

**I. Title Page**

**AN EVALUATION STUDY OF THE BULGARIAN/COLORADO LIBRARY  
PARTNERSHIP PROJECT**

**A Capstone Project**

**Presented to**

**The Faculty of the Department of Education**

**Library Information Science Program**

**University of Denver**

**In Partial Fulfillment**

**Of the Requirements of the Degree**

**Master of Library and Information Science**

**By**

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**September 2002**

## **II. Abstract**

The Bulgarian/Colorado Library Partnership Project became an official partnership project in 1999, when both the Colorado Library Association (CLA) and the Bulgarian Library Association (BLA) passed resolutions to form a partnership between Colorado and Bulgarian libraries. Public, school, academic and special libraries have formed partnerships. Information, books and other resources have been shared. Partners have participated in conferences, visits and email discussions. Relationships have formed between partner libraries. This study is an evaluative research study of the Bulgarian/Colorado Library Partnership Project. Although the Bulgarian/Colorado Library Partnership Project has been working well for most partner libraries, projects can always benefit from evaluation. This study seeks to determine in what ways the partnership project has been beneficial and in what ways the project could be improved.

### **III. Introduction**

#### **A. Background on the Bulgarian/Colorado Library Partnership Project**

The Bulgarian/Colorado Library Partnership Project has been formally in existence since 1999, when both the Bulgarian Library Association (BLA) and the Colorado Library Association (CLA) passed resolutions to form a partnership. Planning for the project began in 1996, when the Colorado State Library hosted Iskra Mahailova, as an American Library Association Fellow. Ms. Mahailova was Continuing Education Consultant for the Bulgarian National Library at this time. After Ms. Mahailova's visit in Colorado, Nancy Bolt, Colorado State Librarian visited and lectured in Bulgaria. Ms. Mahailova's initial visit to Colorado and Ms. Bolt's subsequent visit to Bulgaria, prompted the Colorado Library Association and the Bulgarian Library Association to officially create the Bulgarian/Colorado Library Partnership Project (Colorado Library Association, <http://www.cla-web.org/bulgaria.htm>).

The project is known as the Bulgarian/Colorado Library Partnership Project. The partnerships are sometimes also referred to as Sister Libraries. Some of the original partnerships were recognized as White House Millennium Council Sister Libraries. Sister Libraries: A White House Millennium Council Project was a cooperative initiative, which included The National Commission on Libraries and Information Science and Sister Cities International. Statements made about the Sister Libraries project speak to the importance of international library cooperation such as that in the Bulgarian/Colorado Library Partnership Project. Sarah Ann Long, former president of the American Library Association wrote,

Libraries build community, but today's community is a global one. Many of today's library users have immigrated from other countries. Many routinely travel for pleasure and conduct business abroad. Becoming a Sister Library is an opportunity

to build relationships with libraries in other cultures that can help us learn, understand and better serve our community” (<http://www.ala.org/sisterlibraries/>).

Martha Gould, who served as Chairperson of the National Commission on Libraries and Information Science, also wrote about the benefits of global cooperation among libraries. Gould stated, “The Sister Library programs will do much to encourage multicultural exchange and broaden international understanding – enabling young people to appreciate more fully their own place in, and impact on, the world of today and tomorrow” (<http://www.nclis.gov/millennium/list6-00.html>). There is a need for cooperation and understanding among the countries of the world. Libraries can play a role in developing this cooperation and understanding.

Most Americans do not know much about the country officially known as the Republic of Bulgaria. I was no exception when I began my research on the Bulgarian/Colorado Library Partnership Project. I knew little about the country, its people, or its history. One of questions in my research was – Why Bulgaria? Why is there a need for Colorado libraries to partner with libraries in Bulgaria? The answer to this question lies in the recent history of Bulgaria. Bulgaria is a country that was under Soviet domination for fifty years after World War II. In 1989, it began the process of redeveloping its identity as an independent country. Communism was not overthrown completely in Bulgaria until 1997. The country has been struggling over recent years to become a democracy. The country has also been struggling with extreme economic hardship. Libraries in Bulgaria have serious budget problems, they also have a desire to learn and grow as the country embraces freedom and democracy. Colorado libraries can play a role in assisting

Bulgarian libraries. In a larger sense, Colorado libraries can play a role in assisting a new and developing democracy. Bulgarian librarians are professionals with a long history of library service to a well-educated society with a rich history. They are eager to learn from American libraries and they also have a rich tradition from which Americans can learn as well.

The Public Library “Pencho Slaveykov” in Varna, Bulgaria has an excellent website, which provides a history of the cooperation between the libraries in Colorado and Bulgaria. The following information from the website gives a clear explanation of the reasons for the cooperation between the Colorado and Bulgarian libraries.

The backgrounds for the initiative are:

- Bulgarian librarians are dedicated professionals seeking to improve their ability to deliver library service to work now to develop a civil society in Bulgaria.
- Bulgarian libraries are suffering financially from the depressed Bulgarian economy.
- Bulgarian library budgets have been cut and they have difficulty purchasing new library materials or periodical subscriptions.
- The Bulgarian Union of Librarians and Information Specialists is currently attempting to pass national legislation to delineate the status and support of Bulgarian libraries, and is interested in sharing information about library law.
- Bulgarian libraries have a rich tradition of publishing bibliographies, indexes, and information about Bulgaria in both Bulgarian and English.
- Current information about Bulgaria is difficult to obtain outside of Bulgaria.
- Colorado libraries lack up-to-date information about Bulgaria, particularly since the end of Communism.
- There are opportunities for librarians from Bulgaria to contribute to Colorado libraries and opportunities for librarians from Colorado to contribute to Bulgarian libraries. <http://www.libvar.bg/projects/history-sister-eng.html>

These statements are also part of the resolution between the Colorado Library Association and the Bulgarian Library Association, which can be found at [http://www.cla-web.org/bul\\_resolution.htm](http://www.cla-web.org/bul_resolution.htm).

The partnership between the Colorado Association of Libraries (formerly known as the Colorado Library Association) and the Bulgarian Library Association can provide opportunities for professional growth, cultural understanding and international friendship.

### **B. Statement of the problem**

Over the years since the project began, an increasing number of libraries have participated in partnerships. At the time of this study there are twelve partnerships. Partnerships exist between public, school, academic and special libraries.

There have been very few requirements for participating as a partner library. The requirements for partnership are:

- a desire to learn about a different culture
- a willingness to frequently communicate with your Partner
- someone who speaks English (mainly a requirement for Bulgarian partners!)
- an e-mail address (post office is too slow) (Bolt, 2002)

Libraries have the flexibility to participate in the partnership in many ways and libraries participate at varying levels of involvement. Some of the activities of partner libraries include:

- e-mail communication
- exhibits and programs in the libraries
- exchange of cultural information about the cities and countries
- exchange of gifts
- sending books and other resources from American libraries to their Bulgarian partners (one American library purchased a computer for its Bulgarian partner)

- visits of American librarians to Bulgaria and Bulgarian librarians to the United States
- joint participation in library conferences.

Although some of the partner libraries have been very active participants and have engaged in a number of partnership activities, other partner libraries have been slow to participate and have not been actively involved in the partnership.

### **C. Goals and Objectives**

The goal of this study is to collect evaluative information about the Bulgarian/Colorado Library Partnership Project and determine if there are reasons why some partnerships have been more active than other partnerships. In addition, it is hoped that some possible strategies for improving the partnership project may be discovered. Finally, it is hoped that the benefits of the partnership project will be more clearly defined.

A combination of methods was employed to gather evaluative information about the partnerships. Between May, 2002 and August 2002, interviews and surveys were conducted to gather information from partner participants about their experiences as partner libraries.

The information gathered was analyzed to determine if there are reasons for varying levels of participation and if there are specific improvements that can be made to the project. Information was also analyzed to determine the benefits of the partnership project.

## **D. Benefits**

An evaluation of the Bulgarian/Colorado Library Partnership Project could lead to improvements in the project. It will be beneficial to learn why some partnerships have been stronger than others and what might be done to strengthen the project as a whole. In addition, it will be helpful to understand how the partnership project has benefited those libraries that have been participants.

## **IV. Literature Review**

### **A. Description of what is known about the topic**

Although there are websites and articles describing the Bulgarian/Colorado Partnership Project, no formal research has yet been done concerning this particular project.

Information about the project can be found on the Colorado Library Association website, the Bulgarian Library Association, also known as the Union of Librarians and Information Services Officers (ULISO) website and on the websites of some libraries that are participating partners. The articles and the websites currently available provide background and anecdotal information.

Another source of interesting information is articles, which have been written about sister cities. Although sister cities projects are broader in scope, there are enough similarities between sister cities and sister libraries to be of relevance for this research. An article written by Peirce (2002) about sister cities quotes Tim Honey of Sister Cities International and underscores the value of cultural partnerships such as that in the Bulgarian/Colorado Library Partnership Project. Peirce wrote:

The only way to have a peaceful and just world is to have people understand each other – both their similarities and differences,’ says Honey. Americans’ profound lack of knowledge of great chunks of the world...cries out for correction. And the answer, says Honey, can’t just be government-to-government relations; citizen diplomacy, direct contact between

peoples and communities, needs to be cultivated if we're to cohabit a shrunken globe in peace (Peirce, 2002).

Fostering understanding of other people and another culture is one of the underlying goals of the Bulgarian/Colorado Library Partnership Project.

## **B. Definition of Concepts and Terminology**

- BCLP Interest Group – Bulgarian Library Partnership Interest Group, an interest group of the Colorado Association of Libraries focusing on the Bulgarian/Colorado Library Partnership Project
- BLA – Bulgarian Library Association, also called Union of Librarians and Information Services Officers (ULISO) or Bulgarian Union of Librarians and Information Specialists
- Bulgarian Library Project – another name for the Bulgarian/Colorado Library Partnership Project
- CLA/CAL – CLA, Colorado Library Association became CAL, Colorado Association of Libraries in 2002
- Evaluation Research – “refers to a research purpose rather than a specific method. This purpose is to evaluate the impact of social interventions such as a new teaching methods, innovations in parole, and a host of others. Many methods – surveys, experiments, and so on – can be used in evaluation research” (Babbie, 2001, p. 332).
- NCLIS - National Commission on Libraries and Information Science
- Sister Libraries: A White House Millennium Council Project – a library partner project of the NCLIS

- Sister Cities – “US towns and cities are participating in sister city alliances with foreign communities... Sister city agreements are intended to foster cultural exchanges and can also be the basis for business relationships” (Zelinsky, 1990).
- ULISO - Union of Librarians and Information Services Officers also known as Bulgarian Union of Librarians and Information Specialists or Bulgarian Library Association

### **C. The importance of the study**

The Colorado Association of Libraries and the Bulgarian Library Association would like to continue the Bulgarian/Colorado Library Partnership Project as a long-term project.

An evaluation of the partnership project will help the project remain vital and may assist in further growth. While the partnership project has a good deal of support and some enthusiastic participating partners, it has some potential obstacles and difficulties.

Identifying potential problems and determining areas that could be improved could strengthen the Bulgarian/Colorado Partnership Project and help it thrive in the future.

Furthermore, identifying the aspects of the project that have been especially beneficial may help the project gain more support in the future.

## **V. Design of the Project**

### **A. Who, what, where, when and why**

Librarians in Colorado and Bulgaria who have participated in the Bulgarian/Colorado Library Partnership Project were interviewed and surveyed during the time period May 2002 through August 2002. The research was conducted using a questionnaire, which is included as Appendix I. This questionnaire was used to administer interviews in person

and via telephone. When interviews were not possible, the questionnaire was used as a written survey. Although much of the research was qualitative in nature, using a standard questionnaire enabled quantitative data to be gathered.

Some of the interviews were conducted during a tour of Bulgaria in May 2002. Other interviews were conducted in June 2002, when a group of eight Bulgarian librarians from partner libraries visited Colorado. Other interviews were conducted via telephone or in person during the research period of May through August 2002. Written surveys were also collected during this time period. Most of the interviews with Bulgarian librarians were conducted with the assistance of a translator and a translated copy of the questionnaire.

## **B. Justification for procedures chosen**

Evaluation research can be done using a variety of research methods. Sometimes, it is effective to collect quantitative data for evaluation. At other times, it is best to use qualitative research methods for evaluation. This study used a combination of quantitative and qualitative information in an effort to most effectively study the project under evaluation. Earl Babbie, an expert in the field of social research wrote this about evaluation research:

The most effective evaluation research is one that combines qualitative and quantitative components. While making statistical comparisons is useful, so is gaining an in-depth understanding of the processes producing the desired results – or preventing the expected results from appearing. (Babbie, 2001, p.344)

The questionnaire contains many open-ended questions that provided qualitative information through the interviews and written responses. The qualitative aspect of the study produced a deeper understanding of the issues involved in the project. However,

the study also analyzed some quantitative data. By using a structured questionnaire in the interviews and surveys, it was possible to collect quantitative data.

The study was done using a variety of methods: personal interviews, telephone interviews, and e-mail surveys. This variety was necessary because of the logistical problems associated with the study. The geographical distance inherent in the Bulgarian/Colorado Partnership Project made it impossible to meet in person with each of the librarians participating in the study. Although personal interviews were the first choice for collecting information, this was not always possible. When interviews were not possible in person, the next preference was a telephone interview. However, it also was not possible to conduct all of the research via telephone. As a result, written surveys were also necessary. The postal system from the United States to Bulgaria is unacceptably slow. Some of the responses were gathered via e-mail survey. Babbie (2001) wrote about the logistical problems of evaluation research. He recognized that logistical problems are one of the greatest challenges in evaluation research. Babbie wrote, "The special, logistical problems of evaluation research grow out of the fact that it occurs within the context of real life" (Babbie, 2001, p. 345). The real life context of this study involves two countries and two cultures. The logistical problems of dealing with the geographical, technical, and cultural differences necessitated flexibility in the data collection methods.

### **C. Limitations of the study**

It was not possible to collect data from all of the partner participants. Of the twenty-four libraries participating in the study, data was collected from eighteen. This represents a

75% response rate from the group under study. It was decided that it was important to study responses from an equal number of Bulgarian and Colorado libraries. It was impossible to gather information from all of the Bulgarian libraries. As a result, not all of the Colorado libraries were studied. The fact that not every partner library was included in the study places a limitation on the study. However, a 75% response rate is an adequate response rate to draw conclusions.

The study was conducted using a standard questionnaire. The questionnaire was chosen as the research tool, in order to standardize responses. This method is effective, however it does have some inherent limitations. Some data may be inadvertently missed, because it may not be covered in the standardized questions.

Another limiting factor of the study is the language barrier. Many of the librarians participating in the study do not speak fluent English and the researcher does not speak Bulgarian. It was necessary to work through an interpreter or written translations for some of the interviews and surveys. There is a potential for miscommunication and lost information when the communication is not direct and in a common language.

## **VI. Results of Project**

### **A. Quantitative Results**

Included in this section are tables and charts providing information gathered from the evaluation research. Each table or chart corresponds to a question asked through the interview or survey process.

1. Most of the libraries in the Bulgarian/Colorado Library Partnership Project are public libraries. This is seen in the responses received about the type of libraries included in the research. Of the libraries studied, sixteen were public libraries, one was a special library and one was a school library.

Type of Library				
		Bulgaria	Colorado	Total
Public		9	7	16
Academic				
Special			1	1
School			1	1

2. The majority of the partner libraries have participated in the project for less than three years.

Partnership time				
		Bulgaria	Colorado	Total
Less than 1 yr.		2	2	4
1-2 yrs.		2	4	6
2-3 yrs.		3	3	6
more than 3 yrs.		2		2

3. In most cases, the partnership was initiated by the library director. This is especially true of the Bulgarian libraries. Of the nine Bulgarian libraries in the study, seven stated that the partnership was initiated by the library director. Of the Colorado libraries, five partnerships were initiated by the library director.

Who initiated partnership		Bulgaria	Colorado	Total
	Library Director	7	5	12
	Manager		1	1
	Staff	1	3	4
	Volunteer	1		1
	Library patron			

4. One of the questions asked was whether one person had primary responsibility for the partnership, or whether there was a team of two or a committee of three or more.
- Most frequently, there was one individual who was responsible for the partnership. However there were also a number of libraries that had a committee of three or more people who shared responsibility for the partnership project.

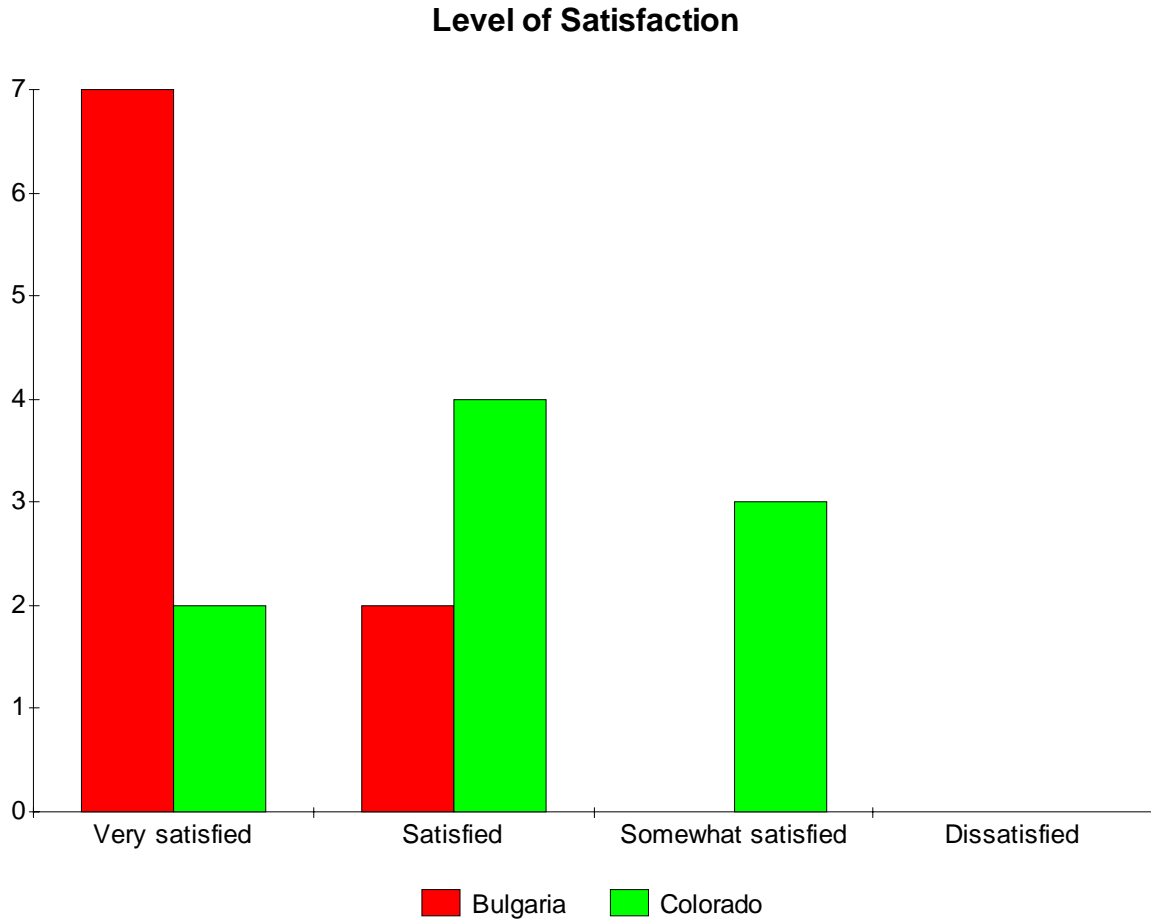
Primary Responsibility		Bulgaria	Colorado	Total
	1 person	4	6	10
	Team of 2			
	Committee of 3 or more	4	2	6

5. An important goal of the research was to determine the level of satisfaction with the Bulgarian/Colorado Library Partnership Project. One of the interesting findings of the research was that the Bulgarian libraries reported a higher level of satisfaction with the project than the Colorado libraries. Of the Bulgarian libraries, seven reported they were “Very satisfied” and two reported they were “Satisfied” with the project. The results from the Colorado libraries were, two libraries reported they were “Very satisfied, four libraries reported they were “Satisfied” and three libraries reported that they were “Somewhat satisfied” with the project. There are several possible reasons for the discrepancy.

- Most of the Bulgarian librarians who participated in the research were visiting Colorado at the time of the interviews. This factor may have contributed to their more positive view of the project.
- It is possible that the difference in culture contributed to the difference in responses. There is a possibility that the Bulgarian culture, especially given the former level of fear felt by many Bulgarians under the communist regime, created more of a likelihood to give positive feedback about perceived “official” programs. In a culture that has lacked the freedom of speech that Americans take for granted, it is possible that the Bulgarian librarians did not feel as free to report dissatisfaction with the project.
- It could also be that the Colorado librarians felt less inhibited with the researcher, who is also from Colorado and the Bulgarian librarians did not feel as comfortable because they were dealing with a researcher from another culture.
- It is also possible, that the Bulgarian libraries do not have as high a level of expectation as the American libraries. Americans have high expectations and high standards. Perhaps, the Colorado librarians expected more in the way of results than the Bulgarians.
- Another possibility is that the project provides more of what the Bulgarian libraries are looking for, and the American libraries are not having their particular needs met as well by the project.

Although Colorado libraries did not report as high a level of satisfaction as the Bulgarian libraries, no library reported dissatisfaction with the project.

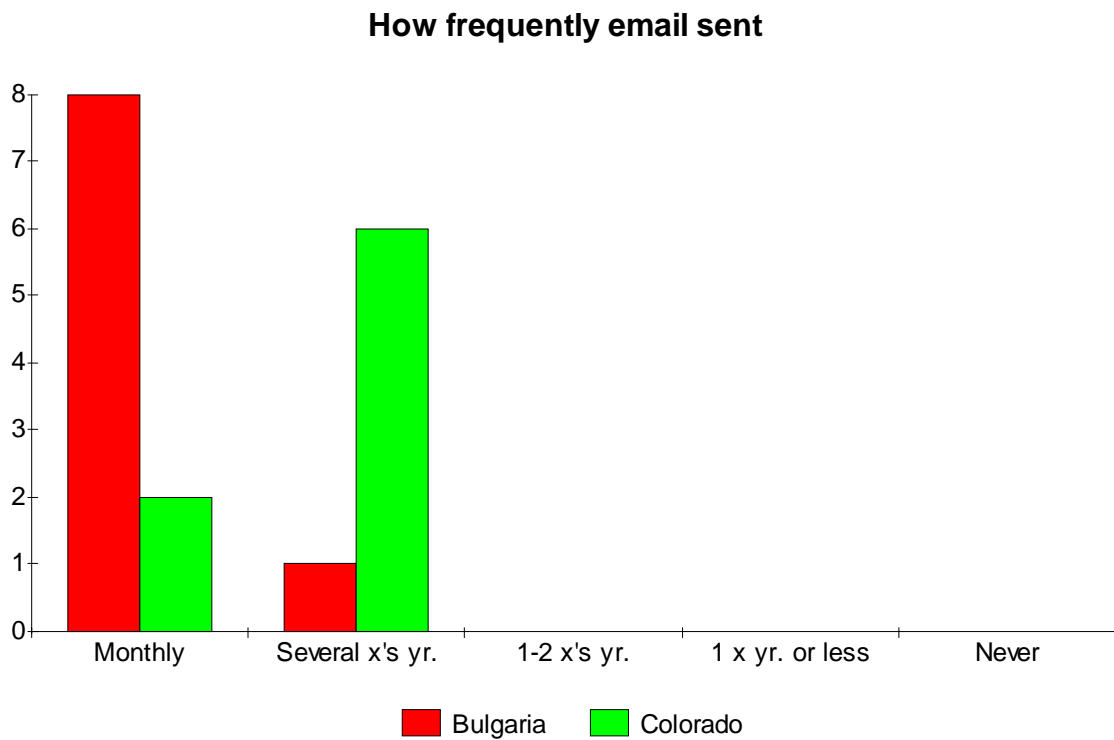
Satisfaction	Bulgaria	Colorado	Total
Very satisfied	7	2	9
Satisfied	2	4	6
Somewhat satisfied		3	3
Dissatisfied			



6. An essential component of the partnership project is email communication between the partner libraries. In determining the success of the partnerships, I asked the participating libraries how frequently they sent email to their partner and how frequently they received email from their partner library. The results for this question were also significantly different between the Bulgarian libraries and the Colorado

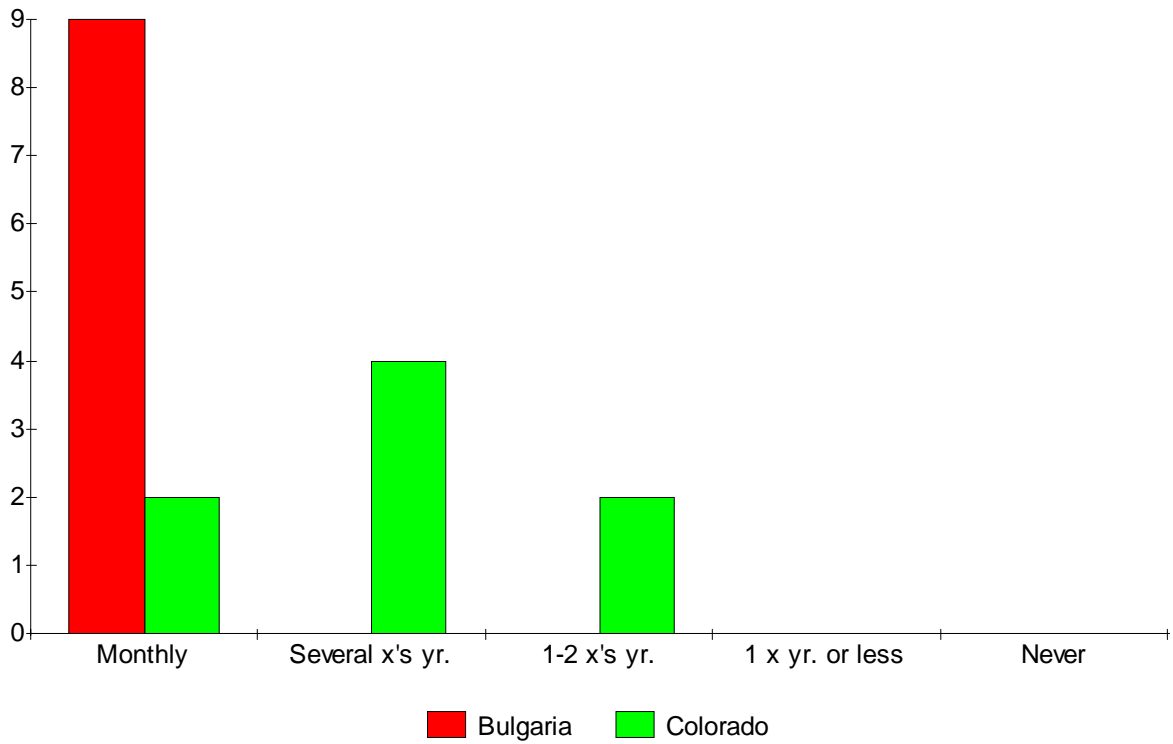
libraries. The Bulgarian libraries reported a higher frequency of email communication. They reported email both being sent and being received more frequently than the Colorado libraries. There is a possibility that the same factor(s) that created a discrepancy in the responses concerning level of satisfaction also affected the responses about email frequency.

How frequently email sent	Bulgaria	Colorado	Total
Monthly	8	2	10
Several times a year	1	6	7
One to two times a year			
Once a year or less			
Never			



How frequently email received	Bulgaria	Colorado	Total
Monthly	9	2	11
Several times a year		4	4
One to two times a year		2	2
Once a year or less			
Never			

**How frequently email received**



7. In addition to email, partner libraries communicate in other ways, they have met in person, they have sent and received books and some have mailed cards and letters.

The tables below show that many partners have visited and almost all of the libraries have sent and received books and gifts.

Other communication		Bulgaria	Colorado	Total
	Telephone			
	Mail	4	5	9
	In person	6	7	13

Have you sent books or gifts		Bulgaria	Colorado	Total
	Yes	7	8	15
	No	2	1	3

Have you received books or gifts		Bulgaria	Colorado	Total
	Yes	9	8	17
	No		1	1

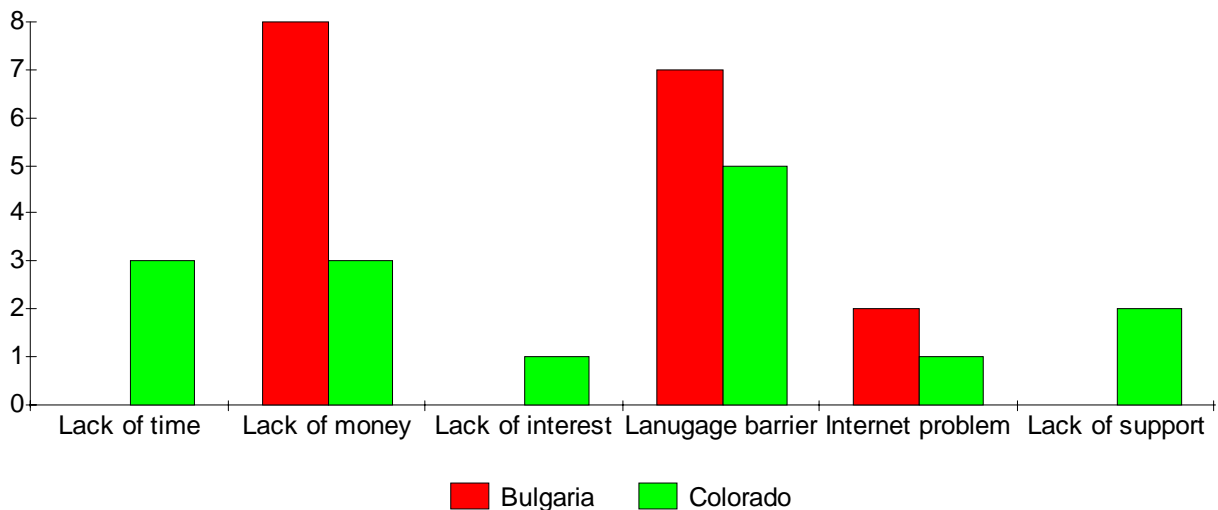
8. Libraries have also had special programs and displays about the partnerships. Most of the Colorado libraries and many of the Bulgarian libraries reported hosting a special program or display in connection with the partnership.

Special program or display		Bulgaria	Colorado	Total
	Yes	5	8	13
	No	2	1	3

9. An important aspect of this evaluation research was to determine what factors are potential problems for the partner libraries involved in the Bulgarian/Colorado Library Partnership. Participating libraries were asked what factors impede their involvement in the partnership project. Bulgarian libraries reported that the biggest factors that impede their involvement are lack of money and the language barrier. Internet problems are also a factor. Some of the Bulgarian libraries have sporadic access to the Internet. This is often because the libraries are not able to afford the cost of Internet access. Colorado libraries reported a wider range of issues that interfere with their participation. Most frequently mentioned by Colorado libraries was the language barrier. Other issues include lack of time, lack of money and lack of community support. Colorado libraries also mentioned the Internet problems in Bulgaria and a lack of interest.

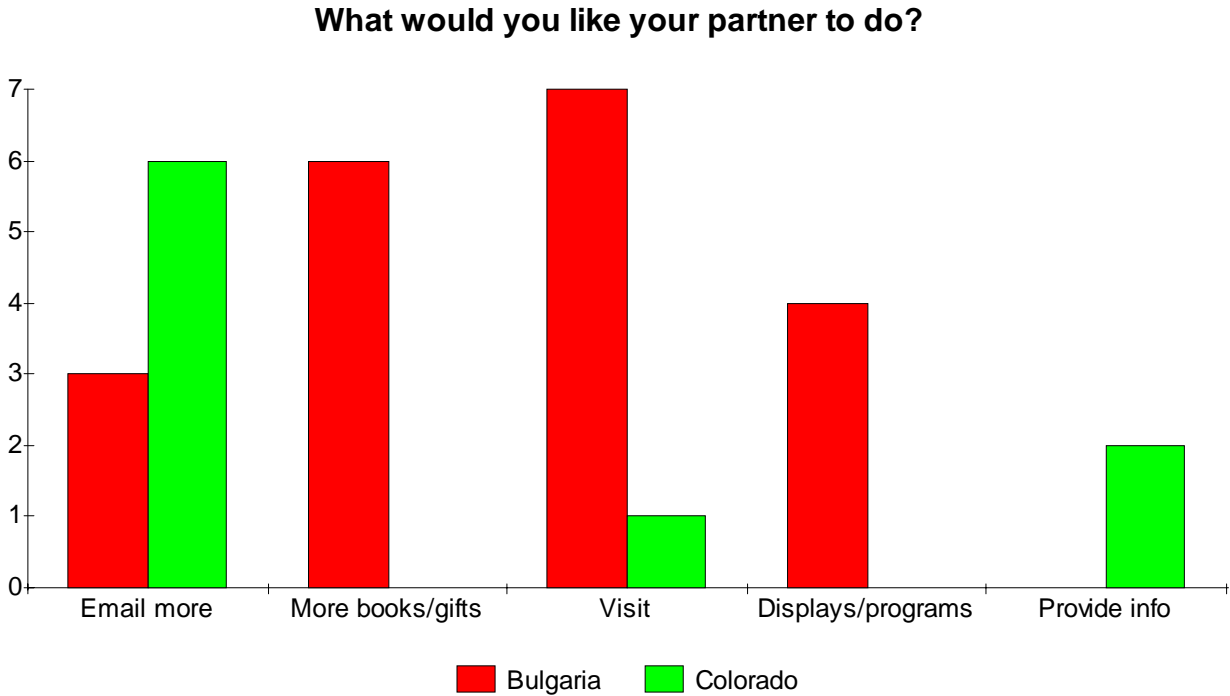
What factors impede involvement	Bulgaria	Colorado	Total
Lack of time		3	3
Lack of money	8	3	11
Lack of interest		1	1
Language barrier	7	5	12
Internet problems in Bulgaria	2	1	3
Lack of community support		2	2

**Factors that impede involvement**



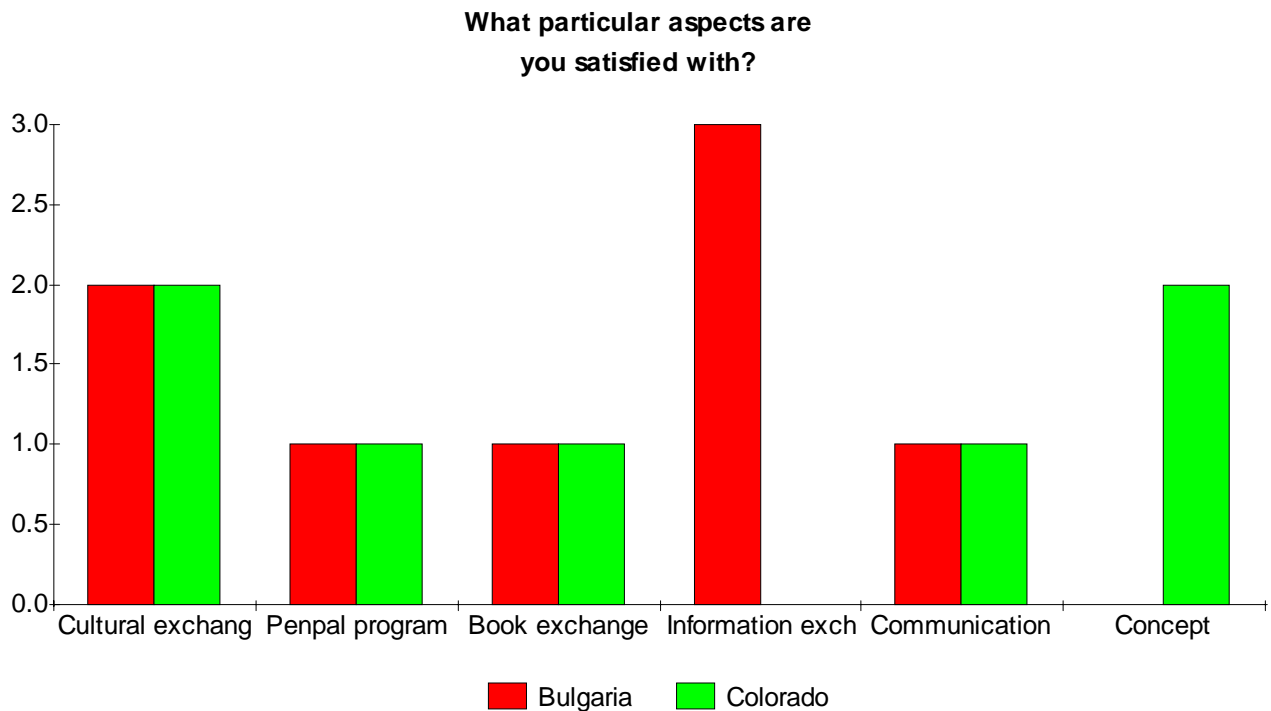
10. When asked what they would like their partner to do, the participating libraries gave a variety of responses. The Colorado libraries indicated that the most important thing they would like their partner library to do is to email more frequently. The Bulgarian libraries mentioned sending more books and gifts and visits most frequently.

What would you like your partner to do	Bulgaria	Colorado	Total
Email more frequently	3	6	9
Send more books or gifts	6		6
Visit	7	1	8
Displays and programs	4		4
Provide info - what they want		2	2



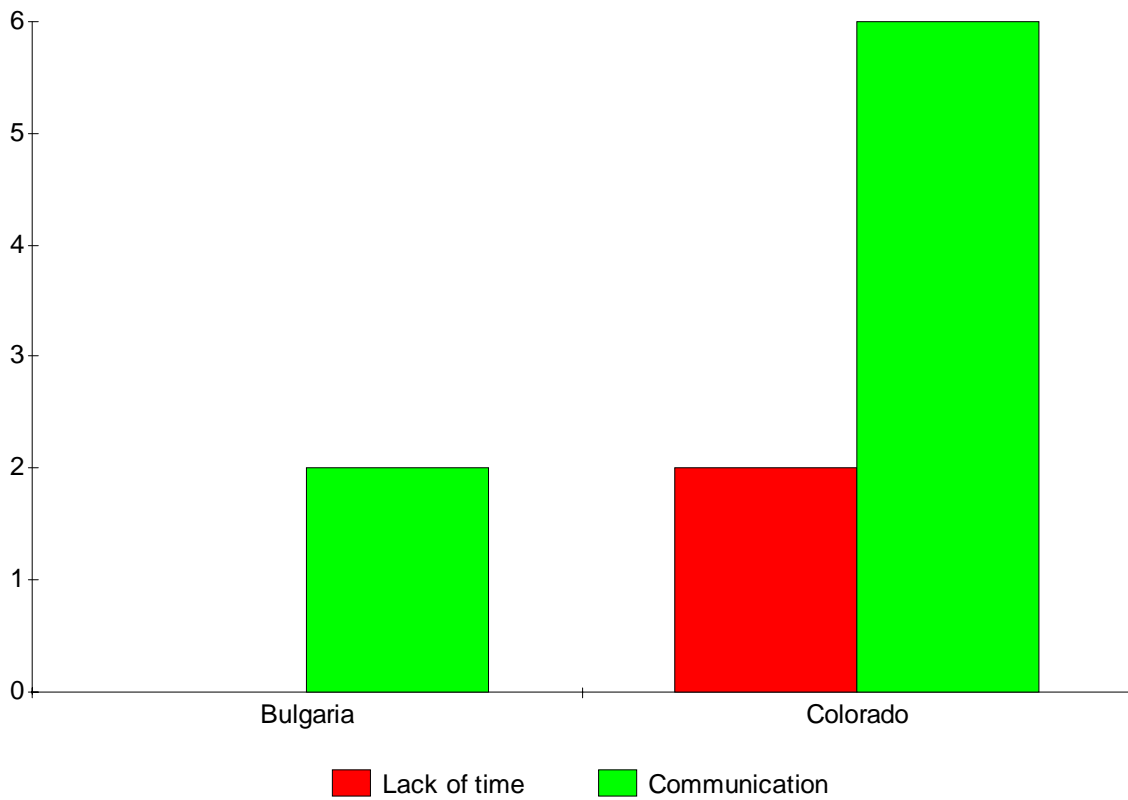
**11.** One of the open-ended questions asked of the libraries was: “Are there any particular aspects of the partnership that you are particularly satisfied with, or dissatisfied with?” The responding libraries reported a wide range of things they are satisfied with. The dissatisfaction centered on communication problems and a lack of time for the Colorado libraries. The tables and charts below list all of the issues that were mentioned by at least two libraries in response to particular aspects of the partnership the libraries were satisfied with or dissatisfied with.

What particular aspects are you satisfied with		Bulgaria	Colorado	Total
	Cultural Exchange	2	2	4
	Penpal Program	1	1	2
	Book Exchange	1	1	2
	Information Exchange	3		3
	Communication	1	1	2
	Concept		2	2



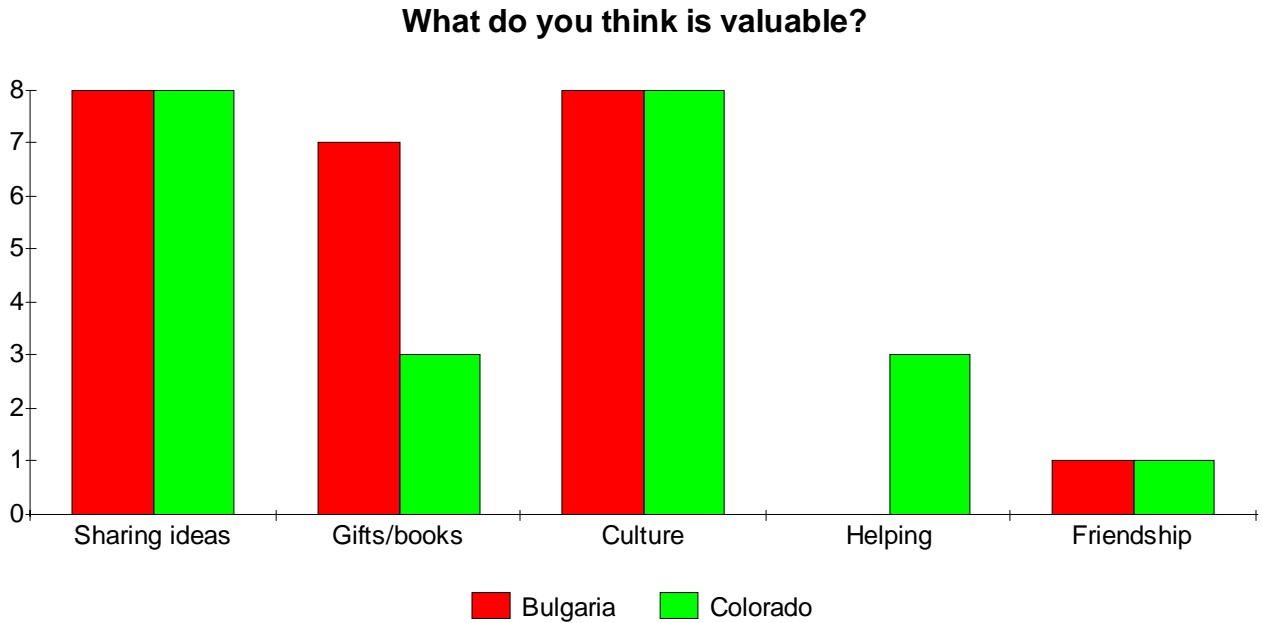
What particular aspects are you dissatisfied with		Bulgaria	Colorado	Total
	Lack of time		2	2
	Communication problems	2	6	8

**What particular aspects are you dissatisfied with**



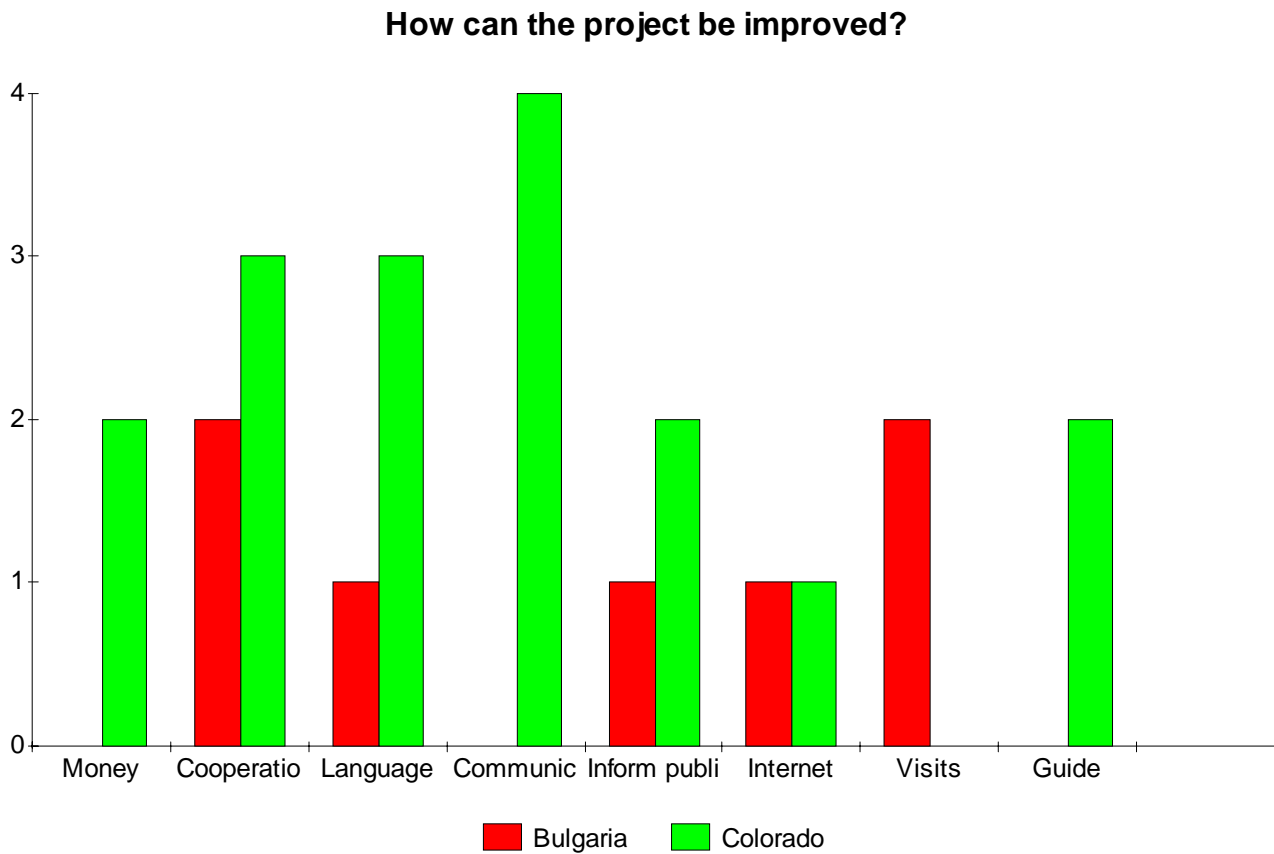
12. The value of the Bulgarian/Colorado Library Partnership Project was one of the areas under investigation. The Bulgarian and Colorado libraries agreed that there were some valuable aspects to the partnerships. Almost all of the libraries in both Bulgaria and Colorado stated that sharing ideas and getting to know another culture were valuable results of the project. The Bulgarian libraries reported more than the Colorado libraries that gifts and books were valuable. Friendship and helping others were also mentioned as valuable.

What do you think is valuable	Bulgaria	Colorado	Total
Sharing Ideas	8	8	16
Gifts and books	7	3	10
Knowing another culture	8	8	16
Helping others		3	3
Friendship	1	1	2



13. Another goal of the evaluation was to determine if there were ways in which the partnership project could be improved. The partner libraries were asked for their feedback about improvement of the project. The participating libraries were asked the open-ended question, “How do you think the Bulgarian/Colorado Library Partnership Project could be improved?” Because the question was open-ended and qualitative in nature, there was a wide range of responses. Any responses that were mentioned by more than one library are reported in the table and the chart below.
- The improvement suggested by the most libraries was mentioned by both Bulgarian and Colorado libraries. This suggestion is to have a cooperation of libraries in Colorado for participating Colorado libraries and another cooperation in Bulgaria for Bulgarian libraries. These cooperations would provide a forum for libraries to exchange ideas and provide support for one another.
  - The suggestion mentioned most frequently by Colorado libraries was to improve the lines of communication between Bulgarian and Colorado partners.
  - A separate, but related issue is to resolve the language barrier.
  - Several libraries suggested that the project could be improved if the public was made more aware of the Partnership Project, in order to gain more community support.
  - Improvement of the Internet access in the Bulgarian libraries was suggested.
  - Bulgarian libraries suggested more visits.
  - Colorado libraries thought that more financial support could improve the project.
  - Another suggestion made by Colorado libraries was to have a written guide to provide basic information and guidance for participating libraries.

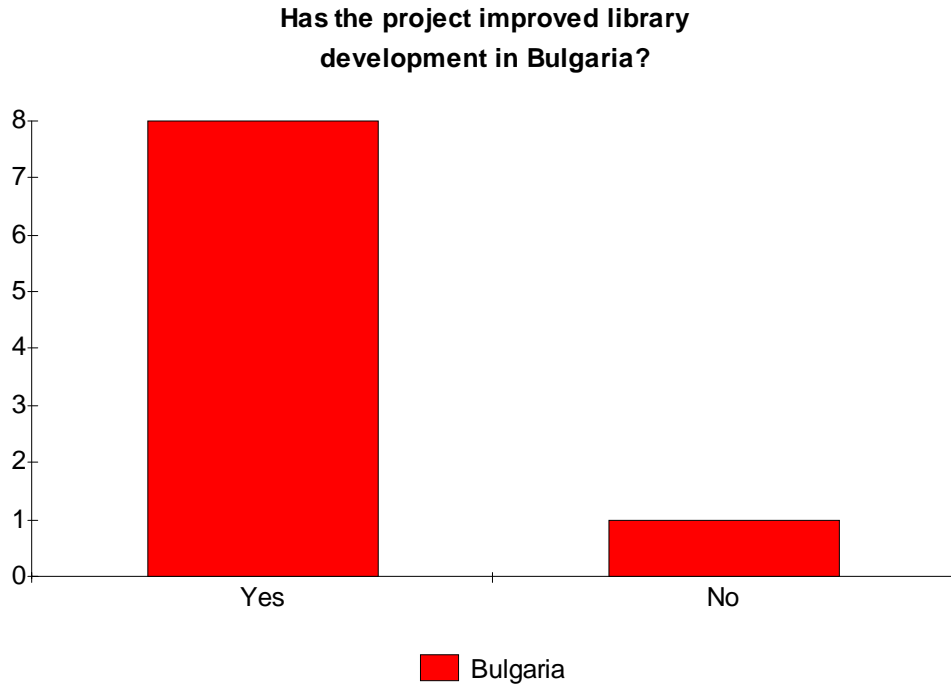
How can the project be improved?	Bulgaria	Colorado	Total
More money		2	2
Cooperation among libraries	2	3	5
Resolve language barrier	1	3	4
Improve communication		4	4
Inform public	1	2	3
Improve Internet access	1	1	2
More visits	2		2
Written Guide		2	2



**14.** The final question in the questionnaire was asked only of Bulgarian libraries. The Bulgarian libraries were asked if they thought the Bulgarian/Colorado Library Partnership Project had improved library development in Bulgaria. Of the nine responding libraries, eight stated that yes, they believed the Bulgarian/Colorado Library Partnership Project had improved library development in Bulgaria. Only one library responded no.

- All nine of the Bulgarian libraries in the study mentioned the benefits of learning through the partnership project. Specifically, learning a new style of librarianship and being exposed to a different library system with new ideas has been helpful for the Bulgarian librarians. Learning about another culture was also mentioned as important, in addition to learning about specific library techniques. One library emphasized the global nature of libraries and information and pointed out the value of international experiences in the world of global information.
- Three of the nine libraries emphasized the value of the visits to the United States and also the value of the visits from American librarians to Bulgaria. These librarians pointed out the importance of seeing things first-hand and meeting people face-to-face.
- Two of the nine mentioned specifically the benefits of receiving English language materials. This is especially helpful for young people in Bulgaria who are learning English.
- Another benefit that was mentioned was the increased prestige of Bulgarian libraries as a result of their involvement in the Bulgarian/Colorado Library Partnership Project. Libraries have received increased recognition from political leaders because of their participation in the project.

Do you think the project has improved library development in Bulgaria?		
		Bulgaria
	Yes	8
	No	1



Most Bulgarian libraries agreed that the Bulgarian/Colorado Library Partnership Project has been beneficial for Bulgarian libraries. There is also a desire among the Bulgarian libraries to give back to the American libraries. The Bulgarian libraries would like to be able to contribute as equal partners and give as well as receive benefits from the project.

## **B. Qualitative Results**

The previous sections gave tabulated quantitative results from the research. In addition to the quantitative results, some qualitative results were received from the discussions during the interviews. Many of these qualitative results mirror the quantitative results, however at times additional information or additional emphasis on issues was received.

One of the problems that were addressed in most of the interviews was difficulty with communication. Factors, which contribute to the communication difficulty, are the language barrier and Internet problems. Many Colorado libraries reported that communication was slow. It was perceived by some Colorado libraries that some Bulgarian libraries were hesitant to communicate, because they were not comfortable writing in English. Some Colorado libraries expressed frustration in not receiving direct information from their Bulgarian partners about the Bulgarian partners' needs. In these instances, the Colorado libraries did not know how to proceed with the partnership, because they were hoping to fill specific needs and wishes from their Bulgarian partners. Inadequate Internet access in Bulgaria was a factor that contributed to the communication problems. Some Bulgarian libraries did not have consistent access to the Internet. This problem was usually a result of financial constraints. The Bulgarian libraries sometimes do not have the money to pay for Internet access. A number of libraries suggested some possible remedies for the communication problems. It was suggested that translation service be provided. This would help alleviate the language barrier. Several Colorado libraries also suggested paying for Internet access for the Bulgarian libraries to assist with the Internet connection problems.

A problem for some Colorado libraries has been a lack of time. Involvement in the partnership project does require a time commitment and many library employees in Colorado are struggling with a variety of time constraints and find it difficult to invest the time needed to maintain an active partnership. This problem was not mentioned as frequently by Bulgarian libraries, however the lack of staff time is a problem for at least one of the Bulgarian libraries.

Both Colorado libraries and Bulgarian libraries expressed a desire to have more publicity and an effort to inform the public about the Bulgarian/Colorado Library Partnership Project. Libraries sometimes expressed that the lack of community awareness hampered the project. They felt as though more awareness by their patrons and understanding of the value of the project would enable the libraries to increase support of their partnership.

Another request from participating libraries was more structure and guidance for partner libraries. Libraries requested written guidelines to help libraries know how to deal with the logistics of a partnership. Bulgarian libraries requested a formal contract for participating libraries. Bulgarian libraries felt a contract would help them legitimize their involvement in their communities.

Libraries in Colorado requested a forum for communicating with other participating libraries in Colorado. Suggestions included annual meetings or a listserv. Libraries would like to learn more about other partners, so they can help each other and provide guidance and support for each other. Bulgarian libraries also expressed interest in coordinating among the participating libraries in Bulgaria. Bulgarian libraries expressed

a desire to meet as a group in Bulgaria and develop joint goals as partner libraries. They also would like to learn from each others' experiences.

Bulgarian libraries expressed an interest in developing more in-depth and structured partnerships. The Bulgarian libraries suggested having partnerships among specific departments and areas of focus within the larger partnership project. For example, there could be a technological focus, a circulation focus, a children's services focus, etc.

Although this type of focused partnership was mention by one Colorado library, most Colorado libraries maintained an interest in a more general focus. Most Colorado libraries expressed interest in cultural exchange, rather than an exchange of specific library expertise.

Although there was an interest in in-depth exchange Bulgarian libraries, Bulgarian libraries also suggested the possibility of expanding the project beyond library partnerships to other types of exchanges. Some Bulgarian libraries envisioned a possibility of hosting music exchanges, sport exchanges, chess tournaments etc. The Bulgarian librarians expressed a desire to have larger numbers of Americans visiting Bulgaria and Americans getting to know more about Bulgaria.

Libraries in both countries expressed a desire to continue the Bulgarian/Colorado Library Partnership Project for a long time. Some libraries viewed the partnership project as being in the early stages and envisioned continuation and growth of the project for many years to come. There is a desire to keep going with the partnerships and keep developing the project.

The aspect of the Bulgarian/Colorado Library Partnership Project that received the most positive response was the cultural exchange. Colorado libraries expressed the value of learning about other people and other places. Bulgarian libraries were interested in learning about American. They also placed a high value on helping Americans learn more about the Bulgarian people and the country. The Bulgarian people have a strong sense of pride and cultural identity. At the same time, they are eager to be involved in the international community. A couple of Bulgarian libraries emphasized the Bulgarian desire to be “open to the world.”

Some of the partner libraries have developed pen pal programs. These pen pal programs all received enthusiastic support from participants. Pen pal programs have been a positive outcome of the Bulgarian/Colorado Library Partnership Project. While most of the pen pal programs have had a focus on younger children, there is a desire for teenagers to be involved in pen pal exchanges as well. One librarian stated that young people often identify more with their age group than with their country. There is a strong sense of connection between young people of similar ages, regardless of national boundaries. Teenagers could benefit from getting to know teens from another country.

One of the goals of this research was to determine why some partnerships have been especially successful. There were a few common threads among successful partnerships.

These common elements included:

- Personal enthusiasm
- Outgoing personalities
- Library support of time
- Library support of money.

The most successful libraries had at least one staff member who was personally very enthusiastic about the partnership project. The person or people involved had outgoing personalities and seemed to enjoy communicating and meeting new people. Successful partnerships also had the support of the library administration in terms of time and money. Libraries that encouraged staff to use paid time to work on the partnership were the most successful. In addition to time, libraries that supported the project financially in other ways, for example through programs or materials were also more successful.

The Bulgarian/Colorado Library Partnership Project does require a commitment from the libraries in terms of time and money. However, libraries that invested the time and money in the project were very enthusiastic about the outcome and the value of the partnerships.

## **VII. Discussion/Implications**

The research had some limitations due to the fact that feedback was not received from all of the participating libraries. The majority of the Bulgarian librarians that participated in the research were visiting the Colorado at the time of the interview. Their visit may have had an impact on the results.

Although the research did have some limitations, it can still provide important and useful information about the Bulgarian/Colorado Library Partnership Project, which could strengthen the project in the future.

This evaluation research provided insight into the Bulgarian/Colorado Library Partnership Project. The project has been in existence for several years and it had not previously been subject to a formal evaluation to determine its strengths and weakness, value and limitations. This paper will enable leadership of the project, participating partner libraries and prospective partner libraries to understand more about the project.

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## **Appendix I**

### **Bulgarian/Colorado Library Partnership Project Study**

Thank you for taking the time to answer the following questions.  
Please circle your answers.

Is your library a:

Public library

Academic library

Special library

School library

What type of library are you partnered with?

Public library

Academic library

Special library

School library

How long has your library been involved in the Bulgarian/Colorado Library Partnership  
Project?

Less than 1 year

1-2 years

2-3 years

more than 3 years

**Who originally initiated your library's participation in the Bulgarian/Colorado Library Partner Project?**

Library director

Manager

Staff member

Volunteer

Library patron

Does one person have primary responsibility for your library's Bulgarian/Colorado partnership?

Yes

No

What is this person's title? \_\_\_\_\_

If no, is there a:

Team of two

A committee of three or more people  
What are the titles of the responsible people?

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**How satisfied are you with your library's Bulgarian/Colorado partnership?**

Very satisfied

Satisfied

Somewhat satisfied

Dissatisfied

Are there any particular aspects of the partnership that you are particularly satisfied with, or dissatisfied with?

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**How frequently does your library email your partner library?**

Monthly

Several times a year

One to two times a year

Once a year or less

Never

**How frequently do you receive email from your partner library?**

Monthly

Several times a year

One to two times a year

Once a year or less

Never

**Has your library communicated with your partner library in a way(s) other than email?**

**If yes, how? Circle all that apply.**

Telephone

Mail

In person

**Have you sent books or gifts to your partner library?**

Yes

No

**Have you received books or gifts from your partner library?**

Yes

No

Has your library ever had a special program or display about the Bulgarian/Colorado Library Partnership Project?

Yes

No

**What factors impede your library's involvement in the Bulgarian/Colorado Library Partnership Project?**

**Circle all that apply.**

Lack of time

Lack of money

Lack of interest

Language barrier

Other \_\_\_\_\_

**What would you like your partner library to do?  
Circle all that apply.**

Email more frequently

Send more books or gifts

Visit

Promote the partnership through displays and programs

Other \_\_\_\_\_

**What do you think is valuable about the Bulgarian/Colorado Library Partnership Project?**

Circle all that apply.

Sharing ideas

Gifts/books from partner library

Getting to know another culture

Other \_\_\_\_\_

**Does your library have any particular plans for the Bulgarian/Colorado Library Partnership Project?**

**If so, what?**

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## **Appendix II**

### **Bulgaria: My Trip and My Impressions**

#### **The Country and the Culture**

It was fascinating to visit a country that I knew so little about. With little in the way of preconceived notions about Bulgaria, everything was new and surprising. Most things were pleasant surprises.

Bulgaria is a country of contrasts. There is history dating back through Soviet domination during the 20<sup>th</sup> century to Turkish domination for 500 years, then further back to Roman times. There are historical landmarks from the Thracian period during the Greek Empire. Finally, there are Neolithic relics. Amidst all of this history, there is a rush to be modern. Almost everyone in Bulgaria carries a cell phone. Internet cafes are abundant in the cities. Kids skateboard amidst the Soviet statues in the center of the capital city of Sofia. Electronic technology is coming to Bulgaria in full force. However, the plumbing often seemed at least a hundred years old. Toilets were often not much more than holes in the floor. I was fascinated by the complexity of the culture.

One of my favorite memories is meeting children during the folk festival known as the Festival of the Roses in Kazanluk. The Festival of the Roses is a time to celebrate roses, one of Bulgaria's treasured commodities. It is also a time to celebrate traditional Bulgarian culture. Many people dress in the traditional Bulgarian costumes and dance the traditional dances. They eat and drink favorite Bulgarian specialties. While our group was visiting the Festival of the Roses, children gathered around us, eager to

practice their English and meet Americans. The children were outgoing and confident. They wanted to speak to Americans. A boy dressed in the traditional costume led the children and visitors in a traditional dance. When he was asked what music he liked, he answered “Metallica”.

### **The Libraries**

I was fortunate to be able to visit several Bulgarian libraries and speak with a number of Bulgarian librarians during our trip. The Bulgarian libraries I visited were segmented into many rooms. There were “reading rooms” for the public, closed stacks and many separate collections in various parts of the buildings. This architecture is very different from most American libraries, especially public libraries. American libraries are built to be open and accessible.

The buildings were old and in need of renovation and repair. The books in the collections were also old and in the need of update. I saw stacks of books and newspapers piled on the floor and decaying. I saw more old antique, precious books than I had ever seen before. Unfortunately, there is no money to preserve these rare books. They were shelved in stacks in rooms with direct sunlight and open windows. I was thrilled to see so much history in these old leather bindings and yellowing brittle pages, but at the same time, I was sad to think that these valuable treasures could not be properly cared for.

I was greeted at each library with enthusiastic hospitality. Each librarian was gracious and shared her or his time with me with a feeling of friendship. The librarians always

treated me with lavish food and drinks. I ate chocolate, drank strong coffee and sat on a sofa to speak with the librarians. There was never an informal, down-to-business, meeting room with hard chairs around a metal table. Each meeting took place at a comfortable seating area around a coffee table laden with treats. The librarians told me how much they appreciated the Bulgarian/Colorado library partnership. They also told me about their hardships. They all spoke about the need for money and technology.

### **The Bulgarian Library Association Conference**

In addition to meeting librarians at several Bulgarian libraries, I also had the privilege to attend and speak at the Bulgarian Library Association conference in Sofia. The Bulgarians decided that the one topic they most wanted to hear about from an American was Library Ethics. So, I spoke to a group of about 150 library professionals at the Bulgarian Library Association Conference about the American Library Association Code of Ethics. I discovered that one of orders of business for the Bulgarian Library Association was to develop their own Library Code of Ethics. I was at the same time excited and humbled to speak to this group of Bulgarian librarians on the topic of library ethics.

My speech is available as Appendix III.

## Appendix III

### Library Ethics: A Look at the *Code of Ethics of the American Library Association*

Lisa Cole  
Spring 2002

**“We have a special obligation to ensure the free flow of information and ideas to present and future generations (ALA Code of Ethics).” This lofty call to all librarians is the basis of library ethics.**

The American Library Association provides guidelines for library professionals to assist them in decision-making and practice as they go about their business of ensuring “the free flow of information and ideas to present and future generations”. These guidelines can be found in ALA documents including, the Code of Ethics of the American Library Association, The Library Bill of Rights and The Freedom to Read. I will focus my attention in this paper on one of these important documents, the Code of Ethics of the American Library Association. You can read the entire Code of Ethics, which is an attachment to this paper. It has eight major components. These are:

- Library Service
- Intellectual Freedom
- Privacy
- Intellectual Property Rights
- Employee Relations
- Not advancing our private interests at the expense of the library
- Placing the library above our personal beliefs
- Professional Growth

I will briefly address each of the eight topics covered in the Code of Ethics.

#### **Library Service**

Librarianship is a service-oriented profession. Good librarianship focuses on serving library users. According to the ALA Code of Ethics, ethical library service has four basic components;

- appropriate and usefully organized resources
- equitable service policies
- equitable access
- and accurate, unbiased, and courteous responses to all requests.

Appropriate and usefully organized resources are a foundation of library service. If library materials are not easily available and easily used by library patrons, the library is not doing its job of ensuring a free flow of information. Information can not flow freely, if it can not be accessed. A library exists to make information resources available to people. If people can not access the information, it is of little use.

Not only must the information be usefully organized; it must also be appropriate. The library must understand the needs of its users and provide for those needs. A library can be filled with books, but if the books are not ones that are needed by its public, the library serves little purpose. If a technical scientific library is filled with all of the latest popular fiction, the library will not be providing appropriate or useful resources. On the other hand, if there is a community library filled with scientific technological documents, it also will not be providing useful resources. It is important and ethical for a library to understand the needs of its community and provide the resources needed in a way that can be used.

Library service and library access must be equitable. It is unethical to provide different levels of service or access for different patrons. Groups or individuals can not be discriminated against. A library must not restrict access to its resources based on race, beliefs, age, or any other factors. An ethical librarian will provide equal access and equal service to all people, no matter who they are.

Sometimes, personal preference can create inequity in subtle ways. There are instances when librarians will favor certain patrons over others. This favoritism can come about simply because they library staff knows some patrons and not others. It is human nature to be more helpful for an acquaintance and not as helpful for a stranger. Librarians must guard against subtle discrimination. Other times, library staff will come to like some patrons more than others. Library patrons who are well dressed and well mannered can sometimes be given better treatment than library patrons who come to the library in tattered clothing and uncombed hair. However, the call of the library profession is to treat all library users equally without preference.

A library professional's responses to all requests should be accurate, unbiased and courteous. Unfortunately, responses are not always accurate. However, library staff should try its best at all times to provide accurate information. In addition to being accurate, a librarian's response must not be biased. Information must be provided without judgment in a pleasant, courteous manner.

I have to admit; that there have been times that a patron has said or done something that has made me angry. It has been difficult at those times to maintain the professionalism to provide accurate, unbiased information in a courteous way. However, I remind myself at those times, that my professionalism must not be swayed by my personal feelings. I must remain true to the ethics of librarianship and remain helpful and courteous in responding to all requests.

## **Intellectual Freedom**

Intellectual freedom is the cornerstone of library ethics. Intellectual freedom is defined by the American Library Association as “the right of every individual to both seek and receive information from all points of view without restriction. It provides for free access to all expressions of ideas through which any and all sides of a question, cause or movement may be explored.” Essentially, intellectual freedom is the freedom to access information.

American librarians feel strongly that intellectual freedom is a foundation of democracy. A democracy requires a well-informed citizenry. If people are involved in self-government, they must have access to ideas and information. Libraries defend and promote intellectual freedom, so people can access and disseminate a variety of ideas in society.

In the effort to uphold intellectual freedom, libraries must resist censorship. Ideas and information must not be suppressed because an individual or a group finds the ideas objectionable.

Librarians have a wide variety of methods of upholding intellectual freedom. Often, librarians and library organizations lobby the government to make sure government is not restricting intellectual freedom.

Locally, library directors often must deal with challenges to library materials. If a patron objects to a book or other library material, the library director typically reviews the material and defends the inclusion of the library material in the library collection.

Many libraries participate in Banned Books Week. Banned Books Week is a week each year when libraries and bookstores across America celebrate and promote books that have been threatened by censorship. Banned Books Week is a time to create awareness among the public that we need to remain vigilant, or our freedom to read may be undermined. Many great books have been the targets of censors. People need to be aware that unless we resist censorship, great books and ideas may be taken from us. Banned Books Week is a time when libraries can create awareness about censorship.

## **Privacy**

Personal privacy is a necessary component of intellectual freedom. Without the assurance of privacy, a person’s freedom to research, read and inquire is hampered.

People are not always comfortable seeking information. They may be embarrassed or afraid to let others know what they are reading or accessing. When library patrons know they have privacy, they are much freer to seek the information they require.

Something as ordinary as a health concern can cause discomfort for library users. If a person comes to library needing information about a health problem, they may not feel comfortable seeking this information. It is reassuring that library patrons don't need to worry that anyone is keeping track of what they are reading.

Other times, library users are researching personal family problems, like divorce. They will want to know that another family member will not be able to access their library information and know what they have borrowed from the library.

Library users must be guaranteed privacy in their library use, no matter what type of information they are using, reading, or borrowing.

In Colorado, there is a law in place that makes it illegal for anyone to divulge the library records of a library patron. Library staff members must not reveal what someone has borrowed or used in the library. The only exception to this law is a court order. Even if the police come to the library and request the records of a library patron, library staff may not give this information, unless the police have an official court order.

The Internet has developed a new area of concern for privacy issues. Librarians have been fighting for privacy of Internet use as well as traditional library use. Privacy, on the Internet and in the library is an essential part of library ethics and intellectual freedom.

### **Intellectual Property Rights**

Information has value; it traditionally has been owned and paid for. Libraries have a history of upholding copyright laws and ensuring that information providers and creative artists are paid for their work. Although libraries exist to freely share information resources with their patrons, libraries also recognize that information providers must be compensated for their work.

With the new explosion of electronic information and resources, ownership and payment for information and creative work is no longer a clear issue. Librarians must be involved in the decision-making process about the ownership of information in the electronic age. Libraries have become great users of electronic information. More and more information is available freely on the Internet. Although it is wonderful to freely have access to articles, papers, video, music and more on the Internet, we must realize that if information producers are not adequately compensated for their work, they may no longer provide it. Will writers continue to write if their work is widely available for free? Is there incentive to create if there is not monetary reward?

In order to ensure a rich future of information and creative work, librarians must respect intellectual property rights.

### **Employee Relations**

Another aspect of library ethics, is the fair treatment of co-workers and employees in the workplace. It is not uncommon for co-workers to have interpersonal problems.

However, it is understood that the ideal we strive for in the library profession is respect, fairness and good faith among our co-workers and colleagues.

The ALA also advocates working conditions that provide for the rights and welfare of library employees.

### **Not advancing our private interests at the expense of the library**

As librarians, we must put the needs of our users and our library institutions before our own interests. There are some librarians who have business interests outside their job in the library. Perhaps they make extra income with a business enterprise. In cases like this, librarians must not let their personal business impact their patrons or the library.

### **Placing the library above our personal beliefs**

A librarian can not allow her or his personal beliefs and attitudes to affect professional duties. If I am personally offended by a book in the library, I must not allow my personal feelings about that book to get in the way of someone else's right to read it.

There is a trend in America for some people, especially teenagers, to be interested in witchcraft. Personally I find many books about witchcraft to be in contrast to my own personal beliefs. However, I can not allow my personal beliefs stand in the way of someone's right to read.

### **Professional Growth**

Librarianship is rapidly changing and growing. As librarians, we must also change, grow and continue to learn. We must also grow the profession, by encouraging others as they consider a possible career in the library profession.

### **Conclusion**

This is a brief overview of the eight issues, which are addressed in the Code of Ethics of the American Library Association.

- Library Service
- Intellectual Freedom

- Privacy
- Intellectual Property Rights
- Employee Relations
- Not advancing our private interests at the expense of the library
- Placing the library above our personal beliefs
- Professional Growth

These guidelines provide a framework for our professional work as librarians. The Code of Ethics guide us in our work. The American Library Association Code of Ethics reminds us that our mission in the library profession is to provide “the free flow of information and ideas to present and future generations.”

# Code of Ethics of the American Library Association

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As members of the American Library Association, we recognize the importance of codifying and making known to the profession and to the general public the ethical principles that guide the work of librarians, other professionals providing information services, library trustees and library staffs.

Ethical dilemmas occur when values are in conflict. The American Library Association Code of Ethics states the values to which we are committed, and embodies the ethical responsibilities of the profession in this changing information environment.

We significantly influence or control the selection, organization, preservation, and dissemination of information. In a political system grounded in an informed citizenry, we are members of a profession explicitly committed to intellectual freedom and the freedom of access to information. We have a special obligation to ensure the free flow of information and ideas to present and future generations.

The principles of this Code are expressed in broad statements to guide ethical decision making. These statements provide a framework; they cannot and do not dictate conduct to cover particular situations.

- I. 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.**
- II. We uphold the principles of intellectual freedom and resist all efforts to censor library resources.**
- III. 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.**
- IV. We recognize and respect intellectual property rights.**
- V. 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.**
- VI. We do not advance private interests at the expense of library users, colleagues, or our employing institutions.**
- VII. 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.**
- VIII. 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.**

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Adopted by the ALA Council  
June 28, 1995

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