

**Committee on Professional Ethics**  
**REPORT TO COUNCIL**

2020 Virtual Council Meeting

As chair of the Committee on Professional Ethics (COPE), I am pleased to report on the committee's activities since the 2020 Midwinter Meeting in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

**Charge**

The council Committee on Professional Ethics shall augment the *Code of Ethics* ([ala.org/tools/ethics](http://ala.org/tools/ethics)) by explanatory interpretations and additional statements, prepared by this committee or elicited from other units of ALA. When units of the association develop statements dealing with ethical issues, a copy will be sent to the committee on professional ethics for review so that it may be compared to the existing ALA *Code of Ethics* in order to determine whether or not conflicts occur.

**Forward Together Response**

Members of the (o)-5e.817(-2.66)725(-2.8(o)-537(-2.66)-502(s)-0.96417(s)-0.96417)1.817(o)



guide the work of librarians, other professionals providing information services, library trustees and library staffs.” To this end, COPE relies on the time and energy devoted by liaisons of divisions, round tables, and affiliates. Thank you to Nancy Bolt (ASGCLA Liaison); Gina Seymour (YALSA Liaison); Elizabeth Shoemaker (ALCTS Liaison); Jill Sordt (ACRL Liaison); Brian Wilson (ALSC Liaison); Carrie Willson (PLA Liaison); and Eboni Henry (ALA Executive Board Liaison).

Sonja Eyer  
Sarah Houghton  
Alexia Hudson-Ward  
Stephen Matthews  
Hilda Weisburg  
Ellen Spring (Committee Associate)  
Rachel Turner (Committee Associate)

## Committee on Professional Ethics and Intellectual Freedom Committee's Letter Addressing Forward Together Recommendations

May 14, 2020  
ALA Committee on Organization  
Chair, James G. Neal

Dear Chairperson Neal and members of ALA's Committee on Organization:

We are writing to express concern about the lack of a standing committee to address issues and topics of importance involving professional ethics, intellectual freedom, and privacy in the Forward Together recommendations. As

The work these committees do is important. They monitor and respond to ongoing intellectual freedom and privacy developments in libraries, including technology, politics, legislation, and social trends. They also ensure that the association's statements concerning intellectual freedom, privacy, and ethics remain current and responsive to the needs of the profession. For example, within the past year, the Library Bill of Rights, one of our profession's most important statements of our core values, was amended to include a new article that codifies Privacy as a core right. ALA's Code of Ethics was also re-evaluated, a regular practice that ensures our values remain grounded in the experiences of libraries and library workers. The Forward Together leadership structure gives no clear direction of how this work would get done or who will be charged with the responsibility for these foundational documents, along with their various interpretations and accompanying documents, that guide the practices of library workers.

Hot-button issues for libraries that generate media attention and social media debates seem more often than not to involve intellectual freedom issues. Recent examples include anti-transgender rights groups using public library meeting rooms, controversies involving drag queen storytimes, facial recognition technology being implemented in schools, and legislation designed to impair library workers' ability to develop diverse collections and allow the censorship of library collections and programs. For ALA leadership to best be prepared to mobilize and respond to such issues effectively, there should be a standing committee to ensure expertise in intellectual freedom issues within the ALA leadership structure.

We recognize the need for change in ALA governance structure and appreciate the amount of time, energy, and thought that SCOE has put into its recommendations and that COO is currently undertaking. Aligning ALA structures and reducing the financial footprint will allow leadership to better address the needs of the profession. ( )-2.97(g)-502(n)-502(i)Ed.6602(b)-502617y64(o)-5794(r)27a2(t)

Sincerely,

Andrew Harant  
Chair, Committee on Professional Ethics

Julia Warga  
Chair, Intellectual Freedom Committee

Cc: Wanda Brown, ALA President  
Julius Jefferson, ALA President-Elect  
Patty Wong, incoming ALA President-Elect  
Tracie Hall, ALA Executive Director  
ALA Executive Board  
ALA Committee on Professional Ethics  
ALA Intellectual Freedom Committee