

How Libraries Protect Intellectual Freedom

Remarks for the Working Group on the Status of Libraries in Vermont


Trina Magi, Library Professor, University of Vermont *

April 21, 2023

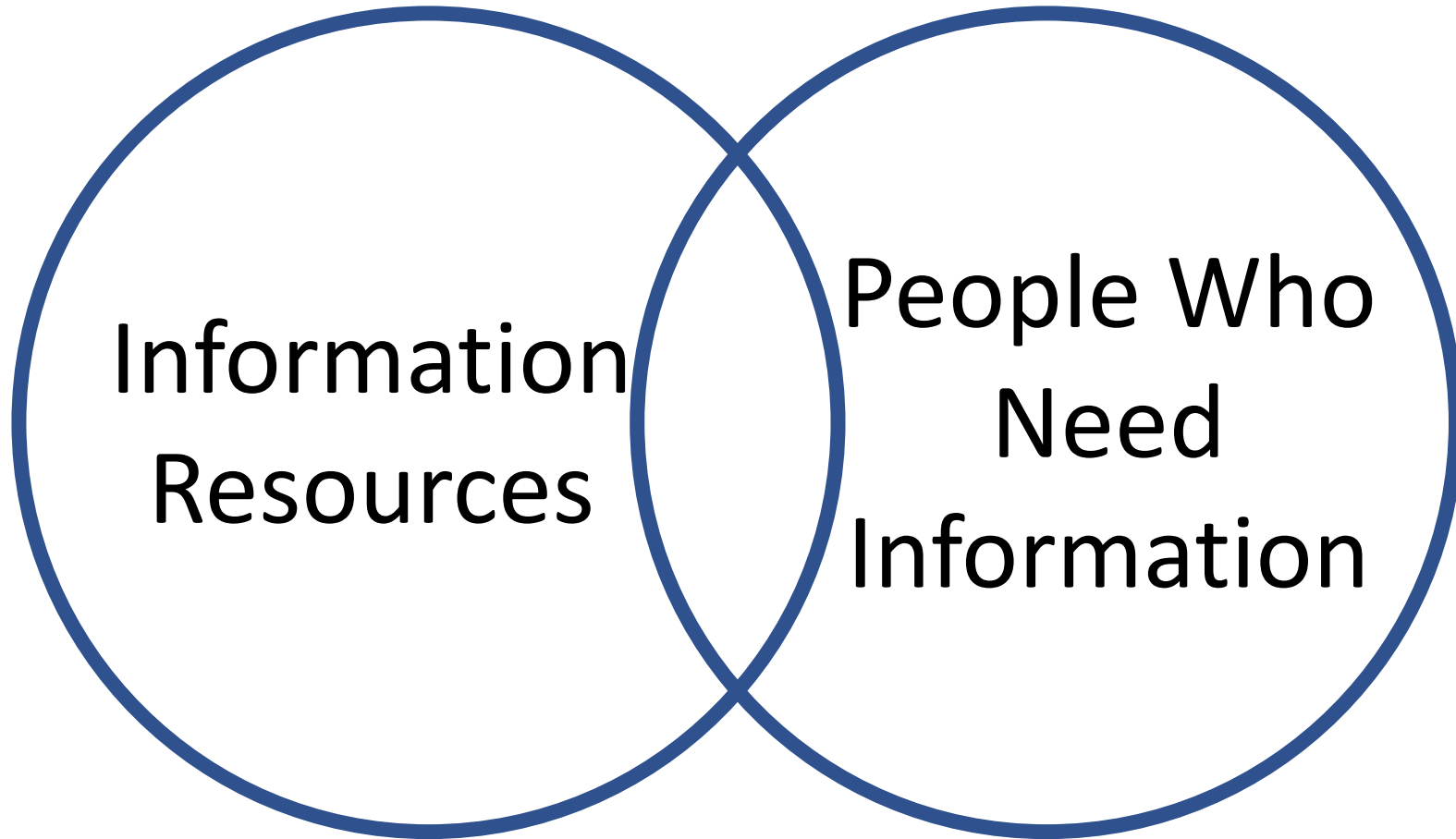
** These views are my own. I am not speaking for the university*



Information
Resources



People Who
Need
Information



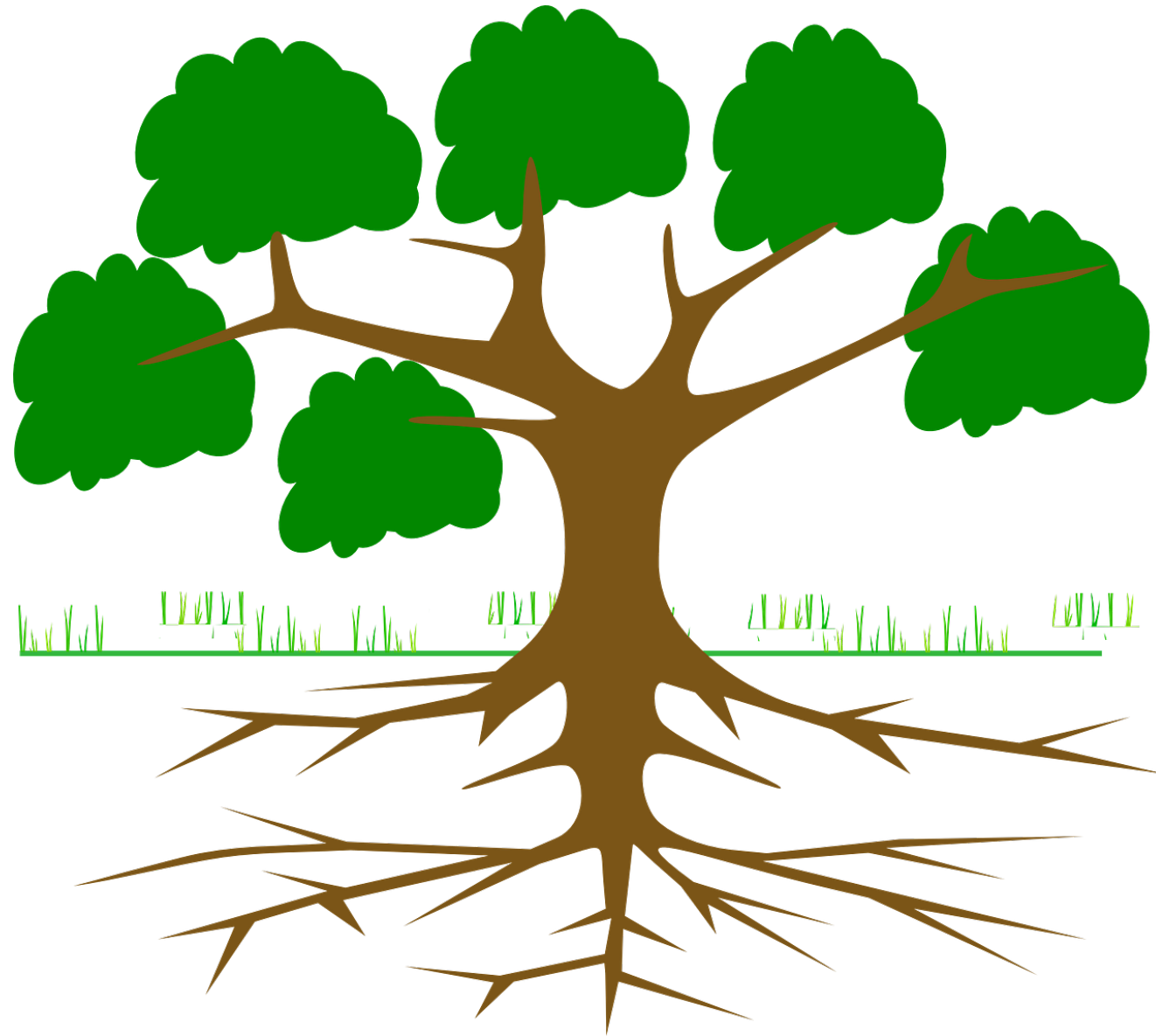


Intellectual freedom is. . .

“. . .the right of every individual to both seek and receive information from all points of view without restriction.”

Barbara Jones

Former director, American Library Association Office for Intellectual Freedom







Arthur Bostwick
President of the American
Library Association, 1908

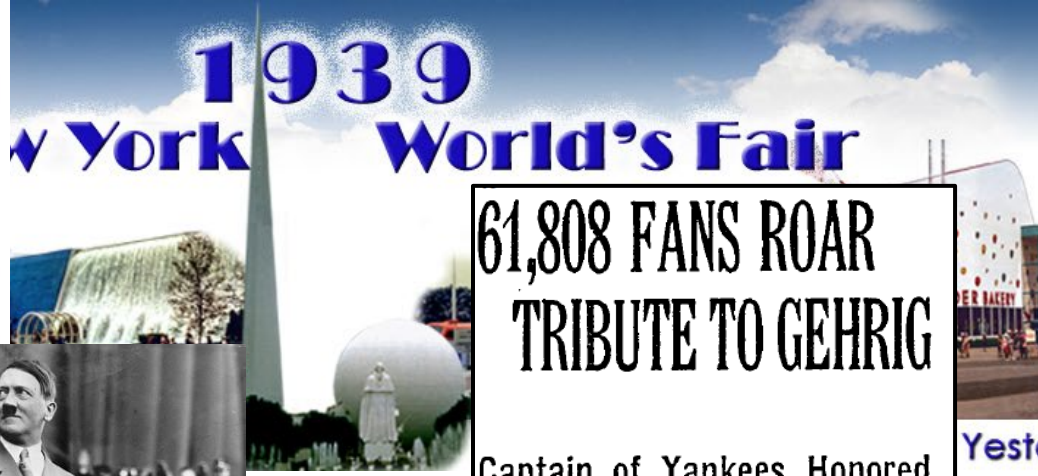
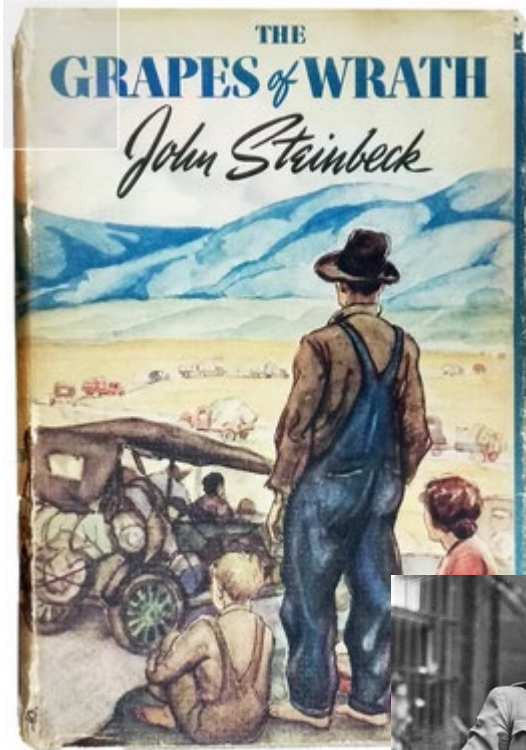
“. . .It is in this way that the librarian has become a **censor** of literature.”



“Books that distinctly commend what is wrong, that teach how to sin and how pleasant sin is, sometimes with and sometimes without the added sauce of impropriety, are increasingly popular, tempting the author to imitate them, the publishers to produce, the bookseller to exploit.”

“Thank Heaven they do not tempt the librarian.”

1939



61,808 FANS ROAR TRIBUTE TO GEHRIG

Captain of Yankees Honored
at Stadium—Calls Himself
'Luckiest Man Alive'

By JOHN DREBINGER

In perhaps as colorful and dramatic a pageant as ever was enacted on a baseball field, 61,808 fans thundered a hail and farewell to Henry Lou Gehrig at the Yankee Stadium yesterday.

To be sure, it was a holiday and there would have been a big crowd and plenty of roaring in any event. For the Yankees, after getting nosed out 3 to 2 in the opening

Yesterday

Library Bill of Rights

The American Library Association affirms that all libraries are forums for information and ideas, and that the following basic policies should guide their services.

- I. Books and other library resources should be provided for the interest, information, and enlightenment of all people of the community the library serves. Materials should not be excluded because of the origin, age, background, or views of those contributing to their creation.
- II. Libraries should provide materials and information presenting all points of view on current and historical issues. Materials should not be proscribed or removed because of partisan or doctrinal disapproval.
- III. Libraries should challenge censorship in the fulfillment of their responsibility to provide information and enlightenment.
- IV. Libraries should cooperate with all persons and groups concerned with resisting abridgment of free expression and free access to ideas.
- V. A person's right to use a library should not be denied or abridged because of origin, age, background, or views.
- VI. Libraries which make exhibit spaces and meeting rooms available to the public they serve should make such facilities available on an equitable basis, regardless of the beliefs or affiliations of individuals or groups requesting their use.
- VII. All people, regardless of origin, age, background, or views, possess a right to privacy and confidentiality in their library use. Libraries should advocate for, educate about, and protect people's privacy, safeguarding all library use data, including personally identifiable information.

Adopted June 19, 1939, by the ALA Council; amended October 14, 1944; June 18, 1948; February 2, 1961; June 27, 1967; January 23, 1980; January 29, 2019.

Inclusion of "age" reaffirmed January 23, 1996.

Code of Ethics

We significantly influence or control the selection, organization, preservation, and dissemination of information. In a political system grounded in an informed citizenry, we are members of a profession explicitly committed to intellectual freedom and the freedom of access to information. We have a special obligation to ensure the free flow of information and ideas to present and future generations.

The principles of this Code are expressed in broad statements to guide ethical decision making. These statements provide a framework; they cannot and do not dictate conduct to cover particular situations.

1. We provide the highest level of service to all library users through appropriate and usefully organized resources; equitable service policies; equitable access; and accurate, unbiased, and courteous responses to all requests.
2. We uphold the principles of intellectual freedom and resist all efforts to censor library resources.
3. We protect each library user's right to privacy and confidentiality with respect to information sought or received and resources consulted, borrowed, acquired or transmitted.
4. We respect intellectual property rights and advocate balance between the interests of information users and rights holders.
5. We treat co-workers and other colleagues with respect, fairness, and good faith, and advocate conditions of employment that safeguard the rights and welfare of all employees of our institutions.
6. We do not advance private interests at the expense of library users, colleagues, or our employing institutions.
7. We distinguish between our personal convictions and professional duties and do not allow our personal beliefs to interfere with fair representation of the aims of our institutions or the provision of access to their information resources.
8. We strive for excellence in the profession by maintaining and enhancing our own knowledge and skills, by encouraging the professional development of co-workers, and by fostering the aspirations of potential members of the profession.
9. We affirm the inherent dignity and rights of every person. We work to recognize and dismantle systemic and individual biases; to confront inequity and oppression; to enhance diversity and inclusion; and to advance racial and social justice in our libraries, communities, profession, and associations through awareness, advocacy, education, collaboration, services, and allocation of resources and spaces.

Adopted at the 1939 Midwinter Meeting by the ALA Council; amended June 30, 1981; June 28, 1995; January 22, 2008; and June 29, 2021.

Core Principles

Code of Ethics

- Ensure free flow of information and ideas to present and future generations
- Provide high-level, equitable access and service
- Resist censorship
- Protect user privacy
- Respect intellectual property rights
- Treat colleagues well
- Don't allow personal beliefs to interfere with providing access and information
- Strive for excellence
- Affirm the dignity and rights of every person

Library Bill of Rights

- Provide resources of interest to all people in the library's community
- Provide access to all points of view
- Challenge censorship
- Provide equitable access
- Protect user privacy



MANDY I LOVE YOU

I SPEAKING

HAL + HAITX'S

Kie @ @ @ Kie

NEVER

#OBAMA 2012

HAPPY BIRTHDAY EVANT





Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances.



Used with permission of the artist.

Sources of Threats to Intellectual Freedom

- Library users and other members of the public
(from the political right, left, and in-between)
- Government officials and agencies, especially law enforcement
- Commercial entities, especially vendors of library resources and technologies
- Library employees and trustees

How to Support Vermont Libraries in Supporting Intellectual Freedom

1. Help libraries write and adopt essential intellectual freedom policies:

1. Collection Development and Reconsideration
2. Internet Use
3. Use of Meeting Rooms and Exhibit Spaces
4. Privacy and Confidentiality
5. Social Media
6. User Behavior and Library Use

2. Provide education and training for:

Library workers

Library trustees

Board members

School administrators

Town managers/attorneys

Police

3. Provide ready access to just-in-time support and consultation on intellectual freedom issues

- Vermont Department of Libraries
- Vermont Library Association Intellectual Freedom Committee
- Vermont School Library Association Intellectual Freedom Committee
- American Library Association Office for Intellectual Freedom
- *ALA Intellectual Freedom Manual*

4. Provide adequate funding so libraries don't have to "sell out" and compromise user privacy in exchange for access to resources

5. Amend the Vermont law protecting privacy of library users (22 VSA 171-173)

- Provide better protection for minors
- Be explicit about the obligations of third parties that handle user information

For example, California § 6267 law: *“All patron use records of any library which is in whole or in part supported by public funds shall remain confidential and shall not be disclosed by a public agency, **or private actor that maintains or stores patron use records on behalf of a public agency.**”*