



# Statement on free access to information

## ALIA objects addressed

To promote the free flow of information and ideas in the interests of all Australians and a thriving culture and democracy.

## Principle


Freedom can be protected in a democratic society only if individuals have unrestricted access to information and ideas.

## Statement

There are several different levels at which the free flow of ideas can be impeded. At the societal level, legislative bodies of all kinds are expected to consider the legal and regulatory frameworks they put in place to support the free flow of information and ideas about the interests and concerns of individuals. At the institutional level, library and information services are expected to encourage the free flow of information and ideas within the scope of their roles and responsibilities. At the personal level, individuals are expected to make informed decisions in exercising their rights and responsibilities.

The Australian Library and Information Association believes that library and information services have particular responsibilities in supporting and sustaining the free flow of information and ideas including:

1. asserting the equal and equitable rights of individuals to information regardless of age, citizenship, political belief, physical or mental ability, gender identity heritage, education, income, immigration and asylum seeking status, marital status, origin, race, language religion or sexual orientation;
2. adopting an inclusive approach in developing and implementing policies regarding access to information and ideas that are relevant to the library and information service concerned, irrespective of the controversial nature of the information or ideas;
3. ensuring that individuals have access to information from a variety of sources and agencies to meet their needs and that an individual's information needs are met independently of location and an ability to pay;
4. catering for interest in contemporary issues without promoting or suppressing particular beliefs and ideas;
5. protecting the confidential relationships that exist between the library and information service and its clients;

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6. resisting attempts by individuals or groups within their communities to restrict access to information and ideas while at the same time recognising that powers of censorship are legally vested in state and federal governments;
  7. observing laws and regulations governing access to information and ideas but working towards the amendment of those laws and regulations which inhibit library and information services in meeting the obligations and responsibilities outlined in this Statement.

## References

Lehmann, V., & Locke, J. (2005). *Guidelines for Library Services to Prisoners (3rd ed.)* (IFLA Professional Report No. 92). The Hague: International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA). Retrieved from <http://www.ifla.org/publications/ifla-professional-reports-92>

## Release notes

Adopted 2001. Amended 2007, 2015.

(Replaced "Free library services to all, freedom to read". Adopted 1971; amended 1979, 1985)