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## Collection Development Policy

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## I. INTRODUCTION

The Detroit Public Library system will provide access to local and global information that will assist all users in the development of a lifetime of enrichment and growth. As the Library moves into the future, it will hold onto the best of its services while meeting changing community needs. The community will recognize the Library as a vital force for expanding the mind, promoting literacy, embracing diversity, creating opportunities for individual and community development, and building a thriving city.

The Detroit Public Library enhances the quality of life for the diverse and dynamic community in the City of Detroit. The Library enlightens and empowers its citizens to meet their lifelong learning needs through open and equitable access to information, technology, and cultural/educational programs.

### A. Vision, Mission and Purpose

The Detroit Public Library's Collection Development Policy provides guidance within budgetary and space limitations, to the selection and evaluation of materials which anticipate the needs of the citizens of Detroit. It directly relates the collection to the Library's mission and strategic objectives; defines the scope of the Library's collections; and provides a plan for the continuing development of its resources.

### B. Goals

1. Govern the work of librarians responsible for collection development and maintenance.
2. Inform Library users, government officials, prospective funders, other libraries, and the public-at-large about DPL's collection development policies and practices.



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3. Guide the solicitation of grants, gifts, and endowments for purchase of Library resources.

DPL neither promotes nor discourages specific views or opinions. Materials selected seek to present a wide spectrum of views essential to an informed citizenry. Having diverse viewpoints in the collection does not constitute DPL's endorsement of any particular or expressed views. DPL subscribes to the principles expressed in the following American Library Association documents:

*Library Bill of Rights*  
*The Freedom to Read*  
*The Freedom to View*

DPL's goal is to meet the educational, professional, cultural, and recreational needs and interests of its customers, regardless of race, creed, age, language, ethnicity, education, occupation, economic, or social status. To meet this commitment, the DPL collects, organizes and makes information accessible in a variety of formats.

Needs and interests of residents vary, sometimes drastically, from one service point to another. DPL seeks to meet the diversity of community needs within the constraints of its resources.

Outside of the Special Collections, DPL's primary collection development goal is meeting customers' day-to-day needs for information and recreational materials. A secondary goal for the Main Library subject departments is providing additional breadth and depth in their respective subject areas.

Progress toward these goals is measured by input from customers and staff as well as by annual circulation statistics drawn from DPL's Integrated Library System (ILS).

Only in the Special Collections does DPL intentionally strive for comprehensive or research-level collections of scholarly and specialized materials.



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Individual agencies of DPL may meet customers' need for informational and recreational material from collections system-wide. Materials not owned by DPL may be available to residents through its participation in Interlibrary Loan programs.

### **C. Responsibility for Collection Development**

In accordance with its responsibilities and powers of authority as an employer, the Detroit Library Commission determines broad collection development policies. The Commission delegates oversight and guidance of selection and collection maintenance to the Executive Director or his or her designee. Under this designated oversight, DPL librarians administer the actual selection and maintenance of collections.

DPL librarians consult a wide variety of tools to aid in material selection. Staff members and customers are encouraged to recommend materials for consideration. DPL librarians base selection or rejection decisions on the selection criteria presented in this document, and exercise professional judgment.

### **D. DPL's Position on Intellectual Freedom and Censorship**

The Detroit Library Commission subscribes to the positions articulated in the following statements concerning Library collections (appended to this document), which have been adopted by the American Library Association.

- ❖ The Library Bill of Rights
- ❖ Interpretations of the Library Bill of Rights
  - Challenged Material
  - Diversity in Collection Development
  - Evaluating Library Collections
  - Expurgation of Library Material
- ❖ The Freedom to Read
- ❖ The Freedom to View



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## II. Detroit Public Library and Its Clientele

The Detroit Public Library is the largest Library system in the state of Michigan. The Main Library and its neighborhood branches make it one of the most valuable and accessible public institutions in metropolitan Detroit.

DPL collections are developed to enhance the quality of life for the diverse and dynamic community in the city of Detroit.

DPL staff builds and maintains customer-focused collections by anticipating and responding to the needs and expectations of the community. A collection development budget is set annually. The allocation of collection development funds are based on factors including demand, cost of materials, publishing trends, changes in the marketplace and a strategic focus on the Detroit Public Library's vision, mission, core values, strategic directions, budget and space.

Detroit boasts 713,000 residents from more than 100 ethnic and nationality groups. Together with its Canadian sister city, Windsor, Detroit represents the largest metropolitan area on any international border in the world. Known as the world's traditional automotive center, Detroit is the symbol of the American automobile industry and an important source of popular music legacies celebrated by the city's two familiar nicknames, the *Motor City* and *Motown*.

Public libraries play a transformational role in the daily lives of Detroit's residents and neighbors. Libraries of the 21<sup>st</sup> century are essential community centers, where literacy, technology access and lifelong learning are supported. DPL embraces this role as it stands on a rich 145-year tradition of making an important difference for the residents of Detroit.

DPL's focus on serving Detroit is best expressed through its vision, mission statement, core values and statement of purpose, which reflect a commitment to community service and engagement.



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### III. General Collection Development Policies

#### A. General Selection Criteria

Selection or rejection only rarely is based on a single criterion. Decisions are usually made because an item or is thought to satisfy several criteria. Selection gives the highest priority to those materials most in demand by City of Detroit residents. The following criteria apply to both purchased and donated material.

- Popular demand
- Accurate, current, and impartial content, or content where the bias is clearly stated
- Authority and reputation of author(s), creator(s), composer(s), director(s), or publisher(s)
- Suitability for the intended audience
- Budget and space limitations
- Availability from vendor(s) and/or publishers
- Quality of production, including ease of use
- Relation to items already in the collection
- Local or regional interest or significance
- Licensing requirements
- Impact on telecommunication and/or network infrastructure
- Availability of similar material in other libraries

#### B. Selection Criteria for Specific Ages

##### 1. Children

Children's collections at both the Main Library and the branches include:

- Books suitable for reading aloud to young children
- Picture books
- Educational sound recordings and video recordings
- Educational toys and games
- Electronic resources and games for education and recreation
- Information sources useful in completing school assignments
- Titles that appear on school reading lists



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- Basic works on a wide range of subjects actually or predictably of interest to the children served, and geared to users of varying ability
- Current editions of standard children's works that enjoy enduring popularity (including feature films for children)
- Encyclopedias, dictionaries, almanacs, and other basic reference tools, in both print and electronic format
- Works that encourage children to respect their ethnic heritage and increase their understanding of other ethnic groups

These collections, as far as possible, include works reflecting diverse views on controversial topics.

## 2. Young Adults (Ages 13 - 17)

Although young adult collections include many titles on school reading lists, young adults working on school assignments rely primarily on adult collections.

Young adult collections include:

- Basic works on a wide range of subjects found to be of interest to the community's young adults
- Works intended to help young people cope with the challenges of adolescence
- Works that help adolescents respect their ethnic heritage and increase their understanding of other ethnic groups
- Titles that appear on school reading lists
- Works that are widely read by young adults for pleasure
- Music and media materials of interest to young adults
- Video games and video game consoles to promote peer interaction

These collections are not intended to meet all the needs of teenagers whose interests are specialized or highly developed. These young people must turn to adult collections.

Young adult collections, as far as possible, include works reflecting diverse views on controversial topics.



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### 3. Adults (Ages 18 and up)

Adult Collections located within Main Library and the Branches include:

- Best Sellers, popular fiction, classics of literature, genre fiction including African American, mystery and suspense, romance, historical fiction, Westerns and urban fiction. The selection of titles and the number of copies purchased is primarily based on popularity and demand from Library customers.
- Non-Fiction in all subject areas. Materials may range in difficulty from high school to undergraduate reading levels.
- Periodicals and newspapers in a wide range of subjects.
- Large print books, both fiction and non-fiction, printed in large type format designed to meet the special needs of customers with vision difficulties.
- Reference materials providing quick, concise and current information.
- Audio books, abridged and unabridged versions of both fiction and non-fiction titles
- Government information.
- Support for adult book discussion groups.

The Library supports research, technical and professional needs through inter library loans. DPL is not equipped to serve as a research or academic library.



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## C. Selection Criteria for Specific Locations

### 1. Branch Library Collections

Branch Library collections include:

- Resources to support formal elementary and secondary education, including representative works of fiction by major authors
- Materials providing information most frequently requested by customers attempting to meet the challenges of life
- Materials geared towards careers, literacy, job skills and testing
- Resources for exploratory independent learning by both adults and children
- Popular works about issues of current impact
- Recreational reading materials for adults and children, including mainstream and urban bestsellers
- Items of special interest to the population groups served by individual branches

These collections are not intended to support formal higher education or advanced independent study.

### 2. Collection Development - Main Library

Main Library is comprised of subject departments offering in-depth collections and is staffed with librarians who are knowledgeable in particular subject areas. Each department has its own range of specialties and services, as well as items of general and popular interest. Education is supported through the early years of college, but textbooks are not necessarily purchased. The Library is a Selective Depository for U.S. and Michigan government documents. These are housed in the Business, Science & Technology, and the Social Science, Education & Religion Departments. Materials relating directly to Detroit and Michigan are extensively collected.

*Business, Science & Technology Department (BST)* - collects materials to aid customers in starting and running a business.



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Other topics include science, both basic and applied, consumer health and material of general interest such as cooking, gardening, automotive and home repair. In addition, BST is a designated Patent and Trademark Resource Center. Materials are collected which would aid an inventor, business owner or creative person to apply for intellectual property protection for original work.

*Children's Library (CL)* – collects fiction and non-fiction materials on all topics for children from infancy to age 12. Special features include science fair books, foreign language books, young adult series, books on tape, music CDs, periodicals and board books. CL supports the curriculum of the Detroit Public Schools.

*HYPE Teen Center (Helping Young People Excel)* – collects books and multimedia materials of interest to ages 13-18. This includes fiction, graphic novels, video games (PG-13), music CDs, audiobooks, and periodicals. The HYPE Center is exclusively for customers between the ages of 13-18.

*Music, Arts & Literature (MAL)* – collects all areas of music, literature, performing arts and fine arts. There is an extensive multimedia circulating music collection including tapes, CDs, LPs and sheet music. The classic literature collection includes literary criticism, a special Shakespeare collection, other plays, and a comprehensive set of the Granger Poetry Series. MAL also offers books on arts, crafts, architecture, fashion, a circulating picture file, and art books of famous collections.

*Popular Library (PL)* – collects fiction of all genres, backlogs of newspapers on microfilm, popular magazines and national newspapers. PL has a comprehensive collection of the Detroit News and Free Press. Its non-fiction collection includes sports, publishing, library science and biographies.

*Social Science, Education and Religion (SSER)* – collects books on social science, psychology, self-help, philosophy, religions of all types, history, civil rights, forensics, true crime, and education. It provides an extensive legal collection targeted to the consumer, which includes self-help books for common legal problems, as well as codes for the United States, Michigan, and Detroit. Of



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particular interest are documents from the city of Detroit departments and reports from City agencies. There is also a map collection including local historic maps and Sanborn maps.

*Technology, Literacy and Career Center (TLC)* - collects materials for literacy, careers and computer training. It houses the most extensive literacy collection in Southeastern Michigan, composed of graded readers, instructional series, skill builder books, test prep, ESL, and GED. Job seekers are provided with books on resume writing, test preparation for various licenses and books on various career paths. TLC also includes a collection of computer books, in support of the many computer classes held at DPL.

### 3. Special Collections

The Special Collections comprises the Burton Historical Collection, the National Automotive History Collection, the E. Azalia Hackley Collection, the Harwell Sports Collection and the Rare Books Collection. These collect are developed to a level that supports research.

- a. *Burton Historical Collection (BHC)*  
The BHC collects genealogical materials regardless of locality. The BHC also documents the history of Michigan, Detroit, the Old Northwest, Upper Canada, local history of all states, and Americana in varied formats.
  
- b. *Azalia Hackley Collection (HC)*  
The HC documents the achievements of African Americans in dance, music, theater, and all areas of the performing arts.
  
- c. *Ernie Harwell Sports Collection (EHSC)*  
The EHSC documents the history of sports, with a primary focus on baseball.



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- d. *National Automotive History Collection (NAHC)*  
The NAHC documents the history and development of the automobile and other forms of motorized, wheeled land transportation in the United States and abroad.
  
- e. *Rare Book Collection (RBC)*  
The RBC acquires and preserves rare materials, across a wide range of subjects.

## D. Selection Criteria for Specific Materials

### 1. Foreign Language Materials

The Detroit Public Library is committed to developing and maintaining a high quality Spanish and foreign language collection within budgetary and space limitations that addresses the needs and interests of its diverse and rapidly changing population.

The Library maintains an extensive collection of Spanish language materials aimed at meeting the recreational and informational needs of the local Spanish-speaking community of Southwest Detroit. Resources include fiction and non-fiction books, magazines, newspapers, and other media formats for children and adults.

Additional languages that have limited collections for children and adults in both fiction and non-fiction books include Bengali at Knapp Branch, Vietnamese and Polish at Conely Branch, and Arabic at Campbell Branch.

### 2. Textbooks

DPL does not intentionally collect textbooks. However, it does not exclude textbooks from its collections.



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### **3. English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL)**

The Library acquires self-instruction resources in multiple formats for persons who are learning English as a second language.

### **4. Government Documents**

DPL is a Selective Depository for United States and Michigan government publications and patents. Its Government Documents and Patents collections are adequate to support research.

### **5. Local Authors**

The Detroit Public Library wishes to recognize the literary efforts of local Detroit authors, by including their works in the collections. Please see Appendix for [Local Authors Policy](#).

### **6. Resources for Customers with Disabilities**

DPL provides resources in special formats devised to meet the needs of the vision-impaired, the hearing-impaired, and others whose disabilities impede their ability to make optimum use of other Library resources.

The Frederick Douglass Library for Specialized Services provides Braille and large print materials for the vision impaired, book deliveries for the homebound, and Library on Wheels services for those who are farthest removed from Library locations.

### **7. Graphic Novels and Comic Books**

The Library acquires graphic novels and comic books on the basis of the literary or artistic merit.

### **8. Digital Collections**

The Detroit Public Library aspires to grow and maintain a Digital Library that corresponds to the strength and purpose of its Special Collections.



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Selection of items for digitization is determined by some or all of the following criteria.

- Materials for which the Detroit Public Library owns the copyright
- Materials that have adequate identification for metadata creation
- Frequently used collections or items that would benefit the research needs or requirements of the Library's customers
- Materials of local historic interest
- Fragile, vulnerable or damaged material that may not sustain repeated handling
- Rare or important material that may be damaged during the course of ordinary handling or use
- Materials of national historic interest
- Materials in the public domain

Selection of materials to be digitized will be by mutual agreement of the Digital Projects Leader and the Coordinator of Special Collections. Adoption of any new standards for preservation and/or digitization may require revision of selection criteria.

The Detroit Public Library will not digitize personal items owned by customers or items borrowed by customers that are owned by other institutions.

#### IV. Gifts and Donations Policy

The Detroit Public Library encourages donations of funds and materials for the collections. The Library accepts donations with the understanding that

- All donations are permanent and cannot be returned
- The Library generally cannot accept donations with specific stipulations



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- The Library reserves the right to integrate donations with other materials on the same subject(s)
- Items selected for the collections meet the policy and criteria described above
- Unneeded items will be disposed of in whatever manner the Library deems best
- Acknowledgement of gifts may be provided, but the Library will not make appraisals of the value of donated items

## V. Duplicate Copy and Replacement Copy Policy

The Library does not usually purchase more than one copy of a given work for a given collection unless the staff confidently foresees high demand for it. Additional copies are acquired in response to demand.

Landmark works of non-fiction, literary classics, literary works by important contemporary authors, and items in demand are replaced as quickly as possible when they are worn out, lost, or stolen. If they are out of print, the Library attempts to acquire used copies in good condition.

Missing works are identified in six ways: (1) from computer-generated reports of items not returned from circulation, (2) from interlibrary loan requests submitted by customers for titles listed in the catalog, (3) from unfilled requests from other libraries for items listed in the catalog, (4) from customers' reports to staff, (5) by staff members' observation, (6) by formal inventories.

## VI. De-accessioning Policy

Popular works of fiction or non-fiction that are not of interest to scholars, other specialists, or students, and which have ceased to circulate are discarded.

Guidebooks, directories, manuals, ready-reference sources, and statistical compendia that contain obsolete information are



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regularly discarded, unless they are likely to be consulted in the future for historical information at the Main Library.

Duplicate copies of works that circulate infrequently are usually discarded—unless the work is important and cannot be easily replaced—in which case one duplicate copy is retained at the Main Library.

Works in the following classes are promptly discarded if they present obsolete information, unless they are landmark works (i.e., works that continue to be read and regularly cited in other works)

004-006 Computer Science  
030-080 Generalities  
310-319 Statistics  
370-379 Education  
500-599 Science  
600-699 Technology

Except when in high demand, previous editions of works are discarded when a new edition is acquired.

Books in disrepair are discarded if they can be speedily replaced. Every effort is made to replace worn copies of landmark works.

If the last copy of a work that would not normally be discarded is in poor condition and cannot be speedily replaced, it may still be discarded, provided that

- It is not a landmark work
- Other works in the collection cover the same ground in comparable depth, from a similar viewpoint

Otherwise, the last copy of a work is not normally discarded. Items in the Special Collections are not discarded without the prior approval of the Director. De-accessioning of U.S. Government Documents is regulated by the Superintendent of Documents, U.S. Government Printing Office. The Library of Michigan regulates de-accessioning of Michigan State Documents.



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The Library's intent is to maintain a collection used by City of Detroit residents. Items in the collection will be periodically examined for physical condition, accuracy of information, and frequency of use within the last five years. Damaged items that are still usable will be repaired or replaced, if possible. Obsolete or unneeded items will be eliminated. Statistical reports from the Library's ILS will be consulted while making decisions.



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## VII. Customer Requests for Purchase/Consideration

Customers or staff may request that an item be added to the Library's collection. Library staff will review the request and make a decision based on the Library's Collection Development Policy and the availability of funds. Action on each request will be communicated to the requester within 30 days of receipt of the [Request for Consideration form](#).

## VIII. Requests for Reconsideration of Selection Decisions

Detroit Public Library supports Detroit residents' constitutionally protected right to free speech. If a complaint is received about an item or items in the collection, the customer will be asked to record the complaint on the [Customer Service form](#). Complaints will be considered seriously. The Director for Public Services will review the completed form and appoint a review committee. The Committee will review the item(s) and advise the Director for Public Services whether collection development policy and criteria were followed in selection and maintenance decisions. Whatever the decision, the customer will receive a written response from the Director for Public Services.

## IX. Copyright

The Detroit Public Library complies with provisions of the U.S. Copyright Law (U.S. Code Title 17, sections 107 and 108) and amendments. The "first sale doctrine" under the copyright law, enables the lending of books and other Library resources. Its provision of fair use allows citizens to use copyrighted works for their personal purposes of criticism, comment, news reporting, scholarship, or research. The law also permits the Library to make single reproductions of copyrighted works for preservation and replacement purposes. The copyright law allows transformation and reproduction of copyrighted works specifically for customers with disabilities



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## X. Appendix

Policy statements concerning Library collections adopted by the American Library Association and endorsed by the Detroit Library Commission.

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



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## Challenged Materials: An Interpretation of the Library Bill of Rights

The American Library Association declares as a matter of firm principle that it is the responsibility of every Library to have a clearly defined materials selection policy in written form that reflects the *Library Bill of Rights*, and that is approved by the appropriate governing authority.

Challenged materials that meet the criteria for selection in the materials selection policy of the Library should not be removed under any legal or extra-legal pressure. The *Library Bill of Rights* states in Article I that "Materials should not be excluded because of the origin, background, or views of those contributing to their creation," and in Article II, that "Materials should not be proscribed or removed because of partisan or doctrinal disapproval." Freedom of expression is protected by the Constitution of the United States, but constitutionally protected expression is often separated from unprotected expression only by a dim and uncertain line. The Constitution requires a procedure designed to focus searchingly on challenged expression before it can be suppressed. An adversary hearing is a part of this procedure.

Therefore, any attempt, be it legal or extra-legal, to regulate or suppress materials in libraries must be closely scrutinized to the end that protected expression is not abridged.

*Adopted June 25, 1971, by the ALA Council; amended July 1, 1981; January 10, 1990.*



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## Diversity in Collection Development: An Interpretation of the Library Bill of Rights

Throughout history, the focus of censorship has fluctuated from generation to generation. Books and other materials have not been selected or have been removed from Library collections for many reasons, among which are prejudicial language and ideas, political content, economic theory, social philosophies, religious beliefs, sexual forms of expression, and other potentially controversial topics.

Some examples of censorship may include removing or not selecting materials because they are considered by some as racist or sexist; not purchasing conservative religious materials; not selecting materials about or by minorities because it is thought these groups or interests are not represented in a community; or not providing information on or materials from non-mainstream political entities. Librarians may seek to increase user awareness of materials on various social concerns by many means, including, but not limited to, issuing bibliographies and presenting exhibits and programs. Librarians have a professional responsibility to be inclusive, not exclusive, in collection development and in the provision of interLibrary loan. Access to all materials legally obtainable should be assured to the user, and policies should not unjustly exclude materials even if they are offensive to the librarian or the user. Collection development should reflect the philosophy inherent in Article II of the Library Bill of Rights: "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." A balanced collection reflects a diversity of materials, not an equality of numbers. Collection development responsibilities include selecting materials in the languages in common use in the community the Library serves. Collection development and the selection of materials should be done according to professional standards and established selection and review procedures.

There are many complex facets to any issue, and variations of context in which issues may be expressed, discussed, or interpreted. Librarians have a professional responsibility to be fair, just, and equitable and to give all Library users equal protection in guarding against violation of



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the Library patron's right to read, view, or listen to materials and resources protected by the First Amendment, no matter what the viewpoint of the author, creator, or selector. Librarians have an obligation to protect Library collections from removal of materials based on personal bias or prejudice, and to select and support the access to materials on all subjects that meet, as closely as possible, the needs, interests, and abilities of all persons in the community the Library serves. This includes materials that reflect political, economic, religious, social, minority, and sexual issues.

Intellectual freedom, the essence of equitable Library services, provides for free access to all expressions of ideas through which any and all sides of a question, cause, or movement may be explored. Toleration is meaningless without tolerance for what some may consider detestable. Librarians cannot justly permit their own preferences to limit their degree of tolerance in collection development, because freedom is indivisible.

*Adopted July 14, 1982, by the ALA Council; amended January 10, 1990.*



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## Evaluating Library Collections: An Interpretation of the Library Bill of Rights

The continuous review of Library materials is necessary as a means of maintaining an active Library collection of current interest to users. In the process, materials may be added and physically deteriorated or obsolete materials may be replaced or removed in accordance with the collection maintenance policy of a given Library and the needs of the community it serves. Continued evaluation is closely related to the goals and responsibilities of all libraries and is a valuable tool of collection development. This procedure is not to be used as a convenient means to remove materials presumed to be controversial or disapproved of by segments of the community. Such abuse of the evaluation function violates the principles of intellectual freedom and is in opposition to the Preamble and Articles I and II of the Library Bill of Rights, which state:

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.

The American Library Association opposes such "silent censorship" and strongly urges that libraries adopt guidelines setting forth the positive purposes and principles of evaluation of materials in Library collections.

*Adopted February 2, 1973, by the ALA Council; amended July 1, 1981.*



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## Expurgation of Library Materials: An Interpretation of the Library Bill of Rights

Expurgating Library materials is a violation of the Library Bill of Rights. Expurgation as defined by this interpretation includes any deletion, excision, alteration, editing, or obliteration of any part(s) of books or other Library resources by the Library, its agent, or its parent institution (if any). By such expurgation, the Library is in effect denying access to the complete work and the entire spectrum of ideas that the work intended to express. Such action stands in violation of Articles I, II, and III of the Library Bill of Rights, which state that "Materials should not be excluded because of the origin, background, or views of those contributing to their creation," that "Materials should not be proscribed or removed because of partisan or doctrinal disapproval," and that "Libraries should challenge censorship in the fulfillment of their responsibility to provide information and enlightenment."

The act of expurgation has serious implications. It involves a determination that it is necessary to restrict access to the complete work. This is censorship. When a work is expurgated, under the assumption that certain portions of that work would be harmful to minors, the situation is no less serious.

Expurgation of any books or other Library resources imposes a restriction, without regard to the rights and desires of all Library users, by limiting access to ideas and information. (See also other Interpretations to the Library Bill of Rights, including Access to Electronic Information, Services, and Networks and Free Access to Libraries for Minors.)

Further, expurgation without written permission from the holder of the copyright on the material may violate the copyright provisions of the United States Code.

*Adopted February 2, 1973, by the ALA Council;  
amended July 1, 1981; January 10, 1990.*



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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.



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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



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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.*
6. 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.
7. *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.



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*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.*



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## THE FREEDOM TO VIEW STATEMENT

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 guarantee of freedom of expression.
2. To protect the confidentiality of all individuals and institutions using film, video, and other audiovisual materials.
3. To provide film, video, and other audiovisual materials which represent a diversity of views and expression. Selection of a work does not constitute or imply agreement with or approval of the content.
4. To provide a diversity of viewpoints without the constraint of labeling or prejudging film, video, or other audiovisual materials on the basis of the moral, religious, or political beliefs of the producer or filmmaker or on the basis of controversial content.
5. To contest vigorously, by all lawful means, every encroachment upon the public's freedom to view.

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

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