

Committee on Professional Ethics

REPORT TO COUNCIL

2012 Midwinter Meeting — Dallas, Texas

As Chair of the ALA Committee on Professional Ethics (COPE), it is my privilege to submit this written report on the Committee's activities since the 2011 Annual Conference:

ASCLA Code of Ethics for Library Consultants

COPE's committee charge includes the directive: "When units of the association develop statements dealing with ethical issues, a copy will be sent to the Committee on Professional Ethics for review so that it may be compared to the existing ALA Code of Ethics in order to determine whether or not conflicts occur."

In 2011-2012, the Library Consultants Interest Group (LCIG – formerly ILEX) of the Association of Specialized & Cooperative Library Agencies (ASCLA) developed a "Library Consultants Code of Ethics." COPE has worked with LCIG to review and comment upon this document both before and during this Midwinter Meeting, and an Open Forum was held by LCIG on Sunday, January 22. LCIG will forward revised drafts of the "Library Consultants Code of Ethics" to COPE for final review and possible endorsement in advance of the 2012 ALA Annual Conference in Anaheim, CA.

IFLA Code of Ethics

At ALA's 2011 Annual Conference, the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA) circulated a draft "IFLA Code of Ethics" for COPE's review. COPE developed and shared substantial comments and suggestions on the draft. As reported by Barbara Jones, Director of the Office for Intellectual Freedom (OIF), IFLA deeply appreciated

these comments and took them under consideration in revising the document. The “IFLA Code of Ethics,” reflecting significant input from COPE, will be reviewed again and finalized at the 2012 IFLA World Library and Information Congress in Helsinki.

ACRL Restructuring and Proposed Elimination of ACRL Ethics Committee

COPE engaged in extensive discussion, both before and during this Midwinter Meeting, about the Association for College & Research Libraries (ACRL) board’s restructuring proposal, which would eliminate the division’s standing Ethics Committee. COPE members joined with those from other ALA units in expressing strong concerns about the elimination of standing committees on core values such as ethics and intellectual freedom. COPE will continue to advise, consult, and provide feedback on the importance, viability, and role of ethics committees at the division level.

Educational Programming on Ethics Issues

COPE’s charge also includes the directive to “augment the Code of Ethics by explanatory interpretations and additional statements,” and the committee takes this charge to encompass the development of educational programming on ethical issues in librarianship. For three years, COPE’s conference programming has focused on “Ethics in a Digital World.” In 2012, COPE will offer an exciting program at Annual Conference on ethical dilemmas around copyright issues. The program title and description are included below:

Do the Right Thing: Empowering Ethical Copyright Usage in Libraries

Article IV of ALA’s Code of Ethics states, “We respect intellectual property rights and advocate balance between the interests of information users and rights holders.” This program – part of COPE’s “Ethics in a Digital World” series – will address practical solutions to ethical dilemmas that libraries of all types face in regard to copyright. A panel of experts will address issues in public, academic, and school libraries, empowering librarians to help people do what’s right – moving from copyright police to sources of creative support.

In addition, through ALA's Office for Intellectual Freedom, COPE has successfully negotiated a contractual agreement with the Institute for Global Ethics (IGE), which will enable ALA to offer IGE's Ethical Fitness Seminar to members. COPE plans to offer this training as a preconference to the 2013 Annual Conference in Chicago and will share further information about this initiative with Council and as widely as possible.

Respectfully submitted,

Martin Garnar,
Chair, ALA Committee on Professional Ethics