

Minors and Online Activity: An Interpretation of the *Library Bill of Rights*

The online environment offers opportunities for accessing, creating, and sharing information. The rights of minors to retrieve, create, and interact with information posted on the Internet in schools and libraries are extensions of their First Amendment rights.

Schools and libraries should ensure that they offer opportunities for students to use social media and other online applications constructively in their academic and recreational pursuits. Students can enhance their social, interpersonal, and academic skills with the use of online applications.

Some examples include

- creating documents and sharing them online;
- uploading pictures, videos, and visual material;
- engaging in interactive games;
- classifying content and organizing information; and
- participating in online communities.

Online tools may help children and young adults learn about and organize social, civic, recreational, and academic activities. Many sites invite users to establish online identities, join networks, share personal information, and create web content. Library workers curate age-appropriate resources for academic and personal pursuits and teach children and young adults how to be safe online. Parents and guardians play a critical role in preparing their children for participation in online activity by communicating their values and guiding their children's use of the Internet. Libraries and their governing bodies shall ensure that only a parent or guardian has the right and the responsibility to determine what their child—and only their child—accesses online.

As defenders of intellectual freedom and the First Amendment, libraries have a responsibility to offer unrestricted access to online activity in accordance with local, state, and federal laws and to advocate for greater access where it is abridged. Of equal importance is the responsibility to advocate for minors' right to free expression and privacy online while using libraries of all types. In addition, library workers and educators should help young people learn digital citizenship skills that will prepare them to be responsible, effective members of a global society.

Adopted July 15, 2009, by the ALA Council; amended on July 1, 2014; Adopted ALA Annual Conference 2019.