

2.103 Libraries: An American Value

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This statement is intended to be a companion piece to the Library Bill of Rights and the Freedom to Read Statement. Prepared for the public, its purpose is to tell them what they can expect of their libraries. It was adopted unanimously by the ALA Council at the Midwinter meeting and by the ILA Executive Board at its December meeting.

Libraries in America are cornerstones of the communities they serve. Free access to the books, ideas, resources, and information in American's libraries is imperative for education, employment, enjoyment and self-government.

Libraries are a legacy to each generation, offering the heritage of the past and the promise of the future. To ensure that libraries flourish and have the freedom to promote and protect the public good in the 21st century, we believe certain principles must be guaranteed. To that end, we affirm this contract with the people we serve:

- We defend the constitutional rights of all individuals, including children and teenagers, to use the library's resources and services;
- We value our nation's diversity and strive to reflect that diversity by providing a full spectrum of resources and services to the communities we serve;
- We affirm the responsibility and the right of all parents and guardians to guide their own children's use of the library and its resources and services;
- We connect people and ideas by helping each person select and effectively use the library's resources;
- We protect each individual's privacy and confidentiality in the use of the library resources and services;
- We protect the rights of individuals to express their opinions about library resources and services;
- We celebrate and preserve our democratic society by making available the widest possible range of viewpoints, opinions and ideas, so that all individuals have the opportunity to become lifelong learners – informed, literate, educated, and culturally enriched.
- Change is constant; but these principles transcend change and endure in a dynamic technological, social and political environment.

By embracing these principles, libraries in the United States can contribute to a future that values and protects freedom of speech, in a world that celebrates both our similarities and our differences, respects individuals and their beliefs, and holds all persons truly equal and free.