

Core Values Interpretations Working Group: Public Good Report to ALA Council  
January 2026

The Core Values Interpretations Working Group: Public Good is pleased to present to ALA Council its completed work to be considered for adoption. Work on this interpretation began in July 2024. Thanks to the six-month extension granted by Council, the committee was able to accomplish its charge.

The working group started with 10 members with a wide variety of library experiences and backgrounds represented, including academic librarians, public librarians, United for Libraries members, and an ALA staff liaison. One member was unable to continue with the working group after the first few meetings.

The working group conducted sessions with thorough discussions and comprehensive editing to produce the result. All sessions were held on Zoom and were recorded. Google Docs were used for all planning and drafting. The working group reviewed all of the [Core Values of Librarianship](#) and foundational documents, including, [Library Bill of Rights](#), [ALA Code of Ethics](#), and [Libraries: An American Value](#). Working groups members referred to other interpretations and the [Intellectual Freedom Manual Style Guide](#) for guidance.

Since this working group's report to Council in June 2025, it circulated its draft to related ALA committees, divisions, and roundtables on two separate occasions. The working group reviewed all feedback and revised its draft accordingly.

The working group feels that the interpretation presented to Council is a clear statement in support of the Core Value. We respectfully ask that you adopt this interpretation.

Thank you for your consideration.

Members of the Core Values Interpretations Working Group: Public Good  
Jessica Brangiel, Maura Deedy, Skip Dye, Andrew Harant (chair), Eldon (Ray) James, Megan Janicki (ALA staff liaison), Matthew Noe, Natalie Taylor, Julia Warga

**PROPOSED DRAFT**  
**ALA Core Value Interpretation for Public Good**  
**December 18, 2025**

A public good is generally defined as a commodity or service that is provided without profit to all members of a society, either by the government or a private individual or organization, for the benefit or well-being of that society. A public good has two distinct aspects. First, that the commodity or service is available to everyone, even if they have not paid for it. Second, that the use of the commodity or service by one person does not reduce its availability for others.

Libraries are a public good as they offer library services without profit and are equally available to everyone in their communities. This applies to all types of libraries—public, school, academic, and special—regardless of how they are funded.

As a public good, Libraries promote equity, access, and participation. They responsibly use funding to serve their communities and uphold democratic values by supporting an informed citizenry.

Library workers, supported by governance, advocates, and collaborators, strive to improve the quality of life in their communities. They deliver top-quality service to all users through well-organized resources, fair policies, equitable access, and unbiased, courteous responses ([ALA Code of Ethics](#)). Library workers strive to remove biases, address inequity and oppression, promote diversity and inclusion, and further racial and social justice through advocacy, education, collaboration, and resource allocation ([ALA Code of Ethics](#)).

These efforts help build informed, connected, and empowered communities, and protect the following rights of every individual in their communities:

- Education—Everyone has the right to education as stated in Article 26 of the [United Nations Declaration of Human Rights](#).
- Literacy—the ability to identify, understand, interpret, create, communicate and compute, using printed and written materials associated with varying contexts. Literacy involves a continuum of learning in enabling individuals to achieve their goals, to develop their knowledge and potential, and to participate fully in their community and wider society. ([ALA Committee on Literacy's adopted definition](#))
- Intellectual Freedom—the right of every individual to both seek and receive information from all points of view without restriction. It provides for free access

to all expressions of ideas through which any and all sides of a question, cause or movement can be explored. ([ALA's definition](#))

Libraries are vital community spaces. They may offer a place of refuge in recognition of the inherent dignity and of the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family.

Libraries were established to enhance access to information, education, and civic engagement. They foster informed citizens and support participatory governance through life-long learning as well as spaces for community members to engage with each other, the community as a whole, and the wider world.

*Motion: that ALA Council approves the Public Good Core Values Interpretation as outlined in Council Document #35.*