

This resolution was adopted by the ALA Council on Tuesday, January 12, 2016

Resolution on Replacing the Library of Congress Subject Heading "Illegal Aliens" with "Undocumented Immigrants"

Whereas the terms "illegal" and "alien," when used in reference to people, have undergone pejoration and acquired derogatory connotations, becoming increasingly associated with nativist and racist sentiments;

Whereas the appropriateness of the word "alien" as a legal term is being questioned, with the New York Times Editorial Board calling for it to be retired and the state of California passing SB 432 to remove it from the state's labor code;

Whereas referring to undocumented immigrants as "illegal" is increasingly viewed as dehumanizing, offensive, inflammatory, and even a racial slur;

Whereas a national campaigns such as "Drop the I-Word" and #WordsMatter are urging news media to stop using the word "illegal" to describe immigrants;

Whereas many news organizations have committed to not using the word "illegal" to describe immigrants, including the Associated Press, USA Today, ABC, The Chicago Tribune, and the LA Times;

Whereas college students have petitioned the Library of Congress to retire the subject heading *Illegal aliens*;

Whereas there is no explicit mandate from Congress that LC must follow the U.S. Code terminology in this matter;

Whereas the ERIC (Education Resources Information Center) Thesaurus and MeSH (Medical Subject Headings) both use the term *Undocumented immigrants*, and both are produced by federal government agencies;

Whereas the ALA Policy B.3 (Diversity) states that "ALA recognizes the critical need for access to library and information resources, services, and technologies by all people, especially those who may experience... discrimination on the basis of appearance, ethnicity, immigrant status...;" and

Whereas the ALA Policy B.1.1 (Core Values of Librarianship) states that all library users should receive "accurate, unbiased, and courteous responses to all requests;" now, therefore, be it

Resolved, that the American Library Association (ALA), on behalf of its members:

urges the Library of Congress to change the subject heading *Illegal aliens* to *Undocumented immigrants*.

Adopted by the Council of the American Library Association
Tuesday, January 12, 2016, in Boston, Massachusetts



Keith Michael Fiels
Executive Director and Secretary of the ALA Council