

2016-2017 ALA CD 19.10  
2017 ALA Midwinter Meeting

### **Resolution on Access To Accurate Information**

In 2005, Council adopted the resolution on Disinformation, Media Manipulation & the Destruction of Public Information, which presciently recognized the growing problem of disinformation and its impact on access to public information and civic discourse. Because of a growing trend over the past several years of not only information disappearing from the public domain, but also actual disinformation propagated across multiple media platforms, the committee felt this resolution should be reaffirmed and updated to reflect the current media environment.

#### **ACTION ITEM**

The Intellectual Freedom Committee moves the adoption of the following action item: CD # 19.10, Resolution on Access to Accurate Information.

### **RESOLUTION ON ACCESS TO ACCURATE INFORMATION**

Whereas the American Library Association recognizes the contribution of librarianship in informing and educating the general public on critical problems facing society (Policy, A.1.1);

Whereas the mission of ALA is to provide leadership for the development, promotion, and improvement of library and information services and the profession of librarianship in order to enhance learning and ensure access to information for all (Policy A.1.2);

Whereas ALA has as one of its officially stated goals that it is the leading advocate for the public's right to a free and open information society (Policy A.1.3);

Whereas ALA opposes any use of governmental power to suppress the free and open exchange of knowledge and information (Policy B.8.5.1);

Whereas in 2005 ALA adopted a Resolution on Disinformation, Media Manipulation and the Destruction of Public Information (2004-2005 ALA CD #64);

Whereas inaccurate information, distortions of truth, deliberate deceptions, excessive limitations on access and the removal or destruction of information in the public domain are anathema to the ethics of librarianship and to the functioning of a healthy democracy;

Whereas some governments, organizations, and individuals use disinformation in pursuit of political or economic advantage to thwart the development of an informed citizenry;

Whereas the exponential growth in the use of disinformation and media manipulation constitutes a critical problem facing our society and includes:

the distribution of "fake news" via websites, social media, and traditional media under the guise of independent journalism;

the increased potency of disinformation due to the confirmation bias effect of personalized newsfeeds, social media sharing, and web search algorithms (i.e. the filter bubble);

propaganda campaigns and cyberwarfare operations conducted by governments and non-state actors to influence or disrupt the domestic affairs of adversaries;  
the use of paid political partisans as commentators and analysts on news networks and publications; the rise of branded content that are advertisements masquerading under the guise of legitimate reporting in many publications;  
the suppression or removal of scientific studies and data that disagree with possible policy positions, for example, the human effects on climate change;  
the removal of public information from U.S. depository libraries and the libraries of government agencies;  
the unreasonable delay or denial of public records and Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) requests and heightened assaults on constitutional rights under the guise of national security;  
attacks on the reputation of news organizations and intimidation of journalists; and

Whereas freedom of the press and freedom of speech is protected by the First Amendment of the United States Constitution and affirmed by the United Nations' Universal Declaration of Human Rights;

Whereas access to accurate information, not censorship, is the best way to counter disinformation and media manipulation; now, therefore, be it

Resolved, the American Library Association reaffirms the resolution on Disinformation, Media Manipulation and the Destruction of Public Information approved in 2005 (2005 ALA CD #64).

Resolved, ALA opposes the use of disinformation, media manipulation, and other tactics that undermine access to accurate information;

Resolved, ALA encourages its members to help raise public consciousness regarding the many ways in which disinformation and media manipulation are used to mislead the public;

Resolved, ALA urges librarians and library workers to actively seek and provide sources of accurate information that counter disinformation;

Resolved, ALA supports the critical role public, academic, and school librarians in teaching information literacy skills that enable users to locate information and evaluate its accuracy;

Resolved, ALA will pursue partnerships with news organizations, journalism institutions, and other allies to promote access to accurate information and defend the role of journalists and the free press in American society.

Mover: Intellectual Freedom Committee

Endorsed in Principle by the Intellectual Freedom Round Table

Passed by Council, January 2017