



**SPOKANE PUBLIC LIBRARY**

**DOCUMENT #40.1**

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**SUBJECT: COLLECTION DEVELOPMENT POLICY**

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## Introduction

### Organizational Responsibility

Library mission: Spokane Public Library strengthens our community by promoting literacy and providing access to words, images and information through respectful, professional service.

In order to fulfill this mission, Spokane Public Library maintains a collection of materials that is determined by budget, space, and current library priorities.

### Service Principles

The purpose of this document is to outline Spokane Public Library's policy regarding the development of the collection of materials. Spokane Public Library adheres to the following collection development policy service principles:

- Spokane Public Library serves customers of all ages and cultural backgrounds and realizes that customers have diverse needs, interests, value systems and reading abilities.
- Not all materials will be suitable, nor of interest to, all segments of the community.
- Spokane Public Library encourages parents to use the library with their children, and supports parents' rights and responsibilities to guide their children's reading and viewing of library materials. Trained Librarians are available to assist parents and children to access and choose the most appropriate materials. Spokane Public Library does not make a determination of what children should read, view, or borrow from the library. The Library does not act *in loco parentis*, but provides materials that support parents and children's searches for diverse materials and ideas.
- Materials are provided in varying formats that meet the educational, recreational and informational needs expressed by customers, and that represent divergent and alternative views.
- Resource sharing is viewed as an additional means of providing customers access to a larger volume of materials and information.
- Purchase suggestions from customers are encouraged, both in general and in the development of special collections.
- Through a process of ongoing assessment and maintenance, collections are kept relevant in content and format and useful to customers.
- The Spokane Public Library endorses and defends the concepts of intellectual freedom as protected by the United States Constitution. Documents that support the foundation of intellectual freedom are found in the appendix of this document.

### Selection Criteria

In order to select materials, Spokane Public Library uses the following criteria:

- Need for information in a subject area.
- Suitability of reading level, interest, and treatment of subject for intended audience.
- Accuracy.
- Community and public interest.
- Balance and diversity of viewpoint.
- Timeliness.
- Locally/regionally produced or authored. However, the fact that an author or producer is/was a resident of Spokane does not necessarily mean that the library will automatically select or accept copies of the item. Other factors including public interest may be more relevant in the decision to select or accept such items.
- Quality of writing or performance.
- Durability and quality of production.

- Reputation and/or authority of author, editor, illustrator, publisher or performer.
- Price format and ease of use.
- Positive reviews and/or widespread critical attention.
- Inclusion in standard bibliographies and indexes.
- Availability of material in other area libraries.
- Space limitations. Shelving arrangements of materials are dictated by size of the branch library and size of the collection.

## **Areas of the Collection**

### **Fiction Materials**

The library will acquire popular best sellers, local or regional fiction, and fiction in a wide range of genres including literary, historical, mystery, science fiction, fantasy, western, horror, romance and inspirational. Material may be purchased in hardback, large print, and paperback formats.

### **Nonfiction Materials**

The library offers nonfiction that covers a broad variety of subject areas related to work, school and personal life. Nonfiction resources will address the needs of all ages, and will emphasize material written or produced for the general reader. The Downtown Library includes greater breadth and a larger quantity of retrospective material.

### **Reference Materials**

Basic print reference resources are maintained at all Spokane Public Library branches. The Downtown library maintains in-depth resources in the areas of business, government, fundraising, careers, education, consumer, and motor vehicle repair. A juvenile reference collection is maintained at the Downtown Library in the Children's department. Further information about electronic reference materials and government documents can be found later in this document.

### **Electronic Materials**

The library selects many web-based materials that are available in an electronic format. Electronic materials include reference resources in areas such as business, literature, and other tools that supplement Spokane Public Library's print reference collection.

### **Electronic Books (Ebooks)**

In addition to reference electronic materials, the library maintains a selection of electronic books (also known as “e-books”) that are available for circulation to library customers. Electronic materials are selected in accordance with professional selection criteria based on reviews, cost, and the integration of these materials into the library’s current collection. Not all publishers are willing to supply their books to ebook vendors so the library only has access to a segment of the ebook market.

### **Audiovisual Materials**

In order to fulfill the mission of the Spokane Public Library system, the Library maintains non-print resources for customers of all ages. These resources represent a variety of formats and viewpoints, extend library services to a clientele not reached by print materials, and supply cultural, recreational and informational productions best represented through an audiovisual medium. New formats will be considered under the Policy Regarding New Formats.

The library will not remove any rating labels that are carried by the item at the time of purchase, nor will it add any rating or warning label to any item.

The media collections shall be weeded routinely, with materials in poor physical condition or out of date withdrawn at any time.

### **Audio**

The audio resources consist of materials best suited or only experienced through the medium of sound. Formats include spoken word on compact disc, downloadable audiobooks and music compact discs. These materials comprise a broad representation of music and the spoken word for adult, young adult, and children’s interests. A legacy collection of audiobooks on cassette will be housed at DT in Outreach, closed stacks and on second floor.

All facilities maintain audio collections.

Music selections include works by a wide variety of composers and performers. Selection criteria include public demand and favorable reviews.

Spoken word selections include fiction, non-fiction, stage and radio productions, speeches, lectures and language instruction. Selection criteria include patron demand and favorable reviews.

### **Video**

Video resources include materials best suited or only experienced through the medium of sight and sound. Video materials are acquired to provide enrichment and recreation through popular feature films and documentary, cultural, and instructional videos that augment the library’s print resources. The collection is primarily in DVD format but includes a repository of VHS tapes in Downtown closed stacks.

All facilities maintain video collections.

The following areas/types of video materials are selected:

- Adult and family interest feature films including contemporary and older productions, selective foreign films, and productions that represent major benchmarks in film history.
- General information and instructional videos including travel, health, culture, documentaries, and local interest videos.
- Juvenile videos to include filmed versions of books, as well as feature films, short features, and television productions.

Selection criteria include favorable reviews in reliable journals and sources, public demand, material's subject timeliness, material's relation to existing collection and director's/producer's reputation.

## **Magazines and Newspapers**

Magazines and newspaper are purchased for the current popular interests of customers of all ages and for reference and informational use. They are selected using the same general criteria for other materials. The availability of electronic and print indexing as well as the availability of full-text access is considered. The Downtown Library's collection includes greater breadth and a larger quantity of retrospective material.

## **Children's Collection**

The Spokane Public Library's children's collections serve children from infancy through age fourteen. Materials for this collection reflect the wide range of reading and interest levels that this age group includes. The children's collections exist to encourage children to develop a lifelong habit of reading for both recreational and informational needs. Materials are chosen based on positive reviews, popularity, award winners, children's classics and/or accuracy of factual content.

Children's collections are located at all of the Spokane Public Library locations and include the following types of resources: board books, paperbacks, picture books, fiction, easy and juvenile nonfiction, beginning readers, magazines, recorded music, math and science kits, audiobooks and DVDs. Reference and professional materials for storytime are also kept at each location. Materials designed for adults who work with children are located in the adult collections.

## **Young Adult Collection**

Spokane Public Library's young adult collections serve primarily young people from age twelve through seventeen. Consisting mainly of recreational reading materials, the resources are selected to provide Spokane's young people with materials that entertain, enlighten and challenge. Materials are chosen based on positive reviews, popularity, award winners, classics and relevance to teen interests.

Young adult collections are located at all Spokane Public Library locations. Holdings at each location vary according to community needs and interests. Materials for this collection include popular fiction

books in both paperback and hardcover, graphic novels, magazines and audiobooks. Young adult nonfiction materials are also purchased, but these items are shelved within the adult nonfiction collection at all locations. The young adult materials will normally not duplicate materials found in either the adult or children's collections except when deemed appropriate.

## **Outreach Collection**

Outreach services are provided to customers at participating senior facilities as well as to individual homebound customers. This collection is comprised of popular materials as well as memory and other assistive materials in a variety of print and non-print formats, with a special focus on large print, mass paperback, audiobook and videos.

## **Documents Collections**

### **Federal Documents Collection**

Spokane Public Library has been a federal selective depository since 1910. The library currently selects 14% of the depository items available through the federal government's documents depository system. Much of that 14% is provided via electronic access only; the FDLP provides passwords to the selected databases as needed. The library still receives some paper documents and a few documents on microfiche (Federal Register and Congressional Record). Spokane Public Library maintains the Federal Documents Collection at the Downtown Library.

Today over 90% of new federal government information is available in electronic format and available via the internet.

The Federal Documents Librarian has primary responsibility for the selection, organization and maintenance of the depository collection, and to help customers find the documents they need, whatever the format. The Federal Documents Librarian will select items using the same general selection criteria for other print and non-print materials.

### **Washington State Documents Collection**

Spokane Public Library maintains the Washington State Documents Collection at the Downtown Library. An increasing number of these documents are available in electronic format (internet, etc.). The State Documents Librarian has primary responsibility for the selection, organization and maintenance of the depository collection, and to help customers find the documents they need, whatever the format.

### **Local Documents Collection**

#### **Environmental Impact Statements Collection**

#### **Miscellaneous Documents Collection**

These three collections are housed principally at the Downtown Library, but other branches house important general or neighborhood-related documents.

The Local Documents collection is made up of documents from Spokane City and Spokane County.

The Environmental Impact Statements collection includes environmental impact statements primarily from Eastern Washington and Northern Idaho.

The Miscellaneous Documents collection contains other important documents primarily from Eastern Washington and Northern Idaho that do not fall into any of the other document collections at the library. An increasing number of these documents are available in electronic format (internet, etc.).

The Local Documents Librarian has primary responsibility for the selection, organization, and maintenance of these collections, and to help customers find the documents they need, whatever the format.

## **Ned Barnes Northwest Room**

Spokane Public Library maintains an extensive collection of research material pertaining to the history, exploration and settlement of the Northwest, or that region including Washington, Oregon, Idaho, Montana and the province of British Columbia. The Northwest collection consists of print and audiovisual materials on every period from the late 1700's to the present. Special effort is made to collect material relative to Spokane and the Inland Northwest. The Northwest collection serves the needs of a broad range of customers, from children working on school projects to scholars conducting research on all aspects of Northwest history.

## **Fuller Collection**

The Fuller collection, developed by George W. Fuller (Spokane City Librarian from 1911 through 1936), includes books, bookplates, prints, tablets and other unusual formats related to the history of printing and the book. Items in the collection may not necessarily be complete or wholly intact, but are still of interest, value or relevance to the collection. Material in the collection is maintained in special environmental conditions in closed stacks in the Northwest History Room on the 2<sup>nd</sup> floor of the Downtown Library.

The items in the collection are primarily intended for display but can be accessed by qualified researchers. (See Spokane Public Library Policy #40.21: *Policy on the Use of Fuller Collection Materials.*) It is unlikely that additional materials will be placed in this collection.

## **Genealogy**

The genealogy collection, located at the Downtown branch, is a regional resource serving researchers in the field of genealogy and individuals interested in investigating their own family stories. Material types include atlases, books, periodicals, microforms, electronic databases, and vertical and card files. The primary focus of the collection is to support customers researching the history of families in the United States. This material is for reference/in-house use only and may not be checked out.

Spokane Public Library has been very fortunate to have a long history of close ties to the Eastern Washington Genealogical Society. This relationship has enabled us to work together to provide resources

and services to those interested in doing genealogical research. Additional details about the genealogical collection's content and maintenance are contained in the latest edition of the Spokane Public Library document *Genealogical Service Principles*.

Branch libraries maintain only very basic “how-to” genealogy materials, most of which is part of the adult non-fiction collection.

## **Foreign Language Collections**

Due to finite resources, collections of foreign languages will be limited. English as a Second Language (ESL) as well as introductory and instructional materials in foreign languages are collected for both adults and children. In order to be responsive to the current ethnic nature of the community, popular fiction and nonfiction materials in Russian and Spanish will be emphasized. As the nature of the community changes, the foreign language collection should reflect those changes.

## **Library Professional Services Collection**

A special collection called the Professional Collection is housed at the Downtown Library. It serves library staff as they make work-related decisions. Books and magazines related to library operations are stored in this collection. All customers may check out the circulating books in this collection, but the magazines are for library use only. Professional juvenile materials for use by youth services librarians for storytime are also maintained at each branch location.

## **Closed Stack Collection**

The Closed Stack Collection, housed at the Downtown Library, consists of print and non-print material selected by professional librarians for retention in light of the material's subject or regionalism. Selected materials may be located in closed stacks in order to address space constraints in the library's public circulating and reference collections.

## **Internet Resources**

Internet resources serve to supplement the resources that are available in print, non-print and electronic format to Spokane Public Library users. Since the internet is an unregulated resource, it is not possible for the staff of Spokane Public Library to evaluate the resources of the internet for reliability and accuracy. Library reference staff prepare guides of links to reliable internet sites on various subject matters. See Spokane Public Library Policy #40.4 for *Internet Use* for further information.

Increasingly, government documents are published solely electronically and the library provides links to these documents in our public catalog.

## Interlibrary Loan Resources

Requested interlibrary loan books are reviewed by the Collection Development staff for possible purchase prior to the Library initiating an interlibrary loan transaction. Purchasing criteria for interlibrary loan requests include the following:

- Has the Library previously owned the book and is a replacement copy available for purchase?
- Do reviews in professional library journals recommend the title?
- Does the title provide series continuity?
- Have multiple requests for the book been received at Spokane Public Library?

After review of the request, if the book is not purchased, the transaction follows the normal interlibrary loan process. (See *Spokane Public Library Interlibrary Loan Guidelines*).

## New Formats

A format is defined as the medium through which information or entertainment is conveyed. Spokane Public Library is not in a financial position or cultural climate to be proactive in adopting new formats. Spokane Public Library will consider new formats under the following circumstances:

- Public demand
- Demise of a current format
- Only source of information
- When a new format is more cost-effective than the current format

When a new format shall be investigated the following issues will be addressed:

- How would this format be funded?
- What selection policy would apply to this format?
- What Public Services concerns would arise?
- What processing concerns would arise?
- What security concerns would arise?
- What publicity concerns would arise?
- What would the timeframe be?

## Gifts

The Spokane Public Library welcomes gifts of both materials and money to purchase materials.

Monetary gifts to purchase books are encouraged and received through the Spokane Public Library Foundation (Document #20.6). Donors may specify types of materials to be purchased but are requested to keep in mind that specific titles may not be available. Materials purchased with monetary donations must be based upon library selection criteria.

Gifts of material are examined and may be added to the collection under the same criteria used for purchasing materials. Gifts are accepted if the donor agrees that they may be added to the collection, sold at book sales, or otherwise disposed of at the discretion of the Library. All materials gifted become the

property of the Spokane Public Library. The Library does not assign a monetary value to donations for tax purposes, but does issue a receipt indicating the number of items or boxes given.

The library does not accept gift magazine subscriptions unless the Support Services Manager has previously approved the gift subscription. In order to be eligible for acceptance the magazine must meet the general selection criteria for other materials and be initially established, by the donor directly with the magazine, for a minimum of three years. Gift magazine subscriptions received by the library that have not been previously approved will be discarded immediately upon receipt at the Library.

Gifts that are added to the collection are shelved with other materials in normal sequence. The Library does not provide special shelving or separate locations for gift items. Gift items, including memorials, are weeded according to the same criteria used for purchases, and are not retained indefinitely.

Gift books may be plated with a library bookplate if the donor wishes. Books donated as memorials are identified with an appropriate plate with the donor's approval.

Donations of special or unique collections that are of local or historical interest that further the mission of the Library will be considered for addition to the Library. Such material will be added to the Library's collections according to established policies and procedures. The Library and donor of such special or unique collections may negotiate an agreement outlining the Library's planned location, shelving, circulation and conditions of withdrawal of items in the donated collection. Any such agreement will include the requirement that the material becomes the property of the Spokane Public Library upon addition to the Library.

## **Withdrawal of Library Materials**

Professional librarians have primary responsibility for withdrawing material from their location.

Material is typically withdrawn from a collection because:

- The item is in poor physical condition
- The item is no longer circulating regularly
- The item is a duplicate of a title that is not in demand
- The item contains outdated information and is of no widespread historic or reference interest
- The item is no longer meeting other current selection criteria

Material withdrawn from the collection by the Branch librarians may be:

- Transferred to another branch of the Spokane Public Library
- Exchanged with another public or academic library
- Sent to the Friends of the Library book sale in accordance with the current Friends/Library Board of Trustees agreement
- Sent to recycling
- Sent to disposal

The agreement between the Library Board and the Friends of the Library outlines the policy on the sale of materials withdrawn from the collection. Customers may not purchase materials directly from the collection. Purchases may only take place at the Friends of the Library book sale. Withdraw of materials

is a vital part of good collection management and most withdrawn items will be available at the Friends' book sales.

## Materials Reconsideration

The Spokane Public Library acknowledges the right of a resident of the city of Spokane to initiate a reconsideration request regarding material found in the Library's collection. The Library will respond to such requests by following the procedures listed below:

Spokane city residents who express a concern about library materials should be immediately referred to the Branch Manager or designated librarian in charge. The Branch Manager or designee should actively listen to the concerns expressed. After listening, the manager or designee should briefly explain the library's collection development policy (well rounded collection in a variety of formats for a diverse population with a variety of interests, reading abilities, and value systems).

If, after this exchange, the individual wishes further consideration, the Branch Manager or designee will confirm that the individual is a resident of the city of Spokane and if so, offer the individual the option of completing a formal *Request for Reconsideration of Library Materials* (see Appendix A). The Library responds only to *Request for Reconsideration of Library Materials* city of Spokane residents. The customer may:

1. Complete the form and give it the Branch Manager or designee who will send the form to the Support Services Manager, via the next inter-office mail. A copy of the form should be retained at the originating branch.  
OR
2. Mail the form themselves to:

Spokane Public Library  
Attention: Support Services Manager  
906 West Main Avenue  
Spokane, Washington 99201-0976

Upon receipt of the form, the Support Services Manager will determine whether the request refers to juvenile, young adult or adult materials. If the request is for adult material, the Support Services Manager will prepare a written response, with input from appropriate Library staff. If the request is for juvenile or young adult materials, the request will be forwarded to the Youth Services Coordinator who will prepare a written response.

The Library will strive to provide a written response to the customer within fourteen days receipt of a *Request for Reconsideration of Library Materials* form.

If after receiving a written response from the Support Services Manager or from the Youth Services Coordinator, the customer desires an additional review of the material, a letter, expressing the customer's specific concerns and the specific action requested, should be written to the Library Director and mailed to:

Spokane Public Library  
Attention: Library Director  
906 West Main Avenue  
Spokane, Washington 99201-0976

If a letter requesting additional review is received, the Director will, within five days, appoint a committee of at least three librarians to review the customer's request. The committee shall be comprised of public services librarians who were not involved in responding to the original *Request for Reconsideration of Library Materials*. The committee shall examine the item and prepare a written recommendation to the Library Director based upon information gathered (reviews, examination, consultation, etc.). The Library will strive to provide a written response to a customer's letter requesting an additional review, within thirty days of the letter's receipt.

In the event a customer is dissatisfied with the Library Director's decision, the customer may appeal the decision to the Spokane Public Library Board of Trustees if all three of the following criteria are met:

1. The customer is a resident of the city of Spokane.
2. The item challenged does not conform to the Collection Development Policy adopted by the Library Board.
3. The customer presents his/her appeal to the Library Board in writing. This letter of appeal, with specific reference to where the item does not conform to the current Collection Development policy, should be mailed to:

Spokane Public Library  
Attention: Board of Trustees  
906 West Main Avenue  
Spokane, Washington 99201-0976

If the Library Director receives a customer request that meets all three criteria the Director will place the item on the agenda for the next available regularly scheduled Library Board meeting. This review will allow for a presentation, by the complainant only, not to exceed ten minutes.

Following the customer's presentation, the Library Board will consider their decision, only on the following points:

1. Is the Library Director's decision in line with current Library Board approved policies?
2. Is the Library Director's decision arbitrary or capricious?

The Library Board will convey the results of its consideration to the customer, in writing, within thirty days of the Library Board meeting at which the customer's appeal was presented.

Once the Library Board has taken formal action on a customer *Request for Reconsideration of Library Materials* no further complaints of a similar nature will be considered by the Board for the same title. Customers who submit a *Request for Reconsideration of Library Materials* for a title that received formal Library Board review will be notified by the Director that the Board has previously reviewed the specific title and no further action will be considered.

**Appendix A: Request for a Reconsideration of Materials**

The Board of Trustees of the Spokane Public Library has delegated the responsibility for selection and evaluation of library resources to the Library Director and has established reconsideration procedures to address concerns, from city residents, about these resources. Completion of this form is the first step in these procedures. If you wish to request review of a library resource complete this form and return it to the reference desk at your nearest Spokane Public Library or mail to: Spokane Public Library, attention Support Services Manager, 906 West Main Avenue, Spokane, Washington 99201-0976.

Customer Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_ Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Are you a resident of the City of Spokane?  Yes  No

1. Resource on which you are commenting:

- |  |                                     |  |
|--|-------------------------------------|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Book          | <input type="checkbox"/> Magazine   | <input type="checkbox"/> Newspaper         |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Videocassette | <input type="checkbox"/> DVD        | <input type="checkbox"/> Computer Software |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Music CD      | <input type="checkbox"/> Audio Book | <input type="checkbox"/> Other             |

Title \_\_\_\_\_

Author/Artist/Producer \_\_\_\_\_

2. What brought this resource to your attention? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

3. Have you examined the entire resource?  Yes  No

4. What concerns you about the resource (use other side if necessary)?

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

5. Are there resources you suggest to provide additional information and/or other viewpoints on this topic?

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

## **Appendix B: Library Bill of Rights**

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

- 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 abridgement 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 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, 1949

Amended February 2, 1961, and January 23, 1980, inclusion of "age" reaffirmed January 23, 1996, by the ALA Council.

## **Appendix C: 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.

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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.

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

*A Joint Statement by:*

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

*Subsequently endorsed by:*

[American Booksellers Foundation for Free Expression](#)  
[The Association of American University Presses, Inc.](#)  
[The Children's Book Council](#)  
[Freedom to Read Foundation](#)  
[National Association of College Stores](#)  
[National Coalition Against Censorship](#)

[National Council of Teachers of English](#)  
[The Thomas Jefferson Center for the Protection of Free Expression](#)

## **Appendix D: The Freedom to View**

The **FREEDOM TO VIEW**, along with the freedom to speak, to hear, and to read, is protected by the First Amendment of the Constitution of the United States. In a free society, there is no place for censorship of any medium of expression. Therefore these principles are affirmed:

1. To provide the broadest access to film, video, and other audiovisual materials because they are a means for the communication of ideas. Liberty of circulation is essential to insure the constitutional guarantees of freedom of expression.
2. To protect the confidentiality of all individuals and institutions using film, video, and other audiovisual materials.
3. To provide film, video, and other audiovisual materials which represent a diversity of views and expression. Selection of a work does not constitute or imply agreement with or approval of the content.
4. To provide a diversity of viewpoints without the constraint of labeling or prejudging film, video, or other audiovisual materials on the basis of the moral, religious, or political beliefs of the producer or filmmaker or on the basis of controversial content.
5. To contest vigorously, by all lawful means, every encroachment upon the public's freedom to view.

This statement was originally drafted by the Freedom to View Committee of the American Film and Video Association (formerly the Educational Film Library Association) and was adopted by the AFVA Board of Directors in February 1979. This statement was updated and approved by the AFVA Board of Directors in 1989.

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Endorsed by the ALA Council January 10, 1990

## Appendix E: Free Access to Libraries for Minors-An Interpretation of the Library Bill of Rights

### An Interpretation of the Library Bill of Rights

Library policies and procedures that effectively deny minors equal and equitable access to all library resources available to other users violate the *Library Bill of Rights*. The American Library Association opposes all attempts to restrict access to library services, materials, and facilities based on the age of library users.

Article V of the *Library Bill of Rights* states, "A person's right to use a library should not be denied or abridged because of origin, age, background, or views." The "right to use a library" includes free access to, and unrestricted use of, all the services, materials, and facilities the library has to offer. Every restriction on access to, and use of, library resources, based solely on the chronological age, educational level, literacy skills, or legal emancipation of users violates Article V.

Libraries are charged with the mission of developing resources to meet the diverse information needs and interests of the communities they serve. Services, materials, and facilities that fulfill the needs and interests of library users at different stages in their personal development are a necessary part of library resources. The needs and interests of each library user, and resources appropriate to meet those needs and interests, must be determined on an individual basis. Librarians cannot predict what resources will best fulfill the needs and interests of any individual user based on a single criterion such as chronological age, educational level, literacy skills, or legal emancipation.

Libraries should not limit the selection and development of library resources simply because minors will have access to them. Institutional self-censorship diminishes the credibility of the library in the community, and restricts access for all library users.

Children and young adults unquestionably possess [First Amendment](#) rights, including the right to receive information in the library. Constitutionally protected speech cannot be suppressed solely to protect children or young adults from ideas or images a legislative body believes to be unsuitable for them.<sup>1</sup> Librarians and library governing bodies should not resort to age restrictions in an effort to avoid actual or anticipated objections, because only a court of law can determine whether material is not constitutionally protected.

The mission, goals, and objectives of libraries cannot authorize librarians or library governing bodies to assume, abrogate, or overrule the rights and responsibilities of parents. As "[Libraries: An American Value](#)" states, "We affirm the responsibility and the right of all parents and guardians to guide their own children's use of the library and its resources and services." Librarians and governing bodies should maintain that parents—and only parents—have the right and the responsibility to restrict the access of their children—and only their children—to library resources. Parents who do not want their children to have access to certain library services, materials, or facilities should so advise their children. Librarians and library governing bodies cannot assume the role of parents or the functions of parental authority in the private relationship between parent and child.

Lack of access to information can be harmful to minors. Librarians and library governing bodies have a public and professional obligation to ensure that all members of the community they serve have free, equal, and equitable access to the entire range of library resources regardless of content, approach, format, or amount of detail. This principle of library service applies equally to all users, minors as well as adults. Librarians and library governing bodies must uphold this principle in order to provide adequate and effective service to minors.

<sup>1</sup>See [Erznoznik v. City of Jacksonville](#), 422 U.S. 205 (1975)-"Speech that is neither obscene as to youths nor subject to some other legitimate proscription cannot be suppressed solely to protect the young from ideas or images that a legislative body thinks unsuitable [422 U.S. 205, 214] for them. In most circumstances, the values protected by the First Amendment are no less applicable when government seeks to control the flow of information to minors. See [Tinker v. Des Moines School Dist.](#), *supra*. Cf. [West Virginia Bd. of Ed. v. Barnette](#), 319 U.S. 624 (1943)."

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Adopted June 30, 1972, by the ALA Council; amended July 1, 1981; July 3, 1991, June 30, 2004.

## **Appendix F: Intellectual Freedom Statement**

The Washington Library Association supports the principle of free, open, and unrestricted access to information and ideas regardless of the medium in which they exist.

A democracy can only succeed if individuals have access to the information necessary to form opinions and make decisions on issues affecting their lives. Libraries play a key role in providing access to this information.

The Association regards this access as a right of all individuals. Therefore the Association believes that libraries have a responsibility to provide access to a wide range of perspectives and viewpoints.

The Association believes that parents and legal guardians have the right and responsibility to guide their own children in the exercise of their rights of access.

The Association recognizes privacy and confidentiality as essential components of intellectual freedom.

The Association encourages and supports local community involvement in developing policies that uphold the United States and Washington State constitutional guarantees of free speech and intellectual freedom.

The Washington Library Association endorses the American Library Association's Code of Ethics, Freedom to Read Statement, Freedom to View Statement and Library Bill of Rights and its Interpretations.

Therefore, the Washington Library Association opposes censorship and restrictions on access to the full range of constitutionally protected materials and speech.

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Ratified at the WLA Conference in Spokane, WA – April 6, 2001

*Policy adopted by the Board of Trustees on February 15, 1994 and then revised on November 19, 2003, August 18, 2009, April 17, 2012*