

INTELLECTUAL FREEDOM STATEMENTS

CILIP: the Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals

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www.cilip.org.uk

(CILIP: the Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals was formed in April 2002 following the unification of the Institute of Information Scientists and the Library Association.)

The statement below was produced by the Library Association which ceased to exist in 2002.

Information Access

A Set of Principles for Access to Information

The right of access to information is essential for a civilized society. If citizens are to exercise their democratic rights, and to make informed choices, they must have access to political, social, scientific and economic information. If our culture is to thrive and to grow, people need access to the widest range of ideas, information and images. Computer and telecommunications technology is constantly changing and developing. Increasingly, it is converging in fast, widespread networked information and multimedia systems. Library and information services and the people who work in them, must also be prepared for constant change and development. They also need to be informed by basic principles to ensure that they can harness the power of new technologies for the benefit of their users.

There should be guaranteed right in all societies to:

1. Information skills

All citizens - regardless of physical or other attributes - should have the right to learn to read and write, as well as to develop numeracy skills. The same right should apply to information skills, and to the level of computer literacy needed to make use of the increasing range of sources available in digitised form.

2. Universal access to information

All citizens, whatever their economic, geographical or personal circumstances or the capabilities of available technology and network infrastructures, must have access to the widest possible range of sources of information, whatever their provenance.

Good quality public library services form an essential component of universal access. Open to the public and free at the point of use, they must provide comprehensive access to information in electronic as well as traditional media.

A strong infrastructure of libraries of all kinds - national, academic and special - is essential to ensure that access.

3. Knowledge about information

All citizens have the right to know what information exists.

4. The free flow of information

Intellectual freedom and freedom of expression are necessary conditions for freedom of access to information. Individuals should have the right to choose what information and ideas to receive and what not to receive, including that which others might find objectionable, without censorship.

The development of new copyright regimes should balance and defend the rights of information users, along with the rights of the owners of intellectual property.

5. Government commitment to informing the public

Government information and information held by the government, should be freely available to the public. Departments and Agencies of government must take steps to make it available actively, promptly and comprehensively. The power of electronic communications networks should be made available for communication between individuals and local and national government.

In addition, government should provide for freedom of access to information from public sector bodies, and private sector bodies where appropriate.

Through provisions such as legal deposit, Government must provide for access to information and ideas, including archiving for the benefit of future generations.

Government should take whatever steps are necessary to provide equal access to networked information systems, and to encourage the availability of information across those systems.

6. Protection of privacy

All individuals have the right to personal privacy and anonymity in their use of information.

Privacy of personal information should be defended and extended.

The principles of Data Protection should be upheld. These should support the free flow of information that is in the public domain, particularly bibliographic data.

7. A committed library and information profession

A commitment to Freedom of Information is a core responsibility for the

library and information profession, which is uniquely placed and skilled to make the case for the widest possible access, to defend it and to deliver it.

The Library Association enforces a Code of Professional Conduct that binds its members to uphold these principles for access to information.

The Library Association actively promotes the acceptance and realisation of these principles, by lobbying government and other decision makers, in the public and private sectors, and internationally. The Association is committed to supporting legislation, which would enact these principles.

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