrons’ freedom to read. Guidelines have been released.

Several committee members participated in the Artificial Intelligence working group to ensure that the work of the group addresses intellectual freedom.

The American Library Association informed the committee that there would be no new edition of the “A History of ALA Policy on Intellectual Freedom,” because of high cost and low demand. The committee has written a report to document changes made to policies and interpretations for the 11th edition of the “Intellectual Freedom Manual” to ensure that future committee members have the context they need to understand why and how policies and interpretations were updated. The report is available on the ALA’s website to ALA members.

The committee has worked with the Committee on Organization to clarify roles and sub-committee structure as the Intellectual Freedom Committee welcomes the former Committee on Professional Ethics as a sub-committee.

Intellectual Freedom Manual, 11th Edition

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This spring, the Intellectual Freedom Manual, 11th Edition was published. Many thanks to ALA members who contributed to the revised manual, particularly Editor Erin Jones.

Work of the Privacy Subcommittee

Since August 2025 the ALA Intellectual Freedom Committee's Privacy Subcommittee has been holding monthly meetings via Zoom, along with utilizing ALA Connect for asynchronous discussion and coordination. Per our charge, we monitored ongoing privacy developments, discussing topics like government surveillance around libraries, privacy breaches from AI vendors, and age verification as invasions of privacy.

In response to a request from the OIF, an explainer document on the potential privacy implications of IP addresses as sensitive PPI was being drafted for the Intellectual Freedom Blog. We reviewed the Privacy Field Guides website for errors and broken links; a spreadsheet of suggested changes was provided to OIF staff. We also provided feedback on the privacy components of the RFI Technology & Privacy Principals section of the ALA Policy Manual.

Members of the subcommittee have worked with members of other ALA committees including IFC and IFRT to develop the IFRT Chair's Program for ALA Annual 2026 on navigating the tension between personal beliefs and professional values in library work. Another proposal was reformatted into an IFRT webinar on the history of member-driven documents (Library Bill of Rights and Intellectual Freedom Manual). Work on publishing the findings and proceedings of the National Forum for Privacy Literacy Standards and Competencies is ongoing (subcommittee chair is a member of that working group).

BOOK CHALLENGES AND CENSORSHIP

The Office for Intellectual Freedom continues to receive reports about actual or attempted efforts to restrict or remove books, cancel programming, or end access to other library resources in schools, public libraries, and academic institutions.

From March 2026 through May 2026, OIF received 153 new reports and provided 66 instances of support. 73 of those were from public libraries, and 65 were from schools and school libraries.

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75 of the reports were book challenges, in which 294 books were challenged across 253 unique book titles.

As in past quarters, most challenged and censored books were titles including content, themes, or characters reflecting LGBTQIA+ and BIPOC identities, or that were written by LGBTQIA and BIPOC authors (53% of both total titles challenged and of unique titles challenged during this period).

All ALA members are urged to report censorship to the Office for Intellectual Freedom and share documentation of library censorship whenever possible. Reports are confidential and can be sent to oif@ala.org

OFFICE FOR INTELLECTUAL FREEDOM

The Office for Intellectual Freedom continues to prioritize confidential support for library workers, school librarians, and community members addressing book bans and other challenges in their communities, while engaging in advocacy and educational activities that respond to members' requests and uphold ALA's core values of intellectual freedom and privacy.

In the wake of increasing censorship, OIF developed new initiatives and re-started old ones, including Intellectual Freedom Helplines and Law for Librarians/Lawyers for Libraries. OIF also focused on building support through existing networks in the Banned Books Week coalition, Unite Against Book Bans, and the Right to Read Working Group. OIF is currently in the process of unifying and streamlining these various activities in order to ensure that they are bringing the most benefits to members and also providing the most opportunity for member participation, education, and empowerment. OIF is currently doing the following:

- Expanding Intellectual Freedom Helplines: Recipients of the State Intellectual Freedom Helpline grants have launched or are preparing to launch their state-level programs, and OIF is working with additional states to launch new helplines. These programs provide challenge support to library workers and community members facing intellectual freedom challenges in their state. They establish confidential challenge support for those in need of conferral, and refer cases to OIF as appropriate.

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- Continuing Law for Librarians/Lawyers for Libraries: The Law for Librarians program now has almost 200 participants and a peer coaching team to assist L4L trainers as they prepare to teach their colleagues and community members about everything from First Amendment Law to Copyright and Privacy Law topics. OIF is facilitating a symposium for law librarians and other library workers who submitted abstracts and were selected to develop and workshop their pieces. This symposium will be held at ALA headquarters in Chicago before the Annual Conference. OIF and L4L participants are also preparing a handbook containing educational materials. This resource will be completed in 2026. We are currently strategizing about how to ensure that these training opportunities continue in the years to come.
- Creating and Expanding OIF Open Access Educational Resources: OIF is exploring possibilities for updating our website, increasing our educational offerings online, and making our paywalled materials accessible to all. We hope to continue this work and provide updates throughout the upcoming year.

In closing, the Intellectual Freedom Committee would like to acknowledge and thank the unit liaisons and representatives for their commitment and contributions and also thank the OIF staff for their commitment, assistance, and hard work, with particular thanks to Sarah Lamdan for supporting the work of the committee.

Respectfully Submitted,

ALA Intellectual Freedom Committee

Johannah Genett, Chair

Glen Benedict, IFC Privacy Subcommittee Chair

Matt Beckstrom

Kim Dare

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Tiffeni Fontno

Michelle Gibeault

Sonnet Ireland

Ray James

William Marden

Amanda Sand

Lori Stockman

Kestrel Ward

Amanda Jones, Committee Associate

Justin Wasterlain, Committee Associate