



## COLLECTION DEVELOPMENT POLICY

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## Selection of 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*, *Labeling Systems*, *Rating Systems*, *Diverse Collections*, *Evaluating Library Collections*, and *Access to Library Resources and Services for Minors*. It is not the librarians' responsibility to practice censorship, but rather to provide the public free access to materials, which discuss varying 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 does not take a stand on public issues or attempt to promote any point of view, except for those issues that directly impact the operation of the library and the open access to information, 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. Parents are encouraged to visit the Library with their children and make reading selections with them.

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 available at the Help Desk).

## 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, and other reputable resources 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 purchase hardback books, paperbacks, 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.

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 or 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.

## **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

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. Every effort will be made to dispose of materials in a responsible manner by donating items to another library; by making them available to the public at a reasonable price through the Friends of the Library book sale; or through 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 on superseded or inaccurate information
2. 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.
3. Deselection Based on Unneeded Duplication of Title or Subject
4. 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.
5. Deselection Based Upon Use Patterns:
  - a. Items that have not circulated in three years.
6. 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 one year if not bound.

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

Library policies are posted online at <http://library.stillwater.org/policies.php>.

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; 4/17/18;  
6/28/22

Re-affirmed: 10/25/05; 4/17/18; 6/28/22

Approved by City Attorney: As to form 6/28/22

## 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; 4/17/18; 6/28/22

## **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.

Note: Attachment updated on 6/2/22 with current version located at <https://www.ala.org/advocacy/intfreedom/librarybill>.

## **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.

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.

Note: Attachment updated on 6/2/22 with current version located at <https://www.ala.org/advocacy/intfreedom/freedomreadstatement>.

## **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 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, 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 January 10, 1990, by the ALA Council

Note: Attachment updated on 6/2/22 with current version located at <https://www.ala.org/advocacy/intfreedom/freedomviewstatement>.

## **Labeling Systems: An Interpretation of the Library Bill of Rights**

The American Library Association affirms the rights of individuals to form their own opinions about resources they choose to read, view, listen to, or otherwise access. 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 systems present distinct challenges to these intellectual freedom principles.

Labels may be a library-sanctioned means of organizing resources or providing guidance to users. They may be as simple as a colored dot or strip of tape indicating reference books or fiction or as elaborate as the Dewey Decimal or Library of Congress call number systems.

Labels as viewpoint-neutral directional aids are intended to facilitate access by making it easier for users to locate resources. Users may choose to consult or ignore the directional aids at their own discretion. Viewpoint-neutral directional labels are a convenience designed to save time. These are different in intent from attempts to prejudice, discourage, or encourage users to access particular library resources or to restrict access to library resources. Labeling as an attempt to prejudice attitudes is a censor's tool. The American Library Association opposes labeling as a means of predisposing people's attitudes toward library resources.

Prejudicial labels are designed to restrict access, based on a value judgment that the content, language, or themes of the resource, or the background or views of the creator(s) of the resource, 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 resource. Such labels sometimes are used to place materials in restricted locations where access depends on staff intervention.

Directional aids can also 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. Even well-intentioned labels may have this effect.

Prejudicial labeling systems assume that the libraries have the institutional wisdom to determine what is appropriate or inappropriate for its users to access. They presuppose that individuals must be directed in making up their minds about the ideas they examine. The American Library Association opposes the use of prejudicial labeling systems and affirms the rights of individuals to form their own opinions about resources they choose to read, view, listen to, or otherwise access.

Adopted on June 30, 2015, by ALA Council.

Note: Attachment updated on 6/2/22 with current version located at <https://www.ala.org/advocacy/intfreedom/librarybill/interpretation/labeling-systems>.



## **Rating Systems: An Interpretation of the Library Bill of Rights**

Libraries, no matter their size, contain an enormous wealth of viewpoints and are responsible for making those viewpoints available to all. However, libraries do not advocate or endorse the content found in their collections or in resources made accessible through the library. Rating systems are tools or labels devised by individuals or organizations to advise people regarding suitability or content of materials. Rating systems appearing in library catalogs or discovery systems present distinct challenges to intellectual freedom principles.

Creators of rating systems assume that individuals or groups exist who can determine what is appropriate or inappropriate for others. They also assume that individuals want or need direction in making decisions about the materials or resources they use. While the creation and publication of such systems is protected by the First Amendment's right to free speech, the American Library Association also affirms the rights of individuals to form their own opinions about the information that they consume.

Libraries' explicit or implicit adoption, enforcement, or endorsement of any of these rating systems violates the Library Bill of Rights and may be unconstitutional if used to prevent an individual's access to materials or resources. If enforcement of rating systems is mandated by law, the library should seek legal advice regarding the law's applicability to library operations.

Libraries often acquire resources, such as DVDs and video games, that include ratings as part of their publication materials. Library workers should not endorse the inclusion of such rating systems; however, removing or destroying the rating placed on the original item by the publisher, distributor, or copyright holder could constitute expurgation.<sup>1</sup>

Because cataloging standards provide an opportunity for libraries to include ratings in their bibliographic records, many libraries have chosen to do so—some by acceptance of standard records containing such ratings and others by a desire to provide the maximum descriptive information available on a resource. Libraries are not required by cataloging best practices to provide this information. If they choose to do so, for whatever reason, they should cite the source of the rating and indicate that the library does not endorse external rating systems.

The inclusion of ratings in bibliographic records within library catalogs or discovery systems may be interpreted as an endorsement by the library. Therefore, without attribution, inclusion of such ratings is a violation of the Library Bill of Rights.

If libraries include information about rating systems on items or records, this information should not be used to restrict access to those materials based on the age of library users. Such a restriction may violate minors' First Amendment rights.<sup>2</sup>

That libraries do not endorse or advocate for the use of rating systems does not preclude them from answering questions about such systems. It is appropriate to provide access to sources containing information on rating systems in order to meet the specific information-seeking needs of individual users. The American Library Association affirms the rights of individuals to form their own opinions about resources they choose to read or view.

<sup>1</sup> “Expurgation of Library Resources: An Interpretation of the Library Bill of Rights,” adopted February 2, 1973, by the ALA Council; amended July 1, 1981; January 10, 1990; July 2, 2008; and July 1, 2014.

<sup>2</sup> *Engahl v. City of Kenosha*, 317 F. Supp. 1133 (E.D. Wis. 1970); *Motion Picture Association of America v. Specter*, 315 F. Supp. 824 (E.D. Pa. 1970); *Swope v. Lubbers*, 560 F.Supp. 1328 (W.D. Mich. 1983); and *Rosen v. Budco*, 10 Phila. 112 (1983).

Adopted on June 30, 2015, by ALA Council; amended June 25, 2019.

Note: Attachment updated on 6/2/22 with current version located at <https://www.ala.org/advocacy/intfreedom/librarybill/interpretations/rating-systems>.

## **Diverse Collections: An Interpretation of the Library Bill of Rights**

Collection development should reflect the philosophy inherent in Article I of the Library Bill of Rights: “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.” A diverse collection should contain content by and about a wide array of people and cultures to authentically reflect a variety of ideas, information, stories, and experiences.

Library workers have an obligation to select, maintain, and support access to content on subjects by diverse authors and creators that meets—as closely as possible—the needs, interests, and abilities of all the people the library serves. This means acquiring materials to address popular demand and direct community input, as well as addressing collection gaps and unexpressed information needs. Library workers have a professional and ethical responsibility to be proactively inclusive in collection development and in the provision of interlibrary loan where offered.

A well-balanced collection does not require a one-to-one equivalence for each viewpoint but should strive for equity in content and ideas that takes both structural inequalities and the availability of timely, accurate materials into account. A diverse collection should contain a variety of works chosen pursuant to the library’s selection policy and subject to periodic review.

Collection development, as well as cataloging and classification, should be done according to professional standards and established procedures. Developing a diverse collection requires:

- selecting content in multiple formats;
- considering resources from self-published, independent, small, and local producers;
- seeking content created by and representative of marginalized and underrepresented groups;
- evaluating how diverse collection resources are cataloged, labeled, and displayed;
- including content in all of the languages used in the community that the library serves, when possible; and
- providing resources in formats that meet the needs of users with disabilities.<sup>1</sup>

Best practices in collection development assert that materials should not be excluded from a collection solely because the content or its creator may be considered offensive or controversial. Refusing to select resources due to potential controversy is considered censorship, as is withdrawing resources for that reason. Libraries have a responsibility to defend against challenges that limit a collection’s diversity of content. Challenges commonly cite content viewed as inappropriate, offensive, or controversial, which may include but is not limited to prejudicial language and ideas, political content, economic theory, social philosophies, religious beliefs, scientific research, sexual content, and representation of diverse sexual orientations, expressions, and gender identities.

Intellectual freedom, the essence of equitable library services, provides for free access to varying expressions of ideas through which a question, cause, or movement may be explored. Library workers have a professional and ethical responsibility to be fair and just in defending the library user's right to read, view, or listen to content protected by the First Amendment, regardless of the creator's viewpoint or personal history. Library workers must not permit their personal biases, opinions, or preferences to unduly influence collection development decisions.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> "Services to People with Disabilities: An Interpretation of the Library Bill of Rights," adopted January 28, 2009, by the ALA Council under the title "Services to Persons with Disabilities"; amended June 26, 2018.

<sup>2</sup> ALA Code of Ethics, Article VII, adopted at the 1939 Midwinter Meeting by the ALA Council; amended June 30, 1981; June 28, 1995; and January 22, 2008.

Adopted July 14, 1982, by the ALA Council; amended January 10, 1990; July 2, 2008; July 1, 2014 under previous name "Diversity in Collection Development"; and June 24, 2019.

Note: Attachment updated on 6/2/22 with current version located at <https://www.ala.org/advocacy/intfreedom/librarybill/interpretations/diversecollections>.

## **Evaluating Library Collections: An Interpretation of the Library Bill of Rights**

Libraries continually develop their collections by adding and removing resources to maintain collections of current interest and usefulness to their communities. Libraries should adopt collection development and maintenance policies that include criteria for evaluating materials. Reasons for inclusion or removal of materials may include but are not limited to accuracy, currency, budgetary constraints, relevancy, content, usage, and community interest. The collection-development process is not to be used as a means to remove materials or deny access to resources on the grounds of personal bias or prejudice or because the materials may be viewed as controversial or objectionable. Doing so violates the principles of intellectual freedom and is in opposition to the Library Bill of Rights.

Some resources may contain views, opinions, and concepts that were popular or widely held at one time but are now considered outdated, offensive, or harmful. Content creators may also come to be considered offensive or controversial. These resources should be subject to evaluation in accordance with collection-development and collection-maintenance policies. The evaluation criteria and process may vary depending on the type of library. While weeding is essential to the collection-development process, the controversial nature of an item or its creator should not be the sole reason to remove any item from a library's collection. Rather than removing these resources, libraries should consider ways to educate users and create context for how those views, opinions, and concepts have changed over time.

Failure to select resources merely because they may be potentially controversial is censorship, as is withdrawing resources for the same reason. Library workers should consider the cataloging, classification, and display of resources to ensure that they are discoverable and readily available to the populations they are meant to serve.

The American Library Association opposes censorship from any source, including library workers, faculty, administration, trustees, and elected officials. Libraries have a profound responsibility to encourage and support intellectual freedom by making it possible for the user to choose freely from a variety of offerings.

Adopted February 2, 1973, by the ALA Council; amended July 1, 1981; June 2, 2008; and June 25, 2019.

Note: Attachment updated on 6/2/22 with version located at <https://www.ala.org/advocacy/intfreedom/librarybill/interpretations/evaluatinglibrary>.

## **Access to Library Resources and Services for Minors: An Interpretation of the Library Bill of Rights**

The American Library Association supports equal and equitable access to all library resources and services by users of all ages. Library policies and procedures that effectively deny minors equal and equitable access to all library resources and services available to other users is in violation of the American Library Association's 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, apparent maturity, educational level, literacy skills, emancipatory or other legal status of users violates Article V. This includes minors who do not have a parent or guardian available to sign a library card application or permission slip. Unaccompanied youth experiencing homelessness should be able to obtain a library card regardless of library policies related to chronological age.

School and public libraries are charged with the mission of providing services and resources to meet the diverse interests and informational needs 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 providing library services and should be determined on an individual basis. Equitable access to all library resources and services should not be abridged based on chronological age, apparent maturity, educational level, literacy skills, legal status, or through restrictive scheduling and use policies.

Libraries should not limit the selection and development of library resources simply because minors will have access to them. A library's failure to acquire materials on the grounds that minors may be able to access those materials 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 through the library in print, sound, images, data, social media, online applications, games, technologies, programming, and other formats.<sup>1</sup> 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>2</sup> Libraries and their 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 or not content is constitutionally protected.

Article VII of the 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." This includes students and minors, who have a right to be free from any unreasonable intrusion into or surveillance of their lawful library use.<sup>3</sup>

The mission, goals, and objectives of libraries cannot authorize libraries and their governing bodies to assume, abrogate, or overrule the rights and responsibilities of parents and guardians. 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.”<sup>4</sup> Libraries and their governing bodies cannot assume the role of parents or the functions of parental authority in the private relationship between parent and child. Libraries and their governing bodies shall ensure that only parents and guardians have the right and the responsibility to determine their children’s—and only their children’s—access to library resources. Parents and guardians who do not want their children to have access to specific library services, materials, or facilities should so advise their own children. Libraries and library governing bodies should not use rating systems to inhibit a minor’s access to materials.<sup>5</sup>

Libraries and their governing bodies have a legal and professional obligation to ensure that all members of the communities they serve have free and equitable access to a diverse range of library resources and services that is inclusive, regardless of content, approach, or format. This principle of library service applies equally to all users, minors as well as adults. Lack of access to information can be harmful to minors. Libraries and their governing bodies must uphold this principle in order to provide adequate and effective service to minors.

<sup>1</sup> *Brown v. Entertainment Merchant’s Association, et al.* 564 U.S. 08-1448 (2011).

<sup>2</sup> *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).

<sup>3</sup> “Privacy: An Interpretation of the Library Bill of Rights,” adopted June 19, 2002, by the ALA Council; amended July 1, 2014; and June 24, 2019.

<sup>4</sup> “Libraries: An American Value,” adopted on February 3, 1999, by ALA Council.

<sup>5</sup> “Rating Systems: An Interpretation of the Library Bill of Rights,” adopted on June 30, 2015, by ALA Council; amended June 25, 2019.

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; and June 25, 2019. Note: Attachment updated on 6/2/22 with version located at

Note: Attachment updated on 6/2/22 with version located at <https://www.ala.org/advocacy/intfreedom/librarybill/interpretations/minors>