



Intellectual Freedom Task Force

Updated February 2023

Purpose Statement

The purpose of the Intellectual Freedom Task Force is to support the Michigan Library Association in safeguarding intellectual freedom and first amendment rights, proactively educate and inform the library field of legislation related to intellectual freedom, develop a position and response by MLA in instances of controversy over censorship and encourage Michigan libraries to develop policies that will support free speech and the freedom to read.

The MLA Intellectual Freedom Task Force will serve as a sub-group and coordinate with the Advocacy and Legislative Committee on establishing progressive priorities relating to library collections, censorship and privacy.

Proposed Duties of Task Force

- Create, manage and edit an accessible web resource center with links to news articles, a toolkit, important organizations, policy templates, national issue tracker, FAQ's, tip sheets, response letters, swag store, banned book lists and other resources with an opportunity to build a statewide coalition.
- Review applications and make recommendations for fund allocation from the MLA Advocacy Resource Fund in defense of intellectual freedom and board training opportunities.
- Encourage libraries to develop collection policies, circulation policies and internet use policies that ensure access to information, patron privacy and the availability of multiple points of view.
- Develop educational outreach concerning intellectual freedom. One example might include development of a "Banned Books Week" social media campaign; another might be planning media coaching or roleplaying practice sessions to prepare participants to respond to challenges.
- Coordinate with the MLA Annual Conference Workgroup and the Webinar/Workshop Workgroup to identify speakers on the topic of intellectual freedom.
- Establish Rapid Response teams composed of interested parties such as parents, students, trustees, etc. capable of addressing challenges at the local or regional level.
- Establish a Help Line for librarian Q & A based on personal experiences with the Michigan Cooperative Directors Association.
- Build alliances with other organizations that also support intellectual freedom like the NAACP, League of Women voters, LGBTQIA+ advocates, etc.
- Research establishing a Volunteer Lawyers for Intellectual Freedom to provide pro bono resources to libraries experiencing legal challenges
- Maintain contact with the ALA Office for Intellectual Freedom.

Task Force Membership and Meetings

The Intellectual Freedom Task Force shall be made up of between 15-30 MLA members. The Executive Director and Database Coordinator serve as staff liaisons.

All task force members are required to attend an annual virtual MLA volunteer development training. Task Force meetings will be held on the last Monday of each month at 10am for up to 2 hours. Meetings will be held by zoom unless an in-person meeting is warranted.

Task Force members must be aware of topics and issues affecting libraries through the protection of Intellectual Freedom. Forward any issues for committee consideration to the MLA office or committee chair prior to the meeting so they can be included on the agenda as appropriate and supporting material can be provided.

Task Force members may also be called on from time to time to provide comment on an issue or topic to assist our lobbyist in their efforts, to help determine its importance to the library community as a whole or discover its potential impact to your library.

Committee Terms

Committee terms are for one year. Committee membership will be renewed automatically unless a task force member decides to leave or has not been actively engaged or attended monthly meetings.

Chair and Vice Chair Selection

A chair of the Task Force will be selected from the current MLA Board Members. The vice chair will be filled from within the current committee membership and approved and selected each year by MLA. All current members are given an opportunity to voice their interest in serving on the Task Force and as the vice chair.

Qualifications

This is an opportunity for an individual who is passionate about the value of intellectual freedom and how it affects our state's libraries. Members of the task force are leaders in MLA and in Michigan libraries. Member accomplishments will also allow them to attract other well-qualified, high-performing leaders to the committee.

Service Without Remuneration

Service on Michigan Library Association's Committees/Workgroups/Task Forces are without remuneration or additional discounts for event attendance.

Preparation

Committee members will receive an agenda via email a few days in advance of the monthly meetings.

Perspective

While each library is unique and may be impacted in a variety of ways by legislation or other issues, it's important to keep the statewide perspective in mind. By serving on the Task Force, you are representing the entire library community. Be aware that MLA is working to address the needs of libraries statewide and may not have the ability to work on an issue specific to a single library. In addition, there may be issues that do not affect your library but pertain to a number of other libraries. Be sure to keep the statewide view in mind.

Media Contact

If you are contacted by the media and choose to speak on a topic, please be sure to make clear you are speaking on behalf of your library or as an individual citizen. Comments on behalf of MLA should come only from the MLA office. Always feel free to refer any media calls to MLA.