



Consultation Paper

ALIA Code of Ethics for the Library and Information Services Workforce

Summary

Why are we consulting?

There is currently no Australian-specific Code of Ethics for the LIS workforce. Feedback on this draft Code will assist ALIA to finalise a Code of Ethics for the Australian LIS Workforce.

How can you have your say?

You can respond in writing or if this is not possible we can arrange to take verbal feedback.

What is the closing date?

Sunday 7 July 2024

Why do we need an Australian Code of Ethics for the library and information services (LIS) workforce?

The impetus to create of Code of Ethics for the LIS workforce in Australia came from discussions about what principles connect and unify us as a workforce. The necessity for a specifically Australian Code of Ethics became apparent in consultations with the LIS sector for the LIS Workforce Project (previously Professional Pathways). During the consultations, many members of the workforce expressed the importance and centrality of the sector's ethics and values, and the need for a Code of Ethics that reflects the shared ethics in Australia. The limitations of relying on the International Federation of Library Associations (IFLA) Code of Ethics, especially in key areas such as First Nations contexts, were expressed and acknowledged.

Why are we consulting?

In response to this feedback, the LIS Workforce Advisory Board recommended, and the ALIA Board decided, that the development of an Australian-specific code of ethics was necessary. The intention to draft an Australia code of Ethics for the LIS workforce was announced at the launch of the [ALIA Skills, Knowledge and Ethics Framework for the LIS Workforce](#) in November 2023.

The Code of Ethics is intended to be representative and supportive of the entire LIS sector, and therefore everyone in the sector is invited and welcome to contribute feedback, with the aim of creating a Code of Ethics that embraces the sector's diversity and unites the workforce in ethical

practice. Roles and professional duties differ greatly across organisations, and it is shared ethics and values that unite and connect the entire sector.

How you can provide feedback

Input is sought on all aspects of the Code of Ethics and there is no set format for submissions, however you may wish to answer the questions posed throughout this Consultation Paper, which have been included to support and structure reflective feedback. Written submissions can be sent to education@alia.org.au.

If you cannot provide a written submission please email education@alia.org.au or call the ALIA Office on 02 6215 8222 and we will find an alternative way of receiving your feedback.

When providing feedback please indicate:

- whether you are making the submission as an individual or on behalf of an organisation
- whether you are happy for your submission to be published
- if you are happy for it to be published, whether you wish to be anonymous.

Please provide feedback by **Sunday 7 July 2024**.

How the feedback will be used

The results of this consultation will inform the final draft of the Code of Ethics for the LIS workforce. Where permission is granted, submissions and feedback to this Consultation Paper will be published on the ALIA website for transparency.

The final draft of the Code of Ethics for the LIS Workforce will be launched in the second half of 2024.

Background

The International Federation of Library Associations (IFLA) created the [IFLA Code of Ethics for Librarians and other Information Workers](#) (long form) in 2012. [ALIA endorsed](#) the IFLA Code of Ethics in 2012 and revised and continued the endorsement in 2018. The IFLA Code of Ethics is explicitly intended to be considered by Library and Information Associations when creating or revising their own codes.

To create this draft for comment, a small working group from ALIA conducted a wide sweep of the literature, existing Codes of Ethics and Codes of Conduct from peak bodies around the world and other industry output. Using the IFLA Code of Ethic as a base, the team then adapted the Code of Ethics for the Australian context, including the development of definitions and ethical statements, and changes to structure, format and implementation.

Feedback on earlier drafts of this Code of Ethics has been provided and incorporated from members of the [ALIA Board of Directors](#), the ALIA Board sub-committee on Accreditation and Standards, the [LIS Workforce Advisory Board](#) and a small number of key individuals and groups.

About the Draft Australian Code of Ethics

The Code of Ethics drafted for the Australian LIS workforce is indebted to the IFLA Code of Ethics as a foundational starting point and was created with awareness and reference to similar codes from other library associations, including the American Library Association (ALA), the Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals (CILIP) and the Library and Information Association of New Zealand Aotearoa (LIANZA).

Key changes from IFLA Code of Ethics

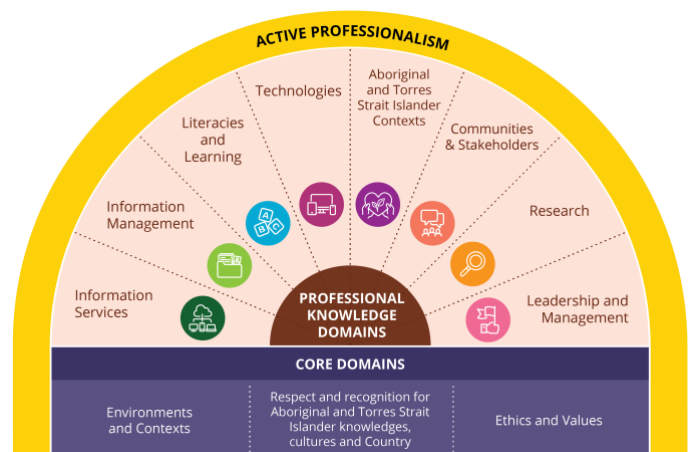
The ALIA Code of Ethics for the LIS Workforce was reimagined and rewritten to align with current and enduring values and for the context of the LIS sector in Australia. Some of the key differences between the IFLA and ALIA Codes of Ethics are:

- replacing 'neutrality' with 'respect'
- adding a clause on sustainability, similarly to the ALA, and in line with Object (f) of the ALIA Constitution (2022)
- adding clauses on continuing professional development (CPD) and literacies because these are key practices and behaviours aligned with values
- Indigenous Cultural and Intellectual Property (ICIP) is included alongside Intellectual Property (IP) and copyright
- removing 'secrecy', but including provisions around access to Indigenous materials
- changing 'professional skills' and 'colleague and employer/employee relationship' to CPD and active professionalism in line with LIS Workforce Framework
- changing the audience through the title from 'Code of Ethics for *Librarians and other information workers*' to 'Code of Ethics for the LIS Workforce', making the language more inclusive

Components of the Code of Ethics

The ALIA Code of Ethics for the LIS Workforce is made up of a preamble, outlining definitions, its purpose, who it is for, how it is intended to be used, and eight ethics statements. The colours in the graphic components are shared with the [ALIA Framework for the LIS Workforce](#).

The Code of Ethics will be the key document involved in enacting Core Domain 3 'Ethics and Values' of the [ALIA Framework for the LIS Workforce](#), outlining our shared ethics and values, uniting the LIS workforce and providing service delivery.



Format and presentation

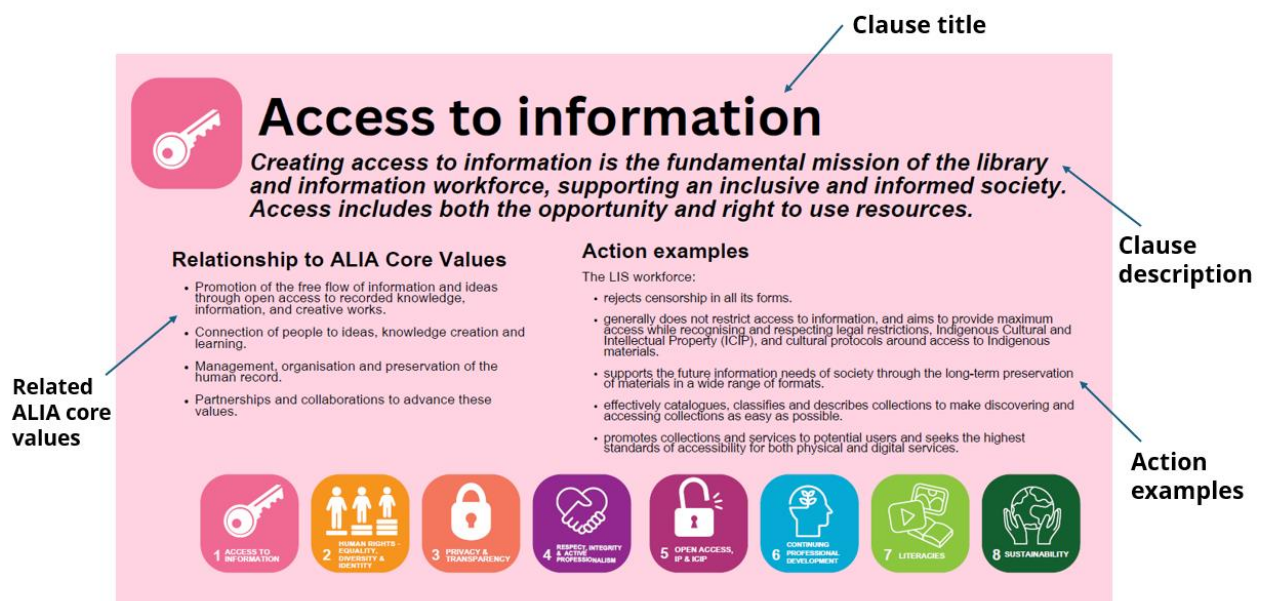
As an indicative proposal, the Code of Ethics would be accessed both as a downloadable and printable PDF and accessed through a website. When accessed through the web, the Code of Ethics is interactive and displayed with its corresponding icon and clause title as below:



When a tile is hovered over, the description appears, as shown in the image below for Clause 1: Access to information:



When a tile is clicked on, the tiles expands to show its four component parts:



1. **Clause title:** states the ethical concept at a high level.
2. **Clause description:** develops the concept, expanding its meaning in the context of the LIS sector.
3. **Related ALIA Core Values:** indicates the related [ALIA Core Values](#), building the connection between professional values and ethical behaviour.
4. **Action examples:** are intended to give illustrative examples of the ways in which the ethical concept could be put into practice; they are neither exhaustive nor prescriptive.

How to use the Code of Ethics

The ALIA Code of Ethics for the Australian Library and Information Services (LIS) Workforce is companioned by the [ALIA Core Values Statement](#), the [ALIA Code of Conduct](#), the [ALIA LIS Workforce Framework](#), and linked to the Objects of [ALIA's Constitution](#). The Code of Ethics is intended for use by all those working in the LIS sector, including qualified and emerging library and information professionals and library staff in all departments and levels.

A guide to facilitate the implementation of the Code of Ethics in workplaces will be developed to support teams and individuals think through how the Code of Ethics aligns to their work. This will include supporting the development of action examples tailored to the specific context of specific organisations, communities and processes, and providing a suggested structure to align the ethics clauses by group: Customers, Staff, Collections and Content, and Organisation.

The ethical clause titles and descriptions are constant, but the action examples can be rewritten and adapted, as can the way their structure, to relate to different audiences within organisations, their collections and communities.

The ethical concepts in the Code of Ethics are necessarily interrelated and interconnected. The division of ethical principles and behaviour into eight separate clauses, avoiding undue repetition, is a delicate balance. The working group has endeavoured to present a balanced Code that sets out the different ethical concepts into a unified Code that gives appropriate weight to the component parts.



Please read through the Code of Ethics and consider the questions included.

ALIA Code of Ethics for the Australian Library and Information Services Workforce

The ALIA Code of Ethics for the Australian Library and Information Services (LIS) Workforce is accompanied by the [ALIA Core Values Statement](#), the [ALIA Code of Conduct](#), the [ALIA LIS Workforce Framework](#), and linked to the Objects of [ALIA's Constitution](#). The LIS workforce includes qualified and emerging library and information professionals and library staff in all departments and levels.

Ethics and values are deeply interrelated but differ in significant ways. In a professional context, values are major, lasting beliefs that are shared among a professional community or sector, defining what is good or bad for that group. Ethics are about how these values are applied and put into practice; they are the principles that guide decision making (Gorman, 2015; Garnar, 2018). This is summed up succinctly by Snow & Shoemaker: 'values are held; ethics are operationalized' (2020).

The purpose of the ALIA Code of Ethics for the Australian LIS Workforce is to:

- articulate commitment to the ethical principles that sit at the centre of professional practice and identity; these differentiate the library and information profession from other sectors
- encompass a set of statements that inform the behaviour of the LIS workforce
- guide and support the application of the [ALIA Core Values Statement](#)
- clarify the purposes and roles of the library and information profession
- provide transparency and guidance for colleagues, organisations and society in general
- respect Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture and knowledge systems as integral to professional practice
- encourage professional reflection and growth
- provide a shared reference point for professional conduct on which the library and information workforce can form policies and support day-to-day decision making.

Each numbered section in the Code of Ethics is made up of component parts: a high-level clause, its definition, the ALIA core values most related to the clause, and action examples indicating ways in which that clause could be put into practice.

The actions are offered as examples only and are neither prescriptive nor exhaustive. ALIA encourages institutions to customise the actions in the Code of Ethics so that they are clearly applicable to their circumstances.

Q1. The preamble is intended to introduce and contextualise the Code of Ethics, outline its purpose and component parts. Do you think the preamble requires any additions or changes?



Access to information

Creating access to information and collections is the fundamental mission of the library and information workforce, supporting an inclusive and informed society. Access includes both the opportunity and right to use resources.

Relationship to ALIA Core Values

Promotion of the free flow of information and ideas through open access to recorded knowledge, information, and creative works

Connection of people to ideas, knowledge creation and learning

Management, organisation and preservation of the human record

Partnerships and collaborations to advance these values

Action examples

The LIS workforce:

- rejects censorship in all its forms.
- generally does not restrict access to information, and aims to provide maximum access while recognising and respecting legal restrictions, Indigenous Cultural and Intellectual Property (ICIP), and cultural protocols around access to Indigenous materials.
- supports the future information needs of society through the long-term preservation of materials in a wide range of formats.
- effectively catalogues, classifies and describes collections to make discovering and accessing collections as easy as possible.
- promotes collections and services to potential users and seeks the highest standards of accessibility for both physical and digital services.
- implements the [FAIR \(Findable, Accessible, Interoperable, Reusable\) Principles](#) and [CARE \(Collective benefit, Authority to control, Responsibility, Ethics\) Principles](#), where applicable.

Q2. Are there any suggestions or thoughts you would like to contribute to the 'Access to information' clause, description or action examples?



Human rights, equality, diversity and identity

Human rights require us to recognise and acknowledge one another's humanity by respecting individual and cultural rights, ensuring everyone has equal opportunity and placing positive value on our diversity.

Relationship to ALIA Core Values

Respect for the diversity, individuality and equality of all

Partnerships and collaborations to advance these values

Action examples

The LIS workforce:

- acknowledges being on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander land and recognises and respects Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander knowledges, cultures and Country. They recognise Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the primary guardians, interpreters and decision-makers of their heritage.
- supports Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander principles of rights to self-determination and sovereignty in alignment with [\(United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples\) UNDRIP](#), and works to design services that support Indigenous wellbeing.
- respects and promotes diversity and inclusion through the provision of representative collections, programs and services.
- treats all people who come to the library with dignity and courtesy, respecting everyone's freedom of opinion and expression, within the boundaries of the law.
- provides equitable services for everyone regardless of age, citizenship, political belief, physical or mental ability, gender identity, heritage, education, income, immigration or asylum-seeking status, origin, race, religion or sexual orientation.
- enhances access for all by actively supporting people in information searching and encouraging the ethical use of information, with particular attention to the welfare of young people.

Q3. Are there any suggestions or thoughts you would like to contribute to the 'Human rights, equality, diversity and identity' clause, description or action examples?



Privacy and transparency

As a foundational condition for intellectual freedom, the LIS workforce protects the personal privacy of library and information service users and treats information and resources sought and received with confidentiality. Principles of transparency and accountability are enacted in LIS systems, services and information governance, and advocated for in democratic decision making.

Relationship to ALIA Core Values

Promotion of the free flow of information and ideas through open access to recorded knowledge, information and creative works

Respect for the diversity, individuality and equality of all

Partnerships and collaborations to advance these values

Action examples

The LIS workforce:

- only collects the personal information required to provide services to users and clients.
- does not share personal data of library users beyond the original transaction or for other purposes without consent, unless required by law.
- creates policies and takes measures to ensure that personal information is protected against loss, unauthorised use, modification, disclosure or other misuse.
- upholds principles of transparency around the processes for information provision, and the standards, policies and procedures governing these processes, are clear, open and documented for knowledge sharing and creation of an evidence base.
- advocates for broader transparency so that the workings of government, administration and business are open to public scrutiny.
- provides services in compliance with principles of sound information governance.

Q4. In the IFLA Code of Ethics, there is a clause titled 'Privacy, secrecy and transparency'. For the ALIA Code of Ethics, we have removed 'secrecy'.

Privacy and transparency can be seen as two sides of the same ethical concept. However, privacy and transparency are also a subset of concepts within information governance. Should information governance be directly referenced in the clause or clause description, and if so how?

Q5. Are there any suggestions or thoughts you would like to contribute to 'Privacy and transparency' clause, description or action examples?



Respect, integrity and active professionalism

The LIS workforce is committed to consistent, honest and respectful service provision and governance. Active professionalism encompasses the application of behaviours and attitudes that contribute to a positive and productive work environment.

Relationship to ALIA Core Values

*Delivery of authentic information and evidence-based practice supported by quality research
Excellence, accountability, integrity and responsibility in service to our communities
Partnerships and collaborations to advance these values*

Action examples

The LIS workforce:

- provides the highest level of service to all library users through representative collections, appropriate and readily accessible resources, equitable service policies and accurate, respectful responses to requests.
- distinguishes between personal convictions and professional duties and does not allow personal beliefs to interfere with the aims of the workplace or provision of access to information.
- fosters positive relationships and partnerships to achieve shared goals.
- respects and upholds the reputation of the library and information profession and confidence in the sector.
- stewards information, human and/or financial resources with integrity.
- actively contributes to the sector and colleagues including through membership and participation in professional associations such as ALIA.

Q6. Are there any suggestions or thoughts you would like to contribute to the 'Respect, integrity and active professionalism' clause, description or action examples?



Open access, intellectual property (IP) & Indigenous Cultural and Intellectual Property (ICIP)

Open access, intellectual property and Indigenous Cultural and Intellectual Property (ICIP) are core ethical principles that guide the broadest possible access to information resources while upholding the moral and legal rights of copyright holders, creators and distributors of intellectual property.

Relationship to ALIA Core Values

Promotion of the free flow of information and ideas through open access to recorded knowledge, information, and creative works

Connection of people to ideas, knowledge creation and learning

Recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the first peoples of the land, and respect for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander knowledges, cultures and Country

Partnerships and collaborations to advance these values

Action examples

The LIS workforce:

- recognises and applies the Indigenous Cultural and Intellectual Property rights of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.
- enacts the primary decision-making rights as the owners of a culture, for example when working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples or materials.
- seeks to build transparent processes upholding the rights of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities regarding ICIP and responds retrospectively to instances where library collections have not been acquired or managed with informed consent.
- maintains awareness of development in copyright, IP and ICIP environments and advocates for change to ensure a fair and equitable system.
- promotes respect for copyright and intellectual property and defends copyright works against piracy, in physical and digital environments.
- supports and applies open access principles across different library and information services environments.
- uses copyright limitations and exceptions to ensure access to collections.

Q7. Are there any suggestions or thoughts you would like to contribute to the 'Open access, intellectual property (IP), Indigenous Intellectual and Cultural Property (ICIP)' clause, description or action examples?

Q8. Do you have any comments about the placement or grouping of these concepts?



Continuing professional development

Dedication to continuing professional development (CPD) and enthusiasm for lifelong learning are vital components of active professionalism. It is how individuals play their part in maintaining and promoting a strong, future-focused library and information services for Australia.

Relationship to ALIA Core Values

Commitment to maintaining currency of professional knowledge and practice

Partnerships and collaborations to advance these values

Action examples

The LIS workforce:

- takes personal responsibility for CPD and encourages colleagues' professional development.
- maintains where possible their professional development record.
- applies professional learning in their work practice
- commits to engaging with and learning from colleagues and those in related professions.
- engages in structured and unstructured mentoring and coaching activities at all career stages.

- commits to advocating for the library and information profession and services, carries out research and participates in the professional literature in areas such as author, contributor, editor, reviewer or as the subject of research.

n.b. Continuing professional development is critically important for maintaining professional learning and skills. It is one component of active professionalism, however its importance is such that it is a distinct clause in the Code of Ethics.

Q9. Are there any suggestions or thoughts you would like to contribute to the 'Continuing professional development' clause, description or action examples?



Literacies

The library and information workforce play a crucial role in supporting the advancement of knowledge through literacy. The development of literacies, especially reading, information, digital and media literacy, are central as diverse types of information are created, curated and enabled.

Relationship to ALIA Core Values

Dedication to fostering reading, information and digital literacies

Partnerships and collaborations to advance these values

Action examples

The LIS workforce:

- supports reading and literacy throughout communities, in different contexts and at all ages.
- supports languages other than English and maintains awareness of current needs of culturally and linguistically diverse communities.
- celebrates the richness of Indigenous languages and all languages used across Australia and supports the right to access resources in various languages.
- promotes literacy education in its diverse forms including information, digital and media literacy.
- champions digital inclusion.
- supports users to identify, critically engage with and understand mis and disinformation.

- supports critical understanding and examination of the embedded power of colonial legacies in the creation and production of works.

Q10. Are there any suggestions or thoughts you would like to contribute to the 'Literacies' clause, description or action examples?



Sustainability

The library and information workforce takes informed action to create a more environmentally and socially just world and supports library communities to develop awareness and development of sustainable practices.

Relationship to ALIA Core Values

Partnerships and collaborations to advance these values

Connection of people to ideas, knowledge creation and learning

Action examples

The LIS workforce:

- seeks to engage with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander worldviews to learn about respect for Country and the land.
- supports the development of the knowledge, skills, values and worldviews necessary for people to act in ways that contribute to a sustainable future.
- is guided by the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals.
- provides access to information about sustainable practices.
- seeks to decrease the emissions and/or carbon footprint of the workplace and equipment where possible.
- develops operational routines and processes to be environmentally sustainable, creating workplaces with a positive carbon handprint.
- communicate their organisational environmental policies, implementation and results of environmental work to the public.

- promotes social sustainability through library-led and community-led initiatives in areas such as education, literacy, community engagement, cross-cultural diversity and social inclusion.

Q11. Are there any suggestions or thoughts you would like to contribute to the 'Sustainability' clause, description or action examples?

Supporting documentation

Australian Library and Information Association. (2024). *ALIA Core Values Statement*.

<https://read.alia.org.au/alia-core-values-policy-statement-0>

Australian Library and Information Association. (2020). *ALIA Member Code of Conduct*.

<https://read.alia.org.au/alia-member-code-conduct-statement-0>

Australian Library and Information Association. (2022). *ALIA Constitution*.

<https://read.alia.org.au/constitution-australian-library-and-information-association-limited-2>

Australian Library and Information Association. (2023). *ALIA Framework for LIS Workforce*.

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Garnar, M. L. (2018). "Information Ethics" in S. Hirsh (ed), *Information Services Today: An Introduction*, 2nd ed., Rowman & Littlefield.

Gorman, M. (2015). *Our Enduring Values Revisited: Librarianship in an Ever-Changing World*. ALA Editions.

International Federation of Library Associations (IFLA). (2012). *Professional Code of Ethics for Librarians*. <https://www.ifla.org/g/faife/professional-codes-of-ethics-for-librarians/>

Snow, K. & B. Shoemaker. (2020). Defining cataloging ethics: practitioner perspectives. *Cataloging & Classification Quarterly*, 58(6), 533-546. DOI: 10.1080/01639374.2020.1795767

Q12. Are there any other key documents you think should be included at the end of the Code of Ethics?

Q13. Are there any other aspects of the Code of Ethics or its implementation that you would like to add?

n.b. With guidance from Aboriginal LIS professionals, the approach adopted in drafting the Code of Ethics has been to incorporate and embed Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples' ethical perspectives and priorities throughout, as opposed to grouping these ethical perspectives and priorities under a separate clause. We will continue to consult with the ALIA Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Expert Advisory Group. We welcome feedback on all aspects of the Code of Ethics, especially from members of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

All questions

Q1. The preamble is intended to introduce and contextualise the Code of Ethics, outline its purpose and component parts. Do you think the preamble requires any additions or changes?

Q2. Are there any suggestions or thoughts you would like to contribute to the 'Access to information' clause, description or action examples?

Q3. Are there any suggestions or thoughts you would like to contribute to the 'Human rights, equality, diversity and identity' clause, description or action examples?

Q4. In the IFLA Code of Ethics, there is a clause titled 'Privacy, secrecy and transparency'. For the ALIA Code of Ethics, we have removed 'secrecy'.

Privacy and transparency can be seen as two sides of the same ethical concept. However, privacy and transparency are also a subset of concepts within information governance. Should information governance be directly referenced in the clause or clause description, and if so how?

Q5. Are there any suggestions or thoughts you would like to contribute to 'Privacy and transparency' clause, description or action examples?

Q6. Are there any suggestions or thoughts you would like to contribute to the 'Respect, integrity and active professionalism' clause, description or action examples?

Q7. Are there any suggestions or thoughts you would like to contribute to the 'Open access, intellectual property (IP), Indigenous Intellectual and Cultural Property (ICIP)' clause, description or action examples?

Q8. Do you have any comments about the placement or grouping of these concepts?

Q9. Are there any suggestions or thoughts you would like to contribute to the 'Continuing professional development' clause, description or action examples?

Q10. Are there any suggestions or thoughts you would like to contribute to the 'Literacies' clause, description or action examples?

Q11. Are there any suggestions or thoughts you would like to contribute to the 'Sustainability' clause, description or action examples?

Q12. Are there any other key documents you think should be included at the end of the Code of Ethics?

Q13. Are there any other aspects of the Code of Ethics or its implementation that you would like to add here?
