



## **Statement of Principle – Intellectual Freedom\***

*Adopted by the MLA Board of Directors on September 10, 2021*

The Michigan Library Association (MLA) actively advocates and educates in defense of intellectual freedom – the rights of library users to read, seek information, and speak freely as guaranteed by the First Amendment. Intellectual freedom is a core value of the library profession, and a basic right in our democratic society.

Intellectual freedom encompasses the freedom to hold, receive and disseminate ideas without restriction. Viewed as an integral component of a democratic society, intellectual freedom protects an individual's right to access, explore, consider, and express ideas and information as the basis for a self-governing, well-informed citizenry. Intellectual freedom comprises the bedrock for freedoms of expression, speech, and the press and relates to freedoms of information and the right to privacy.

The United Nations upholds intellectual freedom as a basic human right through Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights which asserts:

“Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers.”

Intellectual freedom encompasses many areas including issues of academic freedom, Internet filtering, and censorship. MLA values an individual's right to choose informational concepts and media to formulate thought and opinion without repercussion, restrictions to access and barriers to privacy of information constitute intellectual freedom issues. MLA opposes any restrictions to access which may include:

- banned books, book burning, and challenges to literature
- censorship in any form
- self-censorship by authors, editors, journalists, or library materials selectors
- measures that diminish net neutrality
- government information and freedom of information laws

In addition, MLA supports upholding an individual's right to privacy of information. Some of these challenges include:

- data mining
- surveillance
- data protection and information privacy laws and practices
- confidentiality of library users' records of access
- legislation that suspends civil liberties in the name of national security such as the Patriot Act and the Homeland Security Act

Not only does MLA oppose censorship of materials, but we are also proponents of the accessibility to materials without prejudice to every member of the community. As the digital world continues to evolve, libraries help ensure that people can access the information they need – regardless of age, education, gender, religion, sexual orientation, ethnicity, language, income, physical limitations or geographic barriers.

*\* This statement of principle on Intellectual Freedom is attributed in whole to an array of articles and sessions documented through the all-encompassing work done by the American Library Association (ALA).*