Two foundational documents from the American Library Association, the Code of Ethics and the Core Values of Librarianship, are meant to guide the actions of all U.S. librarians. However, their relevance to school librarians has not been studied to date. In this research, U.S. school librarians were surveyed to evaluate the significance of these documents. Generally, strong support was indicated for both. Respondents expressed less support for the ethical principles of intellectual freedom/censorship and privacy/confidentiality and for the core values of preservation, the public good, and democracy. Additional respondent comments suggest that some school librarians have difficulty applying these statements in their school settings.

Introduction

The American Library Association (ALA) has developed numerous documents and policies to guide and direct librarians’ work. Two of the most important statements are the Code of Ethics and the Core Values of Librarianship. Together, these documents provide a framework for much of librarianship; as the Core Values states, these “define, inform, and guide our professional practice” (ALA, 2004, para. 1). Similarly, the Code of Ethics lists “the values to which we are committed” (ALA, 2017a, para. 2).

However, relatively little research has studied the actual implementation of these normative guiding documents. Do librarians rely on the Code of Ethics to “guide ethical decision making” (ALA, 2017a, para. 4)? Have the Core Values actually “been embraced by the majority of librarians as the foundations of their practice” (ALA, 2004, para. 2)? How important are these documents in day-to-day librarianship? The research described here begins to answer these questions, focusing on school libraries in the United States. If the ALA claims their ethics and values as authoritative guidelines to professional action, but these principles are not used, then there is a serious disconnect between the organization and the professionals it purports to represent. For ALA, as well as practitioners, a disconnect may mean reconsidering the content or importance of the Code of Ethics and Core Values.

Literature Review

Code of Ethics

The ALA Code of Ethics was first written and approved in 1939 and has been subsequently amended in 1981, 1995, and 2008 (ALA, 2017a, para. 13; see Appendix A for the complete Code of Ethics.). The code has eight principles, focusing on equitable service, intellectual freedom, privacy and confidentiality, intellectual property, respect for co-workers, private interests, personal beliefs, and excellence in the profession. The code has been described as

the document that translates the values of intellectual freedom that define the profession of librarianship into broad principles that may be used by individual members of that
profession as well as by others employed in a library as a framework for dealing with situations involving ethical conflicts (ALA, 2017b, para. 2).

The ALA does not offer different codes for different types of librarianship, thus implying that this code should be relevant and useful for all types of librarians.

Several authors have written about the history of the Code of Ethics and some have offered thoughtful critiques. Others have taken a practical bent, explaining how to deploy and use the Code of Ethics as a practicing librarian (e.g., Hauptman, 2002; Preer, 2008; Simpson, 2003). Only a few scholars have conducted research into how the Code of Ethics is used by librarians (Kendrick & Leaver, 2011). For example, Hoffman (2005) examined the perspectives of Texas librarians, after the Texas Library Association adopted the ALA Code of Ethics. She reported that over 80% of respondents (from all types of libraries) agreed with each principle of the code (p. 98). However, “school librarians clearly had a conflict” when it came to censorship, as 73% of school library respondents “agreed that librarians should exercise censorship in the selection of materials” (p. 100). This was a strong departure from the responses of other types of librarians, as well as a strong disagreement with the Code of Ethics.

Kendrick and Leaver (2011) examined the impact of the Code of Ethics on academic librarians; respondents indicated some uncertainty about whether the code supported the values of librarianship and whether it was useful in day to day practice. Only 46% of respondents said they were generally familiar with the Code of Ethics. Nearly two-thirds of their respondents reported an ethical dilemma in the past six months, but few reported relying on the Code of Ethics to resolve these dilemmas. The authors concluded “there may not be a link between Code of Ethics knowledge and how academic librarians respond to instances of observed or self-reported unethical workplace behavior” (p. 86).

McNicol (2016) studied school librarians’ ethics in the UK, focusing on intellectual freedom. She reported that respondents were “more likely to express support for intellectual freedom in theory than in practice” (p. 333). These respondents were wary of conflict with administrators or parents and reported relying heavily on their own knowledge and personal judgment (p. 338).

Turning to the U.S., most discussion of ethics in relation to school librarianship is normative—articles explain the ethical principles and exhort school librarians to carry them out. The principles of the Code of Ethics “offer a direction and provide a moral framework that library media specialists may use” (Adams, 2008, p. 31; see also Martin, 2009). There is some acknowledgement that ethical dilemmas faced by school librarians may be quite complex and not easily resolved through application of the Code of Ethics (Butler, 2005; Adams, 2009). Adams (2009), for example, says, school librarians must

balance the principles they learned in library school with the messy mix of school culture, district policies and procedures, competing community values, administrators trying to be responsive to parents, well-meaning colleagues with different educational philosophies, and, finally, the rights of students to exercise free inquiry in the school media center (p. 69).

Thus, there are two streams of publications with respect to the Code of Ethics and school librarianship in the U.S.: on one hand, school librarians are pressed to enact the principles of the code; on the other hand, writers recognize that some ethical dilemmas faced by school librarians are quite complex and may not be easily resolvable by turning to the Code of Ethics. However, there is little research that examines this “messy” area of ethical interpretation.

**Core Values of Librarianship**

Along with the Code of Ethics, the Core Values of Librarianship is another foundational, guiding document established by the ALA. As adopted in 2004, the core values are access,
confidentiality/privacy, democracy, diversity, education and lifelong learning, intellectual freedom, preservation, the public good, professionalism, service, and social responsibility (ALA, 2017; see Appendix B for the complete Core Values). The Core Values can be seen as “a reiteration and distillation” of other foundational ALA documents (such as the Library Bill of Rights) (Berg & Jacob, 2016, p. 461).

Most literature about the Core Values and school librarianship is, again, normative, encouraging these librarians to enact and be guided by the Core Values. For example, Ballard (2016) said the Core Values “are the ever-present and unwavering foundational elements upon which librarianship is constructed” (p. 28; see also Adams, 2016). Berg and Jacobs (2016) noted that the Core Values are “discussed infrequently, applied sparingly and cited modestly” in the literature (p. 459). Furthermore, the Core Values are rarely investigated through research (p. 463).

**Methods**

This research was conducted as a nationwide survey of school library professionals, distributed via Qualtrics survey software. The survey instrument is featured in the Appendix. The survey method was chosen in hopes of obtaining a representative sample from which some generalizations could be made. The survey took approximately 5-15 minutes to complete and was a mixture of multiple choice and open-ended questions (with 44 total questions). The Qualtrics software records answers and, as with this survey, can be set up to not record IP addresses, thus ensuring anonymity for respondents. The survey was distributed via a link in an email message; the link took the survey respondents directly to the survey. In an attempt to boost participation, the school library coordinator from each state was asked to circulate the survey to their state’s school librarians via email. However, this attempt was mostly unsuccessful, as there were only 312 total responses. Thus, the survey results must be interpreted cautiously, as this data may not be generalizable to all school librarians.

One of the research questions is whether the core values have “been embraced by the majority of librarians as the foundations of their practice.” The low response rate for this survey means that the survey may not be able to accurately answer such questions. Because “validity in research refers to how accurately a study answers the study question or the strength of the study conclusions” (Sullivan, 2011, p. 119), these survey results must be interpreted with caution.

**Respondents’ Demographic Information**

Although the location of most respondents could not be ascertained, most respondents (n= 125) were in school librarians in elementary schools, as shown in Table 2.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grades served</th>
<th>Number of respondents</th>
<th>Percentage of respondents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Elementary</td>
<td>125</td>
<td>43.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Junior high or middle school</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>15.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High school</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>26.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Combination</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>14.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

High school was the second most common response (n = 76), followed by junior high/middle school (n = 45). All but one respondent (n = 183, 99.46%) reported working full time in schools. The majority (n = 166, 89.7%) worked at only one school; this was a bit unexpected because of recent news stories and anecdotes about school librarians having to cover multiple schools (which only 19 respondents reported).

Most respondents noted that they held a Master’s of Library Science (MLS) or the equivalent; 76.2% (n = 141) held this degree while 23.8% (n = 44) did not. In addition to the MLS degree, many
reported holding additional degrees: 149 reported a bachelor’s degree, 77 reported another master’s degree, 22 reported an associate degree, and 3 said they held a doctorate. Others reported they were working on additional training, often a second bachelor degree, a doctorate, or library-specific training. The majority of respondents said they were certified (n = 164, 89.1%). Only 15 (8.1%) said they were not certified, and five (2.8%) said their state did not require certification.

Results
This section summarizes the results of the survey. First, basic demographic information about the participants is explained, followed by data about ethical principles, core values, and intellectual freedom.

Code of Ethics
The respondents were asked about professional ethical principles in several questions. First, they were asked which ethical principles they used in their job, in a free-form response; 177 people left a comment, most listing multiple principles they relied upon. The most common response was service (59 respondents), followed by privacy/confidentiality (30 respondents) and providing resources (30 respondents). Additional responses included avoiding censorship and promoting intellectual freedom (28 respondents), ensuring equal access (26 respondents), providing diverse resources (24 respondents), treating students fairly (22 respondents) and serving as a resource for the entire school (22 respondents). Although copyright (15 respondents), digital citizenship (12 respondents), and plagiarism (10 respondents) were mentioned, they were not very frequently listed as guiding ethical principles by these respondents.

Next, respondents were asked to evaluate the ethical principles of the American Library Association, as expressed in the Code of Ethics. They reported whether the eight ethical principles were important in their school libraries, as shown in Table 3.
As shown in Table 3, all of the ethical principles of the ALA received strong support from these respondents. The principle with the strongest support was the first, “We provide the highest level of service to all library users...” which is not surprising given the free-response comments which also emphasized service. However, the third principle (“we protect each library user’s right to privacy and confidentiality...”) received the weakest support, with just 50.8% of respondents reporting it was very important and 38.6% saying it was somewhat important. This finding is somewhat surprising given the frequency with which privacy and confidentiality were mentioned.
in free-response comments; however, it’s worth noting that only seven respondents said this principle was somewhat unimportant and zero said it was not at all important.

In a follow-up question, respondents were asked if any of these principles were not relevant to school libraries, eliciting some intriguing responses. For example, one respondent said:

[T]he principles of censorship (or lack thereof) are shaded in my library as it is an elementary school library and I try to purchase books with strong characters who make good choices. My parents are for the most part conservative and want to know that their children have appropriate books available to them.

Another librarian said, “I think they are all relevant to school libraries too but I do think we have an obligation to provide grade appropriate materials for our students.” Others noted that confidentiality is difficult because students are minors, and staff, teachers, and administrators may want access to their records; one person noted, “I don’t believe the users [sic] right to privacy is applicable when there is a potentially dangerous situation in the school.” A second respondent said, “I marked right to privacy and censorship slightly lower because I work with children.”

Some respondents argued that these principles are very important in school libraries; for example, one person said “They are extremely relevant to school libraries, where we are teaching about truth, justice, democracy, and America on a daily basis.” Another added, “In this era of ‘alternative facts’ and ‘fake news’ and the devastating effects they are having at all levels of society and government, the above [principles] is even more important than ever.”

Respondents reported confidence in applying ethical principles in their library. Nearly two-thirds were very confident they could apply ethical principles in their library, with just over one-third somewhat confident. Approximately 38.6% said they wanted to know more about library ethics—but the same percentage said they did not need to know more, with 22.6% unsure if they wanted to know more.

In free-response answers, respondents said they wanted to know “what are ‘hard’ absolutes and what are ‘soft’ absolutes and what are ‘soft’ ethics” as well as “What is the line between protecting young students and allowing them choice?” Another wanted to know “how to handle parent requests such as restriction of materials based on reading levels. I want to respect parents but also want students to challenge themselves.” Several mentioned privacy and confidentiality of students, especially in the context of requests for information from teachers and administrators. The respondents noted that thinking about potential challenges concerned them. One librarian said, “Our district policy for challenges is out of date […] right now, I carefully check content and try to stay away from some content,” which was echoed by others. Most comments referred to a generalized desire for basic information, updates, and case studies to explore ethical issues. Several respondents noted they were relatively new to their positions, or served in relative isolation, and welcomed a chance to discuss ethical issues in their libraries.

**Core Values**

Respondents were also asked about the Core Values of the ALA. As shown in Table 4, they reported whether these core values are important in their libraries.
Table 4. Respondents’ Ratings on Importance of ALA Core Values in School Libraries

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Core Value</th>
<th>Very important N (%)</th>
<th>Somewhat important N (%)</th>
<th>Neither important nor unimportant N (%)</th>
<th>Somewhat unimportant N (%)</th>
<th>Not at all important N (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Access</td>
<td>174 (92.1)</td>
<td>15 (7.9)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Confidentiality/privacy</td>
<td>103 (53.4)</td>
<td>82 (42.5)</td>
<td>5 (2.6)</td>
<td>3 (1.5)</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Democracy</td>
<td>115 (60.2)</td>
<td>55 (28.8)</td>
<td>15 (7.6)</td>
<td>2 (1.1)</td>
<td>1 (0.5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diversity</td>
<td>146 (76)</td>
<td>39 (20.4)</td>
<td>5 (2.6)</td>
<td>0 (0)</td>
<td>1 (0.5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education and lifelong learning</td>
<td>182 (94.8)</td>
<td>8 (4.2)</td>
<td>1 (0.5)</td>
<td>0 (0)</td>
<td>1 (0.5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intellectual freedom</td>
<td>156 (81.3)</td>
<td>33 (17.2)</td>
<td>3 (1.6)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preservation</td>
<td>71 (37)</td>
<td>80 (41.7)</td>
<td>27 (14.1)</td>
<td>11 (5.7)</td>
<td>1 (0.5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The public good</td>
<td>110 (57.6)</td>
<td>54 (28.3)</td>
<td>15 (7.9)</td>
<td>3 (1.6)</td>
<td>2 (1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professionalism</td>
<td>174 (90.2)</td>
<td>18 (9.3)</td>
<td>1 (0.5)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Service</td>
<td>182 (94.8)</td>
<td>9 (4.7)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1 (0.5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social responsibility</td>
<td>139 (73.2)</td>
<td>43 (22.6)</td>
<td>6 (3.2)</td>
<td>1 (0.5)</td>
<td>1 (0.5)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

According to these responses, “service” (94.8% said it was very important), “education and lifelong learning” (94.8%), “access” (92.1%), and “professionalism” (90.2%) were the most important core values in school libraries. This echoes what respondents said in the discussion of ethical principles. The core values with the least support were “preservation” (37%), followed by “confidentiality/privacy” (53.4%) and “the public good” (57.6%). Respondent comments shed further light on these evaluations of core values.

Librarians reported mixed understandings of how “preservation” was relevant to their school libraries. For example, a representative comment was:

*Preservation isn’t too important in our library. We don’t really have any archive quality books. Now if you are talking about taking care of what you do have, then it is very important in our library. My budget is so small we take care of EVERYTHING.*

On one hand, school librarians did not see themselves engaged in preservation activities as typically understood. Another respondent said, “I’m not sure that preservation is important. We are not an archive, and our mission is to provide current resources.” On the other hand, they did value longevity and preservation of materials due to limited budgets.

The respondents also expressed uncertainty about how “the public good” and “democracy” were relevant to their school libraries. One said, “Not sure who decides what the Public Good [sic] is” and another said, “the public good—I just don’t understand the specifics of this.” Summarizing the uncertainty, a respondent noted, “I was uncertain as to what ‘the public good’ meant. Clarification on this point is important. Does it mean that we serve our greater community outside of our school buildings? Stakeholders?” Others noted that rules for the library and/or the school were decided by authority figures, implying that the rules lacked democratic input from students.

Another core value which drew several comments was “diversity” (with 76.4% saying it was very important). One respondent said

*I think the diversity in a library would differ according to the age of students and regions in the U.S…I live in the Bible belt—I consider myself conservative—I’m not going to expose the students to topics that are controversial.*

Similarly, another said they were hesitant about the “issue of social responsibility” and “hesitant about LGBT issues and promoting them or covering them at the middle school level.”

In general, though, most respondents were very supportive of the majority of ALA’s core values. For example, one person said, “I feel these core values are under attack and are crucial to ensuring
students learn to be informed, empathetic citizens” and another said, “All of these are integral to the library field. I struggle to understand how librarians don’t value all of these as strongly important. This is the core of what we do!”

**Intellectual Freedom**

Finally, because intellectual freedom is of particular interest to the researcher, this core value was explored in further questions. Respondents were asked how important intellectual freedom is in their library, as shown in Table 6.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 5. Importance of Intellectual Freedom</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Response</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very important</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moderately important</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not important</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I don't know what intellectual freedom means</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Over two-thirds (72.8%) of respondents said intellectual freedom was very important in their library. Only one person (0.5%) said it was not important.

A majority of respondents affirmed they have a reconsideration policy: 85.4% (n = 164) reported having such a policy; 8.3% (n=16) were unsure if they had a policy and 6.3% (n = 12) reported no policy. Half of the respondents reported having never experienced a book challenge (n = 105, 54.7%), while 42.2% (n = 81) had gone through a challenge (and 3.1%, n = 6 were unsure).

Nearly two-thirds of respondents (63.5%, n=122) said they themselves had removed an item from their library, compared with 31.3% (n = 60) who had not removed an item from their library. Those who had removed items were asked to explain in subsequent comments, and 120 people left comments. Some of these comments explained situations where parents, teachers, or principals requested books be removed (sometimes following a formal challenge procedure, but more often not), but most comments described the librarian removing content for various reasons. Graphic novels and manga were mentioned by 22 respondents and were faulted for being “too graphic.” For example, one respondent said, “The illustrations were very graphic and sexual in nature, and we could not justify keeping them on the shelves.” Another said, “I have received some books with an order that I deemed inappropriate for high school students because of graphic sexual illustrations (manga, graphic novels).” For these respondents, the pictorial content of graphic novels was too detailed and was seen as not appropriate.

The most common (reported by 42 respondents) reason for removing items was due to “mature content.” The exact nature of this content was often left unspecified: “the book was of a mature theme and not appropriate for an elementary school library.” Another said that they removed books from an elementary library because “Accelerated Reader levels are not the content levels. Just because they can read it, doesn’t mean they should read it.” A third person explained, “There was a book that discussed a topic I didn’t feel was appropriate for students in grades K-2 and I put it in the back room and not out in the general circulation.” With these responses, one is left wondering about the content that was “too mature.”

The second most common concern (with 28 responses) was related to sex and sexual content. One respondent noted, “a few graphic novels had some pictures of females with very little clothing on and very exaggerated anatomy,” while another removed a “book purchased before my time [that] contained graphic sex scenes.” Another librarian said, “I’m pretty liberal, but some graphic sexual encounters don’t need to be readily available to teenagers.”
Others removed content because of language (11 responses), lack of literary merit (7 responses), or due to dated, racist content (5 responses). A respondent said, “I removed items that contained curse words…I do not feel materials with words we are teaching our elementary students not to say should be in the library.” As an example of the lack of literary merit, one respondent explained:

I removed a book when I found out that the main character threw a beer bottle out of a car window, painted a stop sign, and talked back to a police officer. I read the book to the end and there was no redemption anywhere for that character.

Another librarian reported that they removed an item because it was “very old, out of print, work of fiction, with very little literary value, that contained some very offensive racial slurs. The work was deemed to have little to no educational value and was weeded from the collection.”

While most respondents did not elaborate on their justification for removing items, a few respondents left detailed comments. For example, one respondent noted, “I evaluate items as to how they fit into the overall values and mind-set of our community.” In a similar vein, a respondent described putting some books with sexual content in the librarian office because the school is a combined middle and high school:

We are from a rural, religious area and I don’t see any reason why I should open myself up for controversy over a book that many in our community would deem inappropriate. It would only scar the image of the school library and cause negative comments.

Respondents were also asked to define or explain intellectual freedom in a school library context; 138 comments were left. Most responses (n=62) explained that intellectual freedom meant accessing (nearly) anything, freely and without any judgment. For example, one librarian said that intellectual freedom means “students have the right to select materials of their choice for reading without the fear of criticism or harassment for doing so.” Another explained it as “the right of each individual to freely choose whatever book it is that they wish, the ability to choose a book without fear of judgment from their peers, and the ability to discuss openly what they have read.”

Other respondents mentioned the importance of having multiple viewpoints represented in the library (n=29) and allowing students to pursue their own unique interests (n=28). One respondent said, “it’s the right for students to receive information on all sides of issues, without bias” and another said, “having access to a wide variety of viewpoints in the materials.” Others focused on the fact that “students are allowed to read books of their choice and are free to explore topics that are of interest to them.” Similarly, a respondent said, “students and staff should have access to print and digital resources that meet their needs and allow for curiosity and investigation.” For some, intellectual freedom was interpreted broadly: “students have the right to explore all topics and perspectives without restriction” or “regardless if there is a curriculum connection or not.”

Others put some limitations on intellectual freedom, such as “the scope of decency” or “in the context of the mission of our school” or “within our county’s acceptable use policy.” Fourteen respondents discussed the importance of age appropriateness with regard to intellectual freedom. One respondent explained:

I define intellectual freedom in a school library media center as a right to know what is desired to learn [sic] as long as it is age-appropriate. As school librarians, we sometimes have a harder job and a narrow line to walk between intellectual freedom and the protection of our students.

Another commented on the balance school librarians try to strike, saying that intellectual freedom is “making materials and resources freely available to all students without regard to the librarian’s political, personal, or religious viewpoints, while respecting the parental rights.” There was some disagreement among respondents. For example, one person said intellectual freedom is “students having access to all topics” but added, “I don’t have books on masu
gays/lesbians, and books of that nature.” In contrast, another respondent invoked similar topics but argued they should be present in school libraries:

> Intellectual freedom means the ability to read what you want...Many students can identify with the protagonist in a story, particularly one with social problems all students face today, whether it’s sexual identity, bullying, etc. These books should be available to the student for help with their own problems and not kept out of the library because of curse words or content.

It appears that school librarians differ on what they consider appropriate content for the students they serve.

**Discussion**

In this research, I found, generally strong support from school librarians for both the ALA Code of Ethics and the Core Values of Librarianship. All of the principles of the Code of Ethics were rated as very or somewhat important by over 80% of respondents. The principles with the lowest support were the second one (focused on intellectual freedom and resisting censorship) and the third one (focused on privacy and confidentiality). In addition, the ethical principle pertaining to service was rated very highly by respondents.

Similarly, there was strong support for most of the core values prescribed by the ALA. The exceptions were preservation, the public good, and democracy. It was difficult for the respondents to identify how these core values were related or applicable to their school library settings. The core value of diversity sparked some disagreement among respondents; while 76.4% said that diversity was very important, others explained they downplayed diversity because of their communities’ overall lack of diversity.

When asked about intellectual freedom in their institutions, the school librarians were generally supportive, though further comments revealed some dissention. The respondents were concerned about mature content, sexual content, and strong language. It is not clear from most respondents what is meant by “mature” or “sexual” content. For example, there was also some concern raised about LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender) content—does this count as mature and/or sexual content to some school librarians? Many respondents mentioned using “age appropriateness” as a determining factor in whether to purchase an item. This, too, is a vague phrase that could enable self-censorship of many topics. Nonetheless, this is a core consideration for school librarians.

The literature review noted that some discussions of the ALA Code of Ethics noted that applying these principles, particularly in school libraries, can be difficult. This difficulty was noted by the respondents. If the ALA’s stance in the Code of Ethics and the Core Values is absolutist, it may be difficult to enact these principles and values in the restricted setting of a school library. Perhaps more nuance is needed in these foundational documents so that they are more useful and applicable across a variety of library types.

**Limitations**

The results of this survey should be interpreted cautiously due to the low number of respondents; the reliability and validity of this study would be stronger with a larger and more representational. This study has provided us with solid information about how school librarians view the Code of Ethics and the Core Values of Librarianship, but did not gather information about how school librarians apply these ethical principles and values. Further information could be gathered via interviews, focus groups, and surveys with different questions.
Conclusion
This survey examined school librarians’ perspectives on the ALA Code of Ethics and the Core Values of Librarianship. While generally high support was indicated for both foundational documents, the respondents indicated some concern over intellectual freedom and privacy (from the Code of Ethics) and preservation, the public good, and democracy (from the Core Values). Additional comments from the respondents suggest that some school librarians have difficulty in applying these statements in their school settings.

References

Author Note
Shannon M. Oltmann is an assistant professor in the School of Information Science at the University of Kentucky. Her research interests include censorship, intellectual freedom, information policy, public libraries, privacy, and qualitative research methods.
Appendix. Survey Instrument

What state is your school library/media center in?
[Drop-down menu with every state]

How long have you worked in school libraries or media centers?
☐ Under three years
☐ Three years or longer

Which grades do you serve?
☐ Elementary
☐ Junior High or Middle School
☐ High School
☐ Combination

Are there any ethical dilemmas you face in your job? If so, please describe them here.

The next several questions ask you about hypothetical situations. Please describe what you would do in each situation. There is no right or wrong answer to these questions.

A grandparent comes into the school library, concerned about a book her granddaughter has checked out. The book has some swear words in it. The parent wants the book removed from the library. What will you do, and why?

An anonymous threat to your school has been made online. The threat included lines from a popular book and now the principal wants to know who has checked out the book in the past six months. Will you share these records with the principal and the police? Why or why not?

A parent contacts you and asks that his children not be allowed to check out books with magic, wizards, or imaginary creatures. Will you agree to this? Why or why not?

The next several questions ask you about ethics. Remember, all answers and perspectives are valuable. Even if you don’t know much about ethics or use ethics very much in your job, we still want to hear your opinion. Please answer as completely as you can.

What are some ethical principles you use in your job? For example, one ethical principle might be “service to others.” List up to five:
The ethical principles listed below are from the American Library Association. Please indicate how important these are in your school library.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Very important</th>
<th>Somewhat Important</th>
<th>Neither important nor unimportant</th>
<th>Somewhat unimportant</th>
<th>Not at all important</th>
<th>I don't understand this</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>We provide the highest level of service to all library users through appropriate and usefully organized resources; equitable service policies; equitable access; and accurate, unbiased, and courteous responses to all requests.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>We uphold the principles of intellectual freedom and resist all efforts to censor library resources.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>We protect each library user’s right to privacy and confidentiality with respect to information sought or received and resources consulted, borrowed, acquired or transmitted.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>We respect intellectual property rights and advocate balance between the interests of information users and rights holders.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>We treat co-workers and other colleagues with respect, fairness, and good faith, and advocate conditions of employment that safeguard the rights and welfare of all employees of our institutions.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>We do not advance private interests at the expense of library users, colleagues, or our employing institutions.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>We distinguish between our personal convictions and professional duties and do not allow our personal beliefs to interfere with fair representation of the aims of our institutions or the provision of access to their information resources.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>We strive for excellence in the profession by maintaining and enhancing our own knowledge and skills, by encouraging the professional development of co-workers, and by fostering the aspirations of potential members of the profession.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Next, we are going to ask about the Core Values of Librarianship as described by the American Library Association. Again, all perspectives are valuable, even if you don't know much about this topic.

Which of these core values are important in your library/media center? Check all that are important.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Core Value</th>
<th>Very important</th>
<th>Somewhat important</th>
<th>Neither important nor unimportant</th>
<th>Somewhat unimportant</th>
<th>Not at all important</th>
<th>I don't understand this</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Access</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Confidentiality/ Privacy</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Democracy</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diversity</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education and Lifelong Learning</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intellectual Freedom</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preservation</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Public Good</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professionalism</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Service</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Responsibility</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Do you have any comments about the above question?

Are any of these core values (listed above) NOT relevant to school libraries/media centers? If so, please explain why.

Are there other core values that are important in a school library/media center (other than the ones listed above)? If so, please list them here:

Are there any core values that you don’t understand? If so, list them here and explain, if you can, what is confusing.

A Reconsideration Policy is a policy that describes what to do when someone challenges library items or wants items removed from the library. Do you have a Reconsideration Policy?

○ Yes
○ Not sure/ Don’t know
○ No

Have you ever had a challenge in your library/media center? A “challenge” means someone wanted you to remove an item from the library/media center.

○ Yes
○ Not sure/ Don’t know
○ No

Have you ever removed something from your library/media center because you thought it was inappropriate?

○ Yes
○ Not sure/ Don’t know
○ No

If you answered yes, please describe what happened, including the item you removed:
How important is intellectual freedom in your library?
- Very important
- Moderately important
- Not important
- I don't know what intellectual freedom means

How important is student privacy in your library?
- Very important
- Moderately important
- Not important

How confidently can you apply ethical principles in your library?
- Very confidently
- Somewhat confidently
- Not confidently

Do you wish you knew more about library ethics?
- Yes
- Not sure/ Don't know
- No

If you answered yes, what do you wish you knew?

How would you define intellectual freedom in a school library/ media center context?

The last section asks you about your background. Please answer as many of the questions as you can.

Do you have a Master of Library Science (MLS) or an equivalent Master's degree?
- Yes
- No

OTHER than a Master of Library Science (MLS) or the equivalent, what degrees do you have? Check all that apply.
- Associate degree
- Bachelor degree
- Other Master's degree
- Juris Doctorate
- Doctorate
- Other: ____________________

If you have a Master of Library Science (MLS) or an equivalent Master's degree, did you learn about ethical principles in your coursework?
- Yes
- Not sure/ Don't remember
- No

Do you work:
- Full time (35 hours or more per week)
- Part time (less than 35 hours per week)

Do you split your time working at more than one school?
- Yes
- No
Are you a certified librarian?
- Yes
- No
- My state does not require school librarians to be certified

How many years have you worked in school libraries?
- Less than three years
- Three years or longer

Are you a member of:
- American Library Association
- American Association of School Librarians
- State-level association (like Kentucky Library Association or Kentucky Association of School Librarians)
- Other: ________________
- Definitely not

Do you have any additional thoughts or comments about ethics and core values?