



## COLLECTION DEVELOPMENT POLICY

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## **Selection Policy for Library Materials**

### **Selection Philosophy**

The purpose of a selection policy is to guide the library staff in the selection of materials and to inform the public about the principles upon which materials are added to or removed from the library.

The Library fully supports the concept of intellectual freedom articulated by the American Library Association's *Library Bill of Rights*, *Freedom to Read Statement*, *Freedom to View Statement*, *Labels and Rating Systems*, *Diversity in Collection Development* and *Evaluating Library Collections*. It is not the librarians' responsibility to practice censorship, but rather to provide the public free access to materials, which discuss all points of view. Selection of library materials is based on the merit of the work as it relates to the Library's purpose and as it serves the needs and interests of the community as a whole.

The Library will not add an item to the collection or remove it from the collection solely because of the race, religion, nationality, or political views of an author, the frankness or coarseness of language, controversial content of the item, or the endorsement or disapproval of an individual or group within the community. The Library takes no stand on public issues, does not attempt to promote any point of view, and does not endorse the opinions expressed in the materials in the collection. Materials which have been selected according to the principles stated in this policy will not be removed from the collection at the request of any individual or group, nor will the Library feel obliged to add to the collection materials which do not meet the criteria stated herein.

The Library recognizes a distinction between children, young adult, and adult collections on the basis of reading level, language comprehension, and intended audience. Material is housed and shelved based on organizational structure and is not intended to restrict or prohibit use for any patron. Library materials are not labeled or identified in any way to show approval or disapproval of their contents. Access to library materials is restricted only to the extent required to protect them from theft or harm.

Responsibility for the use of library materials by children and teens rests with their parents and/or legal guardians. Selection of materials for the adult collection is not restricted by the possibility that children and teens may obtain materials which their parents or guardians consider inappropriate.

Members of the public who wish to comment on a particular library item may do so on a form provided by the Library (see Customer Comment On Library Materials form).

### **Responsibility for Selection of Materials**

The Library Director, operating under Library Board approval, is responsible for the selection of library materials. The Director, in turn, delegates the responsibility for the day-to-day selection of materials to designated staff members and staff committees. Reviews, best seller lists, standard catalogs, etc., are tools utilized by staff to make selections. The Library also welcomes suggestions on items for purchase from the community. The Director shall be responsible for expending available funds in an equitable manner.

### **Standards for Selecting Library Materials**

#### **Several standards and combinations of standards will be used to select material.**

1. Quality of content and presentation:

The Library collects materials of high or reasonably high quality. Consideration is given to literary merit, accuracy of content, readability, enduring intellectual and aesthetic significance, awards received, and quality of illustration. Reference books are also evaluated for scope, arrangement, basis of authority, and ease of use. Children's materials are judged for appeal to children in content, format, and illustration.

2. Appropriateness for the collection and community:

An attempt is made to maintain a collection of print and non-print materials of permanent and enduring value. However, materials are also selected if they are currently in demand. The purchase of multiple copies of materials

will be considered based on the number of reserves on each item or the item's long-term popularity. If the demand is judged to be temporary or restricted, and the item does not meet other selection standards, then the need for the item may be met through interlibrary loan.

Maintenance of a balanced collection, which includes materials on as many subjects and points of view as possible, is a high priority. In controversial areas, such as religion and politics, materials which attempt to inform rather than convince are preferred.

### 3. Format:

The Library purchases hardback books, paperbacks (which are usually bound), periodicals, microfilm, recorded music and books, video recordings, electronic databases, downloadable content, and future, lasting formats that become regularly used.

Space limitations are a consideration for the purchase of audio-visual materials. Emphasis for the selection of recorded books is placed on the purchase of popular/high demand titles. Emphasis for recorded music is placed on variety, quality, and timelessness of titles. Emphasis for video recordings is placed on educational, children's, award winning classics, and programs featured on public television rather than popular feature films, since these are readily available from other community sources. Materials, which are primarily recreational, are generally not purchased.

A complete collection of Stillwater area newspaper(s) is maintained, with back issues on microfilm as available. Regional and national newspapers may also be purchased if community interest is evident.

Materials relating to the history of Stillwater, Payne County, and Oklahoma State University are collected at a research level.

Materials which are useful to local genealogists are also collected. Demand for genealogical materials that might not be of general interest may be met through interlibrary loan.

The Library does not purchase most textbooks, and ephemeral children's materials such as workbooks.

### 4. Exceptions to Application of Above Standards:

In some instances, material will be selected even though a standard criterion is not met, such as the collection of:

- a) Local history material
- b) Material written or produced by local creators
- c) Material in subject areas where information is scarce, as long as the information is accurate

### 5. Donations:

The Library welcomes both material and monetary donations. However, the same standards of selection will be applied to donations as to other library materials. The Library Director is available to assist patrons in selecting appropriate materials to donate to the Library. Donated items may be removed from the collection for the same reasons any other item is removed. (See Donation Policy.)

## **Selection Limitations**

### 1. Unnecessary duplication of materials within the collection or the community:

Due to budget constraints and space limitations, the Library will normally purchase recorded music, recorded books, and video recordings in a single, designated format. The Library will base its purchasing decision regarding format type on the dominant format in the market place which offers the widest variety of titles.

When selecting materials, the staff also takes into account the presence in the community of libraries at Oklahoma State University and the public schools. Materials, which are of a research or technical nature related to the curriculum or research at Oklahoma State University, are generally not selected. Similarly,

the Library attempts to supplement and enrich the public school curriculum, not to provide the basic materials needed by all school children. Nevertheless, in order to meet the fundamental informational needs of Stillwater Public Library patrons, some materials, which are also owned either by the school libraries or the university library, may be purchased.

2. Susceptibility to theft or mutilation:

The liability of an item to theft or mutilation is not an influencing factor in its original selection. However, some materials have traditionally been the objects of repeated theft or injury. If the item is judged to be essential to the maintenance of a well-rounded collection, it will be replaced and possibly moved to a secure location. Materials of marginal importance whose use cannot be adequately controlled may, at times, not be replaced.

3. Low community interest or demand:

If similar materials in the Library have not been used, an item which otherwise meets the selection standards may not be purchased.

4. High cost:

Budgetary limitations may preclude the purchase of high cost items which might otherwise meet purchase criteria.

Disagreements concerning any aspect of this policy may be appealed to the Stillwater Public Library Board.

Approved: November 6, 1985

Revised: 2/25/97; 5/20/97; 11/7/00; 5/28/02; 4/26/05; 3/28/06; 10/27/09; 11/19/13

Re-affirmed: 10/25/05

## **Deselection of Materials**

### **Deselection Philosophy**

Stillwater Public Library maintains professional standards which require the deselection of materials in order to provide responsible service by maintaining an up-to-date, useful, attractive collection. Library shelves should be stocked with materials most likely to be used by our patrons. Items least likely to be used due to age or condition should be periodically removed through the deselection process.

Since removing materials from the Library is never an easy decision, the Library will use a team evaluation approach. Members of the public services, administrative, and/or technical services departments will evaluate the collection based on the guiding principles and review process. Materials worn, outdated, of little historical significance, or no longer in demand will be candidates for deselection. The team evaluation process will eliminate personal biases or lack of knowledge about the usefulness of the items.

### **Guiding principles in collection evaluation will include**

1. Quality rather than quantity will be considered in collection maintenance. A current, up-to-date collection improves the quality of service to our patrons.
2. Deselection enhances the collection that is available to the public and is not a misuse of public funds. The process of deselection for the Library's collection benefits the customers and staff by saving them time and making it easier to locate quality materials.
3. Space on the Library shelves will determine the need for deselection of materials. Every effort will be made to dispose of materials in a responsible manner. This may be done by donating items to another library in the community or by making them available to the public at a reasonable price through the Friends of the Library book sale. Items such as newspapers and magazines will be sent for recycling.
4. Deselection will be done on a continual basis.

### **Deselection Guidelines**

These guidelines will serve as criteria for the deselection team. Any item that meets one or more of the criteria is a candidate for review, but not necessarily removal, from the collection.

1. Deselection Based Upon Appearance or Condition:
  - a. Worn-out volumes with dirty, brittle or yellow pages, or with missing pages, frayed binding, broken backs, dingy or dirty covers, or with a discernible musty odor.
  - b. Audiovisual materials with poor sound/video quality, missing pieces, outdated formats, or outdated equipment.
2. Deselection Based on Duplication:
  - a. Unneeded duplicate titles.
  - b. Outdated duplicate issues.
3. Deselection Based Upon Age:
  - a. General collection after ten years.
  - b. Books on medicine, law, science, and business between three and five years old.
  - c. Geography and travel books after five years.
  - d. Continuously updated material such as encyclopedias and almanacs every five years.
  - e. Directories when new copies are added to the collection but retain local ones indefinitely.
  - f. Dated software.
4. Deselection Based Upon Use Patterns:
  - a. Items that have not circulated in three years.

5. Deselection Based on Special Works:

- a. Memorial, honor, and award materials will be deselected using the same standards as other materials in the collection. However, these materials will be given special consideration before they are withdrawn.
- b. Works by local authors and works on local history will be deselected only under exceptional circumstances.
- c. Periodicals and serials will be withdrawn after five years if not bound.

Discarded materials may be given to other libraries or sold by The Friends of the Stillwater Public Library for the benefit of the Library.

Disagreements concerning any aspect of this policy may be appealed to the Stillwater Public Library Board.

Revised: 5/28/02; 4/26/05; 3/28/06; 10/27/09; 11/19/13

Re-affirmed: 10/25/05

## **Customer Comment On Library Materials**

The Stillwater Public Library welcomes your comments. The Library serves people from all walks of life, with a variety of viewpoints and tastes. In selecting materials to meet the diverse needs of this community, the Library staff is guided by the Library's Collection Development Policy. The Library Board and staff support the belief that the right to read and the right to free access to library collections for persons of all ages are essential to the individual's freedom of thought, which is fundamental to democracy. Accordingly, the Library Board has also adopted the American Library Association's **Library Bill of Rights** and interpretations of this bill which represent the Library's interpretation of the first Amendment to the Constitution of the United States. If you would like to review copies of the Collection Development Policy or any statements, please ask a librarian, or visit the Stillwater Public Library's web page at [library.stillwater.org](http://library.stillwater.org).

### **Library material on which you are commenting:**

Title: \_\_\_\_\_

Author: \_\_\_\_\_

Material type: \_\_\_book\_\_\_ audio \_\_\_ video \_\_\_ other: \_\_\_\_\_

1. What brought this resource to your attention?
2. Have you examined the entire resource?
3. What concerns you about the resource? (use other side or additional pages if necessary)
4. What other resource(s) do you suggest to provide additional information and/or other viewpoints on this topic?

Request initiated by \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_ Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Do you represent: Yourself OR Organization (name) \_\_\_\_\_

Thank you for your concern and comments. The Material Selection Committee will review the material in light of your comments. The Library Director will receive the committee's recommendations and will contact you in a written notice of our decision regarding the material. Disagreements with this decision may be appealed to the Library Board. During the review process, the material(s) will remain on the library shelves.

Revised 4/26/05; 3/28/06; 10/27/09

Re-affirmed 10/25/05; 11/19/13

## Library Bill of Rights

The American Library Association affirms that all libraries are forums for information and ideas, and that the following basic policies should guide their services.

I. Books and other library resources should be provided for the interest, information, and enlightenment of all people of the community the library serves. Materials should not be excluded because of the origin, background, or views of those contributing to their creation.

II. Libraries should provide materials and information presenting all points of view on current and historical issues. Materials should not be proscribed or removed because of partisan or doctrinal disapproval.

III. Libraries should challenge censorship in the fulfillment of their responsibility to provide information and enlightenment.

IV. Libraries should cooperate with all persons and groups concerned with resisting abridgment of free expression and free access to ideas.

V. A person's right to use a library should not be denied or abridged because of origin, age, background, or views.

VI. Libraries, which make exhibit spaces and meeting rooms available to the public they serve, should make such facilities available on an equitable basis regardless of the beliefs or affiliations of individuals or groups requesting their use.

Adopted June 18, 1948 by the ALA Council.

Amended February 2, 1961, June 28, 1967 and January 23, 1980.

*Inclusion of "age"* reaffirmed January 24, 1996 by the ALA Council.

## THE FREEDOM TO READ STATEMENT

The freedom to read is essential to our democracy. It is continuously under attack. Private groups and public authorities in various parts of the country are working to remove or limit access to reading materials, to censor content in schools, to label “controversial” views, to distribute lists of “objectionable” books or authors, and to purge libraries. These actions apparently rise from a view that our national tradition of free expression is no longer valid; that censorship and suppression are needed to avoid the subversion of politics and the corruption of morals. We, as citizens devoted to reading and as librarians and publishers responsible for disseminating ideas, wish to assert the public interest in the preservation of the freedom to read.

Most attempts at suppression rest on a denial of the fundamental premise of democracy: that the ordinary citizen, by exercising critical judgment, will accept the good and reject the bad. The censors, public and private, assume that they should determine what is good and what is bad for their fellow citizens.

We trust Americans to recognize propaganda and misinformation, and to make their own decisions about what they read and believe. We do not believe they need the help of censors to assist them in this task. We do not believe they are prepared to sacrifice their heritage of a free press in order to be “protected” against what others think may be bad for them. We believe they still favor free enterprise in ideas and expression.

These efforts at suppression are related to a larger pattern of pressures being brought against education, the press, art and images, films, broadcast media, and the Internet. The problem is not only one of actual censorship. The shadow of fear cast by these pressures leads, we suspect, to an even larger voluntary curtailment of expression by those who seek to avoid controversy.

Such pressure toward conformity is perhaps natural to a time of accelerated change. And yet suppression is never more dangerous than in such a time of social tension. Freedom has given the United States the elasticity to endure strain. Freedom keeps open the path of novel and creative solutions, and enables change to come by choice. Every silencing of a heresy, every enforcement of an orthodoxy, diminishes the toughness and resilience of our society and leaves it the less able to deal with controversy and difference.

Now as always in our history, reading is among our greatest freedoms. The freedom to read and write is almost the only means for making generally available ideas or manners of expression that can initially command only a small audience. The written word is the natural medium for the new idea and the untried voice from which come the original contributions to social growth. It is essential to the extended discussion that serious thought requires the accumulation of knowledge and ideas into organized collections.

We believe that free communication is essential to the preservation of a free society and a creative culture. We believe that these pressures toward conformity present the danger of limiting the range and variety of inquiry and expression on which our democracy and our culture depend. We believe that every American community must jealously guard the freedom to publish and to circulate, in order to preserve its own freedom to read. We believe that publishers and librarians have a profound responsibility to give validity to that freedom to read by making it possible for the readers to choose freely from a variety of offerings. The freedom to read is guaranteed by the Constitution. Those with faith in free people will stand firm on these constitutional guarantees of essential rights and will exercise the responsibilities that accompany these rights.

We therefore affirm these propositions:

1. *It is in the public interest for publishers and librarians to make available the widest diversity of views and expressions, including those that are unorthodox or unpopular with the majority.*

Creative thought is by definition new, and what is new is different. The bearer of every new thought is a rebel until that idea is refined and tested. Totalitarian systems attempt to maintain themselves in power by the ruthless suppression of any concept that challenges the established orthodoxy. The power of a democratic system to adapt to change is vastly strengthened by the freedom of its citizens to choose widely from among conflicting opinions offered freely to them. To stifle every nonconformist idea at birth would mark the end of the democratic process. Furthermore, only through the constant activity of weighing and selecting can the democratic mind attain the strength demanded by times like these. We need to know not only what we believe but also why we believe it.

2. *Publishers, librarians, and booksellers do not need to endorse every idea or presentation they make available. It would conflict with the public interest for them to establish their own political, moral, or aesthetic views as a standard for determining what should be published or circulated.*

Publishers and librarians serve the educational process by helping to make available knowledge and ideas required for the growth of the mind and the increase of learning. They do not foster education by imposing as mentors the patterns of their own thought. The people should have the freedom to read and consider a broader range of ideas than those that may be held by any single librarian or publisher or government or church. It is wrong that what one can read should be confined to what another thinks proper.

3. *It is contrary to the public interest for publishers or librarians to bar access to writings on the basis of the personal history or political affiliations of the author.*

No art or literature can flourish if it is to be measured by the political views or private lives of its creators. No society of free people can flourish that draws up lists of writers to whom it will not listen, whatever they may have to say.

4. *There is no place in our society for efforts to coerce the taste of others, to confine adults to the reading matter deemed suitable for adolescents, or to inhibit the efforts of writers to achieve artistic expression.*

To some, much of modern expression is shocking. But is not much of life itself shocking? We cut off literature at the source if we prevent writers from dealing with the stuff of life. Parents and teachers have a responsibility to prepare the young to meet the diversity of experiences in life to which they will be exposed, as they have a responsibility to help them learn to think critically for themselves. These are affirmative responsibilities, not to be discharged simply by preventing them from reading works for which they are not yet prepared. In these matters, values differ and values cannot be legislated nor can machinery be devised that will suit the demands of one group without limiting the freedom of others.

5. *It is not in the public interest to force a reader to accept with any expression the prejudgment of a label characterizing it or its author as subversive or dangerous.*

The ideal of labeling presupposes the existence of individuals or groups with wisdom to determine by authority what is good or bad for the citizen. It presupposes that individuals must be directed in making up their minds about the ideas they examine but Americans do not need others to do their thinking for them.

6. *It is the responsibility of publishers and librarians, as guardians of the people's freedom to read, to contest encroachments upon that freedom by individuals or groups seeking to impose their own standards or tastes upon the community at large.*

It is inevitable in the give and take of the democratic process that the political, the moral, or the aesthetic concepts of an individual or group will occasionally collide with those of another individual or group. In a free society, individuals are free to determine for themselves what they wish to read and each group is free to determine what it will recommend to its freely associated members. No group has the right to take the law into its own hands and to impose its own concept of politics or morality upon other members of a democratic society. Freedom is no freedom if it is accorded only to the accepted and the inoffensive.

7. *It is the responsibility of publishers and librarians to give full meaning to the freedom to read by providing books that enrich the quality and diversity of thought and expression. By the exercise of this affirmative responsibility, they can demonstrate that the answer to a "bad" book is a good one; the answer to a "bad" idea is a good one.*

The freedom to read is of little consequence when the reader cannot obtain matter fit for that reader's purpose. What is needed is not only the absence of restraint, but the positive provision of opportunity for the people to read the best that has been thought and said. Books are the major channels by which the intellectual inheritance is handed down and the principal means of its testing and growth. The defense of the freedom to read requires of all publishers and librarians the utmost of their faculties, and deserves of all citizens the fullest of their support.

We state these propositions neither lightly nor as easy generalizations. We here stake out a lofty claim for the value of the written word. We do so because we believe that it is possessed of enormous variety and usefulness, worthy of cherishing and keeping free. We realize that the application of these propositions may mean the dissemination of ideas and manners of expression that are repugnant to many persons. We do not state these propositions in the

comfortable belief that what people read is unimportant. We believe rather that what people read is deeply important, that ideas can be dangerous, and that the suppression of ideas is fatal to a democratic society. Freedom itself is a dangerous way of life, but it is ours.

Adopted June 25, 1953; revised January 28, 1972, January 16, 1991, July 12, 2000, June 30, 2004, by the ALA Council and the AAP Freedom to Read Committee.

## FREEDOM TO VIEW STATEMENT

The **FREEDOM TO VIEW**, along with the freedom to speak, to hear, and to read, is protected by the First Amendment to the Constitution of the United States. In a free society, there is no place for censorship of any medium of expression. Therefore these principles are affirmed:

1. To provide the broadest access to film, video, and other audiovisual materials because they are a means for the communication of ideas. Liberty of circulation is essential to insure the constitutional guarantees of freedom of expression.
2. To protect the confidentiality of all individuals and institutions using film, video, and other audiovisual materials.
3. To provide film, video, and other audiovisual materials which represent a diversity of views and expression. Selection of a work does not constitute or imply agreement with or approval of the content.
4. To provide a diversity of viewpoints without the constraint of labeling or prejudging film, video, or other audiovisual materials on the basis of the moral, religious, or political beliefs of the producer or filmmaker or on the basis of controversial content.
5. To contest vigorously, by all lawful means, every encroachment upon the public's freedom to view.

This statement was originally drafted by the Freedom to View Committee of the American Film and Video Association (formerly the Educational Film Library Association) and was adopted by the AFVA Board of Directors in February 1979. This statement was updated and approved by the AFVA Board of Directors in 1989.

Endorsed by the ALA Council January 10, 1990

## **LABELS AND RATING SYSTEMS**

### **An Interpretation of the Library Bill of Rights**

Libraries do not advocate the ideas found in their collections or in resources accessible through the library. The presence of books and other resources in a library does not indicate endorsement of their contents by the library. Likewise, providing access to digital information does not indicate endorsement or approval of that information by the library. Labeling and rating systems present distinct challenges to these intellectual freedom principles.

Labels on library materials may be viewpoint-neutral directional aids designed to save the time of users, or they may be attempts to prejudice or discourage users or restrict their access to materials. When labeling is an attempt to prejudice attitudes, it is a censor's tool. The American Library Association opposes labeling as a means of predisposing people's attitudes toward library materials.

Prejudicial labels are designed to restrict access, based on a value judgment that the content, language, or themes of the material, or the background or views of the creator(s) of the material, render it inappropriate or offensive for all or certain groups of users. The prejudicial label is used to warn, discourage, or prohibit users or certain groups of users from accessing the material. Such labels sometimes are used to place materials in restricted locations where access depends on staff intervention.

Viewpoint-neutral directional aids facilitate access by making it easier for users to locate materials. The materials are housed on open shelves and are equally accessible to all users, who may choose to consult or ignore the directional aids at their own discretion.

Directional aids can have the effect of prejudicial labels when their implementation becomes proscriptive rather than descriptive. When directional aids are used to forbid access or to suggest moral or doctrinal endorsement, the effect is the same as prejudicial labeling.

Many organizations use rating systems as a means of advising either their members or the general public regarding the organizations' opinions of the contents and suitability or appropriate age for use of certain books, films, recordings, Web sites, games, or other materials. The adoption, enforcement, or endorsement of any of these rating systems by a library violates the Library Bill of Rights. When requested, librarians should provide information about rating systems equitably, regardless of viewpoint.

Adopting such systems into law or library policy may be unconstitutional. If labeling or rating systems are mandated by law, the library should seek legal advice regarding the law's applicability to library operations.

Libraries sometimes acquire resources that include ratings as part of their packaging. Librarians should not endorse the inclusion of such rating systems; however, removing or destroying the ratings—if placed there by, or with permission of, the copyright holder—could constitute expurgation. In addition, the inclusion of ratings on bibliographic records in library catalogs is a violation of the Library Bill of Rights.

Prejudicial labeling and ratings presuppose the existence of individuals or groups with wisdom to determine by authority what is appropriate or inappropriate for others. They presuppose that individuals must be directed in making up their minds about the ideas they examine. The American Library Association affirms the rights of individuals to form their own opinions about resources they choose to read or view.

Adopted July 13, 1951, by the ALA Council; amended June 25, 1971; July 1, 1981; June 26, 1990; January 19, 2005; July 15, 2009.

## **DIVERSITY IN COLLECTION DEVELOPMENT**

### **An Interpretation of the Library Bill of Rights**

Collection development should reflect the philosophy inherent in Article II of the Library Bill of Rights: "Libraries should provide materials and information presenting all points of view on current and historical issues. Materials should not be proscribed or removed because of partisan or doctrinal disapproval." Library collections must represent the diversity of people and ideas in our society. There are many complex facets to any issue, and many contexts in which issues may be expressed, discussed, or interpreted. Librarians have an obligation to select and support access to materials and resources on all subjects that meet, as closely as possible, the needs, interests, and abilities of all persons in the community the library serves.

Librarians have a professional responsibility to be inclusive, not exclusive, in collection development and in the provision of interlibrary loan. Access to all materials and resources legally obtainable should be assured to the user, and policies should not unjustly exclude materials and resources even if they are offensive to the librarian or the user. This includes materials and resources that reflect a diversity of political, economic, religious, social, minority, and sexual issues. A balanced collection reflects a diversity of materials and resources, not an equality of numbers.

Collection development responsibilities include selecting materials and resources in different formats produced by independent, small and local producers as well as information resources from major producers and distributors. Materials and resources should represent the languages commonly used in the library's service community and should include formats that meet the needs of users with disabilities. Collection development and the selection of materials and resources should be done according to professional standards and established selection and review procedures. Librarians may seek to increase user awareness of materials and resources on various social concerns by many means, including, but not limited to, issuing lists of resources, arranging exhibits, and presenting programs.

Over time, individuals, groups, and entities have sought to limit the diversity of library collections. They cite a variety of reasons that include prejudicial language and ideas, political content, economic theory, social philosophies, religious beliefs, sexual content and expression, and other potentially controversial topics. Examples of such censorship may include removing or not selecting materials because they are considered by some as racist or sexist; not purchasing conservative religious materials; not selecting resources about or by minorities because it is thought these groups or interests are not represented in a community; or not providing information or materials from or about non-mainstream political entities. Librarians have a professional responsibility to be fair, just, and equitable and to give all library users equal protection in guarding against violation of the library patron's right to read, view, or listen to materials and resources protected by the First Amendment, no matter what the viewpoint of the author, creator, or selector. Librarians have an obligation to protect library collections from removal of materials and resources based on personal bias or prejudice.

Intellectual freedom, the essence of equitable library services, provides for free access to all expressions of ideas through which any and all sides of a question, cause, or movement may be explored. Toleration is meaningless without tolerance for what some may consider detestable. Librarians must not permit their own preferences to limit their degree of tolerance in collection development.

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Adopted July 14, 1982, by the ALA Council; amended January 10, 1990; July 2, 2008

## **EVALUATING LIBRARY COLLECTIONS**

### **An Interpretation of the Library Bill of Rights**

The continuous review of library materials is necessary as a means of maintaining an active library collection of current interest to users. In the process, materials may be added and physically deteriorated or obsolete materials may be replaced or removed in accordance with the collection maintenance policy of a given library and the needs of the community it serves. Continued evaluation is closely related to the goals and responsibilities of each library and is a valuable tool of collection development. This procedure is not to be used as a convenient means to remove materials that might be viewed as controversial or objectionable. Such abuse of the evaluation function violates the principles of intellectual freedom and is in opposition to the Preamble and Articles I and II of the Library Bill of Rights, which state:

The American Library Association affirms that all libraries are forums for information and ideas, and that the following basic policies should guide their services.

- I. Books and other library resources should be provided for the interest, information, and enlightenment of all people of the community the library serves. Materials should not be excluded because of the origin, background, or views of those contributing to their creation.
- II. Libraries should provide materials and information presenting all points of view on current and historical issues. Materials should not be proscribed or removed because of partisan or doctrinal disapproval.

The American Library Association opposes internal censorship and strongly urges that libraries adopt guidelines setting forth the positive purposes and principles of evaluation of materials in library collections.

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Adopted February 2, 1973, by the ALA Council; amended July 1, 1981; June 2, 2008

## Free Access to Libraries for Minors

### An Interpretation of the Library Bill of Rights

Library policies and procedures that effectively deny minors equal and equitable access to all library resources available to other users violate the [Library Bill of Rights](#). The American Library Association opposes all attempts to restrict access to library services, materials, and facilities based on the age of library users.

Article V of the *Library Bill of Rights* states, "A person's right to use a library should not be denied or abridged because of origin, age, background, or views." The "right to use a library" includes free access to, and unrestricted use of, all the services, materials, and facilities the library has to offer. Every restriction on access to, and use of, library resources, based solely on the chronological age, educational level, literacy skills, or legal emancipation of users violates Article V.

Libraries are charged with the mission of developing resources to meet the diverse information needs and interests of the communities they serve. Services, materials, and facilities that fulfill the needs and interests of library users at different stages in their personal development are a necessary part of library resources. The needs and interests of each library user, and resources appropriate to meet those needs and interests, must be determined on an individual basis. Librarians cannot predict what resources will best fulfill the needs and interests of any individual user based on a single criterion such as chronological age, educational level, literacy skills, or legal emancipation.

Libraries should not limit the selection and development of library resources simply because minors will have access to them. Institutional self-censorship diminishes the credibility of the library in the community, and restricts access for all library users.

Children and young adults unquestionably possess [First Amendment](#) rights, including the right to receive information in the library. Constitutionally protected speech cannot be suppressed solely to protect children or young adults from ideas or images a legislative body believes to be unsuitable for them.<sup>1</sup> Librarians and library governing bodies should not resort to age restrictions in an effort to avoid actual or anticipated objections, because only a court of law can determine whether material is not constitutionally protected.

The mission, goals, and objectives of libraries cannot authorize librarians or library governing bodies to assume, abrogate, or overrule the rights and responsibilities of parents. As "[Libraries: An American Value](#)" states, "We affirm the responsibility and the right of all parents and guardians to guide their own children's use of the library and its resources and services." Librarians and governing bodies should maintain that parents—and only parents—have the right and the responsibility to restrict the access of their children—and only their children—to library resources. Parents who do not want their children to have access to certain library services, materials, or facilities should so advise their children. Librarians and library governing bodies cannot assume the role of parents or the functions of parental authority in the private relationship between parent and child.

Lack of access to information can be harmful to minors. Librarians and library governing bodies have a public and professional obligation to ensure that all members of the community they serve have free, equal, and equitable access to the entire range of library resources regardless of content, approach, format, or amount of detail. This principle of library service applies equally to all users, minors as well as adults. Librarians and library governing bodies must uphold this principle in order to provide adequate and effective service to minors.

<sup>1</sup>See [Erznoznik v. City of Jacksonville](#), 422 U.S. 205 (1975)-"Speech that is neither obscene as to youths nor subject to some other legitimate proscription cannot be suppressed solely to protect the young from ideas or images that a legislative body thinks unsuitable [422 U.S. 205, 214] for them. In most circumstances, the values protected by the First Amendment are no less applicable when government seeks to control the flow of information to minors. See [Tinker v. Des Moines School Dist.](#), *supra*. Cf. [West Virginia Bd. of Ed. v. Barnette](#), 319 U.S. 624 (1943)."