

“Overcoming Disconnections: Staying True to the Library’s Mission”

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#SDConnections2025

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Staying True to the Library's Mission

What is mission and purpose of your library?

Libraries are built on access, equity, and service.

But what happens when those values meet restrictive laws, politics, or budgets?

How we stay connected legally, ethically, personally to our mission, vision, and values?

Why We Do This Work: Constitutional Foundations

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The Library is a Constitutional Institution

The First Amendment enables and requires that the Five Freedoms are embedded in our policies and services.

The Fourteenth Amendment gives obliged us to anti-discrimination, public accommodation, and “no fear, no favor” service.

The 10th Amendment is the mechanisms of a tax policy that fund the common good.

Free Expression • Open Access • Freedom to Read

Public libraries are where the First Amendment lives.

Every shelf, every book, every storytime is an act of expression.

“The right to read is the right to think.”

What do you do each day that enacts the First Amendment in your community?

Equal Protection • Civil Rights • No Fear, No Favor

By law, public libraries are places of public accommodations.

“No Fear, No Favor” service is a civil rights duty, not an optional ethos.

Civil Rights means that equity and access are statutory expectations.

“If library ethics and civil rights laws are about diversity, equity, and inclusion, then why don’t we talk about the law more?”

Tax Policy as Civic Promise

Public library budgets are the legal expressions of shared political values. How we choose to tax ourselves....

Public money put to public use builds civic infrastructure for knowledge and prosperity.

Defending funding is defending democracy's scaffolding.

“How can we show your board and taxpayers that your budget is a statutory commitment to the common good?”

Recognizing Disconnection

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When Mission, Vision, and Reality Collide

When have you had to justify your core values under pressure?

Disconnection shows up as drift, doubt, or defensive decisions.

Forces of tension: governance, politics, budgets, culture.

Recognizing disconnection is the first step to realignment.

Anchors for Renewal

Start with the Law: your responsibility to your mission and values is constitutional, not only ethical.

Lead with Values: access and equity are statutory mandates.

Speak to the Common Good: public investment is civic strength.

Reconnecting to Purpose

“When libraries hold their constitutional ground, they safeguard the institutions where the democratic promise of free thought, equal access, and shared prosperity is enacted for diverse communities.”



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Thank You!

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