

Report on NJLA's Core Values

April 2019

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Introduction

In late 2016, ALA issued a press release "highlighting how libraries can advance specific policy priorities of the incoming Trump administration." (<https://litwinbooks.com/the-ala-press-release-that-was-taken-down-on-1119/>) After the resulting controversy, members of the NJLA Executive Board agreed this was a crucial time to clarify and publicize the organization's shared beliefs. Subsequent discussion culminated in the release of an NJLA Statement on Inclusion, approved by the Intellectual Freedom Subcommittee, Public Policy Committee, and Executive Board in February 2017. This positive statement of our values remains posted at <https://njla.org/content/njla-statement-inclusion>

To continue the conversations and advance the work surrounding the writing of the Statement on Inclusion, during the 2017 NJLA Conference incoming President Michael Maziekien asked NJLA member and former executive board member Julie Tozer to co-chair a Task Force on NJLA's Core Values. The process of the Task Force's work is recorded below.

Rather than prescribe or recommend values to NJLA and its members, the Task Force sought to capture NJLA's values at this moment in time. The Task Force is particularly interested in the gaps between how survey respondents report perceiving NJLA's values as an association and how they report their own values as library staff, which suggests there is rich ground for further discussion of how the organization should prioritize its work and so express its values.

This report includes a list of NJLA's core values as discerned through the work of the Task Force, a narrative of the Task Force's process, recommendations from the Task Force to NJLA leadership, and several appendices.

Core Values of the New Jersey Library Association

- **Access:** we strive to provide equal access to a variety of materials in all formats and make information both findable and accessible to all people whenever it is needed.
- **Civic engagement:** we seek to deepen connections to service areas and improve the quality of life in our communities by actively listening to community concerns, partnering with fellow community organizations to achieve shared goals, and spending time beyond library walls.
- **Education and lifelong learning:** we recognize all libraries as hubs for people of all ages to connect with, create, and share knowledge.
- **Equity, diversity and inclusion:** we welcome, engage, and reflect all people in our communities through programming, collections, services, and staffing.
- **Healthy workplaces:** we embrace the need for libraries as institutions to care for and support library workers, reflecting librarianship as a caring profession.
- **Integrity and trustworthiness:** we hold ourselves to the highest ethical standards and operate our institutions in a transparent and open manner.
- **Intellectual freedom:** we advocate for the First Amendment rights of all library users to freely, equitably, and confidentially read, research, question, speak, and access information.
- **Preservation and stewardship:** we support the maintenance of local history and culture, and support libraries as fiscally sound, taxpayer-funded organizations working in the public interest.
- **Privacy and confidentiality:** we protect the right to open inquiry without having an interest examined or scrutinized, and we keep personally identifiable information private on behalf of all users.
- **Public good:** we empower communities by providing information, services, and support to all community members in an open, equal, and equitable manner.
- **Social responsibility:** we prioritize programming, collection development, services, information, knowledge, and staffing that solves problems and builds community.

Respectfully submitted to the NJLA Executive Board, February 2019

The Core Values Task Force's Process

- A call for task force interest was issued in May 2017. NJLA President and Core Values Co-Chair Michael Maziekien, NJLA Past President Chris Carbone, and Task Force Co-Chair Julie Tozer selected task force members in July 2017. (See Appendix C.)
- We started with a series of in-person meetings in September, November, and December 2017.
- We confirmed our definition of core values:
 - Intrinsic beliefs
 - Deeply held
 - Deeply defended
 - Personal / professional (continued conversation on this point)
- We created a resource list to park our library-world instinct to only/first research our way out of a problem. (See Appendix B.)
- Out of our initial meetings and subsequent work via email and Adobe Connect, we created a “long list” of values based on discussion and reading and began to generate recommendations to NJLA for future work around values and task forces.
- To refine and focus our list, we held a session at the annual NJLA conference in May 2018, including updates, discussion, and live survey of the audience.
- After post-conference discussion and review of some NJLA Executive Board minutes, we determined it would be useful and relevant to ask what NJ library staff define as their own core values and what they perceive to be NJLA's core values.
- We gathered additional feedback via the July 2018 NJLA leadership orientation, where Chelsea Woods-Turner asked attendees to list what they viewed as NJLA values and what their own values (thank you, Chelsea).
- Finally, we worked with the Strategic Planning Survey Team to gather our last round of input via including these questions in their November 2018 survey (thank you, Nancy Weiner and Leah Wagner). (See Appendix A.)

Recommendations to NJLA Leadership

- In response to the core values questions on the strategic plan survey, there were striking differences in how individual library staff report their own values and how they perceive NJLA's values (see Appendix A). Note these differences and explore what they mean -- how might the differences move the organization's work?
- Undertake a demographic study of the organization's membership and the statewide library community. Determine who receives financial support from their workplaces for NJLA membership, conference, and other activities.
- Remove financial barriers to entry to NJLA task force/committee work. Explore reimbursement for travel to meeting attendance (mileage and tolls or a flat rate for each attendees), conference registration discount or sliding scale, and other means.
- Provide ongoing opportunities to review and revisit the organization's core values. The work of this task force is groundwork; it captures where we are now. Values necessarily evolve over time and as the organization becomes more diverse, inclusive, and equitable. A list of core values should be a living document that can include aspirational values and questions. What can be done structurally to trigger revision/review of core values on a regular/ongoing basis?
- Improve communication within the organization, including building capacity to support an association-wide email list for discussion as well as for distribution of information from leadership, and widely posting/publicizing meeting agendas, minutes (especially those of the Executive Board), and contact information.

Appendix A

NJLA Strategic Plan Task Force Survey Question Results

(Shaded categories indicate the more significant gaps between how survey respondents report perceiving NJLA's values as an association and how they report their own values as library staff.)

Survey Question: "From this list, please select the four words or phrases that best represent..."

	...NJLA's core values. (Q20)	...your Core Values as a library worker. (Q21)
Access	124	118
Civic engagement	60	59
Education & lifelong learning	183	155
Equity, diversity & inclusion	92	120
Healthy workplaces	29	41
Integrity & trustworthiness	34	88
Intellectual freedom	123	75
Preservation & stewardship	37	19
Privacy & confidentiality	59	62
Public good	138	134
Social responsibility	63	73

Appendix B

NJLA Core Values Resource List

Research by the Task Force into how to proceed with this process.

1. NJLA

NJLA Statement on Inclusion - 2/21/17

<https://www.njla.org/content/njla-statement-inclusion>

NJLA Constitution & Bylaws

<https://njla.org/content/njla-constitution-and-bylaws>

“II. OBJECT

A. The purposes for which this corporation is formed are to advance the standards of librarianship in New Jersey; to protect the professional interests of the members of the Association including the establishment of sound personnel practices and the principles of intellectual freedom; to promote the progress and welfare of all types of libraries in this State; to promote library science and to grant scholarships in connection therewith; to encourage the use of libraries for educational, scientific, and literary purposes; and to engage in such other educational, charitable, scientific, and literary enterprises as the membership may elect from time to time.”

2. ALA

ALA - Core Values of Librarianship - Adopted June, 29, 2004, by the ALA Council

<http://www.ala.org/advocacy/intfreedom/corevalues>

ALA Council Rescinds “Meeting Rooms: An Interpretation of The Library Bill of Rights” - 8/16/18

<https://americanlibrariesmagazine.org/blogs/the-scoop/ala-council-rescinds-meeting-rooms-interpretation-library-bill-rights/>

ALA and affiliates issue joint statement on libraries and equity, diversity and inclusion - 8/3/17

<http://www.ala.org/news/press-releases/2017/08/ala-and-affiliates-issue-joint-statement-libraries-and-equity-diversity-and>

The American Library Association, The American Indian Library Association, Asian Pacific American Librarians Association, Black Caucus of the American Library Association, Chinese American Librarians Association,

REFORMA (The National Association to Promote Library & Information Services to Latinos and the Spanish Speaking) and the Joint Council of Librarians of Color issued a joint statement on equity, diversity, and inclusion.

ALA President-Elect Loida Garcia: Holding On To ALA's Core Values - 5/4/17

<http://lj.libraryjournal.com/2017/05/interviews/ala-president-elect-loida-garcia-febo-holding-on-to-alas-core-values/#>

ALA opposes new administration policies that contradict core values - 1/30/17

<http://linkis.com/www.ala.org/news/pre/4nEd1>

Interrogating the American Library Association's Core Values Statement - 1/31/13

<http://lj.libraryjournal.com/2013/01/opinion/peer-to-peer-review/interrogating-the-american-library-associations-core-values-statement-peer-to-peer-review/>

3. Core Values of other organizations

SLA Vision, Mission, and Core Values Statement

<https://www.sla.org/about-sla/vision-mission-core-values/>

Philly Cam Mission & Values

<https://phillycam.org/mission>

4. Values-related commentary

SLJ Editors Respond to DACA Decision - 9/6/17

<http://www.slj.com/2017/09/opinion/slj-editors-respond-daca-decision/>

Libraries Are Not Neutral - 8/12/16

<http://www.slj.com/2016/08/opinion/libraries-are-not-neutral-opinion/>

Vocational Awe? - 5/30/17

<https://fobaziettarh.wordpress.com/2017/05/30/vocational-awe/>

Tells, Safety & The Tenets of the Profession - 7/13/17

<http://brycedontplay.blogspot.com/2017/07/tells-safety-and-tenets-of-profession.html?m=1>

Our Path to Engagement, Learning and Stewardship: The Oak Park Public Library, the American Library Association, and the Harwood Institute - 5/9/17
<http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/01616846.2017.1312194> (paywall)

Less Is Not More: Rejecting resilience narratives for library workers - 11/1/17
By Meredith Farkas
<https://americanlibrariesmagazine.org/2017/11/01/resilience-less-is-not-more/>

Interrogating the American Library Association’s “Core Values” Statement | Peer to Peer Review - 1/31/13
http://lj.libraryjournal.com/2013/01/opinion/peer-to-peer-review/interrogating-the-american-library-associations-core-values-statement-peer-to-peer-review/#_

Cambridge Public Library Policy Regarding Hate Speech - undated
<https://www.cambridgema.gov/~media/Files/cambridgepubliclibrary/aboutus/Policies/policyregardinghatespeech.pdf?la=en>

Free Speech vs Hate Speech from Skokie Public Library’s Blog - 6/30/17
<https://skokielibrary.info/blog/116/free-speech-vs-hate-speech/>

Skokie Public Library’s Culture Statement - undated
<https://skokielibrary.info/about/staff/culture/>

On Racism, Ignorance, and Librarianship by R. David Lankes - 8/13/17
<https://davidlankes.org/on-racism-ignorance-and-librarianship/>

Ugly Beliefs, Free Speech, and Libraries by David Lee King - 8/31/17
<https://www.davidleeking.com/ugly-beliefs-free-speech-and-libraries/>

Appendix C

Core Values Task Force Members

Colleen Affrime, Youth Services Librarian, Ocean County Library, Jackson Branch

Theresa Agostinelli, Reference & Instruction Librarian, Middlesex County College, and Adjunct Librarian, Brookdale Community College

John Arthur, Director, Englewood Public Library (previously: Director, Metuchen Public Library)

Sophie Brookover, Program Coordinator & Social Media Manager, LibraryLinkNJ

Mary DeNunzio, Head of Children's Services, Upper Saddle River Library

Kerry Falloon, Acquisition Librarian, CUNY-CSI

Carina Gonzalez, Adult Services Librarian, Somerset County Library System (previously: Outreach Librarian, Raritan Valley Community College)

Andrea Levandowski, Project Manager for Small Business, New Jersey State Library

Laverne Mann, Director, Cherry Hill Public Library

Michael Maziekien, Director, Cranford Public Library

Eileen Palmer, Executive Director, LMxAC

Lilia Pavlovsky, Associate Teaching Professor and Director, MI Program, Rutgers University

Samantha Rice, Librarian for Acquisitions & Serials, Gardner A. Sage Library

Rebecca Sandoval Sloat, Technical Services Manager, Somerset County Library

Dale Spindel, Director, Springfield Free Public Library

Julie Tozer, Branch Manager, Camden County Library, Nilsa Cruz-Perez Downtown Branch