

BCALS Statement and Call to Action

June 5, 2020

The executive board of the BC Academic Libraries Section stands in solidarity with Black communities, Black library workers, and all those protesting police violence and anti-Black racism in Canada, the United States, and across the world.

Accordingly, we affirm the following:

- Black lives matter.
- Police violence is not just the work of a few “bad actors” and is part of the systemic, pervasive, and ongoing culture of white supremacy.
- Anti-Black racism is a problem in both British Columbia and academic libraries.
- Academic libraries and post-secondary institutions, including those in Canada, are embedded and complicit in the ideologies, structures, and actions of white supremacy and settler colonialism.

Furthermore, we commit ourselves to a focus on anti-racist work, understanding that this work must go beyond making statements and talking about racism and white supremacy to taking action and promoting ways for people to take action themselves. We will listen, learn, and strive to make these actions ones that BIPOC and especially Black voices find most helpful. We do this work in keeping with BCALS' goals of providing a forum for discussion of academic library issues and providing for the improvement and development of reference and other academic library services in British Columbia. Such issues and services do not occur in isolation, and sustained discussion and action in regards to them is a necessary part of the struggle for a more just and equitable world.

In addition, we call for libraries, library professional organizations, and library staff to:

- Actively condemn white supremacy, racism, and state-sanctioned violence.
- Concretely support BIPOC and especially Black employees and library users.
- Listen to and validate BIPOC and especially Black voices.
- Divest from relationships with police, review library policies and procedures that include security and police, and call for defunding police.
- Invest in effective allyship training and education for employees.
- Critically examine their existing structures and biases and the ways that institutional silence and neutrality systematically benefit some groups and individuals while marginalizing others.
- Use their power on behalf of those who have less.

Both ongoing police violence and the current pandemic show the urgency of what Black activists have been saying for centuries: life cannot continue as it has been. Explicit commitments to change are needed, and we look forward to joining others in making that change happen.

Sincerely,

The 2019-2020 BCALS Executive Board