

**COLLECTION  
DEVELOPMENT  
POLICY**

**APPOMATTOX  
REGIONAL  
LIBRARY  
SYSTEM**

**ADOPTED BY THE APPOMATTOX REGIONAL  
LIBRARY SYSTEM BOARD**

**May 27, 1997  
Reprinted September 3, 2008**

## COLLECTION DEVELOPMENT POLICY

### Table of Contents

- I. AUTHORITY**
- II. OBJECTIVES**
- III. RESPONSIBILITY**
- IV. CRITERIA FOR SELECTING MATERIALS**
- V. SELECTION AIDS**
- VI. PATRON PARTICIPATION IN THE SELECTION PROCESS**
- VII. CENSORSHIP**
- VIII. SPECIAL ASPECTS IN SELECTING ADULT MATERIALS**
- IX. SPECIAL ASPECTS IN SELECTING JUVENILE MATERIALS**
- X. SELECTION BY SUBJECT**
  - A. Generalities
  - B. Philosophy/Psychology
  - C. Religion
  - D. Social Sciences
  - E. Pure Sciences
  - F. Applied Sciences
  - G. The Art
  - H. Literature
  - I. History
  - J. Biography
  - K. Genealogy
  - L. Special Subject Areas
  - M. Fiction
- XI. SELECTION BY FORMAT**
  - A. Reference Works
  - B. Audio-Visual Materials
  - C. Paperbacks
  - D. Vertical File
  - E. Maps
  - F. Magazine Collections
  - G. Online Databases, Compact Disks and Public Internet Access
  - H. Book Rental Programs
- XII. MISCELLANEOUS**
  - A. Government Documents

- B. Materials for the Physically/Visually Impaired
- C. Manuscripts and Rare Books
- D. Sheet Music
- E. Textbooks
- F. College Catalogs
- G. Adult Basic Education collection
- H. Duplication of Titles

**XIII. GIFTS AND DONATIONS**

**XIV. WITHDRAWALS AND DISPOSAL OF DISCARDS**

**XV. INTERPRETATION OF POLICY**

**XVI. RECONSIDERATION OF LIBRARY MATERIALS**

**XVII. APPENDICES**

- A. LIBRARY BILL OF RIGHTS
- B. FREEDOM TO READ STATEMENT
- C. SCHOOL LIBRARY BILL OF RIGHTS

## **I. AUTHORITY**

Final authority for the determination of policy in the selection and acquisition of materials is vested in the Library Board of Trustees.

## **II. OBJECTIVES**

It is the responsibility and aim of the Appomattox Regional Library System (ARLS) by providing, as fully as possible, circulation and reference materials to meet the needs of the residents of the City of Hopewell, the County of Prince George, and the County of Dinwiddie. For this purpose, representative materials are selected and maintained to support formal education, pre-school learning needs, and general information and leisure reading. To this end, the library endorses the Library Bill of Rights, the Freedom to Read Statement, and the School Library Bill of Rights insofar as it is applicable to public libraries. Said documents are attached and form a part of this policy.

## **III. RESPONSIBILITY**

Ultimate responsibility for material selection rests with the Regional Library Director, who operates within the framework of policies determined by the Board of Trustees. Day to day selection is performed by the Librarians and Managers, who actively seek input from the public service staff who have firsthand knowledge of patron requests.

## **IV. CRITERIA FOR SELECTING MATERIALS**

Book reviews from professional and trade publications are distributed and reviewed by staff members. Materials are rated by staff based on general criteria (ex. Literary, educational, informational, and recreational value): the author's reputation and significance as a writer; importance of subject matter for the collection; appearance of material in bibliographies or indexes; price; and availability of material through Interlibrary Loan. The final decision to purchase is based on the value of the material to the collection and not on the personal tastes of the selectors. The same criteria applies to gift items.

## **V. SELECTION AIDS**

The following are used in selections by ARLS: *LIBRARY JOURNAL*, *BOOKLIST*, *PUBLISHERS WEEKLY*, and *SCHOOL LIBRARY JOURNAL*. In addition, professional catalogs, bibliographies, and indexes such as *PUBLICLIBRARYCATALOG*, *FICTION CATALOG*, and *CHILDRENS CATALOG* are used in the weeding process of the collection.

## **VI. PATRON PARTICIPATION IN THE SELECTION PROCESS**

Patron suggestions for the addition of materials to the library's collection are given particular consideration. If their suggestions do not meet the criteria established by the Board of Trustees for the selection of materials, then efforts will be made to obtain the material through interlibrary

loan.

## **VII. CENSORSHIP**

The library does not accept the role of censoring the library collection on behalf of any group or individual. In seeking to develop a collection which represents many viewpoints, and provides information and entertainment to a range of library users, the library does acquire books and other materials which are not acceptable to the beliefs of everyone.

The library also avoids the practice of “Labeling”. Labeling is the practice of describing or designating certain library materials by affixing a label to them, or by segregating them in a certain location. This tends to predispose people’s attitudes against these materials, and as such, the practice is a tool of censorship.

Libraries are sometimes asked by parents to exercise censorship over the reading of children or young adults either by restricting borrowing access or by transferring materials from the youth collection into the adult collection. The library does not accept his role because it is an authority rightly reserved to the parents, and because such a process would reduce the informational and literary content of the youth collection to the detriment of other young people. Patrons who believe that a given item does not belong in the library collection may fill out a form explaining their reasons. This form will be sent to a committee composed of librarians and managers who are empowered to take such action if they agree.

## **VIII. SPECIAL ASPECTS IN SELECTING ADULT MATERIALS**

The library asserts its right and duty to keep a representative selection of materials on all subjects of interest to its readers and not prohibited by law. Materials which meet selection criteria are added to the collection. The library has no right to emphasize one subject at the expense of another, or one side of a subject without regard to the other side. Variety of opinion is to be represented whenever available.

## **IX. SPECIAL ASPECTS IN SELECTING JUVENILE MATERIALS**

The Youth Services Department strives to meet the needs and diverse interests of youth, ages birth through high school, by providing a well-rounded collection of popular and informational materials. The Youth Services Department also offers support to formal education, day cares and preschools by providing material that supplement and enhance their curriculums.

## **X. SELECTION BY SUBJECT**

### **A. Generalities**

#### **1. Encyclopedias**

Encyclopedias are updated by revised editions, not by the purchase of yearbooks. General encyclopedias will be replaced every three to five years, earlier, if funds permit, on a rotating basis. Electronic encyclopedias will be updated on a yearly basis. Specialized encyclopedias will be replaced as warranted by the subject matter: e.g., medical and

science encyclopedias require more frequent updating than history or literature encyclopedias.

2. Continuations

Continuing titles such as almanacs yearbooks, and subsequent editions are replaced annually as needed; some titles in this category are replaced every two or three years.

**B. Philosophy/Psychology**

1. Philosophy

In the area of philosophy, the library seeks to maintain general histories of Western and Eastern philosophy. Moreover, the library seeks to maintain representative works of various philosophers in the histories of philosophy and, when possible, in expositions of the philosophers. Specialized philosophical discussions will be treated by popularizations intended for a lay audience.

Scholarly and esoteric materials may be obtained through interlibrary loan procedures.

2. Psychology

The library purchases psychology materials designed for a lay audience on common subjects such as divorce, death, stress, and fear; and materials on the occult sciences such as astrology, palmistry, and ESP. Generally, theoretical psychological works, case studies, and technical medical materials are not purchased.

**C. Religion**

The subject of religion is one that most people have strong feelings about. The library will attempt to insure that purchases made in this area will be based on selection criteria, rather than on personal religious beliefs. General histories of the major religions of the world; works of theology, especially those that are written for the lay reader; inspirational works and sacred writing, including various editions of the Bible, are included in the library collection. The library does not intend to include items such as works which contain distortions or misrepresentations of fact. Catechisms and study guides for particular religions, or works written for the purpose of recruiting new members will also be excluded.

**D. Social Sciences**

Subjects in the area of social science include sociology, political science, economics, law, education, commerce, and folklore. Materials in this area of the collection provide practical application for topics such as real estate, personal finance, wills and probate, learning disabilities, and etiquette.

As with other subject areas, materials added to the social science collection are intended for a lay audience. More specific, scholarly works are available from college and university libraries via interlibrary loan.

**E. Pure Sciences**

The pure sciences include mathematics, astronomy, physics, chemistry, geology, meteorology, biology, and botany, among others. In this area the library seeks to maintain a good collection of materials which explains science topics and methods to the lay reader, and supports preparation

of science fair projects. Since science is characterized by continual change, special efforts are needed to keep the science collection up-to-date.

#### **F. Applied Sciences**

An applied science, or technology, includes information relating to the medical sciences, engineering, agriculture, home economics, business, and construction. Cookbooks are considered popular materials. We will select items with high popularity. Auto repair manuals will be selected according to their usefulness. We will not attempt to be comprehensive in these categories. As with materials in the pure sciences, applied science materials are selected according to accuracy, timeliness, and presentation for use by the non-technician. Technical works, such as training manuals, and other specialized materials are available through interlibrary loan.

#### **G. The Arts**

For purposes of selecting library materials, the arts include such topics as the fine arts, music, furniture, antiques, interior decoration, handicrafts, sports and other recreational activities.

The library concentrates on collecting general histories of art and general works on the various aspects of art, rather than a comprehensive collection of illustrated books on individual artists. Materials on music and musicians will include works on classical composers, serious contemporary composers, and popular music. General works on instruments, orchestration, composition, etc. will also be included. Sheet music is not included in the collection because of storage and lending difficulties.

#### **H. Literature**

The library's literature collection consists primarily of essays, poetry, drama, short stories, and works of interpretation and criticism. In the field of drama, anthologies of plays are collected to satisfy the demand for that type of literature. Standard and classical playwrights are represented in the collection by individual plays as needed, and by works of interpretation and criticism.

Poetry is represented primarily in large anthologies, in separate collected works of authors, and to a lesser extent in individual volumes of poetry. In the area of contemporary verse, only major writers are collected. Interpretation and criticism of major and classical poets are added as needed. Essays and short stories are collected mostly in anthologies. The library, as needed, collects classics of foreign literature in English. Materials in the native language may be borrowed through interlibrary loan.

#### **I. History**

In selecting works on history, authority, accuracy, clarity of presentation, and effective style are important criteria. The library seeks to avoid materials which tend toward extremes in personal bias, partisanship, and propaganda.

Generally, the collection includes popular treatments of history; however, scholarly treatments are sometimes added to the collection, particularly in subject areas of special consequence, i.e. local or state history. United States history is covered nationally, regionally, and when possible by time period. For areas outside North America general histories are added to the collection. Geographical materials on the national, regional,

and state level are given prominence in the collection. Works on the geography of other areas tend to be general in coverage. Travel guides for North America and other prominent areas are included in the collection and are updated as possible.

**J. Biography**

Biographical writing in some respects is an extension of historical writing, and as such, most of the aspects of collection development which are applicable to history apply here, i.e. authority, accuracy, etc. In developing its collection of biographical material, the library's goal is to maintain works on prominent historical and current individuals associated with other subject areas covered by the library's collection.

**K. Genealogy**

In collection development some emphasis is given to the acquisition of materials which give information as to the how and why of genealogical work, i.e. information on genealogical procedures, sources, and publishers. Because of the close proximity of the genealogical collection of the Library of Virginia and the cost of such materials, family histories and early census data are not normally acquired, except when listed in standard bibliographies or of particular interest for inclusion in the standard library's local history collection. Interlibrary loan requests may be submitted to supplement library resources. To assist in securing sources, the library has catalogs published by the National Archives Trust Fund Board. These catalogs provide ordering information for Federal Population Censuses, 1790-1900 on microfilm.

**L. Special Subject Areas**

Within Adult Nonfiction, there are a number of subject areas which have traditionally generated high circulation and high numbers of patron requests. Examples of these are auto repair, cookbooks, home schooling, test preparation, and computer instruction. The library develops these collections through the use of booklists in review journals, usually adding only recently published titles to the collection. The library will order books for the collection in these categories whenever the title is judged to have popular appeal or usefulness to a wide audience. For example, a book giving instruction on a major new computer software product, or a repair manual to a car model that is widely owned would be good candidates for purchase.

The library does not accept the responsibility of purchasing an item to fill a patron request if it is judged to have a limited readership. Such requests will be filled through interlibrary loan when possible.

**M. Fiction**

The development of the fiction collection involves providing novels to patron who have differing tastes, interests, purposes, and reading levels. Rather than relying on one person, collection development on the fiction area involves a great deal of participation of "front line" public service staff who are aware of what patrons check out. As Popular Materials has been identified as a primary role of the library, providing materials for the enjoyment and enrichment of leisure time is a high priority. Multiple copies are provided for high interest items whenever possible.

Conversely, the library also recognizes the importance of the literary novel in providing insight to the human condition. Classics and other fiction which meet this description are considered for the collection, especially items that recur in school assignments.

## **XI. SELECTION BY FORMAT**

### **A. Reference Works**

Reference works are non-circulating materials such as dictionaries, encyclopedias, indexes, almanacs, etc. Generally a reference work is not read at length, but is consulted to locate facts or limited information on a subject.

Guidelines for locating materials in the reference collection include:

1. Local needs. The recurrence of certain types of questions necessitates placing appropriate materials in reference.
2. Usefulness in answering reference questions. The degree to which a particular work is useful is judged by the experience of the library staff.
3. Format. Some works are placed in the reference collection because they are used to answer questions of fact and intended to be read in their entirety.
4. Frequency of use. Some materials are placed in the reference collection because of frequent use and it saves time to keep such items close to the reference desk.

### **B. Audio-Visual Materials**

#### 1. Cassettes

The library primarily purchases unabridged adult and juvenile titles for the collection. The collection also has a few instructional tapes. Some abridged titles which have been patron donations are also found in the collection.

#### 2. Video Cassettes and DVD's (Added 5/28/02)

The Library's video cassette/DVD collection is intended to serve the informational, educational, cultural, and entertainment needs of the community. In selection of video cassette/DVD materials, the demand for the item will be considered, as well as the quality of the item as determined by documentation, awards, and reviews. Items that in the judgment of the selector will not be in demand will not be acceptable. Items that will be in high demand but have received poor reviews in general will also not be selected. In accordance with the ALA Bill of Rights, no age restrictions will be imposed. The library system supports the ALA's belief that parents/legal guardians have the right and responsibility to determine what is appropriate for their children to read, watch, or listen to, and should be aware of what their children are viewing on a TV monitor. Gift materials will be accepted by the library with the understanding that they become the property of the library, subject to the same evaluation criteria as purchased materials. Special conditions made by the donor will not be acceptable to the library.

#### 3. Microfilm/Microfiche

A collection of newspapers and magazines on 35mm microfilm is developed for informational needs. Included in the collection are the *HOPEWELL NEWS*, the *NEW YORK TIMES*, and often requested magazine titles indexed in the *READER'S GUIDE TO PERIODICAL LITERATURE*.

**C. Paperbacks**

A paperback book collection composed primarily of popular, recreational titles is maintained, and is intended to be supplemental to other library materials.

**D. Vertical File**

The library has two vertical files. One is a general file containing pamphlets, newsletters, maps, etc. that have been or may be of interest to patrons. Material is filed by subject headings according to SEARS LIST OF SUBJECT HEADINGS. The second file contains items pertaining to Hopewell, its history and items of local interest, such as the historic houses of the area. Materials in these files are part of the reference collection and do not circulate.

**E. Maps**

The library maintains no map collection except those maps included in the vertical file, atlases, and gazetteers.

**F. Magazine Collections**

The magazine collection at ARLS is to be developed in a manner consistent with the roles of providing popular materials and supporting formal education. Adult reference is not a major focus of the collection. Requests for scholarly journal articles are handled through ILL, as the library lacks the space or funding to compete with local academic libraries. The magazine collection is not targeted to our role of preschooler's door to learning, as magazines do not seem an appropriate vehicle for this mission. In developing the magazine collection as a source of popular materials, the library looks for titles with broad popular appeal and high circulation potential. Formal education support is provided by a number of titles in the magazine collection, some of which overlap the popular materials role. Titles indexed in Reader's Guide are considered most useful for this library role. Titles requested by CAIN member libraries are considered priority items, as are titles heavily requested by students on site. Gift magazines are subject to the same criteria as those purchased.

**G. Online Databases, Compact Disks and Public Internet Access**

It is the philosophy of the Library that access is more important than ownership where reference materials are concerned. In this regard, we often find that online databases offer our patrons information that is more timely and has lower net cost than what we would be able to provide by "in print" reference sources. Online databases will be used when they offer information that is reasonably priced. Databases that do not satisfy patron needs or are no longer the optimal source in their category may be discontinued.

**H. Book Rental Programs**

The library does not participate in book rental programs at this time because none appear to be cost effective. With high discounts available from most vendors, books can be purchased for the collection and discarded whenever they lose timeliness.

## **XII. MISCELLANEOUS**

### **A. Government Documents**

The library maintains information relative to the local governments, such as charters, code, annual budgets, and various reports. The library collects and maintains a very limited number of State and Federal documents for reference purposes. Patron seeking documents beyond this level are referred to Virginia State University, which is the area's authorized documents depository.

### **B. Materials for the Physically/Visually Impaired**

The library maintains a collection of large print books, materials on sign language, a collection of recorded books and equipment such as magnifiers and the Kurtzweil Reader. In addition, the library acts as a liaison between patrons and the State of Virginia Library for the Visually and Physically Handicapped.

### **C. Manuscripts and Rare Books**

The library does not collect or maintain manuscripts and/or rare books. Patrons seeking information on the value of what is thought to be a rare books are referred to a commercial rare books dealer, and/or the State Library of Virginia.

### **D. Sheet Music**

The library does not collect nor maintain a sheet music collection.

### **E. Textbooks**

Appomattox Regional Library is interested in developing a special collection of school textbooks. This would enable us to support the work of students who failed to bring a textbook to the library with them. Because of financial constraints, the library does not accept the responsibility of purchasing such textbooks, but does solicit copies from the school divisions.

### **F. College Catalogs**

A small collection of state, regional, and some national college catalogs is maintained.

### **G. Adult Basic Education collection**

The library has a number of Adult Basic Education items which are helpful for patrons with special reading needs. The collection consists of book and video formats.

### **H. Duplication of Titles**

Often the library faces heavy demand for the best seller and popular titles. The library anticipates heavy demand for material by previous experience and existing conditions, and duplicates accordingly.

### **XIII. GIFTS AND DONATIONS**

#### **A. Gifts**

Gifts of books and related materials are accepted with the understanding that the library has the right to handle or dispose of them in its best interest. Any items deemed unsuitable may be sent to book sales or disposed of otherwise.

If the donor so desires, a book plate stating the donor's name is inserted in the front of the gift.

Donations of money may be made directly to the Library. Checks are to be written to the Appomattox Regional Library System. Donations are entered into the library's book budget. While a donor's suggestions are given particular consideration, disbursement of contributions is subject to selection criteria.

Donors are notified of selections made with memorial contributions.

#### **B. Consideration of Gifts**

Gift items should be clean, intact, and odorless; contain current information and conform to the same criteria as those items purchased for the collection (see section X)

### **XIV. WITHDRAWALS AND DISPOSAL OF DISCARDS**

Worn, outdated and unused materials are weeded from the collection.

Withdrawn materials are designated as book sale items.

### **XV. INTERPRETATION OF POLICY**

Questions or comments concerning the scope and policies of the collection may be discussed with the Regional Library Director. Complaints or comments on library materials should be addressed in writing to the Regional Library Director.

### **XVI. RECONSIDERATION OF LIBRARY MATERIALS**

Any citizen may request that the library reconsider materials which are part of the library's collection. Such requests must be made in writing on special forms provided for this purpose.

If necessary, the Regional Library Director is to appoint a committee of librarians and/or managers plus other staff members to review materials in question. A written report which includes recommendations for action by this committee is to be made to the Regional Library Director and to the citizen making the request.

Appeals of the committee's review and recommendations may be made in writing to the Library Board of Trustees. If the appeal is deemed to have merit, the Trustees shall nominate and elect a committee of citizens-at-large to review the material in question and make recommendations concerning appropriate action.

The Citizen Review Committee shall consist of a minimum of three members representing, where possible, the localities served by the Appomattox Regional

Library System. Upon receipt of the report of the Citizen Review committee, final action with regard to the material in question will be determined by the Library Board of Trustees.

Adopted Date: 4/30/96

Revised Date: 7/30/96

Revised Date: 5/27/97

## **XVII. APPENICES**

### **A. LIBRARY BILL OF RIGHTS**

#### **LIBRARY BILL OF RIGHTS**

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

---

Adopted June 18, 1948, by the ALA Council; amended February 2, 1961; amended June 28, 1967; amended January 23, 1980; inclusion of "age" reaffirmed January 24, 1996

## C. FREEDOM TO READ STATEMENT

### FREEDOME 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.

## **D. SCHOOL LIBRARY MEDIA BILL OF RIGHTS**

### **Access to Resources and Services in the School Library Media Program An Interpretation of the LIBRARY BILL OF RIGHTS**

The school library media program plays a unique role in promoting intellectual freedom. It serves as a point of voluntary access to information and ideas and as a learning laboratory for students as they acquire critical thinking and problem-solving skills needed in a pluralistic society. Although the educational level and program of the school necessarily shape the resources and services of a school library media program, the principles of the Library Bill of Rights apply equally to all libraries, including school library media programs. Under these principles, all students have equitable access to library facilities, resources, and instructional programs.

School library media specialists assume a leadership role in promoting the principles of intellectual freedom within the school by providing resources and services that create and sustain an atmosphere of free inquiry. School library media specialists work closely with teachers to integrate instructional activities in classroom units designed to equip students to locate, evaluate, and use a broad range of ideas effectively. Intellectual freedom is fostered by educating students in the use of critical thinking skills to empower them to pursue free inquiry responsibly and independently. Through resources, programming, and educational processes, students and teachers experience the free and robust debate characteristic of a democratic society. School library media specialists cooperate with other individuals in building collections of resources that meet the needs as well as the developmental and maturity levels of students. These collections provide resources that support the mission of the school district and are consistent with its philosophy, goals, and objectives. Resources in school library media collections are an integral component of the curriculum and represent diverse points of view on both current and historical issues. These resources include materials that support the intellectual growth, personal development, individual interests, and recreational needs of students.

While English is, by history and tradition, the customary language of the United States, the languages in use in any given community may vary. Schools serving communities in which other languages are used make efforts to accommodate the needs of students for whom English is a second language. To support these efforts, and to ensure equitable access to resources and services, the school library media program provides resources that reflect the linguistic pluralism of the community.

Members of the school community involved in the collection development process employ educational criteria to select resources unfettered by their personal, political, social, or religious views. Students and educators served by the school library media program have access to resources and services free of constraints resulting from personal, partisan, or doctrinal disapproval. School library media specialists resist efforts by individuals or groups to define what is appropriate for all students or teachers to read, view, hear, or access via electronic means. Major barriers between students and resources include but are not limited to imposing age, grade-level, or reading-level restrictions on the use of resources; limiting the use of interlibrary

loan and access to electronic information; charging fees for information in specific formats; requiring permission from parents or teachers; establishing restricted shelves or closed collections; and labeling. Policies, procedures, and rules related to the use of resources and services support free and open access to information.

It is the responsibility of the governing board to adopt policies that guarantee students access to a broad range of ideas. These include policies on collection development and procedures for the review of resources about which concerns have been raised. Such policies, developed by persons in the school community, provide for a timely and fair hearing and assure that procedures are applied equitably to all expressions of concern. It is the responsibility of school library media specialists to implement district policies and procedures in the school to ensure equitable access to resources and services for all students.

---

Adopted July 2, 1986, by the ALA Council; amended January 10, 1990; July 12, 2000; January 19, 2005; July 2, 2008.