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The American Library Association's Core Values articulate the profession's principles and highest aspirations. They guide and unite library workers, including staff, volunteers, trustees, advocates, and others who contribute their talents, expertise, and dedication to furthering the library mission.

The Core Values uplift and support other foundational documents, the Library Bill of Rights, the Code of Ethics, and Libraries: An American Value. These foundational documents represent the common ground upon which we can build policies, make decisions, set goals, and prioritize actions to bring equitable library access to all users. The Core Values describe the rights we seek to protect and the ethical guidelines we look to for direction.

Our Core Values are for the people who make libraries work, not the buildings they reside in or the American Library Association itself. They declare a shared set of ideals and professionalism that unites and motivates library workers, volunteers, trustees, and advocates throughout the nation.

Access

Access provides opportunities for everyone in the community to obtain library resources and services with minimal disruption. Library workers create systems that ensure members of their community can freely access the information they need for learning, growth, and empowerment regardless of technology, format, or delivery methods.

Equity

Library workers play a crucial role in fostering equity by actively working to dismantle barriers and create spaces that are accessible, welcoming, and beneficial for all. This is accomplished by recognizing and addressing systemic barriers, biases, and inequalities to create inclusive library environments where everyone can benefit from the library's offerings and services.

Intellectual Freedom and Privacy

Intellectual freedom empowers people to think for themselves and to make informed decisions while respecting each individual's dignity and independence. Library workers encourage people to cultivate curiosity and form ideas by questioning the world and accessing information from diverse viewpoints and formats without restrictions or censorship. The right to privacy is a crucial safeguard to this freedom, ensuring everyone has the right to develop their thoughts and opinions free of surveillance.

Public Good

Public good is working to improve society and protect the rights to education, literacy, and intellectual freedom. Libraries are an essential public good and are fundamental institutions in democratic societies. Library workers provide the highest service levels to create informed, connected, educated, and empowered communities.

Sustainability

Sustainability means making choices that are good for the environment, make sense economically, and treat everyone equitably. Sustainable choices preserve physical and digital resources and keep services useful now and into the future. By supporting climate resiliency, library workers create thriving communities and care for our common good for a better tomorrow.¹

¹ “ALA Task Force on United Nations 2030 Sustainable Development Goals,” ALA, accessed November 28, 2023, <https://www.ala.org/aboutala/ala-task-force-united-nations-2030-sustainable-development-goals>.