



Greene County

P u b l i c L i b r a r y

Collection Development Policy

**Approved by the
Greene County Public Library
Board of Trustees**

September 11, 2013

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Vision Statement

The Greene County Public Library is essential for improving the quality of life for Greene County citizens by providing educational resources for lifelong learning, access to information, ideas and entertainment, and giving exceptional service to a diverse population

Values

The Greene County Public Library System believes in:

- Providing people with the opportunity, resources, and assistance to foster literacy and lifelong learning
- Providing free and equal access to information, materials and services
- Providing services that are responsive to the diverse needs of our community
- Providing excellent customer service
- Providing library services in a financially, physically, and environmentally responsible manner
- Providing resources and training for a competent, well-educated staff
- Providing a work environment that fosters diversity, respect, integrity, teamwork, and support for change
- Providing the opportunity for effective communication and staff input

Mission Statement

The Greene County Public Library system is the community connection to reading, lifelong learning, entertainment, and the personal and professional enrichment for people of all ages.

The Library maintains an open, unbiased environment and upholds the public's right of access to information.

In support of this mission, the Library provides individualized assistance, community outreach, professional expertise, and current technologies for equal access to facilities, quality services, and materials in a variety of formats.

Purpose of this Policy

Collection development is an ongoing activity; the collection evolves as the needs of the community evolve and as changing technology provides additional or alternative resources. Because no library budget is large enough to permit the purchase of every worthy resource, this Collection Development Policy guides the library staff in most effectively using the Greene County Public Library's financial resources to meet the present and anticipated needs of the community it serves. A policy cannot replace the judgment of librarians, but stating goals and indicating boundaries will assist staff in selecting Library resources, evaluating the collection, and maintaining the collection's currency, relevancy and usefulness.

Periodically, the Board of Trustees of the Greene County Public Library reviews this document as well as the principles of intellectual freedom enunciated by the American Library Association, the Revised Code of the State of Ohio and the First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution. (See Appendices.)

Responsibility to the Community

The public library plays an active and positive role in the community. It strives to be the unbiased repository for the recorded expression of thought. It is committed to the freedom of information and open access to all points of view, including generally accepted perspectives as well as divergent ones. In a democratic society, every individual needs to be free to explore all ideas.

The Greene County Public Library (hereafter referred to as the Library) fulfills its mission when it selects and makes available materials for the enlightenment, cultural development, and enjoyment of all members of the public, including all age levels and many levels of interest and ability. Moreover, the collection should include materials that represent topics of current interest, as well as those of enduring value.

Inclusion of materials thus signifies the importance of diversity; it does not represent an endorsement. Efforts are made to provide materials that represent a variety of viewpoints on controversial issues.

All libraries, then, are likely to contain some materials that some patrons may find objectionable. In addition, collections may not contain all materials that some patrons feel are important. In both cases, the Library has established procedures to hear the voices of the community. (Please see "Request for Addition of a Title" and "Request for Reconsideration of a Title/Source" below.) When a title or source has been examined through the established procedures, it will be re-evaluated only if subsequent requests cite substantially different reasons than the first.

All comments and suggestions are welcomed, and forms are available on paper and through the library website to make it easy for patrons to express their opinions.

The Library does not label materials except to aid the public in finding them in the library. Thus, stickers such as "new" or "mystery" may be used. Judgmental statements such as "This material contains language which some may find offensive" are not applied by the library.

Selection is an individual choice. Every person has the right to reject items for him- or herself, but no one has the right to restrict others' freedom to choose what they prefer to read, view, or hear.

The responsibility for monitoring a child's reading, listening and viewing rests with the parent or legal guardian. Selection of materials for the Library is not restricted by the possibility that children may obtain materials that their parents consider inappropriate.

The Library staff is willing to work with the parent or guardian to determine what materials are best suited for a child's needs, within the framework or guidelines established by the parent or guardian.

Principles of Collection Development

Librarians have a professional responsibility to be inclusive, not exclusive, in collection development and in the provision of resource sharing. We make every attempt to access to all materials legally obtainable to the public, and policies should not exclude materials even if such materials offend a librarian or some members of the community. The Library provides access to materials through its collection and resource sharing services.

The Library collection is developed and maintained to serve the entire community of Greene County, with the collection at each branch targeted to the local community, addressing the needs of both current and potential users. Items are evaluated as a whole, not on the basis of a particular section or sections. Thus, an item will not be included in, or excluded from, the collection because of:

- Race, religion, nationality, sexual orientation or views of the author;
- Depictions or descriptions of violence or sexual activity;
- Controversial content;
- Endorsement or disapproval by any individual or community group.

Responsibility for Selection

Library staff who are qualified by education, training, interest, and job classification are responsible for selecting materials. Overall responsibility for the collection rests with the Director, subject to the policies and mandates of the Board of Trustees. The Library's *Collection Management Plan* describes the selection, development, and maintenance plans for the Library's various collections.

General Selection Standards

Because its ability to purchase and store materials is limited by both budgets and buildings, the Library has established standards for purchase and retention. These standards are developed, implemented, and revised by librarians who are trained in adult, young adult, juvenile, reference, local history, audio-visual, and electronic services. These standards may be applied to all formats. The standards include, but are not limited to:

- Current interest
- Timeliness
- Educational significance
- Positive reviews
- Recommendations by professionals
- Patron requests
- Accuracy
- Contribution to the breadth of representative viewpoints
- Value commensurate with cost and/or need
- Reputation of author/publisher/producer

Collection Development Levels

Both circulating and reference materials will usually be collected within the Basic Information Level for all subject areas. Collecting at this level indicates that the Library will usually purchase materials that serve "to introduce and define a subject and to indicate the varieties of information available elsewhere." (See Appendix A) The Library's staff is trained to offer suggestions for further research beyond the local collections or to request materials from other libraries for the patron.

The Greene County Room, as both a specialized collection and research library, will develop a more in-depth and advanced collection than will be found in the branch libraries.

Non-Duplication

Greene County is home to several institutions of higher learning. The Library recognizes the purpose and resources of libraries at these and other institutions, as well as those of local school districts, and will not needlessly duplicate materials found in their collections.

The Library does not acquire text books, professional or academic journals, or other curriculum-related materials except as such materials might also serve the general public, e.g. basic science books. Nor does the library purchase multiple copies in sufficient quantity to meet the assigned informational demands of local institutions, schools and colleges, or non-library reading groups.

Resource Sharing with Other Libraries

The Library participates in several resource sharing networks. Patrons are encouraged to use these networks to borrow materials that the Library does not own and staff will assist patrons if necessary. Please see Section 3Ac in the *Public Service Policy Manual* for more details on current resource sharing services.

Gifts

The library does not provide formal monetary appraisal of any gift for income tax or other purposes. The library retains unconditional ownership of gifts and decides if items will be added to the collection, offered in a book sale, or discarded. The Library reserves the right to refuse donations.

Memorial Gifts

Patrons may donate money to the Library and/or the Greene County Public Library Foundation for the purchase of specific materials as memorial gifts. The items must meet all regular selection process criteria. The head librarian at each branch can advise and assist patrons in the selection process. Patrons may designate a donation for a particular purpose.

Reference Information Sources

Each Community Library holds at least some basic print reference materials.

Insofar as licenses and costs permit, electronic products subscribed to by the Library are offered for use off-site as well as in the branches. All branches also provide access to the Ohio Public Library Information Network (OPLIN) and its contracted reference databases, which are available for use off-site as well. Both OPLIN and the Library, through their respective websites, guide users to selected recommended Internet sites, and all branches provide access to the full range of Internet sites permissible under Ohio law.

Withdrawn Materials

Librarians periodically re-examine materials, including gift items, in order to re-evaluate the overall collection and specific items within it. Doing so keeps the collection optimally sized and current. Staff consider the condition, use and timeliness of materials when deciding what items to withdraw from the collection. The Library may offer withdrawn materials to Library Friends Groups or other groups or organizations whose purpose is consistent with or furthers the Library's mission. These groups may resell these materials, or use them for other purposes consistent with the Library's mission, e.g. donation to underprivileged children.

Requests For Addition Of A Title/Source

The Library serves a diverse public. On occasion, a patron may think that the Library should add a particular title to the collection. Patrons may request the addition of a title or source by contacting appropriate staff in person. Most requests are handled in this manner. If the patron wishes, however, the matter may be handled in a more formal manner, using the "Request for Addition of a Title/Source" form. Forms are available at all library branches and on the Library's website, and are reproduced below. The completed form will be referred to the staff member responsible for selecting in that area.

If the appropriate selector determines that the title should be added, the library will purchase a copy and the patron making the request will be informed of the decision. The patron will also be informed if the decision is not to add the title to the collection. If the patron is dissatisfied with the decision, he or she may appeal in writing to the Director, who will respond within 30 days. The letter should be addressed to: Director, Greene County Public Library, 76 East Market Street, PO Box 520, Xenia, OH 45385.

The Director's decision may be appealed in writing to the Board of Trustees. The letter should be addressed to: President, Board of Trustees, Greene County Public Library, 76 East Market Street, PO Box 520, Xenia, OH 45385. The Board will inform the patron in writing of its decision, usually following the next regularly scheduled Board meeting.

Requests For Reconsideration of A Title/Source

The Library serves a diverse public. On occasion, a patron may believe that a specific title or source should not be in the collection. In this instance, the patron should first discuss the material with the head of the branch library.

If, following the discussion, the patron still wishes the Library to reconsider the title or source, he or she must fill out a "Request for Reconsideration of a Title/Source" form. Forms are available at all library branches and on the Library website, and are reproduced below. Because items are evaluated as a whole, a title will not be reconsidered unless the patron making the request has read/viewed/heard the entire item. Also, if the material has been previously reconsidered, it will not be reconsidered again unless the newer request is based on substantially different reasons than the first.

The request will be referred to a collection development committee for review.

The patron will be informed in writing of (1) the receipt of the request and (2) the decision. If the patron is not satisfied with the decision, he or she may appeal in writing to the Director, who will respond in writing within 30 days. The letter should be addressed to: Director, Greene County Public Library, 76 East Market Street, PO Box 520, Xenia, OH 45385.

The Director's decision may be appealed in writing to the Board of Trustees. The letter should be addressed to: President, Board of Trustees, Greene County Public Library, 76

East Market Street, PO Box 520, Xenia, OH 45385. The board will make a decision and inform the patron in writing, usually following the next regularly scheduled Board meeting.

The title under consideration will remain in the collection throughout the process to support the freedom to read/view/listen for other patrons.

Sample Forms

**Greene County Public Library
Request for Addition of a Title/Source**

The Greene County Public Library respects the opinions of its patrons concerning the items in its collection. Your request to add materials will be referred to the appropriate persons or committee, and you will be contacted within 10 days in most cases.

PLEASE PRINT

The material I would like to see added is: _____

(Please give as much information as possible: author/title/publisher/year/artist/website, etc.)

I would like this added because (be specific): _____

I have read this book/seen this movie/listened to used this database.

I saw this item reviewed in _____ Date: _____

Additional comments: _____

=====
Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Phone _____ Email Address _____

Signature _____

Library Card # _____ Home Library _____

Library Use ONLY

BV CV FB JM WT X YS Date: _____ Received By: _____

Greene County Public Library
Request for Reconsideration of a Title/Source

The Greene County Public Library respects the opinions of its patrons concerning the items in its collection. Your request will be referred to the appropriate committee, which will review it and respond in writing after its next regularly scheduled meeting. Because a title is judged as a whole, you must have read/reviewed/listened to the entire work/source.

PLEASE PRINT

The material in question is: _____

(Please give as much information as possible: author/title/publisher/year/artist/website, etc.)

I would like this material reconsidered because (Be specific. Include page numbers/passages/scenes/sections/website. Use the back of this form if more space is needed): _____

I have read this book/seen this movie/listened to this music/ used this database.

The action I request is _____

Additional comments: _____

=====
Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Phone _____ Email Address _____

Signature _____

Library Card # _____ Home Library _____

Library Use ONLY

BV CV FB JM WT X YS Date: _____ Received By: _____

Appendices

Appendix A

Collection Level Definitions

Current Collection, Acquisition Commitment, Collection Goal

0 - OUT OF SCOPE: The library does not collect in this subject.

1 - MINIMAL LEVEL: A subject area in which few selections are made beyond very basic works. A collection at this level should be frequently and systematically reviewed for currency of information. Superseded editions and titles containing outdated information are withdrawn.

1a - MINIMAL LEVEL. UNEVEN COVERAGE: Few selections are made; there is unsystematic representation of the subject.

1b - MINIMAL LEVEL. EVEN COVERAGE: Few selections are made; basic authors, some core works, and a spectrum of ideological views are represented. Can support fundamental inquiries.

2 - BASIC INFORMATION LEVEL: A selective collection of materials that serves to introduce and define a subject and to indicate the varieties of information available elsewhere. It may include dictionaries, encyclopedias, access to appropriate bibliographic databases, selected editions of important works, historical surveys, bibliographies, handbooks, and a few major periodicals. The collection is frequently and systematically reviewed for currency of information.

2a - BASIC INFORMATION LEVEL. INTRODUCTORY: The emphasis at this level is on providing resources that introduce and define a subject. A collection at this level includes basic reference tools and explanatory works, such as textbooks; historical descriptions of the subject's development; general works devoted to major topics and figures in the field; and selective major periodicals. The introductory level of a basic information collection is only sufficient to support patrons attempting to locate general information about a subject or students enrolled in introductory level courses.

2b - BASIC INFORMATION LEVEL. ADVANCED: At the advanced level, basic information about a subject is provided on a wider range of topics and with more depth. There is a broader selection of basic explanatory works, historical descriptions, reference tools, and periodicals and indexes that serve to introduce and define a subject. Access to appropriate bibliographic databases (online or CD-ROM), a selection of editions of important works and a greater quantity and variety of materials is typical. This level is sufficient to support the basic informational and recreational reading needs of a highly educated general public or community college students.

3 - STUDY OR INSTRUCTIONAL SUPPORT LEVEL: A collection that is adequate to impart and maintain knowledge about a subject in a systematic way but at a level of less than research intensity. The collection includes a wide range of basic works in appropriate formats, a significant number of classic retrospective materials, complete collections of the works of more important writers, selections from the works of secondary writers, a selection of representative journals, access to appropriate machine-readable data files, and the reference tools and fundamental bibliographical apparatus pertaining to the subject. At the study or instructional support level, a collection is adequate to support independent study and most learning needs of the clientele of public and special libraries, as well as undergraduate and some graduate instruction. The collection is systematically reviewed for currency of information and to assure that essential and significant information is retained.

3a - BASIC STUDY OR INSTRUCTIONAL SUPPORT LEVEL: The basic subdivision of a level 3 collection provides resources adequate for imparting and maintaining knowledge about the basic or primary topics of a subject area. The collection includes the most important primary and secondary literature, a selection of basic representative journals/periodicals, and subject-based indexes, the fundamental reference and bibliographical tools pertaining to the subject. This subdivision of level 3 supports lower division undergraduate courses, as well as some of the basic independent study needs of the lifelong learner.

3b - INTERMEDIATE STUDY OR INSTRUCTIONAL SUPPORT LEVEL: The intermediate subdivision of a level 3 collection provides resources adequate for imparting and maintaining knowledge about the basic or primary topics of a subject area. The collection includes a broad range of basic works in appropriate formats, classic retrospective materials, all key journals on primary topics, selected journals and seminal works on secondary topics, access to appropriate machine-readable data files, and the reference tools and fundamental bibliographical apparatus pertaining to the subject. These materials are adequate to support advanced undergraduate course work. It is not adequate to support master's degree programs.

3c - ADVANCED STUDY OR INSTRUCTIONAL SUPPORT LEVEL: The advanced subdivision of level 3 provides resources adequate for imparting and maintaining knowledge about the primary and secondary topics of a subject area. The collection includes a significant number of seminal works and journals on the primary and secondary topics in the field; a significant number of retrospective materials; a substantial collection of works by secondary figures; works that provide more in-depth discussions of research, techniques, and evaluation. This level collection can support master's degree level programs as well as other specialized inquiries such as those of subject professionals within special libraries.

4 - RESEARCH LEVEL: A collection that includes the major published source materials required for dissertation and independent research, including materials containing research reporting, new findings, scientific experimental results, and other information useful to researchers. It is intended to include all important reference works and a wide selection of specialized monographs, as well as a very extensive collection of journals and major indexing and abstracting services in the field. Pertinent foreign language materials are included. Older material is usually retained for historical research and actively preserved. A collection at this level supports doctoral and other original research.

5 - COMPREHENSIVE LEVEL: A collection in which a library endeavors, so far as is reasonably possible, to include all significant works of recorded knowledge (publications, manuscripts, other forms), in all applicable languages, for a necessarily defined and limited field. This level of collection intensity is one that maintains a "special collection"; the aim, if not the achievement, is exhaustiveness. Older material is retained for historical research with active preservation efforts.

Reproduced from *Guide for Written Collection Policy Statements*, American Library Association, 1989.-

Appendix B

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:

1. 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.
2. 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.
3. Libraries should challenge censorship in the fulfillment of their responsibility to provide information and enlightenment.
4. Libraries should cooperate with all persons and groups concerned with resisting abridgment of free expression and free access to ideas.
5. A person's right to use a library should not be denied or abridged because of origin, age, background, or views.
6. 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 affiliation of individuals or groups requesting their use.

*Adopted June 18, 1948. Amended February 2, 1961, June 27, 1967
and January 23, 1980, by the American Library Association Council.*

Challenged Materials

An Interpretation of the LIBRARY BILL OF RIGHTS

The American Library Association declares as a matter of firm principle that it is the responsibility of every library to have a clearly defined materials selection policy in written form which reflects the LIBRARY BILL OF RIGHTS, and which is approved by the appropriate governing authority.

Challenged materials which meet the criteria for selection in the materials selection policy of the library should not be removed under any legal or extra-legal pressure. The LIBRARY BILL OF RIGHTS states in Article 1 that "Materials should not be excluded because of the origin, background, or views of those contributing to their creation," and in Article 2, that "Materials should not be proscribed or removed because of partisan or doctrinal disapproval." Freedom of expression is protected by the Constitution of the United States, but constitutionally protected expression is often separated from unprotected expression only by a dim and uncertain line. The Constitution requires a procedure designed to focus searchingly on challenged expression before it can be suppressed. An adversary hearing is a part of this procedure.

Therefore, any attempt, be it legal or extra-legal, to regulate or suppress materials in libraries must be closely scrutinized to the end that protected expression is not abridged.

Adopted June 25, 1971; amended July 1, 1981; amended January 10, 1990, by the ALA Council.

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, the ability for library users to access electronic information using library computers does not indicate endorsement or approval of that information by the library.

Labels

Labels on library materials may be viewpoint-neutral directional aids that 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 may be used to remove materials from open shelves to 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.

Rating Systems

A variety of organizations promulgate rating systems as a means of advising either their members or the general public concerning their opinions of the contents and suitability or appropriate age for use of certain books, films, recordings, Web sites, or other materials. The adoption, enforcement, or endorsement of any of these rating systems by the library violates the [Library Bill of Rights](#). Adopting such systems into law may be unconstitutional. If such legislation is passed, the library should seek legal advice regarding the law's applicability to library operations.

Publishers, industry groups, and distributors sometimes add ratings to material or include them as part of their packaging. Librarians should not endorse such practices. However, removing or destroying such ratings—if placed there by, or with permission of, the copyright holder—could constitute expurgation (see [Expurgation of Library Materials: An Interpretation of the Library Bill of Rights](#)).

Some find it easy and even proper, according to their ethics, to establish criteria for judging materials as objectionable. However, injustice and ignorance, rather than justice and enlightenment, result from such practices. The American Library Association opposes any efforts that result in closing any path to knowledge.

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

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.¹ 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.

¹See [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)."

Access for Children and Young People to Videotapes and other Non-print Formats ***An Interpretation of the Library Bill of Rights***

Library collections of nonprint materials raise a number of intellectual freedom issues, especially regarding minors. 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 American Library Association's principles protect minors' access to sound, images, data, games, software, and other content in all formats such as tapes, CDs, DVDs, music CDs, computer games, software, databases, and other emerging technologies. ALA's [Free Access to Libraries for Minors](#): *An Interpretation of the Library Bill of Rights* states:

... 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.

... [P]arents—and only parents—have the right and responsibility to restrict 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.

Policies that set minimum age limits for access to any nonprint materials or information technology, with or without parental permission, abridge library use for minors. Age limits based on the cost of the materials are also unacceptable. Librarians, when dealing with minors, should apply the same standards to circulation of nonprint materials as are applied to books and other print materials except when directly and specifically prohibited by law.

Recognizing that librarians cannot act *in loco parentis*, ALA acknowledges and supports the exercise by parents of their responsibility to guide their own children's reading and viewing. Libraries should provide published reviews and/or reference works that contain information about the content, subject matter, and recommended audiences for nonprint materials. These resources will assist parents in guiding their children without implicating the library in censorship.

In some cases, commercial content ratings, such as the [Motion Picture Association of America](#) (MPAA) movie ratings, might appear on the packaging or promotional materials provided by producers or distributors. However, marking out or removing this information from materials or packaging constitutes expurgation or censorship.

MPAA movie ratings, [Entertainment Software Rating Board](#) (ESRB) game ratings, and other rating services are private advisory codes and have no legal standing ([Expurgation of Library Materials](#)). For the library to add ratings to nonprint materials if they are not already there is unacceptable. It is also unacceptable to post a list of such ratings with a collection or to use them in circulation policies or other procedures. These uses constitute labeling, "an attempt to prejudice attitudes" ([Labels and Rating Systems](#)http://www.ala.org/Content/NavigationMenu/Our_Association/Offices/Intellectual_Freedom3/Statements_and_Policies/Intellectual_Freedom2/Interpretations/Statement_on_Labeling.htm), and are forms of censorship. The application of locally generated ratings schemes intended to provide content warnings to library users is also inconsistent with the Library Bill of Rights.

The interests of young people, like those of adults, are not limited by subject, theme, or level of sophistication. Librarians have a responsibility to ensure young people's access to materials and services that reflect diversity of content and format sufficient to meet their needs.

Adopted June 28, 1989, by the ALA Council; amended June 30, 2004.

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 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 Foundation for Free Expression](#)
[The Association of American University Presses, Inc.](#)
[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](#)

The Freedom to View

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 possible 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 guarantee 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 and 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.

Libraries: An American Value

Libraries in America are cornerstones of the communities they serve. Free access to the books, ideas, resources, and information in America's libraries is imperative for education, employment, enjoyment, and self-government.

Libraries are a legacy to each generation, offering the heritage of the past and the promise of the future. To ensure that libraries flourish and have the freedom to promote and protect the public good in the 21st century, we believe certain principles must be guaranteed.

To that end, we affirm this contract with the people we serve:

- We defend the constitutional rights of all individuals, including children and teenagers, to use the library's resources and services;
- We value our nation's diversity and strive to reflect that diversity by providing a full spectrum of resources and services to the communities we serve;
- 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;
- We connect people and ideas by helping each person select from and effectively use the library's resources;
- We protect each individual's privacy and confidentiality in the use of library resources and services;
- We protect the rights of individuals to express their opinions about library resources and services;
- We celebrate and preserve our democratic society by making available the widest possible range of viewpoints, opinions and ideas, so that all individuals have the opportunity to become lifelong learners - informed, literate, educated, and culturally enriched.

Change is constant, but these principles transcend change and endure in a dynamic technological, social, and political environment.

By embracing these principles, libraries in the United States can contribute to a future that values and protects freedom of speech in a world that celebrates both our similarities and our differences, respects individuals and their beliefs, and holds all persons truly equal and free.

**Adopted February 3, 1999, by the
Council of the American Library Association**