# "What can I know? Where can I go? What can I be?"

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## ABSTRACT

Co-sponsored by the Information Policy and Information Ethics special interest groups (SIGs), this proposal is for a pair of 90-minute speaker panels, facilitated by the respective SIG convenors and supporting interlocutors, which will draw on concepts of Habermas's ideal speech and public discourse. We begin with the premise that there are multiple theoretical lenses through which to critique increasingly hostile proposals of law and/or policies that limit bodily sovereignty and speech/intellectual freedom. Such polices can be understood as attempts to organize historically marginalized bodies in both physical and digital realms (e.g., through restrictions on access to knowledge, or production of dis/mal information, etc.). Thus, challenges that limit access to spaces and knowledge (focusing libraries and education) demonstrate a need to counter the breakdown of "ideal speech" within a pluralistic society that is free of coercion (Habermas, 1985) while acknowledging the role of identity, positionality, and embodiment with a post-critical lens.

This back-to-back SIG session will be comprised of two panels: first, a panel focusing on Information Ethics, which will explore the notion of what is allowed and is not allowed in public and quasi-public physical and virtual spaces; and second, a panel focusing on Information Policy, which examines how conflicts in ethics are manifest in policies that determine or exert limitations on discourse in public spaces, focusing on libraries and educational spaces. Together, the panels will demonstrate theoretical and practical departure points that can be applied in a wide range of LIS/IS educational contexts.

The first co-sponsored panel explores how identity and embodiment are linked, as embodied knowledge can be understood as identity expressions, whether enacted through affordances or limitations to exercise autonomy and that which a society and community construct for it, e.g., gender affirming and reproductive care, expressions of sexuality, and the

racialized body. Professional identity, which is the identity transposed into and developed within a profession, can impact understanding of affiliation with a profession and behaviour within it (e.g., Pierson, 2023). Librarians and library workers are increasingly tasked to confront challenges to professional expertise and the imposition of hostile policies directed at marginalized community embodiment, such as through challenges to library materials, which disproportionately represent the marginalized body. Identity, positionality, and embodiment therefore have deep implications in interpreting professional ethical imperatives and in interacting with or against policy intended to outline who and what are allowed where and how. This first co-sponsored panel will focus on the guiding question: How do we as educators prepare students to navigate the complex, often clashing, realities of identity, embodiment, and professional ethical imperatives to maintain the library as a commons for ideal speech and public discourse?

The second co-sponsored panel pivots attention to laws and policies that limit public speech and discourse. We begin with the proposition that each person exists in a body and has a lived experience and identity that makes them unique, and that some bodies or experiences are policed in public spaces. Limitations on expression can be considered an act of symbolic violence (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1990), designed to subordinate certain bodies, ideas, identities, etc. However, policy-makers are tasked with governing public spaces to balance the rights of individuals with the collective. When (if ever) is it acceptable to create policies that limit speech or peoples' right to express themselves in public spaces? Panelists in the second panel will focus on how educators in LIS can prepare students to engage with policies and policy-makers that govern human rights in public spaces, especially libraries and educational spaces. How might policies be developed, and what do policies look like, that take into account and respect individuals' rights and create a collective space where all bodies are able to flourish? We again ask: how can libraries remain a space for ideal speech and public discourse that is free of coercion?

Both discussions will be supported but co-convenor and interlocutors representing both North American and international voices, prompting organic discussion in the tradition of the commons and public discourse.

## ALISE RESEARCH TAXONOMY TOPICS

Information policy; information ethics; community and civic organizations; political economy of the information society; education

## AUTHOR KEYWORDS

Public spaces; discourse; embodiment; identity

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