

Committee on Professional Ethics
REPORT TO COUNCIL

2020 Midwinter Meeting – Philadelphia, PA

As chair of the Committee on Professional Ethics (COPE), I am pleased to report on the committee's activities since the 2019 Annual Conference in Washington, D.C.

Charge

The council committee on professional ethics shall augment the Code of 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.

Intellectual Freedom Manual

The 10th edition of the Intellectual Freedom Manual, edited by Martin Garnar and Trina Magi, is planned to be published at the end of 2020 by ALA Editions. COPE started its work of reviewing the *Code of Ethics of the American Library Association* and updating corresponding documents in February 2018. The committee revised the Copyright Interpretation and four Q&As, which will be considered for inclusion in the new edition along with an in-depth essay on copyright and the law.

Programs

The Committee on Professional Ethics is planning a program for the 2020 PLA Conference in Nashville, titled "What Would You Do? Ethical Issues in Public Libraries." Through scenarios involving patron behavior, controversial programming, and diversity in collection development, panelists Sara Dallas and Maria McCauley will lead the audience in discussing ethical issues and applying the *Code of Ethics* to real-life situations.

COPE is cosponsoring three events at the 2020 ALA Annual Conference in Chicago: the Intellectual Freedom Round Table Breakfast and Awards program; the IFRT program “Intellectual Freedom, Hate Speech, the First Amendment, and You”; and the Intellectual Freedom Committee program “Practical Applications of the Interpretations of the ALA Library Bill of Rights.” Members of the COPE will speak to professional ethics in the latter two programs.

Forward Together Response

Members of the Committee on Professional Ethics, the Intellectual Freedom Committee, and the Intellectual Freedom Round Table have expressed concern about the lack of a standing committee to address issues and topics of importance addressing professional ethics, intellectual freedom, and privacy in the Forward Together recommendations. Many expressed a belief that the decision suggests that professional values are no longer viewed as a core value or core function of the association or the library profession. COPE Chair Andy Harant and IFC Chair Julia Warga will be creating specific recommendations on how professional values can be incorporated into the future proposal for ALA.

Members of COPE recognize the need for change in ALA governance structure and appreciate the amount of time, energy, and thought that the Steering Committee on Organizational Effectiveness has put into its recommendations. Aligning ALA structures and reducing the financial footprint will allow leaders to implement a vision for a reimagined association as outlined in the *Code of Ethics of the American Library Association* (ala.org/tools/ethics) to “strive for excellence in the profession by maintaining and enhancing our own knowledge and skills, by encouraging the professional development of co-workers, and by fostering the aspirations of potential members of the profession.” As we move forward together through this process, we must also endeavor to “treat co-workers and other colleagues with respect, fairness, and good faith.”

Professional Ethics Liaisons

Stephen Matthews served as COPE's liaison to the ALA Intellectual Freedom Committee. He has actively raised ethical issues and concerns in email conversations, in comments on documents, and in virtual and in-person IFC meetings.

The opening line of the *Code of Ethics of the American Library Association* states, "As members of the American Library Association, we recognize the importance of codifying and making known to the profession and to the general public the ethical principles that 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 Sodt (ACRL Liaison); Carrie Willson (PLA Liaison); and Eboni Henry (ALA Executive Board Liaison).

COPE is seeking additional liaisons to assist in crafting resources, developing and presenting programs, providing feedback on documents and professional ethics concerns, and sharing updates from their particular group. Please see the COPE roster to view the list of representatives (ala.org/groups/committees/ala/ala-profethic). Those interested can contact COPE Chair Andy Harant at aharant@cuyahogalibrary.org.

Thank You

The Committee on Professional Ethics thanks the OIF staff for their commitment, assistance, and hard work. COPE thanks President Wanda Brown and the Executive Board for their confidence in the committee and for allowing them to serve ALA.

Respectfully Submitted,

ALA Committee on Professional Ethics

Andrew Harant (Chair)
Miranda Bennett
Sonja Eyer
Sarah Houghton

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