

Collection Development - 502

Approved by the Board of Trustees March 10, 2008

ALA Policies Reaffirmed April 23, 2012

St. Joseph Public Library Collection Development Policy

Library Goal for Collection Development

The St. Joseph Public Library shall select, organize and maintain a quality collection of library materials which will provide a basis for community information, education, recreation and historical preservation in the Library District.

Purpose of the Collection Development / Selection Policy

The purpose of the St. Joseph Public Library collection development/materials selection policy is to guide library staff and to inform the public about the principles upon which the selections are made. A policy cannot replace the judgment of librarians, but stating goals and indicating boundaries will assist them in choosing from the array of available materials.

Definition of Materials Selection

“Selection” refers to the decision that must be made either to add material to the collection or to retain material already in the collection. “Library materials” and other synonyms as they may appear in this policy have the widest possible meaning; all forms of contemporary, recorded mass communication, from the traditional printed forms to the latest development in non-print media, are included in this definition.

Responsibility for Selection

Ultimate responsibility for the selection of library materials lies with the Director of the Library within the framework of the policy set by the Library Board. The Director may delegate the actual selection and deselection of material to qualified library staff.

General Process for Selection

Selection shall be based on the merits of a work in relation to the needs, interests and demands of the entire St. Joseph community. Basic to this policy are the “Library Bill of Rights” and the “Freedom to Read Statement” as adopted by the American Library Association, and to which this Library subscribes. (See Appendix)

Materials are evaluated as complete works and not on the basis of a particular passage. An item will not be excluded from the Library’s collection solely because it represents a particular aspect of life, frankness of expression, or because it is controversial.

Based on the services it is expected to perform, it is the responsibility of the Library to provide circulating, reference and resource material for the general public. Special collections shall be developed and maintained when indicated by community interest.

Patrons’ purchase suggestions and requests are an important consideration. Titles are added to the collection as long as they meet the stated selection criteria. Each purchase request submitted will be reviewed by Library staff. If a title is not selected for purchase an interlibrary loan may be offered for the patron according to interlibrary loan policy.

Specific Principles for Selection

The following principles will be taken into consideration when selecting items to be added to the collection:

- Public demand and interest.
- Contemporary significance or permanent value.
- Reviews in professionally recognized sources.
- Accuracy of content.
- Authority and competence of the author and/or reputation and standing of the publisher.
- Contribution to diversity, depth or breadth of existing collection.
- Local or community relevance.
- Adequate coverage of controversial issues.
- Price, effectiveness and suitability of format, durability and ease of use.
- Budgetary constraints.
- Availability of information in the subject area.
- Availability of material elsewhere in the community--holdings of other libraries in the area are considered in developing the library's collection.
- Replacement of lost or worn copies or updating of outmoded information.
- Support of the library's mission roles.

General Selection Tools

The St. Joseph Public Library uses the following resources when selecting material for the collection:

- Professional journals
- Trade journals
- Subject bibliographies
- Publishers' catalogs and promotional material
- Reviews from reputable sources
- Popular and news magazines
- Newspapers
- Related web sites and commercial web sites

General Deselection (Weeding) Criteria

The systematic removal of materials from the collection, or weeding, is an important component of total collection development. Ongoing evaluation of materials is necessary in order to maintain a current, accurate and inviting collection. Weeding improves the accessibility of the remaining materials, enhances the appearance of the collection, and helps improve the overall circulation of materials.

Weeded materials cannot be reserved. Discarded materials become surplus property and may be sold by the library or Friends of the Library for fundraising purposes or discarded at the Library's discretion.

The decision to weed an item takes into account the same criteria used when the item was first selected for inclusion in the collection. Additionally, the following criteria should apply when evaluating the collection:

Usage/Age:

- Frequency of circulation and/or potential use
- In-house use
- Outdated or inaccurate information – Materials will be reviewed on a regular basis especially in the fields of travel, science, health, medicine, finance, law and inter-related topics.

Value/Quality:

- Subject matter no longer of current interest or historical or literary significance
- Historical importance: community or regional interest
- Availability of other materials in the field
- Physical appearance/condition relative to other factors of importance
- Multiple copies of a title no longer in demand

Condition:

- Worn, damaged
- Deteriorated

Audiovisual materials: The Library considers the same criteria during the weeding process for audiovisual materials. Worn and damaged materials will be removed from the collection. Additionally, outdated formats will be removed from the collection in a timely manner.

Adult Fiction Materials

The fiction collection of the St. Joseph Public Library is largely made up of best sellers, favorably reviewed works, genre fiction, critically-acclaimed first time authors, classics of literature and translations of foreign works. The primary purpose of the fiction collection is to satisfy the heavy demand for recreational reading from the general public. The fiction collection is comprised mainly of American and British works. The Library attempts to work with local educational institutions to provide fiction titles on reading lists when possible.

Because of the volume of new fiction published each year, very few titles will be collected retrospectively. Exceptions will be made for new editions or translations of classic titles or to replace missing or worn out copies of classics or series. Special emphasis is given to providing multiple copies of high demand titles in order to fill patron requests as quickly as possible.

Genre fiction includes the following categories:

- Mystery
- Romance
- Science Fiction/Fantasy
- Western

Adult Non-Fiction Materials

The Library collects non-fiction in all subject areas. The Library's collection will be examined and new materials ordered based on the General Selection Criteria. The subject areas include:

- Generalities: encyclopedias, writing manuals, computers
- Philosophy and psychology
- Religion
- Social Sciences: politics, economics, social welfare, education
- Languages
- Science and math
- Applied sciences: health and medicine, cookbooks, gardening, do-it-yourself projects
- Arts and recreation: arts and crafts, music, movies, sports
- Literature
- Geography and history

Each subject area of the non-fiction collection will be reviewed and maintained on a regular basis.

Teen Materials

The teen collection consists of material considered to be of particular interest to adolescents in grades 6-12. It is not intended to be a comprehensive collection serving all the needs and interests of young adults, nor is it the Library's intention that teens should be confined to the use of this material.

Teens may use a wider range of library materials than any other age group. Some items are purchased only for the teen collection. However, some items found here may be duplicated in the children's collection, adult collection, or both.

Materials are selected for this collection to broaden the horizons of teens and help them to cope with the problems of adolescence. To fulfill these needs, the collection will inevitably include materials on controversial or sensitive topics. Because of the wide range of maturity and reading levels among individual teens, the suitability of any particular item must be determined on an individual basis by the parent or guardian of that teen.

Children's Materials

To encourage lifelong reading habits, the children's collection of the St. Joseph Public Library primarily serves children from infancy through grade eight, as well as their parents, legal guardians, teachers and caregivers. The Library provides books and other media of the best available quality for recreational use and general information. Our goal is to support children's reading development and lifelong love of reading. The materials are selected with regard to literary excellence, accuracy, timeliness of factual material, high quality art and illustration and the stages of emotional and intellectual development of children. The children's collection is reviewed and maintained on a regular basis in all subject areas.

Although the Library facilities are divided into sections such as Children's, Young Adult, Reference, Fiction, Nonfiction, etc. for the convenience of the public, patrons of any age may use

all parts of the library. The classification scheme, reviews by professionals, and the librarians' expertise contribute to the proper placement of material.

The Children's collection often reflects reality and as such, it may include material which is controversial or offensive to some. Library staff does not serve *in loco parentis*. It is the responsibility of the parent/guardian, not the library staff, to monitor library use by children.

Areas of collection development in the print Children's collection include:

- Picture Books – the Library provides picture books for reading aloud and sharing with children from preschool to age two. In these books, the text and pictures should complement each other.
- Board books – these are early picture books with simple stories geared toward infants and toddlers.
- Easy Readers/I CAN READ – these books are intended for children just beginning to read on their own.
- Paperback – the paperback collection is intended to be a popular reading collection consisting mainly of mass market series publications.
- Juvenile Novels – selected mainly for grades three through eight.
- Non-fiction – should be accurate, objective and consistently appropriate to the age of the reader.
- Bilingual – books to assist with learning another language are selected as well as a few translations of easy children's books originally published in English.
- Reference – the non-circulating reference collection, while not extensive, consists of books needed to answer specific questions or to assist with the location of material in other books. It includes encyclopedias, almanacs, dictionaries, bibliographic aids, indexes, important lists, definitive books in subject areas, and books related to the subject of children's literature.

The children's collection will follow the same selection and deselection policies as the adult collection.

Media Collections

The Library's goal is to provide a collection of instructional, educational and recreational audio and visual material that will enhance the existing nonfiction and fiction collections. The media collections will follow the same general selection and deselection criteria as the rest of the Library's collections. The content of the media collection may contain materials deemed objectionable by some. Individuals are advised to use the collection at their own discretion.

Periodically, new forms of media are introduced and are studied carefully to assess their suitability for public library use. Sufficient time is given to properly determine whether they will receive lasting and widespread acceptance before they are added to the library collection.

- The visual collection contains popular entertainment for both juveniles and adults, such as feature length movies; classic and foreign television series; informational and instructional works; and documentaries. They are chosen from materials that are intended for home use. When purchasing visual materials, the library considers the following MPAA guidelines: G, PG, PG-13 & R. Select materials are purchased without MPAA ratings such as television programs, foreign films, nonfiction and classic films.

- Audiobooks comprise a diversified collection of both fiction and nonfiction materials. The fiction collection includes contemporary and classic fiction with an emphasis on best selling authors. The nonfiction collection covers a range of subject areas including best sellers, instructional and self-improvement recordings on topics such as business skills or motivation.
- The music collection is a diverse representation of all categories of music. This includes, but is not limited to: pop, R&B, country, jazz, world, gospel, religious, show tunes, classical, opera, etc.

Foreign Language

The St. Joseph Public Library maintains a collection of foreign language materials aimed at meeting the recreational and informational needs of non-native English speakers in the St. Joseph community. Resources include books, magazines, newspapers, DVDs, and sound recordings in the languages used by individuals in the community, primarily Spanish. Most of these materials circulate.

The Library's collection also includes materials which aid in learning a second language. These resources include books such as grammars and dictionaries, audiobooks, and videos/DVDs for learning languages. Most of these materials circulate.

Reference

The reference collection is a non-circulating collection selected for accuracy, authority and depth of coverage. The reference collection comprises print materials and some electronic resources, purchased outright or by annual subscription. It includes encyclopedias, almanacs, dictionaries, bibliographic aids, indexes, business and financial resources and definitive books in select subject areas. We comprehensively collect local history and genealogy materials related to Northwest Missouri. Undue duplication of materials is avoided, either in the library itself, or with other institutions in the community. Esoteric or very technical works, and materials available elsewhere to special interest groups, are generally excluded from the reference collection.

Government Documents

The St. Joseph Public Library has been a partial depository for Federal government documents since 1891. The depository is housed at the Downtown Library. In addition, the Library collects Missouri State, Buchanan County and St. Joseph documents.

Large Print

The Library collects large print editions in fiction and nonfiction materials. The large print collection is primarily a duplication of titles already in the library in standard type.

Periodicals

The Periodical collection consists mainly of magazines and newspapers, providing a broad range of general interest subject areas. Full text access in electronic format is also available for some magazine and newspaper articles through the Library's database pages. The choice of which periodicals are available as online journals as well as the number of simultaneous users is determined by the publisher. The *St. Joseph News-Press* and some other local historical newspapers are available on microfilm.

Electronic Resources

Electronic resources are a diverse collection of reference and circulating materials that are accessed electronically. This collection offers access to databases, serials, books and audiovisual materials in a variety of non-traditional formats. Electronic resources will follow the same selection and deselection criteria as the rest of the library's collections. In addition, these factors are considered:

- The resource must meet a community need.
- The impact on the materials budget must be considered in relation to usage.
- Reference content must be authoritative and trustworthy.
- The resource must be technically compatible and user friendly.
- Licensing issues must be addressed.

Subject areas will be considered for database coverage on an annual basis. The Library will attempt to make as many electronic resources available from home as is permitted by licensing agreements. When home access is possible, customers may use these resources by inputting a valid St. Joseph Public Library card.

New formats will be considered for purchase as demand and use dictates. Some titles may be purchased in several formats in order to serve the most patrons. Availability of items in the format, the cost per item and the Library's ability to acquire and handle the items will also be factors in determining when a new format will be collected. Similar considerations will influence the decision to delete a format from the library's collection.

Textbooks

Textbooks will generally not be purchased for the collection and will only be considered for purchase when they supply information in areas in which they may be the best, or only, source of information on a subject. The Library shall not assume the responsibility for purchasing textbooks for wide and general distribution.

Gifts and Donations

The St. Joseph Public Library actively encourages and solicits gifts, grants, and contributions to the Library which will further its mission and goals in serving the public.

Financial gifts that are intended for the purchase of specific items, subject areas, or are in other ways designated, should be negotiated through the appropriate Branch Manager, Library Administrative Assistant, or Library Director.

Gifts of specific items such as books, audio-visual materials, and other materials shall be accepted by the Library. These materials shall be subject to the same procedural consideration that is utilized when considering an item for purchase. The Library accepts material donations with the understanding that materials donated to any library branch become the property of the system as a whole. While some items are added to the collection, the majority are sold to benefit the Library.

While it is not the practice of the Library to accept material with externally imposed conditions, the Library does recognize that community organizations may request some negotiated conditions for the donation. Any such conditions should be negotiated with the administrative staff of the Library.

The Library cannot be responsible for the appraisal of gifts for income tax or other purposes. A receipt acknowledging donated material is available upon request.

Community Participation

Involvement by the community in the selection process is encouraged. Patron suggestion requests are accepted at all library branches. The suggestions for purchase will be evaluated in accordance with the Collection Development Policy.

Reorders

Public demand for best-selling titles can be extremely great and can trigger reorders of those titles. It is the goal of the Library to have enough copies of popular titles to avoid long waiting periods for the public. Additional copies may be purchased according to Library guidelines.

Reconsideration of Library Materials

In order to represent the diversity of thought in the community, it is very important that the Library's collection contain materials representing differing points of view on public issues of a controversial nature. The Library does not endorse particular beliefs or views, nor does the selection of an item express or imply an endorsement of the viewpoint expressed by the author. Library materials will not be sequestered, except for the purpose of protecting them from theft or damage.

There may be occasions when a member of the community may be concerned about a particular item in the Library's collection. If a library patron wishes the Library to reconsider material that is in the collection, a Patron Comment on Library Materials form is available at all public service desks. This form must be completed in its entirety and returned to a library staff member who will forward it to the Director of the Library. Once the form is received, the Director will review the comment, as well as the criteria used in selecting the item, its place in the collection, and reasons for including the item in the collection. The Library Director will send a written response in a timely manner.

References

During the preparation of this document, the following libraries' collection development and materials selection policies were referenced:

Kansas City Public Library
St. Charles City County Public Library
St. Louis County Library

**APPENDIX TO THE
COLLECTION DEVELOPMENT POLICY**

ST. JOSEPH PUBLIC LIBRARY

POLICIES ON INTELLECTUAL FREEDOM
Reaffirmed by the Board of Trustees
April 23, 2012

Reaffirmed as policy by the Board of Trustees

of the St. Joseph Public Library on 4/23/2012.

LIBRARY BILL OF RIGHTS*

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

1. Books and other library resources should be provided for the interest, information, and enlightenment of all people of the community the library serves. Materials should not be excluded because of the origin, background, or views of those contributing to their creation.
2. Libraries should provide materials and information presenting all points of view on current and historical issues. Materials should not be proscribed or removed because of partisan or doctrinal disapproval.
3. Libraries should challenge censorship in the fulfillment of their responsibility to provide information and enlightenment.
4. Libraries should cooperate with all persons and groups concerned with resisting abridgment of free expression and free access to ideas.
5. A person's right to use a library should not be denied or abridged because of origin, age, background, or views.
6. Libraries which make exhibit spaces and meeting rooms available to the public they serve should make such facilities available on an equitable basis, regardless of the beliefs or affiliations of individuals or groups requesting their use.

Adopted June 18, 1948. Amended February 2, 1961, June 27, 1967, and January 23, 1980, by the ALA Council.

*Source: Office for Intellectual Freedom, American Library Association. This document and many others related to Intellectual Freedom are available from the Office for Intellectual Freedom, American Library Association, 50 East Huron Street, Chicago, IL 60611.

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THE FREEDOM TO READ STATEMENT

The freedom to read is essential to our democracy. It is continuously under attack. Private groups and public authorities in various parts of the country are working to remove or limit access to reading materials, to censor content in schools, to label "controversial" views, to distribute lists of "objectionable" books or authors, and to purge libraries. These actions apparently rise from a view that our national tradition of free expression is no longer valid; that censorship and suppression are needed to counter threats to safety or national security, as well as to avoid the subversion of politics and the corruption of morals. We, as individuals devoted to reading and as librarians and publishers responsible for disseminating ideas, wish to assert the public interest in the preservation of the freedom to read.

Most attempts at suppression rest on a denial of the fundamental premise of democracy: that the ordinary individual, by exercising critical judgment, will select the good and reject the bad. We trust Americans to recognize propaganda and misinformation, and to make their own decisions about what they read and believe. We do not believe they are prepared to sacrifice their heritage of a free press in order to be "protected" against what others think may be bad for them. We believe they still favor free enterprise in ideas and expression.

These efforts at suppression are related to a larger pattern of pressures being brought against education, the press, art and images, films, broadcast media, and the Internet. The problem is not only one of actual censorship. The shadow of fear cast by these pressures leads, we suspect, to an even larger voluntary curtailment of expression by those who seek to avoid controversy or unwelcome scrutiny by government officials.

Such pressure toward conformity is perhaps natural to a time of accelerated change. And yet suppression is never more dangerous than in such a time of social tension. Freedom has given the United States the elasticity to endure strain. Freedom keeps open the path of novel and creative solutions, and enables change to come by choice. Every silencing of a heresy, every enforcement of an orthodoxy, diminishes the toughness and resilience of our society and leaves it the less able to deal with controversy and difference.

Now as always in our history, reading is among our greatest freedoms. The freedom to read and write is almost the only means for making generally available ideas or manners of expression that can initially command only a small audience. The written word is the natural medium for the new idea and the untried voice from which come the original contributions to social growth. It is essential to the extended discussion that serious thought requires, and to the accumulation of knowledge and ideas into organized collections.

We believe that free communication is essential to the preservation of a free society and a creative culture. We believe that these pressures toward conformity present the danger of limiting the range and variety of inquiry and expression on which our democracy and our culture depend. We believe that every American community must jealously guard the freedom to publish and to circulate, in order to preserve its own freedom to read. We believe that publishers and

librarians have a profound responsibility to give validity to that freedom to read by making it possible for the readers to choose freely from a variety of offerings.

The freedom to read is guaranteed by the Constitution. Those with faith in free people will stand firm on these constitutional guarantees of essential rights and will exercise the responsibilities that accompany these rights.

We therefore affirm these propositions:

1. *It is in the public interest for publishers and librarians to make available the widest diversity of views and expressions, including those that are unorthodox, unpopular, or considered dangerous by the majority.*

Creative thought is by definition new, and what is new is different. The bearer of every new thought is a rebel until that idea is refined and tested. Totalitarian systems attempt to maintain themselves in power by the ruthless suppression of any concept that challenges the established orthodoxy. The power of a democratic system to adapt to change is vastly strengthened by the freedom of its citizens to choose widely from among conflicting opinions offered freely to them. To stifle every nonconformist idea at birth would mark the end of the democratic process. Furthermore, only through the constant activity of weighing and selecting can the democratic mind attain the strength demanded by times like these. We need to know not only what we believe but why we believe it.

2. *Publishers, librarians, and booksellers do not need to endorse every idea or presentation they make available. It would conflict with the public interest for them to establish their own political, moral, or aesthetic views as a standard for determining what should be published or circulated.*

Publishers and librarians serve the educational process by helping to make available knowledge and ideas required for the growth of the mind and the increase of learning. They do not foster education by imposing as mentors the patterns of their own thought. The people should have the freedom to read and consider a broader range of ideas than those that may be held by any single librarian or publisher or government or church. It is wrong that what one can read should be confined to what another thinks proper.

3. *It is contrary to the public interest for publishers or librarians to bar access to writings on the basis of the personal history or political affiliations of the author.*

No art or literature can flourish if it is to be measured by the political views or private lives of its creators. No society of free people can flourish that draws up lists of writers to whom it will not listen, whatever they may have to say.

4. *There is no place in our society for efforts to coerce the taste of others, to confine adults to the reading matter deemed suitable for adolescents, or to inhibit the efforts of writers to achieve artistic expression.*

To some, much of modern expression is shocking. But is not much of life itself shocking? We cut off literature at the source if we prevent writers from dealing with the stuff of life. Parents and teachers have a responsibility to prepare the young to meet the diversity of experiences in life to which they will be exposed, as they have a responsibility to help them learn to think critically for themselves. These are affirmative responsibilities, not to be discharged simply by preventing them from reading works for which they are not yet prepared. In these matters values differ, and values cannot be legislated; nor can machinery be devised that will suit the demands of one group without limiting the freedom of others.

5. *It is not in the public interest to force a reader to accept the prejudgment of a label characterizing any expression or its author as subversive or dangerous.*

The ideal of labeling presupposes the existence of individuals or groups with wisdom to determine by authority what is good or bad for others. It presupposes that individuals must be directed in making up their minds about the ideas they examine. But Americans do not need others to do their thinking for them.

6. *It is the responsibility of publishers and librarians, as guardians of the people's freedom to read, to contest encroachments upon that freedom by individuals or groups seeking to impose their own standards or tastes upon the community at large; and by the government whenever it seeks to reduce or deny public access to public information.*

It is inevitable in the give and take of the democratic process that the political, the moral, or the aesthetic concepts of an individual or group will occasionally collide with those of another individual or group. In a free society individuals are free to determine for themselves what they wish to read, and each group is free to determine what it will recommend to its freely associated members. But no group has the right to take the law into its own hands, and to impose its own concept of politics or morality upon other members of a democratic society. Freedom is no freedom if it is accorded only to the accepted and the inoffensive. Further, democratic societies are more safe, free, and creative when the free flow of public information is not restricted by governmental prerogative or self-censorship.

7. *It is the responsibility of publishers and librarians to give full meaning to the freedom to read by providing books that enrich the quality and diversity of thought and expression. By the exercise of this affirmative responsibility, they can demonstrate that the answer to a "bad" book is a good one, the answer to a "bad" idea is a good one.*

The freedom to read is of little consequence when the reader cannot obtain matter fit for that reader's purpose. What is needed is not only the absence of restraint, but the positive provision of opportunity for the people to read the best that has been thought and said. Books are the major channel by which the intellectual inheritance is handed down, and the principal means of its testing and growth. The defense of the freedom to read requires of all publishers and librarians the utmost of their faculties, and deserves of all Americans the fullest of their support.

We state these propositions neither lightly nor as easy generalizations. We here stake out a lofty claim for the value of the written word. We do so because we believe that it is possessed of enormous variety and usefulness, worthy of cherishing and keeping free. We realize that the application of these propositions may mean the dissemination of ideas and manners of expression that are repugnant to many persons. We do not state these propositions in the comfortable belief that what people read is unimportant. We believe rather that what people read is deeply important; that ideas can be dangerous; but that the suppression of ideas is fatal to a democratic society. Freedom itself is a dangerous way of life, but it is ours.

This statement was originally issued in May of 1953 by the Westchester Conference of the American Library Association and the American Book Publishers Council, which in 1970 consolidated with the American Educational Publishers Institute to become the Association of American Publishers.

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

A Joint Statement by:

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

Subsequently endorsed by:

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

Reaffirmed as policy by the Board of Trustees
of the St. Joseph Public Library on 4/23/2012.

FREE ACCESS TO LIBRARIES FOR MINORS
An Interpretation of the LIBRARY BILL OF RIGHTS

Library policies and procedures that effectively deny minors equal and equitable access to all library resources and services 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 providing services and 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. Equitable access to all library resources and services shall not be abridged through restrictive scheduling or use policies.

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 through the library in print, nonprint, or digital format. Constitutionally protected speech cannot be suppressed solely to protect children or young adults from ideas or images a legislative body believes to be unsuitable for them.¹ Librarians and library governing bodies should not resort to age restrictions in an effort to avoid actual or anticipated objections, because only a court of law can determine whether material is not constitutionally protected.

The mission, goals, and objectives of libraries cannot authorize librarians or library governing bodies to assume, abrogate, or overrule the rights and responsibilities of parents and guardians. As *Libraries: An American Value* states, "We affirm the responsibility and the right of all parents and guardians to guide their own children's use of the library and its resources and services." 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. Librarians and governing bodies should maintain that only parents and guardians have the right and the

responsibility to determine their children's—and only their children's—access to library resources. Parents and guardians who do not want their children to have access to specific library services, materials, or facilities should so advise their children.

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.

See also Access to Resources and Services in the School Library Media Program and Access to Children and Young Adults to Nonprint Materials.

1 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 for them. In most circumstances, the values protected by the First Amendment are no less applicable when government seeks to control the flow of information to minors." See also *Tinker v. Des Moines School Dist.*, 393 U.S.503 (1969); *West Virginia Bd. of Ed. v. Barnette*, 319 U.S. 624 (1943); *AAMA v. Kendrick*,. 244 F.3d 572 (7th Cir. 2001).

Adopted June 30, 1972, by the ALA Council; amended July 1, 1981; July 3, 1991; June 30, 2004; and July 2, 2008.

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ACCESS FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG ADULTS TO NONPRINT MATERIALS *An Interpretation of the LIBRARY BILL OF RIGHTS*

Library collections of nonprint materials raise a number of intellectual freedom issues, especially regarding minors. Article V of the [Library Bill of Rights](#) states, "A person's right to use a library should not be denied or abridged because of origin, age, background, or views."

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

. . . The "right to use a library" includes free access to, and unrestricted use of, all the services, materials, and facilities the library has to offer. Every restriction on access to, and use of, library resources, based solely on the chronological age, educational level, literacy skills, or legal emancipation of users violates Article V.

. . . [P]arents—and only parents—have the right and responsibility to restrict access of their children—and only their children—to library resources. Parents who do not want their children to have access to certain library services, materials, or facilities should so advise their children. Librarians and library governing bodies cannot assume the role of parents or the functions of parental authority in the private relationship between parent and child.

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

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

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

In some cases, commercial content ratings, such as the [Motion Picture Association of America](#) (MPAA) movie ratings, might appear on the packaging or promotional materials

provided by producers or distributors. However, marking out or removing this information from materials or packaging constitutes expurgation or censorship.

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

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

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

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Reaffirmed as policy by the Board of Trustees
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LIBRARY INITIATED PROGRAMS AS A RESOURCE *An Interpretation of the LIBRARY BILL OF RIGHTS*

Library-initiated programs support the mission of the library by providing users with additional opportunities for information, education, and recreation. Article I of the *Library Bill of Rights* states: “Books and other library resources should be provided for the interest, information, and enlightenment of all people of the community the library serves.”

Library-initiated programs take advantage of library staff expertise, collections, services and facilities to increase access to information and information resources. Library-initiated programs introduce users and potential users to the resources of the library and to the library’s primary function as a facilitator of information access. The library may participate in cooperative or joint programs with other agencies, organizations, institutions, or individuals as part of its own effort to address information needs and to facilitate information access in the community the library serves.

Library-initiated programs on site and in other locations include, but are not limited to, speeches, community forums, discussion groups, demonstrations, displays, and live or media presentations.

Libraries serving multilingual or multicultural communities should make efforts to accommodate the information needs of those for whom English is a second language. Library-initiated programs that cross language and cultural barriers introduce otherwise underserved populations to the resources of the library and provide access to information.

Library-initiated programs “should not be proscribed or removed [or canceled] because of partisan or doctrinal disapproval” of the contents of the program or the views expressed by the participants, as stated in Article II of the *Library Bill of Rights*. Library sponsorship of a program does not constitute an endorsement of the content of the program or the views expressed by the participants, any more than the purchase of material for the library collection constitutes an endorsement of the contents of the material or the views of its creator.

Library-initiated programs are a library resource, and, as such, are developed in accordance with written guidelines, as approved and adopted by the library’s policy-making body. These guidelines should include an endorsement of the *Library Bill of Rights* and set forth the library’s commitment to free and open access to information and ideas for all users.

Library staff select topics, speakers and resource materials for library-initiated programs based on the interests and information needs of the community. Topics, speakers and resource materials are not excluded from library-initiated programs because of possible controversy. Concerns, questions or complaints about library-initiated programs are handled according to the same written policy and procedures that govern reconsiderations of other library resources.

Library-initiated programs are offered free of charge and are open to all. 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” encompasses all the resources the library offers, including the right to attend library-initiated programs. Libraries do not deny or abridge access to library resources, including library-initiated programs, based on an individual’s economic background or ability to pay.

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MEETING ROOMS

An Interpretation of the LIBRARY BILL OF RIGHTS

Many libraries provide meeting rooms for individuals and groups as part of a program of service. Article VI of the *Library Bill of Rights* states that such facilities should be made available to the public served by the given library “on an equitable basis, regardless of the beliefs or affiliations of individuals or groups requesting their use.”

Libraries maintaining meeting room facilities should develop and publish policy statements governing use. These statements can properly define time, place, or manner of use; such qualifications should not pertain to the content of a meeting or to the beliefs or affiliations of the sponsors. These statements should be made available in any commonly used language within the community served.

If meeting rooms in libraries supported by public funds are made available to the general public for non-library sponsored events, the library may not exclude any group based on the subject matter to be discussed or based on the ideas that the group advocates. For example, if a library allows charities and sports clubs to discuss their activities in library meeting rooms, then the library should not exclude partisan political or religious groups from discussing their activities in the same facilities. If a library opens its meeting rooms to a wide variety of civic organizations, then the library may not deny access to a religious organization. Libraries may wish to post a permanent notice near the meeting room stating that the library does not advocate or endorse the viewpoints of meetings or meeting room users.

Written policies for meeting room use should be stated in inclusive rather than exclusive terms. For example, a policy that the library’s facilities are open “to organizations engaged in educational, cultural, intellectual, or charitable activities” is an inclusive statement of the limited uses to which the facilities may be put. This defined limitation would permit religious groups to use the facilities because they engage in intellectual activities, but would exclude most commercial uses of the facility.

A publicly supported library may limit use of its meeting rooms to strictly “library-related” activities, provided that the limitation is clearly circumscribed and is viewpoint neutral.

Written policies may include limitations on frequency of use, and whether or not meetings held in library meeting rooms must be open to the public. If state and local laws permit private as well as public sessions of meetings in libraries, libraries may choose to offer both options. The same standard should be applicable to all.

If meetings are open to the public, libraries should include in their meeting room policy statement a section that addresses admission fees. If admission fees are permitted, libraries shall seek to make it possible that these fees do not limit access to individuals who may be unable to pay, but who wish to attend the meeting. Article V of the *Library Bill of Rights* states that “a person’s right to use a library should not be denied or abridged because of origin, age,

background, or views.” It is inconsistent with Article V to restrict indirectly access to library meeting rooms based on an individual’s or group’s ability to pay for that access.

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