

# FACT SHEET

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Originated by the American Library Association's Office for Intellectual Freedom and Office for Diversity, Literacy and Outreach Services, Our Voices is an initiative to offer a template to interested libraries to promote the growth of diverse, quality content in library collections.

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The initiative includes steps and will document successful approaches to:

- identify small, independent, and self-published content creators in the local region
- connect with those content creators and other members of the reading ecosystem (especially independent booksellers and readers) for a conversation about diversity, quality, and the value of libraries
- develop collections of reviewed, diverse, quality content
- get these collections into the local library collection
- allow other libraries to acquire these collections.

Our Voices is committed to:

- 1. Equitable Access.** All library patrons should be able to find content in their local libraries that reflect their own lives.
  - 2. Diversity.** We recognize all diverse experiences, including (but not limited to) people of color, in the LGBTQIA community, who are differently abled, and/or who are in an ethnic, cultural, and/or religious minority.
  - 3. Quality.** We look for content that reflects intention, craft, and objective review.
  - 4. Sustainability.** Our Voices is meant to be self-sustaining, an ongoing effort effecting a permanent change in the landscape of publishing and librarianship.
  - 5. Preservation.** The content of Our Voices should be maintained for future readers and researchers. We will seek to find a persistent digital repository.
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The American Library Association (ALA), the voice of America's libraries, is the oldest, largest and most influential library association in the world. Its more than 58,000 members are primarily librarians but also trustees, publishers and other library supporters. The association represents all types of libraries; its mission is to promote the highest quality library and information services and public access to information.

The Office for Intellectual Freedom (OIF) is charged with implementing ALA policies concerning the concept of intellectual freedom as embodied in the [Library Bill of Rights](#), the Association's basic policy on free access to libraries and library materials.

The Library Bill of Rights affirms that all libraries are forums for information and ideas, and that six basic policies should guide their services. Four of those policies confront several significant issues that block equitable access to diverse, quality books in libraries. Those four policies are:

- 1.** Books and other library resources should be provided for the interest, information, and enlightenment of all people of the community the library serves. Materials should not be excluded because of the origin, background, or views of those contributing to their creation.
- 2.** Libraries should provide materials and information presenting all points of view on current and historical issues. Materials should not be proscribed or removed because of partisan or doctrinal disapproval.
- 3.** Libraries should challenge censorship in the fulfillment of their responsibility to provide information and enlightenment.
- 4.** Libraries should cooperate with all persons and groups concerned with resisting abridgment of free expression and free access to ideas.

The Office for Diversity, Literacy and Outreach Services serves the membership through its initiatives and programs, resource development, active consultations and training on diversity issues that impact the profession, the workplace and information service delivery. The Office also maintains an active recruitment program for people of color to the library profession known as the Spectrum Initiative.