



MATERIALS SELECTION/COLLECTION DEVELOPMENT POLICY

A. Objectives

The Liberty Public Library attempts to provide a well-balanced collection of general materials to meet the needs of the community. Library materials are provided to facilitate informal education, and encourage life-long learning, in order to provide information and recreational needs.

Because of the volume of publishing, as well as the limitations of budget and space, the library must have a selection policy with which to meet community interests and needs.

The materials selection/collection development policy is used by the library staff in the selection of materials and also serves to acquaint the general public with the principles of selection.

The following documents from the American Library Association (ALA) have been endorsed by the Liberty Public Library Board of Trustees and are integral parts of the policy: *Library Bill of Rights*, *Access to Library Resources and Services for Minors: An interpretation of the Library Bill of Rights*, and *The Freedom to Read Statement*. (see Appendices for these documents.)

B. Responsibility for Selection

The ultimate responsibility for selection of library materials rests with the library director who operates within the framework of the policies determined by the Liberty Public Library Board of Trustees. This responsibility may be shared with other members of the library staff; however, because the director must be available to answer to the library board and the general public for actual selections made, the director has the authority to reject or select any item contrary to the recommendations of the staff.

C. Criteria for Selection

1. The main points considered in the selection of materials are:
 - a. individual merit of each item
 - b. popular appeal/demand/anticipated demand
 - c. suitability of material for the clientele
 - d. existing library holdings
 - e. budget

- f. readability
 - g. favorable reviews (see #2)
 - h. author's reputation
 - i. timeliness: reflecting new or emerging fields of knowledge
2. Reviews are a major source of information about new materials. The primary print sources of reviews are Library Journal, The New York Times Book Review and Booklist. Online review sources such as Amazon.com are also used. Other methods of evaluation may supplement or be substituted for favorable reviews, including an examination of the book itself.
 3. Publishers' Catalogs/Advertisements:
Publishers' catalogs are an important source of information, since many titles do not get reviewed. In such instances the reputation of the publisher, and series or type of book in particular are taken into consideration for purchasing decisions.
 4. Hold Lists/Purchase Alert Reports/Other Reports:
All holds are monitored by the director to identify frequently requested materials that are not in the collection in adequate numbers. Whenever feasible, it is our current policy to purchase one copy for every five unfilled requests. Other reports (such as Lost, Missing and Claims Returned) identify possible titles for replacement.
 5. The lack of a review or an unfavorable review shall not be the sole reason for rejecting a title that is in demand. Consideration is, therefore, given to requests from library patrons and books discussed on public media. Materials are judged on the basis of the work as a whole, not on a part taken out of context.

D. Interlibrary Loan

Because of limited budget and space, the library cannot provide all materials that are requested. Therefore, interlibrary loan is used to obtain from other libraries those materials that are beyond the scope of this library's collection.

In return for utilizing interlibrary loan to satisfy the needs of our patrons, the Liberty Public Library agrees to lend its materials to other libraries using a standard interlibrary loan policy.

- New titles to the library do not circulate via ILL.
- New films, with the exception of instructional/non-fiction, do not circulate via ILL.

E. Gifts and Donations

The library accepts gifts of books and other materials but these items will be added to the collection only if appropriate and needed. The same criteria of selection that are applied to purchased materials are applied to gifts. The same guidelines listed in *section G*

Withdrawn Materials will be applied to items that are not included in the collection. The following items are prime candidates for inclusion:

- Popular titles, usually fiction, still on reserve or otherwise in demand
- Newer editions of titles already in the collection
- Local history and yearbooks
- Replacements for lost, missing, long overdue, or ragged items
- Paperback fiction in excellent condition
- Out of print titles still in demand
- Nonfiction titles to add to popular subject areas or subject areas that need strengthening.

Gifts of books, other materials, or money are also accepted only with the understanding that the Liberty Public Library exercises the final responsibility for deciding which titles and formats will be purchased. However, the library will consult with the donor to ensure that the selections, as far as possible, are mutually satisfactory. Specific memorial books can be ordered for the library on request of a patron if the request meets the criteria established by the Board and if the titles are readily available for purchase. It is desirable for gifts of specific titles to be offered after consultation with the library director. Book selection will be made by the director if no specific book is requested.

By law, the library is not allowed to appraise the value of donated materials, though it can provide an acknowledgment of receipt of the items if requested by the donor.

F. Types of Materials and Formats Purchased

The Library maintains collections of books (both fiction and non-fiction) and non-print materials. Non-print materials include Books on CD, DVDs, Music CDs (from donations only), and a small “Library of things” collection (ie. early literacy backpack items, hiking backpack, and Tonie box kits). The Library also makes available e-books, e-audiobooks, e-magazines and streaming video for downloading onto portable devices through Overdrive/Libby, and Kanopy. Selection criteria for digital formats is the same as for other library materials.

The library does not collect textbooks or other curriculum-related materials produced specifically for schools, except as these materials also serve the needs of the general public. Thus, the library may purchase or add donations of a textbook that covers a broad area of knowledge that is not covered in more general publications. This includes a few high school level and undergraduate level texts, especially in the sciences and technology.

G. Withdrawal of Materials

An up-to-date, attractive and useful collection is maintained through a continual withdrawal and replacement process. Replacement of worn, dated, damaged, or lost volumes is dependent upon current demand, usefulness, more recent acquisitions, historical value, and whether another networking agency could better provide that or a similar item and availability of newer editions.

This ongoing process of withdrawing items is the responsibility of the Library Director and is authorized by the Board of Trustees. Withdrawn materials may be sold through the

Friends of Liberty Library group, given away to the public, offered to other RCLS libraries, given to other not for profit organizations, or recycled and discarded.

H. Controversial Works

The Library subscribes to the American Library Association Library Bill of Rights and follows the principles of the Freedom to Read and the Freedom to View statements (see Appendices). Liberty Public Library recognizes that some materials are controversial and that any given item may offend some patrons. Selection of materials will not be made on the basis of anticipated approval or disapproval, but solely on the basis of the principles stated in this policy.

Responsibility for the reading of children rests with their parents or legal guardians. Selection of library materials will not be inhibited by the possibility that materials may come into the possession of children.

Library materials will not be marked or identified to show approval or disapproval of their contents, and no library material will be sequestered except to protect it from damage or theft.

I. Copyright

It is the patron's responsibility to ensure that s/he uses all Library materials in accordance with current federal and state copyright laws.

J. Requests for Reconsideration

The public library has the responsibility to meet the information and recreational reading needs of all the members of the community. The Liberty Public Library recognizes that the views and beliefs of its patrons are individual and worthy. If a patron finds it necessary to request reconsideration of the placement of materials in the Library's collection, s/he should request a "Statement of Concern About Library Resources" form and submit it to the Director. Please read "The Guidelines and Policy: Statement of Concern" document for information pertaining to how the request will be handled.

Appendix I 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.

VII. All people, regardless of origin, age, background, or views, possess a right to privacy and confidentiality in their library use. Libraries should advocate for, educate about, and protect people's privacy, safeguarding all library use data, including personally identifiable information.

Adopted June 19, 1939, by the ALA Council; amended October 14, 1944; June 18, 1948; February 2, 1961; June 27, 1967; January 23, 1980; January 29, 2019.

Inclusion of "age" reaffirmed January 23, 1996.

Although the Articles of the Library Bill of Rights are unambiguous statements of basic principles that should govern the service of all libraries, questions do arise concerning application of these principles to specific library practices. See the documents designated by the Intellectual Freedom Committee as Interpretations of the Library Bill of Rights.

Appendix II. Access to Library Resources and Services for Minors: An Interpretation of the Library Bill of Rights

All people, of all ages, should have equal and equitable access to all library resources and services. The American Library Association (ALA) opposes any efforts to restrict access based on age. Policies and procedures that prevent minors¹ from accessing the same resources and services as adults violate the ALA's *Library Bill of Rights*. Libraries and their governing bodies should not use age as a reason to avoid potential objections. Not acquiring materials because minors might access them reduces the credibility of the library and limits access for everyone.

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 means that people should have free access to all services, materials, and facilities and unrestricted use of everything the library offers. Any restriction based solely on the following criteria violates Article V:

- age;
- apparent maturity;
- educational level;
- literacy skills; or
- legal status.

Further violations of Article V include setting limits on:

- how old someone must be to get a library card;
- demonstrated skills or abilities required to get a library card (like signing their name);
- requiring parental/guardian permission to get a card for anyone old enough to be in the library without parental/guardian supervision;

- how many or what kinds of items minors can check out compared to adults, or;
- creating trial periods for library use based on age.

Violations to Article V also include restricting access for minors who don't have a parent or guardian available to sign a library card application or permission slip, who can't provide legal ID to verify their name or address, or who can't visit a library in person.

Libraries can make reasonable exceptions to protect the safety of minors or financial liability to the library. Reasonable exceptions may include limiting access to multipurpose rooms, expensive/rare materials, or high cost circulating items or technology.

"Libraries: An American Value" states the following: "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."² Libraries and their governing bodies can't take on the role of parents or act "*in loco parentis*." Examples include:

- setting up computer systems that hide or block certain materials without parental permission;
- limiting which parts of the library or what kinds of books and services minors can use;
- not letting minors check out certain items or making comments about whether materials are appropriate based on assumed age or maturity; and
- using ratings to stop young people from getting certain materials.

There are many resources available for parents/guardians to find information on how a book, resource, or other material aligns with their family's values. Libraries are not responsible for determining the appropriateness of any book, material, or resource for an individual beyond the already existing collection designations. Only parents or guardians should restrict their own children's access to library materials and services.

The freedom to read is guaranteed by the U.S. Constitution.³ This includes minors. Minors have the right to receive information from the library in all forms, such as:

- print
- sound
- images
- data
- social media
- online applications
- games
- technologies
- programming
- other formats⁴

The right to privacy is fundamental to the freedom to read.⁵ Article VII of the *ALA Library Bill of Rights* states, "All people, regardless of origin, age, background, or views, possess a right to privacy and confidentiality in their library use." Minors also have the right to use the library without being watched or monitored.⁶

Libraries and their governing bodies have a legal and professional obligation to provide free and equitable access to a diverse range of library resources and services that is inclusive, regardless of content, approach, or format to everyone in their community equally, including minors.

School and public libraries, in particular, must provide resources and services to meet the diverse interests and informational needs of everyone in their community. This means:

- Offering services, materials, and spaces that work for all community members, no matter their age;
- Curating developmentally appropriate collections;
- Understanding that people need different things at different stages of their lives, and;
- Not making decisions about what's appropriate for each person individually.

Libraries cannot censor constitutionally protected speech to protect minors from ideas or images lawmakers deem unsuitable.⁷ Denying access to information to anyone, including minors, can be harmful. Libraries and their governing bodies must uphold this principle to protect the rights to intellectual freedom and the freedom to read for people of all ages.

Notes

1. Check local laws for definitions.
2. "[Libraries: An American Value](#)," adopted on February 3, 1999, by ALA Council.
3. "[The Freedom to Read Statement](#)." Adopted June 25, 1953, by the ALA Council and the AAP Freedom to Read Committee; amended January 28, 1972; January 16, 1991; July 12, 2000; June 30, 2004. Reaffirmed by ALA, AAP on June 26, 2023.
4. *Brown v. Entertainment Merchant's Association, et al.* 564 U.S. 08-1448 (2011).
5. "[Privacy: ALA Core Values of Librarianship](#)." Adopted January 2024 by the ALA Council.
6. "[Privacy: An Interpretation of the Library Bill of Rights](#)." adopted June 19, 2002, by the ALA Council; amended July 1, 2014; June 24, 2019; and June 29, 2025.
7. *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 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 also *Tinker v. Des Moines School Dist.*, 393 U.S.503 (1969); *West Virginia Bd. of Ed. v. Barnette*, 319 U.S. 624 (1943); *AAMA v. Kendrick*, 244 F.3d 572 (7th Cir. 2001).

Adopted June 30, 1972, by the ALA Council; amended July 1, 1981; July 3, 1991; June 30, 2004; July 2, 2008 under previous name "Free Access to Libraries for Minors"; July 1, 2014; June 25, 2019; and May 29, 2025.

APPENDIX III 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 counter threats to safety or national security, as well as to avoid the subversion of politics and the corruption of morals. We, as individuals 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 individual, by exercising critical judgment, will select the good and reject the bad. 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 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 or unwelcome scrutiny by government officials.

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, and to 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, unpopular, or considered dangerous by 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 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 the prejudgment of a label characterizing any expression 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 others. 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; and by the government whenever it seeks to reduce or deny public access to public information.*

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. But 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. Further, democratic societies are more safe, free, and creative when the free flow of public information is not restricted by governmental prerogative or self-censorship.

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 channel 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 Americans 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; but that the suppression of ideas is fatal to a democratic society. Freedom itself is a dangerous way of life, but it is ours.

This statement was originally issued in May of 1953 by the Westchester Conference of the American Library Association and the American Book Publishers Council, which in 1970 consolidated with the American Educational Publishers Institute to become the Association of American Publishers.

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

A Joint Statement by:

[American Library Association](#)
[Association of American Publishers](#)

Subsequently endorsed by:

[American Booksellers for Free Expression](#)
[The Association of American University Presses](#)
[The Children's Book Council](#)

Freedom to Read Foundation

National Association of College Stores

National Coalition Against Censorship

National Council of Teachers of English

The Thomas Jefferson Center for the Protection of Free Expression

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