



## STATEMENT ON ACADEMIC FREEDOM FOR PROFESSIONAL ACADEMIC LIBRARIANS

CAPAL/ACBAP believes that *academic freedom* is a quintessential right and core responsibility of all professional academic librarians who work in academic communities. *Academic freedom* is a fundamental necessity for the pursuit of truth, the advancement of learning and the dissemination of knowledge and uncensored access to information in a democratic society. *Academic freedom* is the guiding principle, the ‘*very essence*’ of what constitutes the work of professional academic librarians. This belief is in keeping with CAPAL/ACBAP’s mission to promote, advance and support the profession of academic librarianship for the advancement of research, teaching and learning at accredited post-secondary institutions and to further the professional interests of our members.

CAPAL/ACBAP defines *academic freedom* in the broadest sense. It includes and recognizes the principles of freedom of speech as legislated in the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms* and intellectual freedom as defined in the United Nation’s *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* to which Canada is a signatory. In addition, CAPAL/ACBAP fully supports and endorses the full meaning of what constitutes academic freedom within the profession and academic communities as defined by CAUT<sup>1</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup><http://www.caut.ca/about-us/caut-policy/lists/caut-policy-statements/policy-statement-on-academic-freedom>

CAPAL/ACBAP's definition of *academic freedom* for Canadian professional academic librarians is shaped by the contemporary cultural and political discourse in which we work as professionals in our local, regional, national and international communities. Academic librarians cultivate, conserve, facilitate and support the dissemination of knowledge within academic communities and it is within this discourse that *academic freedom* is understood as a core principle which guides the professional activities of academic librarians.

For these reasons, CAPAL/ACBAP affirms that *academic freedom* for Canadian professional academic librarians constitutes the following:

1. *Academic freedom* is the freedom to express, communicate, enquire, review, examine, question, teach and learn, in private or public contexts, even when those ideas oppose the viewpoints held by bodies of authority, religious, sectarian or political perspectives. This freedom of enquiry, teaching and learning is essential and pertains to all areas of a librarian's professional activities, service and scholarship.
2. *Academic freedom* encompasses the right to pursue and be eligible to apply for institutional grants and to seek support to pursue research topics or perspectives which may be considered unconventional, unorthodox or controversial, free from the threat of censure, proscription or institutional doctrines.
3. *Academic freedom* is the freedom to openly and freely pursue topics in scholarship and professional creative activities which may or may not be directly related to their professional responsibilities, librarianship or information studies, and thereafter, to publish or make public the results of such investigations and activities.
4. CAPAL/ACBAP supports subject expertise, specificity and recognizes the necessity for academic librarians to pursue areas of specialization, in order to ensure that scholarship meets high research and ethical standards.

5. *Academic freedom* is the freedom from institutional censorship and the right to communicate ideas and concerns that oppose, question or transgress institutional policies and views. The exercise of academic freedom should never serve as grounds for discipline or dismissal.
6. *Academic freedom* does not require neutrality on the part of the individual nor does it preclude commitment on the part of the individual. Rather *academic freedom* makes such commitments possible. It embraces diversity, different perspectives, ideas and opinions without persecuting or intimidating those who openly voice or represent those views or imposing social injustices on others. The responsibilities of academic freedom include the respect for the views of others.
7. *Academic freedom* requires that librarians be participants in shared governance at all levels of the institution and the academic library. Academic freedom allows for critical engagement with professional issues, enables discernment when best practices and professional values have been breached, and serves as an important check and balance on administrative prerogatives and initiatives.
8. *Academic freedom* requires that librarians have the same policies pertaining to academic freedom, tenure, shared governance and peer-review as faculty do in workplace collective agreements. It is vital for librarians to ensure that workplace collective agreements do not transgress current legislated freedoms and rights in the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedom* and the United Nations *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*.
9. *Academic freedom* is a core, fundamental responsibility of professional academic librarians within their professional activities and scholarship. This means that academic librarians must be especially prudent and cognizant of how easily *academic freedom* may be eroded within the context of modern-day technologies and changing political attitudes concerning research, teaching and learning environments. For these reasons CAPAL believes that academic librarians must seek to:

- a) Provide leadership in upholding, supporting and promoting *academic freedom* within their communities.
- b) Ensure that there are no obstacles or barriers (visible or invisible, written or spoken) within their academic environments in the pursuit of *academic freedom*, the advancement of learning, research and the uncensored dissemination of knowledge despite sectarian, political or religious differences.
- c) Provide leadership and collegial support to individuals, professional colleagues, faculty and students in their right to pursue *academic freedom*
- d) Provide leadership in the creation of environments in which academic freedom is understood, encouraged and promoted at all levels in the academic community

CAPAL/ACBAP:

- Recognizes *academic freedom* as a fundamental freedom, requirement and necessary protection for professional academic librarians.
- Believes that academic librarians have the right to academic freedom and, at the same time, a responsibility to uphold academic freedom.
- Believes that publically-funded, Canadian post-secondary educational institutions have a responsibility to support, uphold and preserve the principle of *academic freedom* for academic librarians for the benefit of their communities and the betterment of society.