

# Westmont Public Library

## Collection Development Policy

### 1. Purpose

The mission of the Westmont Public Library is to help people achieve their full potential by being a leading resource for information, education, culture and recreation. The policies and procedures are developed with an eye toward creating a welcoming environment where residents can explore possibilities for living and learning.

To implement the mission, the Board of Trustees selected the following goals for emphasis in the Strategic Plan, adopted in June, 2004.

#### Primary Goals:

- *Current Topics and Titles:* To fulfill community residents' appetite for information, popular cultural and social trends, and their desire for satisfying recreational experiences, the Library will be a provider of current high-interest materials in a variety of formats for all ages.
- *Commons:* To address the need of people to meet and interact with others in their community and to participate in public discourse about community issues, the Library will be a provider of materials that support and encourage people to interact and participate in their diverse community.

#### Secondary Goals:

- *Life-Long Learning:* To address the desire for self-directed personal growth and development opportunities, the Library will be a provider of materials in a variety of formats designed to develop reading, viewing, and thinking skills. Materials designed to support parents' efforts to develop their children's interests, experience, knowledge, and development will also be selected.
- *General Information Library:* To address the need for information and answer to questions on a broad array of topics related to work, school, and personal life, the Library will be a provider of timely, accurate and useful information from the collection and through access to resources outside the Library.

One of the purposes of the Collection Development Policy is to document selection librarians' knowledge of what, how and why materials are selected the way they are, and, accordingly, to act as an information resource for selection librarians, public services staff and others interested in the collection. The primary goal of this policy, however, is to present an official statement of the Westmont Public Library's commitment to a collection that attempts to meet the needs of the public it serves. Identifying the customer's needs and expectations and finding the means to meet or exceed them is a fundamental principle of public library service.

This Collection Development Policy presents, in one document, the policies that determine the selection of materials and the maintenance of the collection of the Westmont Public Library.

The Library's commitment to the continued improvement of the quality of service and of the processes of delivering that service is the core principle of the Westmont Public Library Collection Development Policy.

## Description

This document is divided into five sections and one appendix.

Following this introduction and description of the Village of Westmont and the Westmont Public Library, is a series of policies adopted by the Library. Some policies were written by the Library, while other were written by the American Library Association and adopted by the Library. The policy section also describes the entire selection process, from the responsibility for selection, through the ordering and processing of materials, to the eventual removal of items from the collection.

## Policies

The policies, which make up the Collection Development Policy, are:

- Materials Selection Policy
- Gifts and Donations Policy
- Reconsideration of Library Materials Policy
- Library Bill of Rights
- Free Access to Libraries for Minors: An Interpretation of the Library Bill of Rights (updated)
- Access to Digital Information, Services, and Networks: An Interpretation of the Library Bill of Rights (update)
- The Freedom to Read (updated)
- The Freedom to View

## 2. The Community of Westmont

Westmont first came into existence in 1872 when William Gregg started the Excelsior Brick Manufacturing Company in the area. The area became known as Gregg's Station because the Chicago, Burlington, and Quincy railroad would stop at the factory to pick up bricks for delivery to Chicago to help it rebuild after the great fire. Mr. Gregg chose this area because it was the highest mound west between Chicago and the Mississippi River on the railroad line. After Chicago was rebuilt, the brick yard was abandoned around 1900, leaving only the Gregg home and a few surrounding farms. "Greggs" experienced no significant development until the end of World War I, when land speculator Arthur T. McIntosh came to the area and began buying up property with the intention of creating a town.

Westmont was incorporated as a village in 1921 with a population of about 400. Cass Avenue was a dirt road until 1927. There were no sewers or water mains until 1923 and no electricity until 1925. However, in the 1920s Westmont was the only town around to have a lighted ballpark, which attracted semi-pro teams from Chicago. (*Chamber of Commerce Westmont Village Profile*)

Westmont is, in 2009, a community of 26,211+/- residents (2007 Special Census) in an area almost evenly divided between owner occupied homes (54%) and renter occupied homes (46%). 59% of the population lives in family units, 36% of the population lives alone.

Data from the 2006-2008 American Community Survey 3-year Estimates (Appendix A) indicates that roughly 17% of the total population is age 65 and older, and 22% is below 18 years old. The average age of a Westmont resident is 40.1 years. 45 percent of the Senior (65+) population reports at least one disability (2000 Census). The median income is estimated at \$59,570, an estimated 7% of the population is living in poverty and 4.5% are unemployed. 92.4% of the population over 25 graduated

from high school. 41.4% have a bachelor's degree or higher. 77% of the workers over 16 years old commute in a car, van or truck and the average commute time is 30 minutes.

ACS reports 20% of the population were foreign born and 80% native, including 64% who were born in Illinois. "Among people at least five years old living in Westmont village 2006-2008, 27 percent spoke a language other than English at home. Of those speaking a language other than English at home, 20 percent spoke Spanish [5.4% of total population over age 5] and 80 percent spoke some other language [all other Indo-European languages 9.9%, all Asian & Pacific Islander languages 9.6%, other languages 2%]; 42 percent reported that they did not speak English "very well."

Today, Westmont is in transition. Most of the land in Westmont is developed with a split between single and multifamily housing. With a scarcity of empty lots in a desirable location, many properties in the coming years will be redeveloped into single-family homes with more square footage or into multifamily homes in the form for duplexes, town homes and condominiums. The 2003 DuPage County Land Use Assumptions estimates the Westmont area will top out at 28,000 residents in 2015.

Westmont residents take great pride in their schools. Westmont students belong to various school districts depending upon their geographic location within the Village. The school districts that serve the majority of Westmont residents are 201, 60, 58, 86, and 99. There are also private schools within the Village limits. The Westmont Junior and Senior High Schools are part of School District 201. Located nearby in Glen Ellyn is the College of DuPage with a satellite facility located in Westmont.

### **3. Westmont Public Library Description**

It has been said that the quality of a town may be measured by its library. Many years ago, the people of Westmont realized the importance of a public library. As early as 1925 Everett Lincoln Meservey personally collected books and a 25-cent monthly charge by going door to door to start the first library collection. These books were kept in the Community Press Building. During the 1930's WPA (Works Progress Administration) funds were received to expand the Library and it was moved to the Hoffman Building. Mrs. Velma Evans became the first librarian.

In 1943 the Village Board voted to support the Library with tax revenues and the first Library Board was elected. Mr. C.E. Miller was the first President of this Board, and it included Pearl Elsing, Carolyn Barton, E.H. Petty, Caroline Townsend and June Goodlow. The Library was located at 22 W. Burlington. Alex N. Buro, Michael A. Levgard and Warren Beardsley would become most strongly associated with the Library for almost 25 years.

By the late fifties it was decided to provide a permanent building for the Library. In 1959 the American Legion Post 338 donated land next to Memorial Park at Richmond and Linden Streets and, with a concerted campaign, the voters passed the bond issue for the building.

In 1960 the new Library building was open with Mrs. Dwight Townsend as Librarian. The Francis S. Maier Children's Wing was added in 1971. Westmont continued to grow rapidly and more residents needed better library service. The Library Board of Trustees planned another expansion and remodeling project to utilize the lower level of the existing building. After what was described by then Librarian, Moira Buhse, as considerable noise, dust and confusion, the project was completed.

When additional space rapidly became inadequate for the demands of the residents in the ever-expanding information age, a period of study and consideration of current and future library needs resulted in a plan for a new library building, which required a new location to provide sufficient space

for the structure and parking. A successful bond referendum in 1989 resulted in construction beginning in 1990.

Unfortunately, the contractor committed financial fraud and left the country. After a year, with construction halted while legal means were pursued, the Library Board obtained a mortgage, hired a second contractor and restarted a considerably scaled back project. With great celebration in new 24,000 square foot building with plenty of parking was open to the public in January 1993.

In the following decade the Board and Librarian Charlene Sanders were successful in litigating the construction problems, achieving a \$550,000 settlement. Essential building retrofits have been completed. Funds and grants from local, state and federal sources have enabled the growth of the collection and the addition of an automation system (aka System Wide Area Network or SWAN. Also Local Library System Automation Project of LLSAP) and public Internet access.

The Library is open to the public 62 hours per week, receives more than 140,000 visitors per year and houses over 95,000 volumes including books, videos, DVDs, audio recordings, and over 200 periodical subscriptions.

Services include the circulating collection, adult and youth programming, reference and reader's advisory, and interlibrary loan. The Library is a part of the Metropolitan Library System and the SWAN LLSAP that enables patrons to access the collections of more than 77 area libraries.

#### **4. Policies**

##### **4a. Materials Selection Policy**

The materials Selection Policy has been adopted by the Board of Trustees of the Westmont Public Library to guide librarians and to inform the public about the principles upon which selections are made. Copies of the ALA Statements are included in this Collection Development Policy

1. Books and other library materials are selected on the basis of literary, educational, informational, and recreational value. The responsibility of selection rests with the Library Director, who operates within the framework of policies determined by the Library Board of Trustees.
2. The Library's service responses and goals guide the selection of books and other library materials.
3. No title is excluded on the basis of moral, racial, religious, or political prejudice. Titles are selected, within the limitations of the budget, on the basis of critical consensus among recognized subject authorities. Suggestions from patrons are encouraged and will be given due consideration
4. The Director, and upon request the Library Board, will review written complaints concerning specific titles as it deems necessary, and retention or deletion will be determined by the Board's standards of selection.
5. The Library endorses the American Library Association's Freedom to Read statement, The Library Bill of Rights, and the statements on Labeling Library Materials, Access to Electronic Information, Services, and Networks, and Free Access to Libraries for Minors.

In addition to the Library mission several other documents guide collection management decisions. These are listed below and can be found in the pages following this policy:

- Library Bill of Rights

- Access to Digital Information, Services, and Networks: an Interpretation of the Library Bill of Rights
- Electronic Information Access Policy: an Interpretation of the Library Bill of Rights
- Freedom to Read
- Freedom to View

### **Responsibility for Selection**

Ultimate responsibility for materials selection rests with the Library Director who operates within the framework of policies determined by the Board of Trustees. The Library Director delegates to the appropriate staff, the authority and responsibility to work with various sections within the Library to accomplish mutual goals and responsibilities regarding the acquisition, cataloging, and processing of materials, and to promote consistency in the selection and maintenance of materials collection.

### **Selection Guidelines**

Selection is a discerning and interpretive process, involving a general knowledge of the subject and its important literature, a familiarity with the materials in the collection, an awareness of the bibliographies of the subject, and recognition of the needs of the community.

### **Criteria**

Popular demand; literary merit; enduring value; accuracy; authoritativeness; social significance; importance of subject matter to the collection; timeliness; cost; scarcity of material on the subject and availability elsewhere; quality and suitability of the format. Other considerations may be applicable in specific subject areas. Selectors should choose material that will build a well-rounded collection which includes all viewpoints and opinions and which will meet patrons' needs.

### **Tools**

Professional journals; trade journals; subject bibliographies; publishers' catalogs and promotional materials; reviews from reputable sources; lists of recommended titles; and sales representatives for specific materials. Purchase suggestions from patrons are also an important source.

Standard review sources include the following: Booklist, BookPage, Chicago Tribune Book Selection, Children's Technology Review, ForeWard, Library Journal, Publishers Weekly, School Library Journal, Video Librarian, and VOYA.

More specialized review sources may be used in their respective collection development areas, such as India Today for topics of interest to Asian Indians, and The Quilter's Newsletter for quilters.

### **Scope**

The scope of the Westmont Public Library collection refers to the formats offered, the treatment, and the level of difficulty. Materials selected for the library collection are intended to meet the cultural, informational, educational, and recreational needs of the residents of Westmont. The scope of the collection is intended to offer a choice of format, treatment, and level of difficulty so that most individual library needs can be met and service given to individuals of all ages, within current budget parameters and constraints. The Library encourages the use of interlibrary cooperation to better serve the needs of its clientele by expanding available resources.

The Westmont Public Library is not an academic library. The collection scope is intended to provide supplemental materials only for individuals pursuing educational programs and a beginning point for those seeking more advanced information or materials.

The emphasis is on acquiring materials of wide-ranging interest to the general public. For instance, history materials at all levels may be purchased because the general public is interested in them, and adult science textbooks because they are often the best materials or even the only materials available on the subject. The collection is not archival, and is reviewed and revised on an on-going basis to meet contemporary needs.

### **Format**

Materials are purchased in the most appropriate format for library use. Books are generally purchased in hardcover editions because of their durability. However, paperback editions may be purchased, and are preferred in cases where the hardcover is extremely expensive and/or the title would either be used infrequently or is of an ephemeral nature. Paperbacks are often purchased as added copies of popular titles to meet patron demand. Library editions are purchased for heavily used title in the Youth Services Department because of their durability.

Formats include print and audiovisual materials. The Library recognized the place of non-print formats in the collection as legitimate educational and recreational resources for the community it serves. The Library monitors the development of new formats and, within budgetary and technical limitations, adds these to the collection.

### **Level of difficulty**

The range of difficulty starts with picture books and easy nonfiction, and progresses through graded readers to college level textbooks and beyond. Materials intended for professionals in a field are added when general introductory and intermediate level materials already exist in the collection, or when these levels are included in the same work.

### **Archival**

At the Westmont Public Library, current usefulness is the determining factor in how long material is kept. There is no attempt to be complete in terms of historical coverage. Old editions are withdrawn when new ones are received or when the contents are incorrect or out of date. The amount of use that an item receives in the present outweighs the possibility that someone may use it someday. No extraordinary effort is made to preserve or protect the last copy of any title in the collection. Local History materials will be retained in the collection but even this collection may undergo periodic evaluation and reassessment.

### **Interlibrary Loan**

Interlibrary Loan (ILL) is not a substitute for collection development, but is meant to expand the range of materials available to library users without needlessly duplicating the resources of other libraries. The ILL process interacts with the collection development process in two ways:

- Titles that have been considered for purchase but which are either unavailable or are not selected are referred back to the patron with a recommendation for ILL.

- Titles that have been requested by patrons and considered for purchase, but which do not fit the scope of the collection, are too old, out-of-date, or out-of-print, are sent back to the patron with a recommendation to try ILL.

### **Multiple Copies**

While the Library does not have the budgetary resources to buy multiple copies of every title it owns, it does buy multiple copies of titles that have high patron demand. Titles with reserves or titles with broad popular appeal are generally ordered in duplicate. For titles with many reserves, one book is acquired for every five patron reserves. In subject areas such as resumes and travel books where patron demand is extremely high, the Library prefers to buy one copy of several different titles instead of buying numerous copies of one title. More variety and depth in the collection can be achieved through this approach.

### **Standing Orders**

Titles on standing order have two characteristics in common: they are seldom reviewed in the professional reviewing journals, and/or they are important enough to the collection that receiving them automatically without evaluating individual volumes is better than missing them. The majority of these are reference materials, buy travel books, college guides, test review books, and other annual series are also put on continuation for the circulating collection.

The standing order and automatic continuation titles are re-evaluated annually by the Reference Coordinator and the Public Services Manager; titles may be cancelled, new titles added, or the number of copies adjusted to accommodate patron interest and demand.

### **Bindery**

When a book is damaged or in poor condition, staff will send it to Technical Services where it will be put on the "Repair" shelves. Staff will review the titles needing repair/rebinding regularly and decide which books should be repaired, rebound, replaced, or withdrawn from the collection. Care should be exercised and very selective decisions made in sending books to the bindery. In many cases, it is more cost effective to buy a replacement or to buy a newer title. This also helps keep the collection looking new.

Re-binding should be reserved for titles that cannot be replaced or would be too costly to replace. In judging which books should be sent to the bindery, the following guidelines are followed:

- Out-of-print books which are of high value to the Library collection
- One volume of a set which is still in good condition and important to the collection
- Expensive books which are important to the collection

Books which should not go to the bindery include the following:

- Mass market paperbacks
- Books which have already been rebound
- Older books that have yellowed or brittle paper
- Books which have an inside gutter of less than ½" and/or outside margins less than 3/8"

- Ephemeral materials; time-dating (medical books, tax books) which are close to being out-of-date; materials which are automatically withdrawn after a set number of years (travel books such as Fodor's, Frommers, etc.)
- Books for which there are duplicate copies
- Any book presently in-print, unless very expensive
- Out-of-print books should be judged by the general weeding guidelines; if there are newer titles on the same subject and the book is not a classic, withdraw it rather than rebind
- Books with a substantial number of pages missing or damaged

Books which cannot be replaced, repaired or rebound according to the above guidelines will be withdrawn from the Library collection.

### **Collection Evaluation and Assessment**

The Library collection needs continuous evaluation in order to keep on target with the Library's mission to provide materials to meet patrons' interests and needs in a timely manner. Statistical tools such as circulation reports, collection turnover rates, fill rates, reference fill rates, statistical samplings, and new materials counts should be used to determine how the collection is being used and how it should change to answer patron needs. The materials themselves should be assessed for their physical condition and their use.

Qualitative standards include checking subject areas against standard bibliographic tools and recommended subject lists to be sure that the Library is acquiring recommended materials. Patron input and community/user surveys should also be used to aid in the evaluation of the Library materials collection.

Through these ongoing quantitative and qualitative methods, the Director, the Public Services Manager, and selectors can monitor the collection to see that it is serving its public. Short-term priorities should be evaluated annually and a revision made of the entire Policy at least every two years.

### **Weeding**

In order to maintain an up-to-date, useful collection, worn and obsolete materials are continuously weeded. Materials may also be withdrawn if they are little used or superseded by a new edition or better work on the same subject. Depth and breadth of varying degrees are desirable in various areas of the collection. The Collection Development Policy serves as a guide for weeding and maintaining the collection as well as for the selection of materials.

Titles are withdrawn from the Library's collection through systematic weeding by selectors or because of loss or physical damage. Materials which are withdrawn because of loss or damage are reported to the Director who decides whether the item should be replaced using the same criteria as for selection. Other factors applicable when deciding on replacement include the number of copies of a title the Library owns, the availability of newer materials on the subject, the importance of the work in its subject area, its listing in standard bibliographies, and its cost. Audiovisual materials which are withdrawn will be replaced in most cases with new, popular titles, as these collections are designed to meet current interest. Systematic evaluation and weeding of the collection is required of every selector in order to keep the collection responsive to patrons' needs, to insure its vitality and usefulness to the community, and to make room for newer materials. For this reason, subject areas should be reassessed for relevancy and currency every two years, at a minimum, although certain areas may require more frequent review.



Weeding identifies damaged items, ephemeral materials which are no longer used, out-of-date materials, extra copies which are not being used, and materials which are inappropriate for the collections. Weeding also helps a selector evaluate the collection by identifying areas or titles where additional materials are needed; older editions which need to be updated; and subjects, titles, or authors that are no longer of interest to the community. Titles will be checked against standard bibliographies in the subject to see if the items have historical or literary value. Materials withdrawn from the Reference collection which retain informational value may be transferred to the circulating collection, offered to other libraries, or put in the book sale.

If there is a reason to believe that a gift, donation or withdrawn item may be of particular value to collectors, dealers may be contacted to bid on them. If dealers offer a substantially higher price than can be realized through sale to the general public at standard prices, the Library may sell these materials to a dealer.

Withdrawn materials which are in good condition will be given to the Friends of the Library for the book sale. Unsold or unwanted materials may be offered to other organizations willing to pick up the items and take all materials without being selective. When this is not feasible, the Library will dispose of any remaining unsold and unwanted material. All materials placed on sale will be available on a first come/first serve basis. Due to space limitations the Library cannot hold materials for purchase by specific individuals.

#### **4b. Gift & Donations Policy**

Gifts to the collection can be in the form of money or actual materials. Gift plates and letters of acknowledgement are appropriate stipulation by a donor, but other requirements should be evaluated carefully before the gift is accepted. All gifts become part of the general collection and should not require special circulation or maintenance procedures. Gifts of books and other library materials are gratefully accepted by the Library with the understanding that they will be considered for addition to the collection in accordance with the Materials Selection Policy. The Library reserves the right to sell or otherwise dispose of gift materials not added to the collection.

When a patron offer to give books, magazines, or audiovisual materials to the Library, the following guidelines apply. If there is a question about these guidelines or a special situation, the patron should be referred to the staff in charge of donated materials or to the Public Services Manager.

- The Library will accept hardcover and/or paperback books and audiovisual materials if they are in good condition.
- Magazines will not be accepted. The patron is encouraged to donate such items to schools, etc.
- Local history materials from the Chicago and Westmont areas are welcome, as are foreign language materials.
- Many donations consist of boxes or bags of materials, which are accepted for the sake of public relations. Unless the item has been published in the last six months or is a unique collection addition, these gifts will go directly to the Friends' Self-Service Book sale. Selectors routinely review items on the sale shelves for possible additions or spare copies.

Materials which are found to have mold, mildew, smell or are badly damaged will be disposed of immediately upon discovery.

If the patron wished to receive such an acknowledgement, he/she should leave name and address and number of books donated. Library staff will not appraise the books or indicate a value in the acknowledgement letter.

#### **4c. Reconsideration of Library Materials**

A singular obligation of the public library is to reflect within its collection differing points of view on controversial or debatable subjects. The Westmont Public Library does not promulgate particular beliefs or views, nor does the selection of an item express or imply an endorsement of the author's viewpoint. Library materials will not be marked or identified to show approval or disapproval of the contents, nor will items be sequestered, except for the purpose of protecting them from damage or theft.

Comments from members of the community about the collection or individual items in the collection frequently provide librarians with useful information about interests or needs that may not be adequately met by the collection. The Library welcomes expression of opinion by patrons, but will be governed by this Materials Selection Policy in making additions to or deleting items from the collection. Patrons who request the reconsideration of library materials will be asked to put their request in writing by completing and signing the form (next page) entitled "Request for Reconsideration of Library Material."

Upon receipt of a formal, written request, the Director will appoint an *ad hoc* committee from the professional staff including, but not limited to, the selector for the subject area of the item in question and the appropriate Section Head. The committee will make a written recommendation to the Director who will then make a decision regarding the disposition of the material. The Director will communicate this decision and the reasons for it, in writing, to the person who initiated the request for reconsideration at the earliest possible date. The Director will inform the Board of Trustees of all requests for reconsideration of library materials and their disposition.

In the event that the person who initiated the request is not satisfied with the decision of the Director, he/she may appeal for a hearing before the Board of Trustees by making a written request to the President of the Board. The Board of Trustees reserves the right to limit the length of presentation and number of speakers at the hearing. The Board will determine whether the request for the reconsideration has been handled in accordance with stated policies and procedures of the Westmont Public Library. On the basis of this determination, the Board may vote to uphold or override the decision of the Director.

## Westmont Public Library

### Request for Reconsideration of Library Materials

Request initiated by (your name): \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Do you represent: \_\_\_ yourself \_\_\_ an organization (name): \_\_\_\_\_

Title: \_\_\_\_\_

Author/Artist: \_\_\_\_\_

This is a: \_\_\_ book \_\_\_ magazine \_\_\_ audio recording \_\_\_ video \_\_\_ other: \_\_\_\_\_

1. What brought this work to your attention?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
2. Have you examined the entire work? \_\_\_ yes \_\_\_ no  
If not, which parts have you read/viewed/listened to?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
3. What concerns you about this work? (Use other side or additional pages if necessary.)
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
4. What would you like the Library to do about this work?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
5. In its place, what work would you recommend that would convey as valuable a picture and perspective of the subject treated?

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

#### 4d. Library Bill of Rights

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

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

Adopted June 18, 1948. Amended February , 1961, and January 23, 1908, inclusion of "Age" reaffirmed January 23, 1996, by the ALA Council.

#### **4e. 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 opposed 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 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. 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 rights 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 (1944);

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

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#### **4f. Access to Digital Information, Services, and Networks: An Interpretation of the Library Bill of Rights**

##### **Introduction**

Freedom of expression is an inalienable human right and the foundation for self-government. Freedom of expression encompasses the freedom of speech and the corollary right to receive information.<sup>1</sup> Libraries and librarians protect and promote these rights regardless of the format or technology employed to create and disseminate information.

The American Library Association expresses the fundamental principles of librarianship in its Code of Ethics as well as in the Library Bill of Rights and its Interpretations. These principles guide librarians and library governing bodies in addressing issues of intellectual freedom that arise when the library provides access to digital information, services, and networks.

Libraries should regularly review issues arising from digital creation, distribution, retrieval, and archiving of information in the context of constitutional principles and ALA policies so that fundamental and traditional tenets of librarianship are upheld. Although digital information flows across boundaries and barriers despite attempts by individuals, governments, and private entities to channel or control it, many people lack access or capability to use or create digital information effectively.

In making decisions about how to offer access to digital information, services, and networks, each library should consider intellectual freedom principles in the context of its mission, goals, objectives, cooperative agreements, and the needs of the entire community it serves.

##### **The Rights of Users**

All library system and network policies, procedures, or regulations relating to digital information and services should be scrutinized for potential violation of user rights. User policies should be developed according to the policies and guidelines established by the American Library Association, including “Guidelines for the Development and Implementation of Policies, Regulations, and Procedures Affecting Access to Library Materials, Services, and Facilities.”

Users’ access should not be restricted or denied for expressing, receiving, creating, or participating in constitutionally protected speech. If access is restricted or denied for behavioral or other reasons, users should be provided due process, including, but not limited to, formal notice and a means of appeal. Information retrieved, utilized, or created digitally is constitutionally protected unless determined otherwise, by a court of competent jurisdiction. These rights extend to minors as well as adults (“Free Access to Libraries for Minors”; “Access to Resources and Services in the School Library Media Program”; “Access for Children and Young Adults to Nonprint Materials”; and “Minors and Internet Interactivity”).<sup>2</sup>

Libraries should use technology to enhance, not deny, digital access. Users have the right to be free of unreasonable limitations or conditions set by libraries, librarians, system administrators, vendors, network service providers, or others. Contracts, agreements, and licenses entered into by libraries on behalf of their users should not violate this right. Libraries should provide library users the training and assistance necessary to find, evaluate, and use information effectively.

Users have both the right of confidentiality and the right of privacy. The library should uphold these rights by policy, procedure, and practice in accordance with “Privacy: An Interpretation of the Library Bill of Rights.”

### **Equity of Access**

The digital environment provides expanding opportunities for everyone to participate in the information society, but individuals may face serious barriers to access.

Digital information, services, and networks provided directly or indirectly by the library should be equally, readily, and equitably accessible to all library users. American Library Association policies oppose the charging of user fees for the provision of information services by libraries that receive support from public funds (50.3 “Free Access to Information”; 53.1.14 “Economic Barriers to Information Access”; 60.1.1 “Minority Concerns Policy Objectives”; 61.1 “Library Services for the Poor Policy Objectives”). All libraries should develop policies concerning access to digital information that are consistent with ALA’s policies and guidelines, including “Economic Barriers to Information Access: An Interpretation of the Library Bill of Rights.” “Guidelines for the Development and Implementation of Policies, Regulations and Procedures Affecting Access to Library Materials, Services and Facilities,” and “Services to Persons with Disabilities: An Interpretation of the Library Bill of Rights.”

### **Information Resources and Access**

Libraries, acting within their mission and objectives, must support access to information on all subjects that serve the needs or interests of each user, regardless of the user’s age or the content of the material. In order to preserve the cultural record and to prevent the loss of information, libraries may need to expand their selection or collection development policies to ensure preservation, in appropriate formats, of information obtained digitally. Libraries have an obligation to provide access to government information available in digital format.

Providing connections to global information, services, and networks is not the same as selecting and purchasing materials for a library collection. Libraries and librarians should not deny or limit access to digital information because of its allegedly controversial content or because of a librarian’s personal beliefs or fear of confrontation. Furthermore, libraries and librarians should not deny access to digital information solely on the grounds that it is perceived to lack value. Parents and legal guardians who are concerned about their children’s use of digital resources should provide guidance to their own children. Some information accessed digitally may not meet a library’s selection or collection development policy. It is, therefore, left to each user to determine what is appropriate.

Publicly funded libraries have a legal obligation to provide access to constitutionally protected information. Federal, state, county, municipal, local, or library governing bodies sometimes require the use of Internet filters or other technological measure that block access to constitutionally protected information, contrary to the Library Bill of Rights (ALA Policy Manual, 53.1.17, Resolution on the Use of Filtering Software in Libraries). If a library uses a technological measure that blocks access to information, it should be set at the least restrictive level in order to minimize the blocking of constitutionally protected speech. Adults retain the right to access all constitutionally protected information and to task for the technological measure to be disabled in a timely manner. Minors also retain the right to access constitutionally protected information and, at the minimum, have the right to ask the library or librarian to provide access to erroneously blocked information in a timely manner. Libraries and librarians have an obligation to inform users of these rights and to provide the means to exercise these rights. <sup>3</sup>



Digital resources provide unprecedented opportunities to expand the scope of information available to users. Libraries and librarians should provide access to information presenting all points of view. The provision of access does not imply sponsorship or endorsement. These principles pertain to digital resources as much as they do to the more traditional sources of information in libraries (“Diversity in Collection Development”).

<sup>1</sup>. Martin v. Struthers, *The Right to Receive Information*, 95 *Law Library Journal* 2 (2003).

<sup>2</sup>. *Tinker v. Des Moines Independent Community School District*, 393 U.S. 503 (1969); *Board of Education, Island Trees Union Free School District No. 26 v. Pico*, 457 U.S. 853, (1982); *American Amusement Machine Association v. Teri Kendrick*, 244 F.3d 954 (7<sup>th</sup> Cir. 2001); cert.denied, 534 U.S. 994 (2001)

<sup>3</sup>. “If some libraries do not have the capacity to unblock specific Web site or to disable the filters or if it is shown that an adult user’s election to view constitutionally protected Internet material is burdened in some other substantial way, that would be the subject for an as-applied challenge, not the facial challenge made in this case.” *United States, et al. v. American Library Association*, 539 U.S. 194 (2003) (Justice Kennedy, concurring).

See Also: “Questions and Answers on Access to Digital Information, Services and Networks: An Interpretation of the Library Bill of Rights.”

Adopted January 24, 1996; amended January 19, 2005; and July 15, 2009, by the ALA Council.

#### **4g. 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 things 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 making 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.
7. 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 concepts 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.
8. 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 principle 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.*

#### **4h. 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 to the Constitution of the United States**. In a free society, there is no place for censorship of any medium of expression. Therefore these principles are affirmed:

1. To provide the broadest access to film, video, and other audiovisual materials because they are a means for the communication of ideas. Liberty of circulation is essential to insure the constitutional 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 (formally the Educational Film Library Association) and was adopted by the AFVA Board of Directors in February 1979. This statement was updated and approved by the AFVA Board of Directors in 1989. Endorsed by the ALA Council January 10, 1990.

## **6. Review and Revision of the Policy**

This Policy will be reviewed periodically in conjunction with any short-term priorities and the Library's long-range plan and mission statement in order to continue to be responsive to the established mission, community interests, and needs. The Collection Development Policies should be reviewed and revised every two years to insure a document that continues to answer the needs of the Library and its community.

We would like to thank the Morton Grove Public Library whose exceptional collection development plan provided inspiration, and from which we lifted whole chunks of succinct description, and to the Downers Grove Public Library's Selection Policy, which enabled us to streamline this document.

**Adopted by the Board of Trustees of the Westmont Public Library on January 19, 2010**