

UNDERSTANDING LIBRARY VALUES

Libraries operate according to a set of principles articulated by the ALA Core Values of Librarianship. This resource is to help our board members better understand library core values so that they may better support the work of librarians. The core values are reproduced below in italics, with our own interpretation of them below the italic text.

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.

This core value motivates library workers to create welcoming libraries, support the accessibility needs of patrons such as magnification tools and accessible buildings, offer evening and weekend open hours, and provide a diverse array of materials, programs, and services. This core value is why many library workers oppose things like late fines for overdue materials, labeling of LGBTQ material (labeling may be a deterrent to access because it has the possibility to “out” someone), and codes of conduct which are overly punitive.

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.

This core value is related to the value of access, but more explicitly recognizing the systemic injustices that create barriers to accessibility. This core value reminds us to lift up those patrons who have been excluded in society, and create library services that support them directly. At their best, libraries offer diverse collections relevant to all walks of life, and are particularly supportive of the information needs of marginalized people.



