

## **HOMER PUBLIC LIBRARY COLLECTION DEVELOPMENT POLICY**

### **A. PURPOSE OF POLICY**

This collection development policy has been prepared by the director and staff of the Homer Public Library, approved by the Library Advisory Board, and adopted by the Homer City Council. Its purpose is to guide the library staff in the selection of materials, and to inform the public about the principles upon which the library's collection is developed and maintained.

The Homer Public Library endeavors to keep up with changes in the community and library technology. This policy will be reviewed every three years by the library director, and updated and approved by the Library Advisory Board as needed.

### **B. STATEMENT OF MISSION AND GOALS**

The mission statement of the Library guides this Collection Development Policy:

The mission of the Homer Public Library is to support the information needs of the community by providing access to quality resources in a welcoming atmosphere by a knowledgeable and caring staff. We take seriously our responsibility to serve as a place for children to discover the joy of reading and the value of libraries. We pledge to promote literacy, lifelong learning, and enrichment for people of all ages, thereby enhancing the economic, social, and cultural vitality of our community.

### **C. COMMUNITY DESCRIPTION**

Homer is a small community located 233 road miles south of Anchorage, Alaska. The Library's service population area contains the City of Homer and the surrounding borough communities, including Kachemak City, Seldovia, Anchor Point, Diamond Ridge, Fritz Creek, Kachemak Bay, Port Graham, Ninilchik, Nanwalek, Nikolaevsk, Voznesenka, Razdolna, and Kachemak Selo.

According to estimates by the State of Alaska in 2013, the population of the City of Homer is 5,136. The population of the surrounding communities within the library service area is 8,400, for a total of 13,536 total residents in the Library's service area. Approximately 87% of the population is Caucasian, with American Indians and Alaska Natives comprising the largest minority population at 6.7%, according to 2010 United States census data. English is the predominant language in the Homer area, with the exception of four predominantly Russian-speaking villages.

In addition to the Homer Public Library, three other municipal public libraries are located in the Kenai Peninsula Borough: the Joyce K. Carver Soldotna Public Library, the Kenai Community Library, and the Seward Community Library, located 80, 90, and 185 miles from Homer, respectively. The communities of Anchor Point and Ninilchik

maintain small public libraries. The Pratt Museum in Homer operates a non-lending library and two small academic libraries are located at the Kenai Peninsula College in Soldotna and the Kachemak Bay Campus in Homer, both affiliated with the University of Alaska. Eight public schools are located in the Homer Library service area.

Homer's local economy relies heavily on commercial fishing and tourism. Borough-wide, oil and gas is the fastest growing sector of the economy, followed by health care and construction. South Peninsula Hospital, Homer Electric Association, and the Kenai Peninsula School District are among Homer's largest employers. Homer has also attracted a number of resident artists, writers and entrepreneurs.

Census data document a trend toward increasing numbers of residents aged 60 and older. The "digital divide" (the gap between computer literate and non-literate, and between those who can afford home access to the internet and those who cannot), together with the proliferation of digital devices for accessing information and reading material, create a need for sophisticated reference service that includes knowledge of digital resources and the numerous devices used to access the internet. A strong print collection emphasizing recreational reading, practical skills, information for daily living, local Alaskana, and materials for youth remains in high demand, as well.

#### **D. INTELLECTUAL FREEDOM**

The library does not promote particular beliefs or views, nor does the selection of any item imply endorsement of its views. One of the essential purposes of the public library is to be a resource where individuals can examine many points of view and come to their own conclusions. The library attempts to provide materials representing different sides of controversial issues.

The Homer Public Library endorses the American Library Association's **Library Bill of Rights**, **Code of Ethics**, and their **Freedom to Read**, **Freedom to View**, and **Libraries: an American Value** statements. These documents, considered guiding principles for this policy, are appended.

Access to library materials are not be restricted beyond what is required to protect materials from theft or damage. Items are not labeled to indicate point of view or bias. The Library assures free access to its holdings for all patrons, who are free to select or reject for themselves any item in the collection. Individual or group prejudice about a particular item or type of material in the collection may not preclude its use by others.

Responsibility for the reading choices and information access by children rests with their parents and legal guardians, not the Library. Parents who wish to limit or restrict the reading of their own child should personally oversee that child's choice of library resources. Selection of library materials will not be inhibited by the possibility that items may be seen by children. The Library encourages parents to be involved with their children's reading and library use and will work with parents to find materials they deem

appropriate for their children. The Library endorses the American Library Association documents **Access to Library Resources and Services for Minors** and **Access for Children and Young Adults to Nonprint Materials**, which are appended.

#### **E. COOPERATION**

Cooperation is a basic tenet of library philosophy in Alaska and the United States. The Homer Public Library recognizes its responsibility to cooperate with other libraries in Homer, the Kenai Peninsula, Alaska, and nationwide.

The library on the Kachemak Bay Campus (KBC) of Kenai Peninsula College supports its institution's educational objectives with a collection emphasizing the humanities, applied science, art, office technology, marine sciences, and business management. While open to the public, the KBC library provides in-house use only to non-students.

Libraries in the public schools focus on educational and curriculum support. Responsibility for the provision of curriculum-related materials belongs properly to the schools, but the public library provides materials that complement local school library collections and enrich the needs of student borrowers of all ages.

Homer Public Library cooperates with the Pratt Museum in collecting material relating to Homer's history and culture. The Pratt Museum has a non-lending library which consists of museological, cultural history and natural history periodicals, books, and a vertical file of scholarly papers and pertinent subject information. The museum also houses an archive of various periodicals and local documents, a photo archive documenting local history, and a media collection of films, audiocassettes and videotapes. Many of the Pratt's collections are available upon specific request to the Collections Manager.

As a member of Online Computer Library Center (OCLC), a worldwide bibliographic database cooperative, the Library is able to provide interlibrary loan service for patrons with needs outside the scope of the Homer Public Library's collection. The OCLC database gives us access to other libraries' resources throughout the state, the nation and the world. The Homer Public Library uses interlibrary loan both to supplement our resources and to lend our materials to other libraries.

#### **F. SELECTION RESPONSIBILITY**

Selection of library materials, whether purchased or donated, is based upon the informational, educational, and recreational needs of the community. It is limited by factors such as materials budgets, space, and the content of existing collections.

The library director has the final responsibility for the maintenance and development of the collection of the Homer Public Library, operating within the framework of policies approved by the Library Advisory Board and adopted by the Homer City Council. Because the library director must be able to answer to the Advisory Board and the

general public for actual selections made, the authority to reject or select any item rests with that position. Staff members assist the library director in the selection of materials.

The Library encourages suggestions for purchase from patrons and staff. Interlibrary loan requests and questions from the public are considered for possible purchase suggestions. All purchase requests are reviewed to determine whether they fall within selection criteria.

#### **G. SELECTION CRITERIA**

Selection of materials is based on the professional judgment of the library staff, which is guided by the needs of the community and the balance and comprehensiveness of the collection. Selection is aided by reviews and other professional tools such as standard catalogs and bibliographies. Selection tools include, but are not limited to:

- Reviews in professional library journals or periodicals such as *Booklist*, *Library Journal*, *Publisher's Weekly*, *Wilson's Public Library Catalog*, *The Horn Book*, *Kirkus Reviews* and other professional publications.
- Internet resources for evaluation and selection such as the ALA website, Amazon.com, Common Sense Media, and professional media review sites.
- Individual subject expertise of staff or community members.
- Publisher catalogs.
- Standard bibliographies.

There is no single standard that can be applied in all acquisition decisions. Some materials must be judged primarily on their artistic merits, some on their scholarship, and some on their value as human documents. Still others are intended to satisfy recreational and entertainment needs. Each will be considered in terms of the audience for whom it is intended. Materials are judged on the basis of the work as a whole, not on a part taken out of context.

Selection Criteria considered in the evaluation and the re-evaluation of materials are:

- Cultural, recreational, informational and/or educational value.
- Local interest and potential use by library patrons.
- Usefulness in relation to other materials in the collection.
- Appearance of the item in standard bibliographies and review journals.
- Permanent significance.
- Accuracy, effectiveness, and timeliness of presentation.
- Artistic excellence.
- Qualifications and/or significance of the author.
- Suitability of physical form for library use.
- Availability of material in other library collections.
- Price.
- Library space.

Two categories excluded from the collection as clearly not within the selection criteria are 1) forms of expression that are unprotected by the First Amendment; and 2) explicit and direct instructions for the manufacture of contraband materials.

#### **H. MATERIAL FORMAT**

The Library offers materials in a variety of formats to meet its goals and objectives. Materials may include books, audiocassettes, CDs, electronic resources, microforms, newspapers and magazines, pamphlets, videos, and others. The Library will not adopt new formats before they have demonstrated reliability and usefulness.

#### **I. COLLECTION OVERVIEW**

The library collection consists of 53,000 items, including books, audiobooks, magazines, newspapers, maps, and videos. It also maintains access to a variety of electronic resources.

In general, collection priority is given to:

- Currency. Collection emphasis is on up-to-date information.
- General treatments over those that are specialized, scholarly, or primarily for professional use.
- Works of broad popular appeal that meet the needs of the independent learner over textbooks or other materials that meet curriculum requirements of the formal student. Textbooks are generally not added to the collection unless there is little or no other material covering the topic in any other format. The Library does not buy textbooks used by the local schools. It is the responsibility of the school libraries to provide copies of course materials for their students.
- Unabridged editions over abridgments. Abridged editions will be considered only if they retain the flavor and quality of the original.

#### **1. Access to the Internet:**

The Library's internet policy is contained in a separate document.

#### **2. Adult fiction:**

In addition to well-known classics, the adult fiction collection provides a wide variety of popular reading materials of current and high interest to the public. We actively consider patron recommendations.

#### **3. Adult nonfiction:**

The non-fiction collection includes materials that are of current interest and demand within the community. It represents a diverse collection in order to make the broadest array of topics and opinions available to our users but is heavily oriented toward the interests and needs of the Homer community. Special emphasis goes to selecting titles dealing with health, boats and marine technology, construction, the arts, sustainability, self-sufficiency and travel.

The Library collects basic books of faith as well as authoritative books on comparative religions but will not collect or accept doctrinal or instructional material in any field of religion. The Library purchases materials of general historical importance rather than denominational content.

#### **4. Alaska and local history materials:**

The Alaskana collection includes materials about Alaska and neighboring regions. The collection priorities of the Alaskana collection include:

- As complete coverage as possible of the immediate Homer area.
- Broad coverage of southcentral Alaska.
- Selected coverage of the rest of Alaska based on expected demand and popular appeal.

Some reference or rare materials will not be available for loan. The university libraries and the Alaska State Library maintain comprehensive Alaskana collections; many of these items are available to Homer Public Library patrons through interlibrary loan.

#### **5. Audio:**

Recorded books in physical formats such as CDs are available in the adult, young adult, and juvenile sections of the Library. The collections include popular fiction, classic titles, and nonfiction in unabridged and abridged editions. Music CDs are available in the music collection and in the children's library. Audiobooks and music are also available in downloadable electronic formats through the Library's subscription to ListenAlaska.

#### **6. Children's books, including easy readers, children's and young adult materials:**

In selecting books for children, the Library's goals are to develop a collection that satisfies children's informational, recreational, and cultural reading needs; to promote literacy; and to encourage a lifelong love of reading. The children's collections include:

- Picture books, beginning readers, and graphic novels.
- Juvenile nonfiction which informs children about their world. Authoritative, up-to-date and attractive materials in a variety of reading levels are sought.
- Juvenile fiction for elementary and middle school students.
- Young Adult fiction and nonfiction that appeal to teenagers and may deal with more adult issues than children's fiction. Books are selected to meet the informational, recreational and emotional concerns of this age group, help them grow in understanding themselves and others, broaden their viewpoints, expand their reading ability and enjoyment, or simply for their reading pleasure.

#### **7. Duplicate titles:**

Duplicate titles are purchased if long-term heavy demand is anticipated, but in general, multiple copies are not purchased due to fiscal limitations. Where the public interest is in the subject more than in a particular title, the Library will purchase more copies of

different titles instead of buying numerous copies of one title. This approach offers library users a collection with greater variety and depth.

**8. Electronic books, audiobooks, music and magazines:**

Downloadable audiobooks, ebooks, and music for children, teens, and adults are available through ListenAlaska, a collection of digital content the Library subscribes to through the Alaska Library Network consortium. Additionally, the Library circulates equipment to access these formats, such as MP3 players and ebook readers. Digital magazines will be made available as the collection budget allows.

**9. Electronic databases:**

The internet, Databases for Alaskans, and individual databases subscribed to by the Library provide access to a vast range of valuable information. The Library may subscribe to specific databases of interest and usefulness to the community, such as online encyclopedias; genealogy, financial, and medical information; and materials for children. Both the Library's website and public catalog may be used to provide access to these electronic materials.

**10. Large Print and materials for the visually handicapped and the hearing-impaired:**

Large print materials purchased by the Library are available for checkout and located in the Large Print section of the Library. In addition, the Alaska State Library Talking Book Center loans rotating collections of audiobooks to the Homer Public Library free of charge. The Alaska State Library also offers services directly to individuals unable to read standard print material. Inquire at the front desk for information about applying for this service.

**11. Periodicals and Newspapers:**

Periodical selection is based on the needs and tastes of the eclectic population in the Homer area. The Library subscribes to the local Homer newspapers and houses most back issues in two formats: paper and microfilm. Subscriptions to the Kenai borough and Anchorage newspapers are maintained, as well as subscriptions to national periodicals of note.

**12. Rare and Expensive Books:**

The Library does not currently have, nor will it become a priority to have, a rare book collection. The cost of preservation and security make housing a rare book collection impractical. Rare books that have been donated to the Library may be sold and the money used to purchase materials for reference and circulation. The Library does maintain a small number of rare books that focus on Alaska and local history.

**13. Reference materials:**

One of the Library's primary collection development objectives is to provide accurate and useful information. To accomplish this objective, the Library provides access to current and authoritative materials in a variety of formats. Resources include a selection

of encyclopedias, atlases, almanacs, bibliographies, and dictionaries in paper and/or electronic formats, as well as electronic databases. Local and regional directories and information are maintained. Authority, organization, and currency of information are among the selection criteria, as well as whether the information is better obtained in another format, on the internet, or in databases available through SLED (Statewide Library Electronic Doorway).

**14. Russian language materials:**

The Library maintains a small collection of Russian language materials including books, audiobooks, and videos. Subjects collected include Old Believer history and culture, Russian literature classics, folktales, craft books, materials for children, and Russian translations of English novels.

**15. Self-Published materials:**

In most cases, the Library does not purchase self-published materials that are not reviewed in established review journals. Exceptions may be made for materials of local interest that meet the general selection criteria. Additional considerations include quality of editing and binding suitable for public use.

**16. Vertical File:**

The Library maintains files of historic materials about Homer and Alaska. Newspaper articles, newsletters, pamphlets, patterns and instructions, materials hard to locate in books such as charts, graphs and statistics, Cooperative Extension Service publications, and maps of Alaska are located in the Vertical File. All items in the Vertical File are cataloged.

**17. Video:**

The Library collects videos that appeals to a wide range of patrons. Videos are selected from reviews, prior viewing, or the reputation of the makers and distributors. Videos of high quality, those based on literary works, children's titles, do-it-yourself, self-help, travel and biography, plays, operas and ballet, other musical events, and outstanding series that tend not to be found in private home collections receive selection priority. Series that have appeared on the Public Broadcasting Service and/or have received critical acclaim are also collected, as are popular titles which serve primarily to entertain.

**J. COLLECTION EVALUATION AND COLLECTION GOALS**

The Homer Public Library strives to maintain a diverse collection to fulfill the many needs and interests of the Homer community. Reports are periodically run from the Library's circulation and cataloging software, which provide information about the percentage of holdings in a particular subject area compared to the percentage of circulation from that area. These reports, analyzed by the collection development librarians, assist in determining how best to divide the acquisitions budget among the subject areas of the collection. A balance is sought between adding new materials to the



most popular sections and strengthening sections containing old and outdated materials.

A top priority of the Homer Public Library is to systematically upgrade the average age of the collection, particularly nonfiction.

In addition, the Homer Public Library collection will be assessed according to the following criteria:

- Comparison to standard lists.
- Proportion of subject area in circulation at any given time.
- Age of publication.
- Representation of diverse viewpoints.
- Completeness of sets or series.
- Number of interlibrary loan requests.
- Number of reserves placed.
- Patron requests.

#### **K. ACQUISITIONS**

The library staff receives numerous catalogs, advertisements, and announcements from publishers, professional reviewing journals, and library vendors. Staff uses these materials, as well as patron requests and staff suggestions, as the beginning of the selection process. Reviews of each item are evaluated before deciding upon purchase. Staff members who are responsible for materials selection collaborate both informally and in periodic collection development meetings to discuss the merits of adding specific titles to the collections, as well as the strengths and weaknesses of the collection in general.

New materials are ordered through the local independent bookstore in Homer, book and media vendors, and publishers. The Library purchases out-of-print materials from companies who specialize in locating hard-to-find books. The majority of the Library's periodicals are managed by a periodical subscription service.

#### **L. COLLECTION MAINTENANCE**

Select books of long-term value to the collection are sent to a professional bindery when their bindings become worn-out or damaged and are not easily mended. These titles are usually popular, of local interest, and not available in hardcover bindings.

Books are mended if, as a whole, they are in good shape and the mending will result in prolonged life of the books for additional circulations. Cumulative damage such as a large number of dirty or torn pages may result in withdrawal or replacement instead of mending.

The purpose of a withdrawal policy is to insure that the collection remains up-to-date and useful. The criteria used for selecting materials are also be used in the removal of items from the collection. Materials that are no longer useful in light of stated objectives are systematically withdrawn from the collection. Prime candidates for deselection are:

- Items which contain outdated or inaccurate information, unless of historical value.
- Superseded editions.
- Worn out or damaged items.
- Seldom-used materials.

Withdrawn materials are added to the Friends of the Homer Public Library's book sale. Proceeds from the sale will be used to purchase needed items for the Library. Occasionally, discarded items are offered to other libraries, schools, or nonprofit groups. Items not distributed or sold are discarded.

#### **M. GIFTS AND DONATIONS**

The Library accepts donations of materials with the understanding that gifts to be added to the collection must meet established selection criteria and are deemed to enrich the collection. Gifts not retained for the collection will be added to the Friends of the Homer Public Library's book sale or discarded.

No condition or restriction of gifts can be honored. It is the policy of the Library not to accept special collections of books and like material to be kept together as a separate entity. Gift collections may be accepted at the discretion of the library director with the understanding that they be integrated into the general collection with the only form of special identification being a bookplate.

The Library encourages cash gifts for the purchase of memorials, tributes, or other reasons. Selection of materials must be based on the same criteria used to select items for the collection. The general nature of the book or its subject area can be based upon the interests of the deceased or the wishes of the donor and the needs of the Library.

Gifts of money, real property, personal property, or stock are accepted if conditions attached to them are acceptable to the Library Advisory Board and/or the City of Homer administration. The Library shall not accept for deposit materials that are not outright gifts. Donations are added to the Homer Public Library's Gift and Building Fund. Investment of funds is managed by the Finance Department of the City of Homer.

The Library cannot legally appraise gifts for tax purposes. Donors are offered a signed and dated gift statement as a receipt.

#### **N. COPYRIGHT**

The Homer Public Library makes every attempt to abide by the copyright law of the United States (Title 17, U.S. Code). Patrons who use library materials are responsible for complying with current laws.

#### **O. RECONSIDERATION**

The Library recognizes that within the Homer area there are groups and individuals with widely separate and diverse interests, backgrounds, cultural heritage, social values, and needs, and that any given item may offend some patrons. Selection of materials is not made on the basis of anticipated approval or disapproval of their contents and no library material is sequestered except to protect it from injury or theft. The suitability of particular materials may be questioned by a borrower and reconsideration formally requested in accordance with the following procedure. Either staff or citizens may initiate reconsideration.

Should patrons have a complaint about library materials the following sequential process will be followed. Questioned materials will not be removed or restricted at any point in this process unless an official determination has been made to do so.

- 1) Informal discussion with the Library Director. The selection policy will be explained and a copy of the collection development policy provided.
- 2) If patrons are not satisfied with the informal discussion, they may fill out a "Request for Reconsideration of Library Materials" form.
- 3) Upon receiving the completed form, the Library Director shall:
  - a) Read the material in its entirety.
  - b) Check the general acceptance of material by reading reviews and consulting recommended lists.
  - c) Judge the material for the strengths and values as a whole and not in part, and apply all appropriate selection criteria to the work.
  - d) Provide a written response to the patron, which will include a full explanation of the decision, and information concerning the process to appeal.
  - e) Present a written recommendation to the Library Advisory Board at their next meeting.
- 4) If the patron remains dissatisfied, an appeal can be heard before the Library Advisory Board. The Board will read the material in its entirety, hear the appeal, review the recommendation by the librarian, and make a final judgment. The Board shall notify the complainant of its decision in writing. No further appeals will be heard. No other reconsideration of this material will be addressed for one full year from the date of final judgment unless the grounds for complaint are substantially different from the previous reconsideration.

## **Documents Appended**

### **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 19, 1939, by the ALA Council; amended October 14, 1944; June 18, 1948; February 2, 1961; June 27, 1967; January 23, 1980; inclusion of "age" reaffirmed January 23, 1996.

Retrieved 1/26/2015 from <http://www.ala.org/advocacy/intfreedom/librarybill>.

### **Code of Ethics of the American Library Association**

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

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

We significantly influence or control the selection, organization, preservation, and dissemination of information. In a political system grounded in an informed citizenry, we

are members of a profession explicitly committed to intellectual freedom and the freedom of access to information. We have a special obligation to ensure the free flow of information and ideas to present and future generations.

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

We provide the highest level of service to all library users through appropriate and usefully organized resources; equitable service policies; equitable access; and accurate, unbiased, and courteous responses to all requests.

We uphold the principles of intellectual freedom and resist all efforts to censor library resources.

We protect each library user's right to privacy and confidentiality with respect to information sought or received and resources consulted, borrowed, acquired or transmitted.

We respect intellectual property rights and advocate balance between the interests of information users and rights holders.

We treat co-workers and other colleagues with respect, fairness, and good faith, and advocate conditions of employment that safeguard the rights and welfare of all employees of our institutions.

We do not advance private interests at the expense of library users, colleagues, or our employing institutions.

We distinguish between our personal convictions and professional duties and do not allow our personal beliefs to interfere with fair representation of the aims of our institutions or the provision of access to their information resources.

We strive for excellence in the profession by maintaining and enhancing our own knowledge and skills, by encouraging the professional development of co-workers, and by fostering the aspirations of potential members of the profession.

Adopted at the 1939 Midwinter Meeting by the ALA Council; amended June 30, 1981; June 28, 1995; and January 22, 2008.

Retrieved 1/26/2015 from

<http://www.ala.org/advocacy/proethics/codeofethics/codeethics>.

### **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:

*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.

*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.

*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.

*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.

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

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

*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.

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

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



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

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

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

A Joint Statement by:

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

Subsequently endorsed by:

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

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<http://www.ala.org/advocacy/intfreedom/statementspols/freedomreadstatement>.

### **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:

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.

To protect the confidentiality of all individuals and institutions using film, video, and other audiovisual materials.

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.

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.

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.

Endorsed January 10, 1990, by the ALA Council

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<http://www.ala.org/advocacy/intfreedom/statementspols/freedomviewstatement>.

### **Libraries: An American Value**

Libraries in America are cornerstones of the communities they serve. Free access to the books, ideas, resources, and information in America's libraries is imperative for education, employment, enjoyment, and self-government.

Libraries are a legacy to each generation, offering the heritage of the past and the promise of the future. To ensure that libraries flourish and have the freedom to promote and protect the public good in the 21st century, we believe certain principles must be guaranteed.

To that end, we affirm this contract with the people we serve:

We defend the constitutional rights of all individuals, including children and teenagers, to use the library's resources and services;

We value our nation's diversity and strive to reflect that diversity by providing a full spectrum of resources and services to the communities we serve;

We affirm the responsibility and the right of all parents and guardians to guide their own children's use of the library and its resources and services;

We connect people and ideas by helping each person select from and effectively use the library's resources;

We protect each individual's privacy and confidentiality in the use of library resources and services;

We protect the rights of individuals to express their opinions about library resources and services;

We celebrate and preserve our democratic society by making available the widest possible range of viewpoints, opinions and ideas, so that all individuals have the opportunity to become lifelong learners - informed, literate, educated, and culturally enriched.

Change is constant, but these principles transcend change and endure in a dynamic technological, social, and political environment.

By embracing these principles, libraries in the United States can contribute to a future that values and protects freedom of speech in a world that celebrates both our similarities and our differences, respects individuals and their beliefs, and holds all persons truly equal and free.

Adopted February 3, 1999, by the  
Council of the American Library Association

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<http://www.ala.org/advocacy/intfreedom/statementspols/librariesamerican>.

### **Access to Library Resources and Services for Minors**

An Interpretation of the *Library Bill of Rights*  
(formerly titled "Free Access to Libraries for Minors")

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

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

Libraries are charged with the mission of providing services and developing resources to meet the diverse information needs and interests of the communities they serve. Services,

materials, and facilities that fulfill the needs and interests of library users at different stages in their personal development are a necessary part of library resources. The needs and interests of each library user, and resources appropriate to meet those needs and interests, must be determined on an individual basis. Librarians cannot predict what resources will best fulfill the needs and interests of any individual user based on a single criterion such as chronological age, educational level, literacy skills, or legal emancipation. Equitable access to all library resources and services shall not be abridged through restrictive scheduling or use policies.

Libraries should not limit the selection and development of library resources simply because minors will have access to them. Institutional self-censorship diminishes the credibility of the library in the community and restricts access for all library users. Children and young adults unquestionably possess First Amendment rights, including the right to receive information through the library in print, sound, images, data, games, software, and other formats.<sup>1</sup> Constitutionally protected speech cannot be suppressed solely to protect children or young adults from ideas or images a legislative body believes to be unsuitable for them.<sup>2</sup> Librarians and library governing bodies should not resort to age restrictions in an effort to avoid actual or anticipated objections because only a court of law can determine whether or not content is constitutionally protected.

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

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, or format.

This principle of library service applies equally to all users, minors as well as adults. Lack of access to information can be harmful to minors. Librarians and library governing bodies must uphold this principle in order to provide adequate and effective service to minors.

*Note*

1. See *Brown v. Entertainment Merchant’s Association, et al.* 564 U.S. 08-1448 (2011): a) Video games qualify for First Amendment protection. Like protected books, plays, and movies, they communicate ideas through familiar literary devices and features distinctive to the medium.. And ‘the basic principles of freedom of speech . . . do not vary’ with a new and different communication medium.”

2. See *Erznoznik v. City of Jacksonville*, 422 U.S. 205 (1975): “Speech that is neither obscene as to youths nor subject to some other legitimate proscription cannot be suppressed solely to protect the young from

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

Adopted June 30, 1972, by the ALA Council; amended July 1, 1981; July 3, 1991; June 30, 2004; July 2, 2008 *under previous name* "Free Access to Libraries for Minors"; and July 1, 2014.

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<http://www.ala.org/advocacy/intfreedom/librarybill/interpretations/access-library-resources-for-minors>.

### **Access for Children and Young Adults to Nonprint Materials**

An Interpretation of the Library Bill of Rights

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

The American Library Association's principles protect minors' access to sound, images, data, games, software, and other content in all formats such as tapes, CDs, DVDs, music CDs, computer games, software, databases, and other emerging technologies. ALA's [Free Access to Libraries for Minors](#): An *Interpretation* of the Library Bill of Rights states: . . . The "right to use a library" includes free access to, and unrestricted use of, all the services, materials, and facilities the library has to offer. Every restriction on access to, and use of, library resources, based solely on the chronological age, educational level, literacy skills, or legal emancipation of users violates Article V.

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

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

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

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

In some cases, commercial content ratings, such as the [Motion Picture Association of America](#) (MPAA) movie ratings, might appear on the packaging or promotional materials provided by producers or distributors. However, marking out or removing this information from materials or packaging constitutes expurgation or censorship.

MPAA movie ratings, [Entertainment Software Rating Board](#) (ESRB) game ratings, and other rating services are private advisory codes and have no legal standing ([Expurgation of Library Materials](#)). For the library to add ratings to nonprint materials if they are not already there is unacceptable. It is also unacceptable to post a list of such ratings with a collection or to use them in circulation policies or other procedures. These uses constitute labeling, "an attempt to prejudice attitudes" ([Labels and Rating Systems](#)), and are forms of censorship. The application of locally generated ratings schemes intended to provide content warnings to library users is also inconsistent with the Library Bill of Rights. The interests of young people, like those of adults, are not limited by subject, theme, or level of sophistication. Librarians have a responsibility to ensure young people's access to materials and services that reflect diversity of content and format sufficient to meet their needs.

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

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<http://www.ala.org/advocacy/intfreedom/librarybill/interpretations/accesschildren>.

Policy approved by Library Advisory Board 3/3/2015.  
Approved by Homer City Council 3/23/15.