

Intellectual freedom principles for academic libraries: Third draft

Prepared by the ACRL Intellectual Freedom Committee

1 The privacy of library users is sacrosanct. Policies should be in place that maintain confidentiality of library borrowing records and of other information relating to personal use of library information. These policies should embrace books borrowed, reserve items used, areas of research activity, and databases consulted. The location of some computer workstations should be planned to provide a degree of privacy.

2 The development of library collections should transcend the personal values of the selector. In the interests of research and learning, it is appropriate that collections contain materials *representing* a variety of perspectives on subjects that may be considered controversial.

3 Preservation and replacement efforts should ensure that the balance in library materials is maintained and that controversial materials are not lost to the collections through theft, loss, or normal wear and tear. Staff should be alert to efforts by special interest groups to bias a collection through systematic theft or mutilation.

4 Licensing agreements are the only legitimate reason for restricting access to databases. These agreements should not be in conflict with the Library Bill of Rights and should maximize access.

5 Only unfiltered access to the Internet should be offered in an academic library. Filtering devices are a contradiction of the academic library mission to further research and learning through exposure to the broadest possible range of information resources.

6 Freedom of information and of expression should be promoted in library exhibits and reflected in library policy documents as an essential American value.

7 Library meeting rooms and research carrels should be available to all library users regardless of research being pursued or subject being discussed. Any restrictions made necessary because of limited availability should be based on such factors as academic status and need for the space rather than on content of research or discussion.

8 Whenever possible, library services should be available without charge in order not to discourage inquiry. Where charges are essential, a free or low-cost alternative (e.g., downloading to disc rather than printing) should be available when possible.

9 A service culture should be promoted that affords equal access to information for all in the college or university community with no discrimination on the basis of race, values, sex, sexual orientation, cultural or ethnic background, religious beliefs, or views.

10 A procedure ensuring due process should be in place to deal with requests by those within and outside the college or university community for removal of library resources, exhibits, or services.

11 It is recommended that this statement of principle be endorsed by appropriate institutional governing bodies, including the faculty senate.

Developing the statement

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 general principles set forth in the Library Bill of Rights form an indispensable framework for building collections, services, and policies that serve the entire academic community. The purpose of this statement is to provide an interpretation of general intellectual freedom principles in an academic library setting and, in the process, raise consciousness of the intellectual freedom context within which academic librarians work.

ACRL's Intellectual Freedom Committee (IFC) developed two preliminary drafts of this document prior to ALA's 1999 Midwinter Meeting. At its January 30 meeting in Philadelphia, the committee adopted revisions

that will serve as the basis for review by ACRL membership.

Part of the ACRL/IFC program at the 1999 ALA Annual Conference in New Orleans will be allocated to an open hearing on this statement. The program is scheduled for Monday, June 28, 9:30-11 a.m. Prior to the hearing, Steve Herb, chair of ALA's IFC and an academic librarian, will give a presentation entitled, "Freedom, Privacy, and the Internet: an Academic Library Primer."

Members of the IFC are Laurence Miller, chair; Susan Brynteson; Jack Forman; Charlotte Hess; Keith W. Russell; Marty Stilwell; Karen Bacsanyi, intern; Jennifer S. Burr, intern.

Readers are invited to send comments and suggested revisions to Laurence Miller, chair of the ACRL Intellectual Freedom Committee, e-mail: MillerL@fiu.edu or via fax at (305) 348-3408. ■

("And the winners . . ." cont. from page 469)

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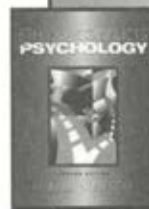
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