



Championing Intellectual Freedom – Structuring and Focusing Library Efforts

Key Findings

- *There are many different ways of going about working on intellectual freedom, from who leads work, what type of activity is pursued, what aspects of intellectual freedom are explored and more*
- *Regardless of region or association size, there is usually an example of a library association or field mobilising in some way around intellectual freedom*
- *There is a strong range of materials and references presented that can be used by other libraries, associations and agencies.*

This report presents the results of a survey into the way in which library associations are engaging with questions related to intellectual freedom. It is intended to get an initial idea about how library associations and others are addressing these themes, rather than build a comprehensive overview of the landscape of library engagement with intellectual freedom (IF) issues.

As such, it is a first step – an indication of what libraries and their associations can do, leading to further work later on how we can build this engagement, and so its contribution to wider efforts to promote and uphold IF. We hope that it provides a resource for libraries and library associations in planning their own work, but also a signal to partners both of what libraries are doing, but also of what they can do. For IFLA, it offers ideas about how we can support our members in this space.

The survey itself was developed in partnership with Martyn Wade, as well as IFLA's Freedom of Access to Information and Freedom of Expression Advisory Committee and the Management of Library Associations Section. We are grateful for their support. It was targeted at library associations, but some volunteers and others have also provided responses, allowing for a view of how actors outside of associations (notably agencies and ministries) can be involved.

Results are disaggregated where appropriate between type of respondent (with a particular focus on associations). Other disaggregations worked with are:

- By region (although we note that there were not adequate responses from Latin America and the Caribbean, the Middle East and North Africa, and Sub-Saharan Africa, so no separate analysis is done)
- By size of association (no permanent staff, and then 1-4, 5-10 and 10+), on the assumption that there may be different types or level of engagement where associations are bigger or smaller

- We also break down Intellectual Freedom (IF) into a range of related issues that can be associated (loosely) with it. These are used at various points in the report, and can help identify different aspects of IF. The list, again, is not exhaustive, but based on the experience of those involved in preparing the survey.

The survey is structured around four ‘activities’ linked to IF:

1. Monitoring the issues,
2. Providing support to librarians faced with challenges and related issues,
3. Proactive production of guidance and guidelines, and
4. Wider advocacy.

Again, this reflects different elements of work on intellectual freedom, and in particular the broad categories of activity carried out by library associations and others around it.

Finally, the survey asked for concrete examples of statements, toolkits, terms of reference of committees and others. These are provided as models and examples that others can draw on.

In terms of respondents overall, we received a total of 35. This is clearly not a comprehensive sample, but provides a good basis for getting an overall idea of the shape of work around intellectual freedom in libraries. This does open the question of whether a more comprehensive survey could help, but perhaps more practically underlines that the list of resources provided can be expanded. It is worth noting that we can tell that some associations did not respond, and while some materials can be harvested from websites, their data is not incorporated.

Looking at regional breakdown, over 60% were from Asia-Oceania and Europe, while North American respondents answered for just over 1 in 6. Figures from LAC, MENA were low, and a little higher for Sub-Saharan Africa.

23 responded as members or representatives of their associations, 6 as representatives of their institution (such as agencies or ministries), and 6 as individuals. Of the association respondents, 7 came from ones with no permanent staff, 6 from ones with 1-4 staff, 4 from ones with 5-10 staff, and 3 from ones with more than 10 staff.

The report is structured as follows:

1. An overview of the types of respondent
2. Analysis of the results on how far associations and others are participating in different activities related to promoting IF
3. Practical examples gathered which can serve to help others looking to develop IF activities, as models or inspiration

Ultimately, this report is intended to be directly useful for library associations and others interested in reflecting on their own work on intellectual freedom, and potential expanding or evolving this. We will welcome further contributions to this, which could turn into a ‘DIY Kit’ on intellectual freedom in libraries.

1. Focus on intellectual freedom in associations

This first section summarises the answers to questions around the way in which associations structure and staff work on intellectual freedom.

Out of the 23 responses that came from library associations, 4 reported having dedicated committees looking at intellectual freedom issues, and a further 6 looking at intellectual freedom amongst other issues.

Those with dedicated committees were of different sizes, with both purely volunteer based associations (Nepal Library Association and the Argentine Qualified Librarians' Association), six smaller ones (including New Zealand, India, Quebec, and Switzerland), two medium sized ones (also including Quebec), and one larger one (UK). Sometimes these groups are closed in order to allow for informality and exploration of key issues in a safe space. See below for examples of terms of reference for committees dealing with IF.

Concerning associations with people focused on intellectual freedom, only one reported this being the case (based in Italy, with a small staff). Four more had someone working at least some of the time on intellectual freedom, representing a mix of medium-small associations (5-10 staff) and larger ones (10-24 staff). Where there were responses, this responsibility typically fell to research teams, or to leadership in general.

Meanwhile, one association in Sub-Saharan Africa (purely volunteer based) and one in Italy (with a small-to-medium staff) noted that they had a dedicated volunteer working on intellectual freedom. Four others noted that they had a volunteer working on IF amongst other issues, coming from different association sizes, including Switzerland, Ontario (Canada) and Australia.

In terms of descriptions of the roles these individuals have, responses highlighted the importance of applying legal texts to situations on the ground, an understanding of local situations, and diplomacy and advocacy skills. Sometimes, people leading on research in general carry out this work,

Meanwhile, five associations had no-one focusing on IF at all, mainly from purely volunteer-focused associations, but also with one association with a permanent staff of 5-10.

To note, none of the people responding on behalf of ministries or library agencies reported having any role in working on IF issues.

TABLE 1: Association respondents by region, and type/level of engagement in IF issues

	TOTAL	Asia-Oceania	Europe	Latin America and the Caribbean	Middle East and North Africa	North America	Sub-Saharan Africa
We have a committee that focuses on intellectual freedom	4	2	2	0	0	0	0
We have a committee that works on intellectual freedom amongst other issues	6	1	2	1	0	2	0
We have a staff member dedicated to intellectual freedom issues	1	0	1	0	0	0	0
We have a staff member who works on intellectual freedom issues amongst other issues	4	1	1	0	0	2	0
We have a volunteer individual or group dedicated to intellectual freedom issues	2	0	1	0	0	0	1
We have a volunteer individual or group which works on intellectual freedom issues amongst other issues	4	1	2	0	0	1	0
None of the above	5	0	1	1	0	1	2

An overall breakdown by region shows first of all that in almost every region there are examples of associations with some sort of capacity to work on intellectual freedom. The largest single group of associations are those with associations that look either specifically at IF or work on it as part of a broader brief. There is a broad range of ways in which IF issues can be addressed.

TABLE 2: Association respondents by number of professional staff, and type/level of engagement in IF issues

	No permanent staff	1-4 staff	5-10 staff	10-24 staff
We have a committee that focuses on intellectual freedom	1	2	0	1
We have a committee that works on intellectual freedom amongst other issues	1	3	2	0
We have a staff member dedicated to intellectual freedom issues	0	1	0	0
We have a staff member who works on intellectual freedom issues amongst other issues	0	0	2	2
We have a volunteer individual or group dedicated to intellectual freedom issues	1	0	1	0
We have a volunteer individual or group which works on intellectual freedom issues amongst other issues	0	1	1	2
None of the above	4	0	1	0

Table 2 highlights that associations of all different sizes can have capacity to work around IF issues, although it is more common among those associations that have permanent staff. Larger associations are more likely to have someone working on IF as a staff member (logically), while smaller ones are active in drawing on volunteer resources.

2. Engagement by activity type

Table 3 shares results from the survey concerning the number of respondents saying that they carried out different types of activity, namely:

- Monitoring of the state of intellectual freedom issues
- Helping librarians deal with challenges and other problems linked to IF
- Providing and giving access to materials that build preparedness
- Advocacy on IF issues

TABLE 3: Respondents engaged in different IF activities

	TOTAL	Asia-Oceania	Europe	Latin America and the Caribbean	Middle East and North Africa	North America	Sub-Saharan Africa
Monitoring	20	8	6	1	1	4	0
Problem Solving	19	7	6	1	0	4	1
Guidance	19	8	4	1	0	4	2
Advocacy	19	5	7	1	0	5	1

This offers a breakdown by region. There was a respondent engaged in at least one of the activities in every region. Most common in Asia-Oceania was work on monitoring and providing guidance, while in Europe and North America it was advocacy. There were too few responses in other regions to conclude much. On average, North American associations had the widest range of activities (2.8 each), followed by Asia-Oceania (2.5) and Europe (2.3).

Globally, however, a similar number of associations responded that they were carrying out each of the different activities.

TABLE 4: Respondents engaged in different IF activities (by association size)

	No permanent staff	1-4 staff	5-10 staff	10-24 staff
Monitoring	4	2	3	3
Problem Solving	3	2	3	3
Guidance	5	3	2	3
Advocacy	4	4	3	3

Table X looks at the breakdown by association size. Once again, there does not seem to be a clear connection between the size of the association and the range of activities that they

carry out. In other words, there is no reason to say that a small association cannot be active in each different area. Nonetheless, smaller associations tend to be active in fewer areas overall – 2.3 on average for those with no permanent staff, and 1.8 for those with 1-4, while those with 5-10 had 2.8 activities on average, and those with 10 or more were active in all areas.

2.1 Activity Type 1: Monitoring

This section looks at the first area of activity around IF – monitoring the situation, in order to support planning, inform members, or for other reasons. The survey then asked on what topics associations were carrying out monitoring, using the below list, which results from reflection among those involved in preparing the survey, as well as wider advocacy experience:

- Censorship of library collections by governments
- Censorship of library collections by private citizens/groups
- Threats to libraries, library workers and events
- Restrictions on civic space
- Other human rights concerns
- Threats to democracy
- Misinformation, disinformation and hate speech
- Online safety
- Government threats to privacy
- Companies' threats to privacy
- Persecution of minority groups

TABLE 5: Respondents engaged in monitoring different IF issues (region)

Priority Issues	Total	Asia-Oceania	Europe	Latin America and the Caribbean	Middle East and North Africa	North America	Sub-Saharan Africa
Censorship of library collections by governments	9	1	4	1	1	2	0
Censorship of library collections by private citizens/groups	13	5	3	0	1	4	0
Threats to libraries, library workers and events	14	5	4	1	1	3	0
Restrictions on civic space	5	2	1	1	0	1	0
Other human rights concerns	5	2	1	1	1	0	0
Threats to democracy	7	2	3	1	0	1	0
Misinformation, disinformation and hate speech	16	7	5	1	0	3	0
Online safety	12	6	3	1	1	1	0
Government threats to privacy	3	1	2	0	0	0	0
Companies' threats to privacy	5	2	2	0	1	0	0
Persecution of minority groups	6	2	2	0	0	2	0
Total number of respondents	35	11	10	3	1	6	4

Based on the data in Table 5, the most popular theme to monitor was misinformation, disinformation and hate speech, followed by threats to libraries, library workers and events, then censorship by private citizens and online safety. The least monitored issues were around privacy, restrictions on civic space and other human rights violations.

Looking by region, misinformation was also the most monitored issue in Asia-Oceania and Europe, while in North America it was censorship by private groups. Other priority topics in Asia-Oceania included online safety, censorship by private groups and threats to libraries. In Europe, it was government censorship and threats to libraries, while in North America, threats to libraries and misinformation also scored high. The amount of data from Latin America and the Caribbean, the Middle East and North Africa and Sub-Saharan Africa.

All of the three regions with more than just a small number of respondents had around 3 issues of focus each (2.83 in North America, 3 in Europe, 3.18 in Asia-Oceania).

TABLE 6: Number of associations engaged in monitoring different IF issues (association size)

Priority Issues	No permanent staff	1-4 staff	5-10 staff	10-24 staff
Censorship of library collections by governments	1	1	3	0
Censorship of library collections by private citizens/groups	1	1	3	3
Threats to libraries, library workers and events	2	1	3	3
Restrictions on civic space	1	0	1	2
Other human rights concerns	1	0	1	0
Threats to democracy	1	1	1	2
Misinformation, disinformation and hate speech	4	2	1	3
Online safety	2	1	1	3
Government threats to privacy	0	0	1	2
Companies' threats to privacy	0	0	1	2
Persecution of minority groups	1	0	1	2
Total number of associations	7	6	4	3

Table 6 gives the same figures, but looking at the relative size of associations. We can see from this, at a high level, that smaller associations are most likely to focus on fewer themes. On average, those with no staff only monitored two issues, and those with 1-4 staff just over one. However, those with 5-10 staff monitored 4.25 each, and those with over 10 monitored over 7.

In summary, we can see that there is relatively little variation between regions, but that size of the association seems to be more closely linked with the range of issues covered, with misinformation the most common topic for smaller players.

2.2 ActivityType 2: Problem Solving

This second looks at the work of library associations and others in library fields in helping colleagues to address challenges linked to IF, such as book challenges or restrictions on libraries' ability to fulfil their missions.

TABLE 7: Number of respondents engaged in problem-solving (by region)

	Total	Asia- Oceania	Europe	Latin America and the Caribbean	Middle East and North Africa	North America	Sub- Saharan Africa
Engaged in problem-solving	19	7	6	1	0	4	1
Not engaged in problem-solving	14	4	3	2	1	2	2
Total Respondents	35	11	10	3	1	6	4

Table 7 provides the number of respondents in total engaged in problem solving work, as well as by region. A little over half of all respondents did note that there was work on this in their countries, with somewhat higher shares in Asia-Oceania, and twice as many involved as not in Europe and North America.

TABLE 8: Number of associations engaged in problem-solving (by size)

	No permanent staff	1-4 staff	5-10 staff	10-24 staff
Engaged in problem-solving	3	2	3	3
Not engaged in problem-solving	2	4	1	0
Total Association Respondents	7	6	4	3

Table 8 then focuses on association respondents. There is a similar trend to previous tables, with the highest share of respondents being engaged when associations themselves are larger. As before, those with no permanent staff however seem to be more likely to engage than those with a small professional team.

Overall, this tells a similar story to those concerning overall engagement, as well as around monitoring of issues – that associations of all sizes and almost all regions *can* be involved in problem solving work, but the capacity to combine this with work on other activities is higher when the association itself is bigger.

See Section 3 below for more on practical examples of engagement in problem-solving.

2.3 Practical resources (Guidance)

The next part of this section complements the focus on more reactive efforts to solve problems, and looks rather at whether there are materials available to help libraries develop their understanding of IF issues. These can take various forms (see Section 3 for more), but allow for a more pre-emptive approach and general capacity building.

TABLE 9: Number of respondents reporting provision of practical guidance (by region)

	Total	Asia-Oceania	Europe	Latin America and the Caribbean	Middle East and North Africa	North America	Sub-Saharan Africa
Yes	19	8	4	1	0	4	2
No	12	3	4	1	1	2	1
I don't know/ want to answer	4	0	2	1	0	0	1
Total Respondents	35	11	10	3	1	6	4

Table 9 once again shows the results for all respondents, and the break-down by region. Just over half of respondents answered positively that there were practical guides available to help on intellectual freedom issues in total. Asia-Oceania and North America had the highest share of respondents saying this, although just less than half of Europeans could point to materials. Other regions had lower total responses.

TABLE 10: Number of associations reporting provision of practical guidance (by association size)

	No permanent staff	1-4 staff	5-10 staff	10-24 staff
Yes	5	3	2	3
No	0	2	1	0
I don't know/ don't want to answer	2	1	1	0
Total Associations	7	6	4	3

Table 10 then breaks down the data by size of association. Here there is a weaker correlation between the size of the association and the tendency to have access to guidance materials, although it is the case that in all cases where there were associations with 10 or more staff, people also had access to guidance materials.

The survey also asked about the source of the guidance materials available (Chart 1). In the case of 14 respondents (of the 19 in total producing them), these came from library associations. In around half of cases, they came from academic experts or individual librarians, and slightly fewer from library agencies or line ministries. There was only one case each with materials coming from other ministries, international sources or other sectors.

Chart 1: Who produces guidance materials?

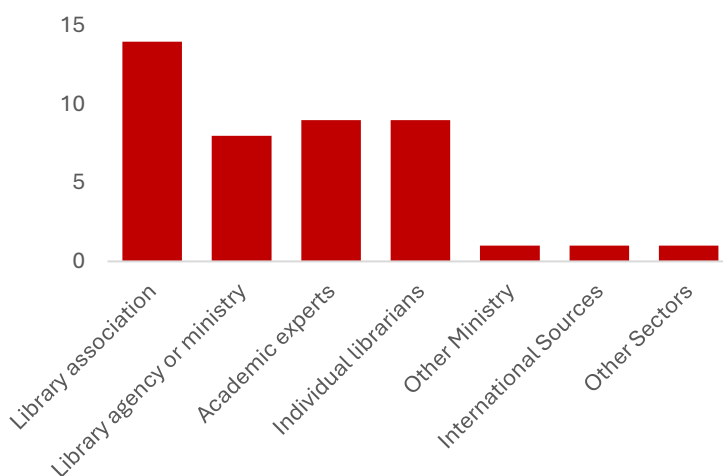
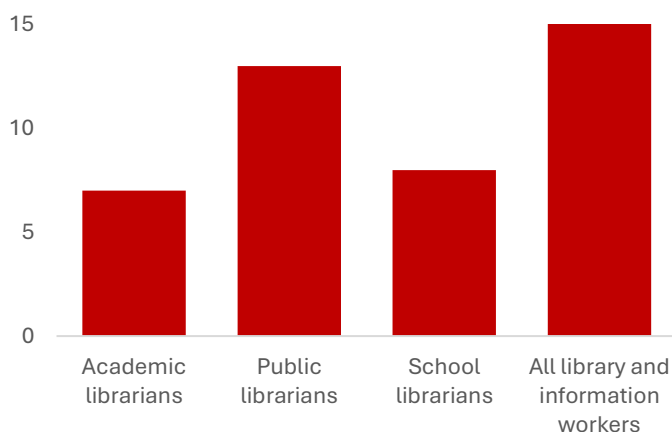


Chart 2 then looks at the target audiences for this guidance, of the 19 who responded that guidance was available at all. In 15 cases, materials were intended for librarians of all types, with those focused specifically on public librarians the second most common (13 cases). School librarians came next, and academic librarians last, at least of the groups for which such materials were available.

Chart 2: Who is the target of this guidance?



Overall, the conclusion from this is that library associations (and potentially the experts and other individuals they can mobilise) are the most regular sources of such materials. This could be explained by their greater freedom to highlight the need for intellectual freedom compared to governments (or possibly the greater acceptance of materials from them, as opposed to those from government). While the data here is far from comprehensive, it may also suggest a need for more materials focused on the situation of academic and school libraries.

As concerns the topics covered by the guidance, the numbers are provided below.

TABLE 11: Numbers of respondents noting the existence of guidance on different IF themes, totals and by region

	Total	Asia-Oceania	Europe	Latin America and the Caribbean	Middle East and North Africa	North America	Sub-Saharan Africa
Censorship	15	6	3	1	0	3	2
Privacy	8	4	2	1	0	0	1
Promoting human rights in general	13	6	2	1	0	2	2
Digital inclusion including digital literacy	13	6	3	1	0	2	1
Diversity and multiculturalism	16	7	4	1	0	3	1
Attacks on or challenges to libraries	14	5	3	1	0	4	0
Promoting democracy and participation	10	6	1	1	0	2	0
Information integrity	12	6	2	1	0	3	0

Globally, as demonstrated in Table 11, diversity and multiculturalism is the most commonly addressed in guidance, closely followed by censorship, then attacks on libraries, and then promoting human rights and digital inclusion. At a regional level, diversity is the most frequently tackled topic in Asia-Oceania and Europe, while in North America it is attacks on libraries. Censorship scored highly in all of these regions as well.

On average, where there was guidance in Asia-Oceania, this covered 4.2 themes, while that in North America covered 3.2 themes and that in Europe just 2.

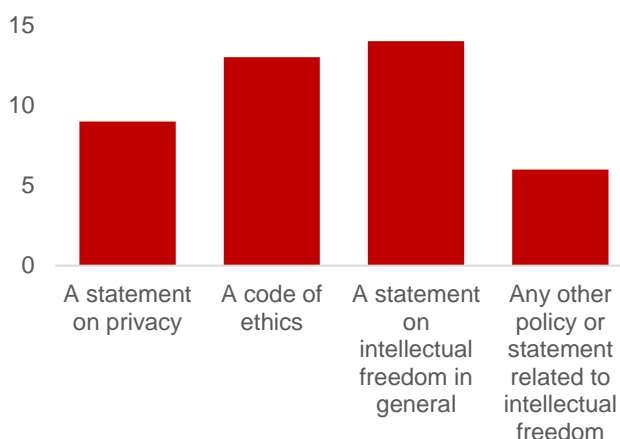
TABLE 12: Numbers of respondents noting the existence of guidance on different IF themes, by association size

	No permanent staff	1-4 staff	5-10 staff	10-24 staff
Censorship	4	2	2	2
Privacy	2	0	1	2
Promoting human rights in general	4	2	1	2
Digital inclusion including digital literacy	4	1	1	2
Diversity and multiculturalism	4	1	2	3
Attacks on or challenges to libraries	2	2	2	3
Promoting democracy and participation	3	1	1	0
Information integrity	3	2	1	1

Table 12 then does the same analysis for respondents from associations, breaking things down by association size. There are no clear patterns in this, although once again it shows that there is evidence that guidance can be produced regardless of the size of the association. On average, when guidance did exist, this tended to cover most topics (5 on average) when there were big library associations, but then it was associations with no staff that came in second on 4.

Chart 3 looks at specific types of material that may be available to librarians – privacy statements, codes of ethics, general purpose IF statements, and other statements in general. While there is more in Section 3 on this topic, it already indicates that there is a stock of statements that can be used as inspiration or models for those elsewhere.

Chart 3: Access to specific materials



Finally, the survey asked about how regularly materials were updated. Of the 16 who gave figures, all noted that guidance was reviewed, with over half doing this ‘regularly’, and one more ‘very regularly’.

In summary, this underlines that there are precedents not only for library guidance to cover a wide range of themes, but this also to be the case in a wide variety of settings. In addition, smaller associations can also be associated with a rich range of such materials.

2.4 Advocacy

Finally, the survey asked about whether libraries were involved in IF advocacy – i.e. trying to shape public opinion, develop partnerships, and affect relevant policy and law.

TABLE 13: Number of respondents reporting engagement in advocacy on IF, totals and by region

	Total	Asia-Oceania	Europe	Latin America and the Caribbean	Middle East and North Africa	North America	Sub-Saharan Africa
Yes	19	5	7	1	0	5	1
No	12	3	2	2	1	1	3
I don't know/don't want to answer	3	2	1	0	0	0	0

Table 13 sets out the data overall, and by region. Of the 34 who replied, over half (19) are involved in advocacy. The greatest share of respondents saying ‘yes’ is highest in North America (over 80%), and Europe (70%), while only 50% do so in Asia-Oceania.

TABLE 14: Number of association respondents reporting engagement in advocacy on IF, by associations size

	No permanent staff	1-4 staff	5-10 staff	10-24 staff
Yes	4	4	3	3
No	3	0	1	0
I don't know/don't want to answer	0	2	0	0

Table 14 does the same, but just for association respondents and by the size of associations. Here there is a correlation between the share of associations involved in advocacy and their size of associations, rising from around 55% in smaller associations to 100% in the larger ones.

Table 15: Numbers of respondents reporting that different actors are carrying out advocacy, total and by region

	Total	Asia-Oceania	Europe	Latin America and the Caribbean	Middle East and North Africa	North America	Sub-Saharan Africa
Library association	18	5	6	1	0	5	1
Library agency or ministry	8	3	3	1	0	1	0
Academic experts	10	3	2	1	0	3	1
Individual librarians	15	5	5	1	0	3	1
Authors	1	0	0	0	0	1	0
Teachers	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
Journalists	1	0	0	0	0	0	0

Table 15 then looks at who is reported to be carrying out advocacy around IF, with responses drawn from all respondents originally saying that advocacy was taking place (i.e. 19 in total). Globally, the role of associations is clear, followed by individual librarians and academic experts getting involved in advocacy work. Library agencies or lead ministries were only involved in just over half of those cases where there was advocacy, with authors, teachers and journalists cited in one case each.

Looking by region, the major role of associations was particularly clear in Asia-Oceania, Europe and North America, while in other regions, the number of responses was not high enough to offer solid data.

TABLE 16: Numbers of association respondents reporting that different actors are carrying out advocacy, by association size

	No permanent staff	1-4 staff	5-10 staff	10-24 staff
Library association	4	4	3	3
Library agency or ministry	2	0	1	1
Academic experts	4	0	1	2
Individual librarians	4	3	1	3

Finally, Table 16 looks at the responses broken down by the size of associations. The interesting point here is that smaller associations are active, but are also joined as much by academics and individuals, whereas where associations are bigger, they can perhaps do more on their own.

TABLE 17: Topics for advocacy, all respondents, totals and by region

	Total	Asia-Oceania	Europe	Latin America and the Caribbean	Middle East and North Africa	North America	Sub-Saharan Africa
Censorship	13	4	4	1	0	3	1
Privacy	8	2	3	1	0	1	1
Promoting human rights in general	10	5	2	1	0	1	1
Digital inclusion including digital literacy	14	4	5	1	0	3	1
Diversity and multiculturalism	14	5	4	1	0	3	1
Attacks on or challenges to libraries	11	3	3	1	0	4	0
Promoting democracy and participation	11	5	2	1	0	2	1
Information integrity	12	5	2	1	0	3	1
Labour rights	1	0	0	1	0	0	0

Finally, we look at the particular themes which are the subject of IF advocacy. Table 17 provides this detail, focusing on a similar breakdown of sub-themes as in previous questions. The most popular topic for advocacy globally was censorship, followed by digital inclusion and diversity, with information integrity following a little behind.

By regions, diversity, human rights in general, democracy and information integrity came top in Asia-Oceania, while Europeans focused most on digital inclusion. North Americans looked most at attacks on libraries. On average, Asia-Oceania respondents cited three themes on which there was advocacy, while Europeans noted 2.5 and Americans 3.3.

Table 18 then looks at what library association respondents said, broken down by the size of the association.

Table 18: Topics for advocacy, association respondents, by size of association

	No permanent staff	1-4 staff	5-10 staff	10-24 staff
Censorship	2	2	3	2
Privacy	2	0	1	2
Promoting human rights in general	3	2	1	1
Digital inclusion including digital literacy	4	3	1	2
Diversity and multiculturalism	4	3	1	2
Attacks on or challenges to libraries	2	2	2	3
Promoting democracy and participation	3	1	1	2
Information integrity	3	1	2	2
Labour rights	1	0	0	0

The data doesn't give any particular strong trends, with digital inclusion and diversity most frequently advocated for by associations without permanent staff, as well as those with only 1-4 staff. Those with 5-10 staff were more likely to talk censorship, while larger ones were most likely to focus on attacks on libraries.

In terms of averages, in countries with associations with no permanent staff, there was advocacy on 3.4 topics, which falls to 2.3 topics where associations have 1-4 staff, and 3 where they have 5-10. The figure is highest in countries with larger associations, where there is advocacy about 5.3 topics each on average.

2.5 Intellectual Freedom Evaluation

A topic potentially worth more attention is that of evaluation of work around intellectual freedom. Of the 16 who answered this question, only 3 said that they did carry out evaluation, while 13 said no, and 2 didn't know. This does indicate an area where we may wish to focus work in future.

3: Reference Examples

This final section draws on the links to materials shared by respondents, as well as materials collected by IFLA from a search through websites. To underline, this is far from a comprehensive collection, but rather a set of examples that explain a little about how associations work on IF, and the core documents that they work with. It is intended to inform and inspire, and has a vocation to be expanded as other ideas are shared.

This section therefore, in turn, looks at the terms of reference given to committees and others working specifically on IF, those working on it among other issues, of research carried out by library associations, of intellectual freedom statements and related texts, and finally other tools, with a particular focus on processes in place for responding to challenges.

3.1 Terms of reference for committees focused on intellectual freedom

The **Canadian Federation of Library Associations** updated the [terms of reference](#) of its Intellectual Freedom Committee in 2024. This needs to work through the Board to define positions. Responsibilities include formulating and reviewing policies, developing guidelines and other tools, overseeing the survey on book challenges, policy monitoring, collaborate with others inside and outside of the association, and to review applications to an intellectual freedom fund).

It also sets out potential deliverables: policies and positions, guidelines, reports, an Intellectual Freedom Toolkit, and reports from the Challenges survey. There are also pointers on procedures, including relations with the Board, term length and removals, and on members (appointed by the committee itself, also with a focus on diversity).

The **American Library Association** has an Intellectual Freedom Committee (smaller group) and Round Table (bigger group), whose mandate is on the [website](#). This establishes purposes (a form for relevant discussions, communicating on IF issues, promoting mobilisation around IF, and encouraging a sense of responsibility to implement ALA policies. It also covers members, roles, meetings, an Executive within the Round Table, sub-committee structures, liaisons to other groups, rules on finances and amendments to the by-laws. The wider website is also a [good guide](#) to areas of focus.

In addition, there is the [Office for Intellectual Freedom](#), set up in 1967, and has a dedicated staff focused on IF issues. They offer confidential support for librarians facing challenges, as well as free consulting services to help develop policies and plans. They also offer training and webinars, and run a [YouTube channel](#) and do other communication work.

They are also developing tools for helping libraries to get in touch with lawyers who can help them when faced with challenges, and are offering grants to help state library associations run helplines. Finally, they also have links with the Freedom to Read Foundation, and award prizes for literary works in the areas of IF.

The **Italian Librarians Association** has an [Observatory on Censorship](#), which started in 2018. This responds to notifications from colleagues and press stories, and produces reports on the association website. It acts in particular when there is interference from local authorities in the operation of public libraries, most commonly in children's collections. It also runs events on 'saved books'.

The **Swiss Library Association's** [Professional Ethics Committee](#) has a mandate on its website that focuses on advising different parts of the association (notably around ethics), as well as maintaining the Code of Ethics. It has a goal for this year to create a database of knowledge. Despite the internal focus otherwise, it has also produced statements (such as on historical fiction concerning other groups and which isn't necessarily accurate, as on the accuracy of information made available by librarians).

The **Library and Information Association of New Zealand Te Aotearoa** has a [Standing Committee on Freedom of Information](#). While there is no published terms of reference, the website highlights its mandate. The Committee reports to the Council, and prepares statements and other messages, supports members, encourages debate, engages in international work, and partners with others. Areas of work referred to include freedom of information (understood as the freedom to publish and consume information), censorship, book challenges, privacy, IF, misinformation, and open access. It also notes scope to develop further statements in future.

The **German Library Association (DBV)** does not have an IF committee, but does have a legal committee, as well as a person named to the role of [Ethics Advisor](#), and to help implement its code of ethics. Their role seems primarily internal however.

The **Norwegian Library Association** has a [page](#) focused on democracy and intellectual freedom, but there is no dedicated committee or staff member for this. The work has been put together as part of its broader advocacy and social engagement. The Association also has programming to support libraries to act as debate centres to facilitate engagement in upcoming elections.

The **French Librarians' Association (ABF)** has both an [Ethics Committee](#) (focused on internal ethics questions much of the time, but also ready to resist outside efforts to curtail library freedoms, and an [Advocacy Committee](#).

The former deals with questions submitted to it, either because of an internal issue or the actions of others. It listens to challenges and offers ideas, putting things in context, or escalates where necessary. When a situation is submitted, it explores this (in confidence, and without replacing the role of unions) – even the rest of the Association is not aware. It doesn't make public pronouncements or start discussions, and if action is needed, it is through the ABF board.

The Advocacy Committee, amongst more general goals, has the task of promoting and following up on the Library Freedoms Charter.

The **Spanish Federation of Library and Museum Associations (FESABID)** has a [Professional Ethics Working Group](#). This has a goal to promote ethical standards in the sector however, with no focus on outside. There is also a group focused on [advocacy](#), looking to explore weaknesses in the current law.

3.2 Terms of reference for Committees not only working on IF

The **Fédération des milieux documentaires (Québec, Canada)** has a published [mandate](#) for its Policy and Lobbying Committee. This identifies rules around the composition of the Committee (including the desire for diversification in terms of library types, geography, career level, language and cultural backgrounds). It also sets out the autonomy of the Committee, although notes that it needs to coordinate with the board on controversial issues.

The Committee is tasked with proposing positions to the administrator of FMD, but can also work to develop responses to events and issues, as well as engage in relevant lobbying. There are also provisions on what different role-holders is, as well as a recommendation to focus on positive positions (not just criticism).

The mandate also sets out an idea of the benefits of the work of the Committee for the wider library sector, including public defence of library sector interests, to strengthen visibility, to have a dynamic community around the topic, to increase the presence of libraries in policy discussion, and to have well-defined positions. It is also seen as benefitting FMD as an association.

To note, there is no explicit reference to IF in this. Nonetheless, the three topics on which [positions](#) have been published (intellectual freedom, censorship and self-censorship, and drag-queen story times) are all relevant.

The [Association of Library Graduates](#) of Argentina includes IF issues under its wider legislative committee.

3.3 Research

The Quebec Public Library Association (ABPQ) has done work to [record examples](#) of challenges of books, working with the Canadian Federation of Library Associations (CFLA). The latter coordinates the [Library Challenges Database](#), and also manages a [webpage](#) with history on their survey work, as well as reporting.

The Italian Librarians Association carried out a survey on censorship in libraries in 2022, and published a [report](#) earlier this year, based on 621 responses.

CILIP Scotland supported [work](#) to explore how library advocacy can build on the ethics and values of the profession and their contribution to society. It also covers key concepts around advocacy, ethics and values. It explores in particular how values and ethics can strengthen advocacy, representing a unique feature of libraries.

ALA has its [own journal](#) in order to bring together insights and relevant work, as well as reporting on the most challenged books, running a regular blog, and releasing a series of publications.

3.4 Intellectual Freedom Statements

Canadian Federation of Library Associations: <https://cfla-fcab.ca/en/guidelines-and-position-papers/statement-on-intellectual-freedom-and-libraries/>. This includes implementation guidance. In addition, there are the following examples:

- [Intellectual Freedom: Third Party Use of Publicly Funded Library Meetings Rooms and Facilities](#)
- [Intellectual Freedom: Challenges to the book Irreversible Damage by Abigail Shrier – a CFLA-FCAB Intellectual Freedom Brief](#)
- [Intellectual Freedom: Challenges Faced by Libraries: Programming and Collections Supporting LGBTQIA2S+ Communities – Guidance from the CFLA-FCAB Intellectual Freedom Committee](#)
- [Intellectual Freedom: Notice of Personal Liability](#)
- [Intellectual Freedom: Position on Protest and Disagreement related to Collections, Programs and Speakers in Libraries. An Interpretation of the Canadian Federation of Library Associations’ Statement on Intellectual Freedom and Libraries](#)

The **American Library Association’s** [Library Bill of Rights](#) offers a set of principles that apply to the work of libraries, with implications for how libraries are regulated. There is also the ALA’s [Statement on the Freedom to Read](#), which is open for public signatures. This takes a broad approach in order to defend the right of access to the widest range of content possible. There is also [Banned Books Week](#), which draws attention to censorship.

This is supported by an official [set of interpretations of the Bill of Rights](#), officially designated by ALA’s Intellectual Freedom Committee. These include:

- [Access to digital resources and services](#)
- [Access to library resources and services for minors](#)
- [Access to library resources and services regardless of sex, gender, identity, gender expression or sexual orientation](#)
- [Access to resources and services in the school library](#)
- [Challenged resources](#)
- [Diverse collections](#)
- [Economic access to information access](#)
- [Education and information literacy](#)
- [Equity, diversity, inclusion](#)
- [Evaluating library collections](#)
- [Expurgation of library materials](#)
- [Internet filtering](#)
- [Intellectual freedom principles for academic libraires](#)
- [Labelling systems](#)
- [Library-initiated programmes and displays as a resource](#)
- [Meeting rooms](#)
- [Minors and online activity](#)
- [Politics in American libraries](#)

- [Prisoners' right to read](#)
- [Privacy](#)
- [Rating systems](#)
- [Religion in American libraries](#)
- [Restricted access to library materials](#)
- [Services to people with disabilities](#)
- [Universal right to free expression](#)
- [User-generated content in library discovery systems](#)
- [User-initiative exhibits, displays, and bulletin boards](#)
- [Visual and performing arts in libraries](#)

Beyond these formally approved texts, there are also guidelines which can help further. These address the following:

- [Freedom of expression and censorship](#)
- [Academic freedom](#)
- [Access to library resources and services](#)
- [Filters and filtering](#)
- [Meeting rooms, exhibit spaces and programmes](#)
- [Schools and minors' rights](#)

The French Librarians' Association (ABF) has its [Charter for the Fundamental Right of Citizens to Access Information and Knowledge](#). This sets out principles of access, of support in this, of experimentation, of non-discrimination, of participation in social innovation, of access to a trustworthy internet, of creation, and of diversity,

The **UK Library Association (CILIP)** has a [policy statement](#) on IF, freedom of access to information and freedom of expression for librarians and information professionals. This both establishes principles, and discusses implementation, plus the role of the association in this. CILIP also has policy guidelines on IF, available [here](#). This is a short document with 7 principles which librarians are encouraged to apply in taking decisions about the application of IF Principles.

LIANZA (New Zealand) has a [statement on freedom of information](#) from 2022, which focuses on core principles, and the role of libraries in upholding freedom. There is also a [discussion document](#) on Freedom of Expression, and an [article](#) exploring definitions of this freedom. Other statements cover:

- [Censorship and classification of publications](#)
- [Privacy guidelines](#) (for use by the profession, including references to relevant legislation), and [Frequently Asked Questions](#).

The **Australian Library and Information Association (ALIA)** has a [statement on free access to information](#) (2018). This also sets out key overall ideas, and illustrations of how libraries can apply key principles. In addition, as part of its Code of Ethics, ALIA includes a focus on [access to information](#), which offers a definition, relationship to other [core values](#), and examples of ethics. There are [linked initiatives](#) in Queensland which give further ideas to work with.

3.5 Other Tools

Reporting Challenges

The **Italian Librarians Association** offers an open possibility to submit information about book challenges on its [website](#).

The **American Library Association** has a very rich set of materials focusing on [book banning](#). This offers a form for doing this, with options to specify what form of censorship is being faced, what materials have been challenged, and information about the incident. This includes the possibility to ask for help from the Office for Intellectual Freedom.

The **French Librarians Association** also welcomes calls which highlight challenges and wider challenges.

The **Swedish Library Association** now also marks [banned books week](#), and has a [form](#) which librarians can fill in to report any effort to influence their work unduly. There is also a [poster](#) available, and see all the research work unpinning efforts here (also from [this page](#)).

The **Canadian Federation of Library Associations and Institutions** has an [Intellectual Freedom Toolkit](#), last updated in 2022. This brings together information and links, and is targeted at library managers. It highlights:

- Statements from library associations;
- Relevant legislation around IF;
- Links to other materials to support advocacy and work
- Links to articles on current or other relevant IF issues in libraries
- Sample documents, such as on collection development, responses to challenges, and IF in general, in particular at the level of individual libraries
- Model letters and policies, for example on use of meeting rooms
- Specific materials for school libraries
- On challenges, examples of how to respond, as well as contacts in such situations
- The IF Challenges Survey
- A reference to the possibility for ongoing updates.

CILIP (the **UK Library Association**) has shared [guidance](#) on managing safe and inclusive public library services. This is a significant piece of work, focusing on how to help people get the most out of libraries, while also how to deal with questions around multiculturalism, dialogue and more. In terms of contents, this includes:

- An introduction to freedom of information for libraries, including a statement of professional commitment and examples of situations where this comes up (book bans, contested spaces).
- Some key principles (11) as a basis for developing policies and responding to situations, followed by a checklist and practical examples of how to make the principles reality.

- A section on the law and its limits, explaining relevant pieces of law concerning freedoms and limitations on this, equalities and protected characteristics, ‘hate speech’, and library legislation itself.
- Guidance on management of collections, including collections development policies, stock and supplier selection, highlighting controversial subjects, how to involve others, liaison with parents, access to library material, presentation of stock, donations, and weeding.
- Guidelines on public internet access policies, including acceptable use
- Guidelines on policies around use of public spaces, covering accessibility, sustainability, location, civic activities (including how to deal with protests), and when it makes sense to prevent access.
- Guidelines on events and activities, including programming, types of events, creative events, planning, risk assessment, promotion (including a checklist for reflection on programming and communications), safe spaces, and evaluation (also with a checklist)
- Guidance on managing challenges, including a crisis communications set of steps, as well as social media
- A list of legal references and further reading

To note, the guide is accompanied by posters, separate checklists, crisis communications templates, a slide-deck and a statement of commitment, all on the [website](#).

The **American Library Association (United States)** shares a [core set](#) of intellectual freedom documents, including links to the Library Bill of Rights and interpretations (see above) and ALA’s Code of Ethics. There are also communications materials, notably:

- A [pamphlet](#) about the bill of rights and freedom to read
- A poster
- Historical information to explain the history of the idea

Other guidelines from them include:

- [Guidelines for reopening libraries during the pandemic](#),
- [3D printing in libraries](#),
- [Confidentiality and copying with law enforcement inquiries](#),
- [Guidelines for library \(intellectual freedom\) policies](#),
- [Guidelines for the development of policies around user behaviour](#),
- [Guidelines to minimise the effect of content filters on intellectual freedom](#),
- [RFID in libraries](#)
- [Social media guidelines for public and academic libraries](#).

The [website](#) also includes a series of publications, a list of resolutions and statements on different themes, **toolkits** on LGBTQ+ materials in school libraries, selection and reconsideration policies, serving LGBT communities and privacy, and a list of **Q&As** on different themes. Finally, there are details about how to contact the Office for Intellectual Freedom.

The **French Librarians' Association** has a [handbook](#) for library personnel when facing difficult situations (as well as a [collection of relevant legal texts](#)). This includes considerations around secularity and freedom of opinion, including the laws in place and what librarians can practically do. The Ethics Committee of the Association also makes itself available to consider concerns.

As an additional point, ALIA (Australia) has a mechanism for registering issues. Meanwhile, in other countries the role of libraries is to ensure that censorship does not completely deprive people of access, for example researchers with legitimate need to access such material.

4. Conclusion

As highlighted in the introduction, the goals of this survey were to provide an overview of the different ways in which libraries and their associations engage around Intellectual Freedom issues. It does not pretend to be comprehensive, but rather illustrative showing what is possible, precisely because it has already been done.

As a number of comments around the survey demonstrate, this is a dynamic field. Some associations are autonomously looking to build up their capacity to work here. Elsewhere, the emergence of pressures on the ability of libraries to support access to information means that associations and others feel obliged to organise better.

In addition to the practical support that we hope that the examples shared provide for associations and others in planning their own work, we can draw some conclusions from this work:

1. There are many different ways of going about working on intellectual freedom, from who leads work, what type of activity is pursued, what aspects of intellectual freedom are explored and more. Those wishing to establish or develop work on this therefore have a range of paths potentially to follow, according to their interests and ability, as well as where they can have maximum positive impact.
2. Regardless of region or association size, there is usually an example of a library association or field mobilising in some way around intellectual freedom. While we see that larger associations can tend to have the widest range of engagement (both in terms of type of engagement and topics covered), everyone can do something.
3. There is a strong range of materials and references presented that can be used by other libraries, associations and agencies. These provide useful models or at least inspiration for building structures and core tools, potentially making it easier to build capacity faster. These provide, in addition, the basis for a potential 'Do-It-Yourself kit' for building stronger engagement in Intellectual Freedom as a next step. Through this, we hope also to see libraries working more effectively with others to form partnerships to promote IF.