

This resolution was referred to the Intellectual Freedom Committee, the Library Research Round Table, and the Library History Round Table. (Note: The resolution will be appropriate forwarded to other ALA committees/units as determined by the ALA Executive Director).

“Resolution on Institutional Review Boards and Intellectual Freedom”

- WHEREAS, The American Library Association’s Library Bill of Rights states: “Libraries should cooperate with all persons and groups concerned with resisting abridgment of free expression and free access to ideas;” and
- WHEREAS, Speech-based academic activities are protected by the United States Constitution; and
- WHEREAS, Institutional Review Board regulation of interview-based academic endeavors constitutes prior restraint of speech, a violation of constitutional doctrine; and
- WHEREAS, No such licensing of speech is imposed upon citizens who are not working at institutions with IRBs; and
- WHEREAS, The United States Code of Federal Regulations, Title 45, Part 46.101 allows colleges and universities to implement policies that exempt research using “survey procedures, interview procedures, or observation of public behavior;” and
- WHEREAS, Extensive reports of substantial chilling effect upon oral historians by IRB activity led to a 2008 statement by the American Historical Association calling for oral history to be “explicitly exempted from IRB review;” and
- WHEREAS, The American Association of University Professors issued a 2005 recommendation that: “research on autonomous adults whose methodology consists entirely in collecting data by surveys, conducting interviews, or observing behavior in public places, be exempt from the requirement of IRB review—straightforwardly exempt, with no provisos, and no requirement of IRB approval of the exemption;” now, therefore, be it
- RESOLVED, That the American Library Association (ALA):
- Supports the American Historical Association in its position on oral history IRB exemption, and joins with the American Association of University Professors in recommending that “research on autonomous adults whose methodology consists entirely in collecting data by surveys [or] conducting interviews...be exempt from the requirement of IRB review-- straightforwardly exempt, with no provisos, and no requirement of IRB approval of the exemption.

Moved by: Melora Ranney Norman, Washington DC AY/Hi Youth Hostel

Seconded by: Thomas Wilding, Renaissance Hotel

References:

Research on Human Subjects: Academic Freedom and the Institutional Review Board

<http://www.aaup.org/AAUP/comm/rep/A/humansubs.htm>

AHA Statement on IRBs and Oral History Research

<http://www.historians.org/perspectives/issues/2008/0802/0802aha1.cfm#note2>

Questions Regarding the Policy Statement

<http://www.historians.org/press/2003-11-10IRB.htm>

Code of Federal Regulations, Title 45, Part 46

<http://www.hhs.gov/ohrp/humansubjects/guidance/45cfr46.htm#46.108>