



Australian Library and  
Information Association

# ALIA CODE OF ETHICS

## FOR THE AUSTRALIAN LIBRARY AND INFORMATION SERVICES WORKFORCE

Long version



1 ACCESS TO  
INFORMATION



2 HUMAN RIGHTS -  
EQUALITY,  
DIVERSITY &  
IDENTITY



3 PRIVACY &  
TRANSPARENCY



4 RESPECT,  
INTEGRITY &  
ACTIVE  
PROFESSIONALISM



5 OPEN ACCESS,  
IP & ICIP



6 CONTINUING  
PROFESSIONAL  
DEVELOPMENT



7 LITERACIES



8 SUSTAINABILITY

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## Preamble

The ALIA Code of Ethics for the Australian Library and Information Services (LIS) Workforce is accompanied by the [ALIA Core Values Statement](#), the [ALIA Code of Conduct](#), the [ALIA LIS Workforce Framework](#), and linked to the objects of [ALIA's Constitution](#). The LIS workforce includes qualified and emerging library and information professionals and library staff in all departments and at all levels.

Ethics and values are deeply interrelated but differ in significant ways. In a professional context, values are major, lasting beliefs that are shared among a professional community or sector, defining what is good or bad for that group. Ethics, however, are about how these values are applied and put into practice; they are the principles that guide decision making (Gorman, 2015; Garnar, 2018). This is summed up succinctly by Snow & Shoemaker: 'values are held; ethics are operationalized' (2020).

## Purpose

The purpose of the ALIA Code of Ethics for the Australian LIS Workforce is to:

- articulate commitment to the ethical principles that sit at the centre of professional practice and identity; these differentiate the library and information profession from other sectors
- encompass a set of statements that govern the behaviour of the LIS workforce
- guide and support the application of the [ALIA Core Values Statement](#)
- clarify the purposes and roles of the library and information profession
- provide transparency and guidance for colleagues, organisations and society in general
- respect Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture and knowledge systems as integral to professional practice
- encourage professional reflection and growth
- provide a shared reference point for professional conduct on which the library and information workforce can form policies and support day-to-day decision making.

## Background

To create this Code of Ethics, an ALIA working group conducted a broad analysis of the literature, including existing Codes of Ethics and Conduct from peak bodies around the world and other industry output. Notably, this Code of Ethics builds on the International Federation of Library Associations (IFLA) [Code of Ethics for Librarians and other Information Workers](#), which was [endorsed by ALIA](#) in 2012 and 2018. Using the IFLA Code of Ethics as a base, the team adapted the Code of Ethics for the Australian context, developed ethical clauses and definitions, and created the structure and format. A wide consultation process gathered feedback from the LIS workforce across Australia and from all sectors, which was incorporated into the final document.



The ethical concepts in the Code of Ethics are necessarily interconnected, without any implied hierarchy. The division of ethical principles and behaviour into eight separate clauses, avoiding undue repetition, is a delicate balance. The working group endeavoured to present a balanced Code that sets out the different ethical concepts into a unified Code that gives appropriate weight to the component parts.

## Connection to the ALIA Skills, Knowledge and Ethics Framework

The Code of Ethics is the key document within Core domain 3 'Ethics and Values' of the [ALIA Framework for the LIS Workforce](#), outlining the shared ethics and values that unite the LIS workforce and underpin service delivery.

## Customising the Code of Ethics

Each numbered section in the Code of Ethics is made up of component parts: **clause title**, **clause definition**, the **related ALIA core values**, and **action examples** indicating ways in which that clause can be put into practice.

The clause titles and descriptions are constant and should not be altered, however the **action examples** are offered as examples only and are neither prescriptive nor exhaustive. ALIA encourages organisations and institutions to customise action examples to be applicable to their environment and context and have developed a [fillable template](#) for this purpose.



## 1. Access to information

Creating access to information and collections is the fundamental mission of the library and information workforce, supporting an informed and inclusive society. Access includes both the opportunity and right to use resources.

### Relationship to ALIA Core Values

Promotion of the free flow of information and ideas through open access to recorded knowledge, information, and creative works

Connection of people to ideas, knowledge creation and learning

Management, organisation and preservation of the human record

Partnerships and collaborations to advance these values

### Action examples

#### *The LIS workforce:*

- rejects censorship in all its forms.
- generally does not restrict access to information, and aims to provide maximum access while recognising and respecting legal restrictions, Indigenous Cultural and Intellectual Property (ICIP), and cultural protocols around access to Indigenous materials.
- supports the future information needs of society through the collection and long-term preservation of materials in a wide range of formats.
- effectively catalogues, classifies and describes collections, and innovates to make discovering and accessing collections as easy as possible.
- promotes collections and services to potential users and seeks the highest standards of accessibility for both physical and digital services.
- implements the FAIR Guiding Principles and CARE Principles, where applicable.



## 2. Human rights, equality, diversity & identity

Human rights require us to recognise and acknowledge one another's humanity by respecting individual and cultural rights, ensuring everyone has the right to equality and non-discrimination, and placing positive value on our diversity.

### Relationship to ALIA Core Values

Respect for the diversity, individuality and equality of all

Partnerships and collaborations to advance these values

### Action examples

#### *The LIS workforce:*

- acknowledges being on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander land and recognises and respects Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander knowledges, cultures and Country. They recognise Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the primary guardians, interpreters and decision-makers of their heritage.
- supports Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander principles of rights to self-determination and sovereignty in alignment with UNDRIP, and works to design services that support Indigenous wellbeing.
- respects and promotes diversity and inclusion through the provision of representative collections, programs and services.
- treats all people who come to the library with dignity and courtesy, respecting everyone's freedom of opinion and expression, within the boundaries of the law.
- provides equitable services for everyone regardless of age, citizenship, physical or mental ability, gender identity, sexual orientation, education, income, housing status, immigration or asylum-seeking status, origin, heritage, race, religion, or political belief.
- enhances access for all by actively supporting people in information searching and encouraging the ethical use of information, with particular attention to the welfare of young people.



### 3. Privacy & transparency

As a foundational condition for intellectual freedom, the LIS workforce protects the personal privacy of library and information service users and treats the information and resources they seek or receive with confidentiality. Information governance, including transparency, privacy and accountability, are enacted in LIS systems and services, and advocated for in democratic decision making.

#### Relationship to ALIA Core Values

Promotion of the free flow of information and ideas through open access to recorded knowledge, information and creative works

Respect for the diversity, individuality and equality of all

Partnerships and collaborations to advance these values

#### Action examples

##### *The LIS workforce:*

- only collects the personal information required to provide services to users and clients.
- does not share personal data of library users beyond the original transaction or for other purposes without consent, unless required by law.
- creates policies and takes measures to ensure that personal information is protected against loss, unauthorised use, modification, disclosure or other misuse.
- upholds transparency around the processes for information provision, and ensures the standards, policies and procedures governing these processes are clear, open and documented for knowledge sharing and creation of an evidence base.
- advocates for broader transparency so that the workings of government, administration and business are open to public scrutiny.
- provides services in compliance with principles of sound information governance.



#### 4. Respect, integrity & active professionalism

The LIS workforce is committed to consistent, honest and respectful service provision and governance. Active professionalism encompasses the application of behaviours and attitudes that contribute to a positive and productive work environment.

#### Relationship to ALIA Core Values

Delivery of authentic information and evidence-based practice supported by quality research

Excellence, accountability, integrity and responsibility in service to our communities

Partnerships and collaborations to advance these values

#### Action examples

*The LIS workforce:*

- provides the highest level of service to all library users through representative collections, appropriate and readily accessible resources, equitable service policies and accurate, respectful responses to requests.
- distinguishes between personal convictions and professional duties and does not allow personal beliefs to interfere with the aims of the workplace or provision of access to programs and services.
- fosters positive relationships and partnerships to achieve shared goals.
- respects and upholds the reputation of the library and information profession and confidence in the sector.
- cares for information, human and/or financial resources with integrity.
- actively contributes to the sector and colleagues including through membership of and participation in professional associations such as ALIA.



## 5. Open access, IP & ICIP

Open access, intellectual property and Indigenous Cultural and Intellectual Property (ICIP) are core ethical principles that guide the broadest possible access to information resources while upholding the moral and legal rights of copyright holders, creators and distributors of intellectual property.

### Relationship to ALIA Core Values

Promotion of the free flow of information and ideas through open access to recorded knowledge, information, and creative works

Connection of people to ideas, knowledge creation and learning

Recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the first peoples of the land, and respect for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander knowledges, cultures and Country

Partnerships and collaborations to advance these values

### Action examples

#### *The LIS workforce:*

- supports and applies open access principles across different library and information services environments.
- Recognises, respects and applies the Indigenous Cultural and Intellectual Property rights of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.
- enacts the primary decision-making rights of the owners of a culture, for example when working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples or materials.
- seeks to build transparent processes upholding the rights of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities regarding ICIP and responds retrospectively to instances where library collections have not been acquired or managed with informed consent.
- actively seeks Indigenous perspectives and input in decision-making processes related to the management and use of Indigenous knowledge and cultural materials.
- maintains awareness of developments and advocates for change to ensure fair and equitable systems of copyright, IP and ICIP environments.
- promotes respect for copyright and intellectual property and defends copyright works against piracy, in physical and digital environments.
- uses copyright limitations and exceptions to ensure access to collections.



## 6. Continuing professional development

Dedication to continuing professional development (CPD) and enthusiasm for lifelong learning are vital components of active professionalism. It is how individuals play their part in maintaining and promoting a strong, future-focused library and information services for Australia.

### Relationship to ALIA Core Values

Commitment to maintaining currency of professional knowledge and practice

Partnerships and collaborations to advance these values

### Action examples

#### *The LIS workforce:*

- takes personal responsibility for CPD and encourages colleagues' professional development.
- maintains their professional development record.
- commits to engaging with and learning from colleagues and those in related professions.
- engages in structured and unstructured mentoring and coaching activities at all career stages.
- commits to advocating for the library and information profession and services, carries out research and participates in the professional literature as author, contributor, editor or research subject.



## 7. Literacies

The library and information workforce has a crucial role to play in supporting the advancement of knowledge through literacy. The development of literacies, especially reading, information, digital and media literacy, are central as diverse types of information are created, curated and enabled.

### Relationship to ALIA Core Values

Dedication to fostering reading, information and digital literacies

Partnerships and collaborations to advance these values

### Action examples

#### *The LIS workforce:*

- supports reading and literacy throughout communities, in different contexts and at all ages.
- supports languages other than English and maintains awareness of current needs of culturally and linguistically diverse communities.
- celebrates the richness of Indigenous languages and all languages used across Australia, and supports the right to access resources in various languages.
- promotes literacy education in its diverse forms including information, digital and media literacy.
- supports users to identify, critically engage with and understand mis-, mal- and disinformation.
- supports critical understanding and examination of the embedded power of colonial legacies in the creation and production of works.



## 8. Sustainability

The library and information workforce takes informed action to create a more environmentally and socially just world and supports library communities to develop awareness and development of sustainable practices.

### Relationship to ALIA Core Values

Partnerships and collaborations to advance these values

Connection of people to ideas, knowledge creation and learning

### Action examples

#### *The LIS workforce:*

- seeks to engage with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander worldviews to learn about respect for Country and the land.
- supports the development of the knowledge, skills, values and worldviews necessary for people to act in ways that contribute to a sustainable future.
- is guided by the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals.
- provides access to information about sustainable practices.
- seeks to decrease the emissions and/or carbon footprint of the workplace and equipment.
- develops operational routines and processes to be environmentally sustainable, creating workplaces with a positive carbon handprint.
- communicates their organisational environmental policies, implementation and results of environmental work to the public.
- promotes social sustainability through library-led and community-led initiatives in areas such as education, literacy, community engagement, cross-cultural diversity and social inclusion.

## Supporting Documentation

Australian Human Right Commission. <https://humanrights.gov.au/>

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