JESSE M. SMITH MEMORIAL LIBRARY
REQUEST FOR RE-EVALUATION OF LIBRARY MATERIAL
OBJECTION TO INCLUSION

Name of person initiating this request: ____________________________
Telephone: ___________________________________________________
Address: _____________________________________________________
Organization initiator represents: _________________________________

MATERIAL RECOMMENDED FOR RE-EVALUATION
☐ BOOK
   TITLE: ____________________________ CALL #: ______________________
   AUTHOR: __________________________

☐ AUDIO-VISUAL MATERIAL:
   TITLE: ____________________________ CALL #: ______________________

☐ OTHER (PLEASE SPECIFY):
   TITLE: ____________________________ CALL #: ______________________

REASON(S) FOR SUBMITTING THIS RE-EVALUATION REQUEST

Please respond to the following questions about the material (please use the back of this form or additional sheets if necessary):

• Have you read, listened to, or viewed this material in its entirety?  ☐ YES ☐ NO

• What reviews of this material have you read?

• For what age group would you recommend this material?

• To what do you specifically object? (Please cite specific passages, pages, scenes, etc.)

• What do you believe is the main idea of this material?

• What do you feel might result from use of this material?

• What would you like your library to do about this material?

• Is there other material on this same subject that you would recommend to take the place of this material?

Signature of Initiator: ____________________________ Date: __________

All comments made using this form will be brought to the attention of both the Librarian and the Library Board of Trustees.

All patrons have the right to bring issues directly to the attention of the Librarian and the Library Board of Trustees at their regularly scheduled meetings.
VISION STATEMENT

The slogan of our library is “Cornerstone of the Community.” The library strives to be an integral and vibrant center for our community. The Jesse M. Smith Memorial Library will continue to provide access to diverse materials, services and programs in an atmosphere which encourages the free flow of ideas to educate, entertain, enrich and inform the residents of the Town of Burrillville. The library will continue to serve as the community's principle resource for reference, and special emphasis will continue to be placed on supporting students at all academic levels and on stimulating the interests of young children to develop an appreciation for reading and learning. The library will continue to strive to acquire up to date technology that will allow patrons access to the latest in educational, informational and recreational services.

Mission Statement

The primary mission of the Jesse Smith Library is to serve as a full-service public library providing access to a wide variety of materials and services to meet the educational, informational and recreational needs of the community.

Community Profile

Burrillville is a rural/suburban community in the northwest corner of Rhode Island. Historically, it was an agricultural and textile manufacturing town consisting of 13 distinct villages, each of which grew up around its own mill. Today, Burrillville is primarily a “bedroom community” with the majority of residents employed outside of the town. There are some small manufacturing and service industries located within the town, but the town’s primary revenue source is residential taxes.

According to the 2010 census, Burrillville’s population is 15,955. 97.1 percent of the population is white, and other groups are represented at ½ percent or less. 74.3 percent of the population is over 21. The median age is 42.4 years. The two largest population centers are the villages of Pascoag, which has historically been the commercial center, and Harrisville, which is the seat of local government. 76.5 percent of the population resides in owner-occupied housing. There are three major senior housing complexes and several nursing homes. Numerous rental housing units exist in town including a substantial number of units in the newly renovated Clocktower Apartment Complex which is part of the Stillwater Mill Center in which the library is located.

The town has many outdoor recreational facilities available to the public. Residents and visitors alike enjoy three state owned forest recreation areas, and numerous ponds and lakes that provide an abundance of fishing, boating, canoeing and swimming areas. The town also contains a bike/walking path, a skateboard park for local youth, two golf courses and a number of sports fields. The Town lacks other types of public and family entertainment facilities.

The library is located in the village of Harrisville. The library is on a main traffic route and within walking distance of the town’s high school, two elementary schools, the newly renovated Clocktower Apartment Complex and the Town Hall.
Complex and two major senior centers. The Harrisville Post Office, Town Hall and a community theatre are all proximate to the library. The library river walk, a performance area for community entertainments, connects with Harrisville Village's other park spaces creating a large public campus.

**Objectives**

The Jesse M. Smith Memorial Library provides free service to all individuals in the community, regardless of race, sex, gender, creed, ethnicity, age, occupation, background, views and social or financial position. Its purpose is to provide a center for reliable information and to make available a variety of materials to aid the individual in the pursuit of personal development, leisure activities, and education.

**Responsibility for Materials Selection**

Responsibility for selection of materials rests with the Director in accordance with policies adopted by the Board of Trustees, which holds ultimate responsibility.

**Criteria for Selection**

The collection will be built to reflect the needs and interests of patrons of all types within the community. Selection must not only meet the needs of regular library users but must anticipate the needs of future users.

Materials are selected by the Director and designated staff using competent reviewing media and lists of standard materials as aids. Recommendations from staff and the public are given serious consideration.

One or more of the following standards will be applied in selection of materials for inclusion in the collection:

1. Current usefulness or permanent value
2. Important of subject matter to the collection
3. Scarcity of material on the subject
4. Authority and competence in presentation
5. Importance as a record of the times/historic value
6. High standard of quality in content, format, and binding
7. Favorable reviews found in standard selection sources
8. High degree of potential user appeal
9. Price
10. Relevance and desirability by the community

Duplicate copies of material already in the collection may be purchased to meet heavy demand within constraints of the budget.

**Selection Aids**

The following resources shall be consulted when selecting materials, but selection is not limited to these listings and may change in accordance to what is available in the present and future:
Children's Department
The same principles which apply to selection for adults shall be applied for selection of materials for children. The Head Children's Librarian shall be primarily responsible for the development of the Children's collection. Recommendations for purchase will be presented to the Director for action.

Scope of Collection
The Library shall seek to maintain a comprehensive basic collection for immediate access by local patrons. However, the Library supports inter-library loan cooperation for materials and resources available outside of its scope and budget.

Special Collections

Local History
The Jesse M. Smith Memorial Library collects and maintains a wide range of materials relevant to the history of the town of Burrillville. The value of many of these materials is unmeasurable, and many resources date back 100 years or more.

The Library collects and accepts Local History materials related to the town of Burrillville as needed. Materials include, but are not limited to:
- Yearbooks
- Photographs
- Artifacts and memorabilia
- Fiction books and materials by local authors
- Reports and historic documents

Access to and availability the Local History collection is outlined on our Local History Policy.

Donation of Materials
The Library accepts donations of materials such as books, and audiovisual media; however, the Library can only accept materials that meet certain standards which make the material useful to the Library, either as an addition to the circulating collection, or as a source of income.

For material to be accepted for inclusion in the Library's circulating collection, the subject matter must conform to the Library's Materials Selection Standards. Materials which do not conform, but which may be of interest to the general public, may be accepted for the inclusion in the Library's book sales. All donations are accepted solely at the discretion of the Director, and become property of the Library.

Donations to the library are tax deductible to the full extent of the law. The Library will provide the donor with an acknowledgement of the gift of those materials that are accepted to the Library, but
Internal Revenue regulations prohibit the Library from providing an estimate of the value of the donated materials.

Books
Acceptable books must be in clean and readable condition, and of recent publication date or of historical interest. The book must be complete, without page defacements or tears, and the bindings must be sound. Books must also have the paper jacket intact unless they were published without a jacket.

The Library does not accept books or materials which are dirty, moldy, odorous, musty, damaged, defaced, incomplete or otherwise deemed unsuitable.

In addition, we do not accept the following print materials:
- Textbooks
- Reader's Digest Condensed Books
- Encyclopedia sets
- Computer/Technology books older than two years
- Abridged editions

Audiovisual
The library accepts movies, audio books, and music. These materials must be legally produced, clean, complete, in playable condition, and in the original packaging.

Materials in obsolete formats, such as VHS tapes or cassettes, will not be accepted.

Magazines
The Library does not accept back issues of magazines and periodicals. Exceptions are made for single issues of historic value.

Maintenance of the Collection

Deselection
In order to maintain an accurate, attractive, and up-to-date collection, the Director shall undertake a continuing program of weeding outdated, worn, or damaged materials and shall provide for the replacement or repair of materials which are lost or damaged, when appropriate.

Lost or Damaged Materials
Patrons shall be liable for the replacement costs of any material which is lost or damaged beyond reasonable repair while in their possession.

Policy and Procedure for Challenged Materials

Intellectual Freedom
It is a library's responsibility to resist censorship and provide materials and information that represent controversial issues and diverse viewpoints. The Library recognizes and upholds the American Library Association's Library Bill of Rights and the Freedom to Read and to View Statements. These documents
assert that people have the right, protected by the First Amendment, to make use of whatever library materials they wish.

These rights stand regardless of the person's age. A child's parent or legal guardian is responsible for determining what he or she may read. Selection of materials for the Library’s collections shall not be restricted by the possibility that children might obtain materials their parents could consider inappropriate.

Use of Materials
Library materials are not marked or identified to show approval or disapproval of contents.

Reconsideration Procedure
The reconsideration procedure adheres to the following steps:

1. When an individual or group finds any material to be objectionable, the complaint shall be reported to the Director. The Director shall contact the complainant to discuss their objections and attempt to resolve it informally, by explaining the Library’s philosophy and goals.

2. If the complaint cannot be resolved informally, the person or group shall be provided with a copy of the Library’s Selection Policy, and asked to complete a Request for Re-evaluation Form detailing their objections. The completed form will be reviewed by the Director, who shall make a professional decision regarding the material’s continuing inclusion in the collection. The decision will be reported to the Board of Trustees.

3. Should the complainant not be satisfied with the decision, they may request to appear before the Board of Trustees. The Trustees will investigate and recommend a course of action, consulting legal counsel as deemed appropriate. During this step, the incident will be reported to the Rhode Island Library Association’s Intellectual Freedom Committee.

Revision of Policy

This policy shall be reviewed every five (5) years and revised as needed.
How to Respond to Challenges and Concerns about Library Resources

LIBRARIES ARE A cornerstone of the community dedicated to serving the information needs of everyone. As such, they collect and make available a wide variety of information resources representing the range of human thought and experience. With such a broad spectrum of ideas and information available, it is inevitable that people will occasionally encounter resources they believe to be inappropriate or offensive. They may complain and request that such resources be removed.

Below are step-by-step suggestions about how to respond. These suggestions are not enough, however. Every library should have a collection development policy with a resource reconsideration process approved by its governing body. In addition to outlining the process and criteria for selecting resources, the policy should describe the procedure the library workers will follow when a user requests that a resource be reconsidered. Having a policy and procedure in place will help library staff deal confidently and fairly with users who express concerns.

Throughout the process, it is critically important that library workers remain calm, respectful, and courteous. There is no reason to become defensive when a complaint is made. Not only is this counterproductive, but it negates the library's efforts to encourage user involvement.

If the library has no collection development policy with a review process, affirm the principles of intellectual freedom found in the Library Bill of Rights as you respond to the challenge. Two relevant ALA documents to read are "Challenged Resources: An Interpretation of the Library Bill of Rights" and "Access to Library Resources and Services for Minors: An Interpretation of the Library Bill of Rights".

All challenges, regardless of the source, should be handled in the same way and in accordance with policy. Do not make exceptions in the reconsideration process based on whether the challenge is submitted by a member of the public, an administrator, a library staff member, or a volunteer.

INFORMAL COMPLAINTS AND EXPRESSIONS OF CONCERN

Informal complaints can occur at any time, and every library should have a process for handling verbal concerns. Library workers and educators who receive expressions of concern should courteously refer them to the person responsible for responding to concerns, who should take the following steps:

1. Acknowledge that every person has the right to question library resources. A library user with a complaint should feel confident that their concerns will be taken seriously. Listen thoughtfully and respectfully. Try to elicit the specific reason for their concern, whether they have read the entire work or only parts, and the specific action they would like the library to take.

2. Do not promise to act or appear to agree with the individual. Instead, offer assistance in finding something else that would better meet the person's needs.

3. If the person requests the item be removed from the library's collection, explain that although the individual may be offended by the library resource, others may not have the same perspective. Describe how library materials are selected. Libraries have diverse collections with resources from many points of view, and a library's mission is to provide access to information for all users. All library users have the First Amendment right to borrow, read, view, and listen to library resources.

4. If the individual is concerned about a children's or young adult resource, explain that parents and guardians play a major role in guiding their child's reading and library use. Often a person's concern about a children's or young adult book involves a desire to "protect all children" by removing that item from the collection or restricting access to it. Explain that each family has the right to determine which library resources are acceptable for its children and must accord the same right to other parents.
5. Many expressions of concern end after the individual has had an opportunity to express personal feelings about a library resource. The person only wanted to be heard and have his opinions acknowledged. No further action is needed. If this is the case, thank the person for their interest, make notes about the conversation, and file them for future reference. Additionally, report the conversation to the library director or principal.

6. If the concerned individual is not satisfied during the discussion and wants the item removed, explain the formal reconsideration process and its timeline. Often people who have a concern would like immediate action and are not aware of the length of time this procedure takes. State what your policy says about the availability of the material during the reconsideration process. Best practice is that the resource under reconsideration will not be removed from use or have access restricted pending completion of the process.

7. Provide a copy of the library’s collection development policy and resource reconsideration form. Stress that no action is taken unless the form is fully completed by the concerned individual. Explain that the submission of a completed form will trigger the formal reconsideration process, and that the document will become part of the public record.

8. After the conversation, make notes, date them, and retain the information to provide background in the event that a request for formal reconsideration form is filed. Remember that all such notes become part of the record of the reconsideration process and may become public records.

9. Keep your director or principal informed of any concerns expressed, whether you feel they have been successfully resolved or not. Knowing that a concern was expressed helps that individual respond knowledgeably if the concerned person contacts them.

FOR ADDITIONAL GUIDANCE on handling informal complaints, refer to the “Guiding Principles for All Types of Libraries” in the “Selection & Reconsideration Policy Toolkit for Public, School, & Academic Libraries (http://www.ala.org/tools/challengesupport/selectionpolicytoolkit).”


Updated 2021
Guidelines for Reconsideration Committees

UNDER THE BEST PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS, reconsideration policies ask those charged with reviewing a challenged book to set aside their personal beliefs and evaluate the work in light of the objective standards outlined in the library’s materials selection policy. Listed are some best practices for reconsideration committee members.

- Bear in mind the principles of the freedom to read and base your decision on these broad principles rather than on defense of individual materials. The freedom to read is essential to our democracy.
- Read all materials referred to you including the full text of the material in question and read available reviews.
- Review library mission statement, policies, and professional guides.
- The general acceptance of the materials should be checked by consulting standard evaluation aids and selection policies.
- Challenged materials should not be removed from the collection while under reconsideration.
- Passages or parts should not be pulled out of context. The values and faults should be weighed against each other and the opinions based on the materials as a whole.
- In order to prevent a tie, the library director should recruit an odd number of members for the committee.
- While it may be prudent to state what area/role a committee member represents in the makeup of the committee (i.e., teacher, librarian, community member, administration, parent, etc), the personal identification should remain anonymous to protect the objectivity of the deliberation.
- While there may be a need for public comments to be heard, the reconsideration committee meeting should be closed. Public Comments can be directed to the director or governing body.
- The committee’s recommendation is to be an objective evaluation of the material within the scope of a library’s collection policy.
- The report, presenting both majority and minority opinions, should be presented to the governing body with a recommendation to retain the material in its original location, to relocate the material to an advisory location, or to remove the material.
- Establish a procedure for communicating the committee’s recommendation to the governing body and to the person who made the formal reconsideration request. For example, the committee communicates its decision to the director, who then communicates the decision to the person who made the challenge as well as to the library’s governing board.

SAMPLE RECONSIDERATION COMMITTEE REPORT

Title: ___________________________________________ Author: ___________________________________________
Has every member of the committee read the material entirely? If not, why?

Resources consulted: (include policies, articles, reviews etc.)

Reconsideration committee recommends:

Justification and comments: (include majority and minority positions)

Signatures of Reconsideration Committee Members:
Date: ______________________________


Updated 2021
Guidance for Holding a Public Meeting

If a challenge is addressed in a public meeting, such as a public hearing or as part of an appeal process, the following tips may be helpful.

BEFORE THE MEETING:
- Brief members of the governing body on:
  - Policies and procedures, specifically open-meeting laws and the library's collection development and resource reconsideration policy
  - The concerns expressed, how the library or educational institution has responded to the challenge, and the decisions made.
- Have everyone review the challenged resource in its entirety.
- Determine the length of the meeting and reserve a definite time for public comment.
- Announce the meeting well in advance. It is important that the media and the public understand that the decisions made are not arbitrary, but are based on a great deal of work, thought, and consultation.
- Seek support from ally groups and individuals who can speak in support of the freedom to access resources, or who can send written expressions of support (e.g., parents, educators, students, area librarians from other library types, local colleges and universities, ministers, attorneys, people from the media, state library associations, educational groups).

AT THE MEETING:
- Distribute the Library Bill of Rights (http://www.ala.org/advocacy/intfreedom/librarybill), your library's collection development and resource reconsideration policy, and open-meeting procedures.
- Ask people who wish to speak to sign in.
- Have the chair of the governing body preside. At the beginning of the hearing, the chair should explain the process the governing body will follow and when it will issue its decision.
- Have individuals speak in the order they signed in, and appoint a timekeeper to limit each speaker to a specific amount of time. If participants are allowed to speak a second time, they should do so only after everyone who has registered has had an opportunity to speak.


Updated 2021
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.


Inclusion of “age” reaffirmed January 23, 1996.

Although the Articles of the Library Bill of Rights are unambiguous statements of basic principles that should govern the service of all libraries, questions do arise concerning application of these principles to specific library practices. See the documents designated by the Intellectual Freedom Committee as Interpretations of the Library Bill of Rights (http://www.ala.org/advocacy/intfreedom/librarybill/interpretations).
Liberal Freedom Core Documents

Selection & Reconsideration Policy Toolkit for Public, School, & Academic Libraries

First Amendment
Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances.

[more (http://www.ala.org/advocacy/intfreedom/censorship)]

Library Bill of Rights and Interpretations
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[more (http://www.ala.org/advocacy/intfreedom/librarybill)]

Code of Ethics of the American Library Association
As members of the American Library Association, we recognize the importance of codifying and making known to the profession and to the general public the ethical principles that guide the work of librarians, other professionals providing information services, library trustees and library staffs.

Ethical dilemmas occur when values are in conflict. The American Library Association Code of Ethics states the values to which we are committed, and embodies the ethical responsibilities of the profession in this changing information environment.

We significantly influence or control the selection, organization, preservation, and dissemination of information. In a political system grounded in an informed citizenry, we are members of a profession explicitly committed to intellectual freedom and the freedom of access to information. We have a special obligation to ensure the free flow of information and ideas to present and future generations. The principles of this Code are expressed in broad statements to guide ethical decision making. These statements provide a framework; they cannot and do not dictate conduct to cover particular situations.

1. We provide the highest level of service to all library users through appropriate and usefully organized resources; equitable service policies; equitable access; and accurate, unbiased, and courteous responses to all requests.
2. We uphold the principles of intellectual freedom and resist all efforts to censor library resources.
3. We protect each library user's right to privacy and confidentiality with respect to information sought or received and resources consulted, borrowed, acquired or transmitted.
4. We respect intellectual property rights and advocate balance between the interests of information users and rights holders.
5. We treat co-workers and other colleagues with respect, fairness, and good faith, and advocate conditions of employment that safeguard the rights and welfare of all employees of our institutions.
6. We do not advance private interests at the expense of library users, colleagues, or our employing institutions.
7. We distinguish between our personal convictions and professional duties and do not allow our personal beliefs to interfere with fair
We strive for excellence in the profession by maintaining and enhancing our own knowledge and skills, by encouraging the professional development of co-workers, and by fostering the aspirations of potential members of the profession.

9. We affirm the inherent dignity and rights of every person. We work to recognize and dismantle systemic and individual biases; to confront inequity and oppression; to enhance diversity and inclusion; and to advance racial and social justice in our libraries, communities, profession, and associations through awareness, advocacy, education, collaboration, services, and allocation of resources and spaces.

[more (http://www.ala.org/tools/ethics)]

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.

[more (http://www.ala.org/advocacy/intfreedom/freedomreadstatement)]
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 beproscribed 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.


Inclusion of “age” reaffirmed January 23, 1996.

Although the Articles of the Library Bill of Rights are unambiguous statements of basic principles that should govern the service of all libraries, questions do arise concerning application of these principles to specific library practices. See the documents designated by the Intellectual Freedom Committee as Interpretations of the Library Bill of Rights (http://www.ala.org/advocacy/intfreedom/librarybill/interpretations).
Professional Ethics

ALA's Code of Ethics is the responsibility of the Committee on Professional Ethics (/groups/committees/ala/ala-profethics) (COPE). The Code of Ethics is the document that translates the values of intellectual freedom that define the profession of librarianship into broad principles that may be used by individual members of that profession as well as by others employed in a library as a framework for dealing with situations involving ethical conflicts.

- Conflicts of Interest Q&A (http://www.ala.org/tools/ethics/conflictsinterestqa) (amended April 30, 2019)
- Speech in the Workplace Q&A (http://www.ala.org/tools/ethics/workplacespeechqa) (amended April 30, 2019)

Code of Ethics

As members of the American Library Association, we recognize the importance of codifying and making known to the profession and to the general public the ethical principles that guide the work of librarians, other professionals providing information services, library trustees and library staffs.

Ethical dilemmas occur when values are in conflict. The American Library Association Code of Ethics states the values to which we are committed, and embodies the ethical responsibilities of the profession in this changing information environment.

We significantly influence or control the selection, organization, preservation, and dissemination of information. In a political system grounded in an informed citizenry, we are members of a profession explicitly committed to intellectual freedom and the freedom of access to information. We have a special obligation to ensure the free flow of information and ideas to present and future generations.

The principles of this Code are expressed in broad statements to guide ethical decision making. These statements provide a framework; they cannot and do not dictate conduct to cover particular situations.

1. We provide the highest level of service to all library users through appropriate and usefully organized resources; equitable service policies; equitable access; and accurate, unbiased, and courteous responses to all requests.
2. We uphold the principles of intellectual freedom and resist all efforts to censor library resources.
3. We protect each library user's right to privacy and confidentiality with respect to information sought or received and resources consulted, borrowed, acquired or transmitted.
4. We respect intellectual property rights and advocate balance between the interests of information users and rights holders.
5. We treat co-workers and other colleagues with respect, fairness, and good faith, and advocate conditions of employment that safeguard the rights and welfare of all employees of our institutions.
6. We do not advance private interests at the expense of library users, colleagues, or our employing institutions.
7. We distinguish between our personal convictions and professional duties and do not allow our personal beliefs to interfere with fair representation of the aims of our institutions or the provision of access to their information resources.
8. We strive for excellence in the profession by maintaining and enhancing our own knowledge and skills, by encouraging the professional development of co-workers, and by fostering the aspirations of potential members of the profession.
9. We affirm the inherent dignity and rights of every person. We work to recognize and dismantle systemic and individual biases; to confront inequity and oppression; to enhance diversity and inclusion; and to advance racial and social justice in our libraries, communities, profession, and associations through awareness, advocacy, education, collaboration, services, and allocation of resources and spaces.

Adopted at the 1939 Midwinter Meeting by the ALA Council; amended June 30, 1961; June 28, 1995; January 22, 2008; and June 29, 2021.
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.

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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.


A Joint Statement by:
American Library Association (/)
Association of American Publishers (http://www.publishers.org/)

Subsequently endorsed by:
American Booksellers for Free Expression (http://www.bookweb.org/abfe)
The Association of American University Presses (http://www.aaupnet.org/)
The Children's Book Council (http://www.cbcbooks.org/)
Freedom to Read Foundation (http://www.frf.org)
National Association of College Stores (http://www.nacs.org/)
National Coalition Against Censorship (http://www.ncac.org/)
Formal Requests for Reconsideration

A formal reconsideration request is a written document that identifies the specific resource that is of concern and the reasons for reconsidering its inclusion in the library's collection. In order to provide a standard method for receiving patron input, every library should have a written process for handling formal complaints as part of its collection development policy. If the library receives a completed reconsideration form, the person or group designated in library policy to evaluate challenges should take the following steps:

1. Respond quickly to the individual, acknowledging that the formal reconsideration request has been received, restating the steps in the process, and reviewing the timeline.

2. Review the complaint carefully. Was the form completed by an individual with personal concerns or a person representing a group? Look at the reason(s) for the challenge. Has the individual read the entire resource or only specified parts? What action is the person requesting? Does the person seek to have the resource removed from the collection, restricted (e.g., requiring minors to provide written permission from a parent or guardian), reclassified and moved to a different location (e.g., young-adult to adult section or middle school to high school library), or another action such as labeling the book to alert potential readers (e.g., “sexually explicit” or “mature”)?

3. Prepare a document for the library director or the school administrator that includes the book's title, summary of the plot or content, selection criteria met by the resource, list of positive reviews, awards received, and a brief summary of the reconsideration process. It is helpful to determine how frequently the resource has been checked out and how many libraries in the local area, the school district, or the state own the resource.

4. Meet with the library director or the school's principal to discuss the resource challenge and the process that will be followed to ensure adherence to the board-approved policy. If an administrator is tempted to acquiesce to a demand to remove a library resource without due process, explain the legal and ethical issues involved. Circumventing policy may put a school district or library in legal jeopardy of a lawsuit if a library resource is removed without following the official reconsideration process. Such action also sends the message that the policy does not matter, and it is easy to remove a resource from a library—a message that can easily spread. The Code of Ethics of the American Library Association (http://www.ala.org/tools/ethics) directs library professionals to "uphold the principles of intellectual freedom and resist all efforts to censor library resources."

5. Follow your library's reconsideration procedure exactly, even if it seems outdated, redundant, or incorrect. The review process must be transparent and objective and should include the following general steps.
   - Review the work in question.
   - Determine if the resource meets the selection criteria in the library's collection development policy.
   - Decide whether or not the resource will be retained.
   - Send a written letter informing the initiator of the challenge of the decision. Address the letter to the individual; do not use an impersonal form letter. Explain how they may appeal the decision if desired, and inform them that appealing the decision will require publicly disclosing the complaint on the agenda of the entity that handles appeals, and in other documents.

6. Update workers in your library or school about the reconsideration process, but be aware of the potential for open records requests. Keep personal opinions and emotional responses out of all official communications. Paper and electronic documents can be obtained and viewed by anyone who submits a request through the proper channels. If you have questions, check with the library's or educational institution's legal counsel.

7. When the final decision about the questioned resource has been made, communicate the resolution to library workers, keep a record of the event, and report the result to the ALA Office for Intellectual Freedom using its Challenge Reporting form (http://www.ala.org/tools/}
• After the challenge is completed, reflect on what was accomplished. For example, if the resource was retained in the collection, users still have access to the information or fiction book. Did you learn something that can be applied to the next challenge? Did you garner new allies? Should lines of communication with civic, religious, educational, or political bodies of the community, and local media be strengthened? Can this experience be used as the basis for library advocacy to the entire community? Also, analyze the reconsideration process for weaknesses and omissions and create a list of possible changes that would improve the process. Meet with the library director or the principal to discuss whether the timing is right for revising the policy.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION on the reconsideration process in public, school and academic libraries is available online in the ALA’s “Selection & Reconsideration Policy Toolkit for Public, School, & Academic Libraries (http://www.ala.org/tools/challengesupport/selectionpolicytoolkit).”


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