



COLLECTION DEVELOPMENT POLICY

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PURPOSE

Mount Laurel Library Board of Trustees recognizes that the citizens of Mount Laurel possess widely diverse and separate interests, backgrounds, cultural heritages, social values and needs. The Material Selection Policy is designed to support the Library's mission and service priorities, within budgetary and space limitations, and serve the needs of all citizens of Mount Laurel regardless of age, sex, race, religious creed, national origin, ancestry, physical or mental disability, sexual orientation, political or social views. This policy is meant to document current collection management policy, further public understanding of the purpose, nature and philosophy behind the library's collection management practices and direct the library staff in the development and maintenance of the collection.

POLICY

Library Materials Definition

"Library materials" include, but are not limited to print (e.g. books, magazines, newspapers), non-print (e.g. audio book, compact disc, DVD, CDROM) and electronic formats (e.g. databases, electronic books, streaming media, internet information).

Authority and Selection Responsibility

Library materials selection is and shall be vested in the Library Director and delegated to members of the professional staff.

Materials Selection Criteria

Selectors choose popular materials for varying levels of entertainment, education, reading levels, age level interests, differing social/religious customs and languages which are available on open library shelves. The collection offers users a variety of formats, viewpoints and subjects.

Selection of library materials is made on the basis of interest, popularity, informational content, appropriateness and relevance to and for all the people of Mount Laurel. The general criteria considered in selecting materials include:

- Budget
- Popularity and anticipated demand by customers
- Significance and value to the collection
- Qualifications of author or producer
- Suitability of subject and style for intended audience
- Suitability and quality of format
- Currency or timeliness of material
- Price of the material
- Attention given to the item by reviewers and general media
- Availability of materials in other libraries or through inter-library loan
- Technical quality of non-book materials

In selection, consideration is given to the work as a whole. Materials need not meet all of the above criteria and materials are not to be excluded solely on any one of the following:

- Race, religion, nationality, sex, sexual preference or political views of an author
- Frankness or coarseness of language
- Controversial nature of an item including cover art
- Endorsement or disapproval of an item by an individual or organization
- The possibility that the materials may inadvertently come into the possession of children

Library materials are purchased in a wide variety of formats to meet the expressed and anticipated needs and interests of the community. Best sellers and other popular titles are purchased in multiple copies as determined by popular demand. Although the Library attempts to provide material on every subject and grade level, no attempt is made to match the collection to a particular curriculum. The Library may serve as a limited, supplementary source to meet the educational needs of students; however, we do not serve in an adjunct capacity to schools and space limitations and budgetary prioritization may preclude the Library from duplicating the specialized and comprehensive collections that exist elsewhere in the community or available through interlibrary loan. Textbooks may be selected when they are the best or only source of information on the subject and not solely because a textbook is assigned as school curriculum. Library materials are selected for the general user rather than the specialist.

General selection criteria considered for print and non-print materials apply to electronic formats as well. In addition, the following criteria are considered:

- Compatibility with hardware and equipment
- Ease of use and searching capabilities
- Frequency of updating
- Remote capability
- Authority
- Design
- Print vs. electronic pricing and availability

While every attempt is made to maintain quality and authoritative links to internet information, Mount Laurel Library does not have control over information on the World Wide Web and cannot be held responsible for the content, accuracy, or quality of the information received.

The Board of Trustees does not endorse every idea or presentation contained in the materials the library makes available to the public and believes it would be in conflict with the public's interest to establish its own political, moral, or aesthetic view as a standard for determining what material the library selects. The library attempts to develop and maintain a balanced collection representing diverse points of view on a subject. A balanced collection reflects a diversity of materials, not equality in numbers.

Access

Mount Laurel Library subscribes to the provisions of the Library Bill of Rights, the Freedom to Read Statement and the Freedom to View Statement, and the Statement on Labeling, as adopted by the American Library Association. These documents are attached as a part of this policy. All individuals have the right to choose which library materials they will use. However, no individual or group has the right to restrict the freedom of others to read or view whatever they wish. No book or other material in question is automatically removed from the collection because of individual objections.

At the Mount Laurel Library, children and young people have access to all parts of the library. Mount Laurel Library supports the Free Access to Libraries for Minors of the American Library Association. This document is attached as a part of this policy.

The library does not assume the role of the parent, but rather encourages parents to be involved with their child's use of the library and to guide their child's selection of library materials in supporting their individual family values. Library staff does not monitor the materials children choose to check out. The responsibility for the reading and viewing choices of children rests with parents and legal guardians.

Requests for Reconsideration of Materials

Mount Laurel Library welcomes and encourages input from the community concerning the collection.

Requests to add or remove materials will be considered within the context of the principles expressed within this policy. Library customers who wish to request the reconsideration of library materials shall complete and sign the Request for Reconsideration form appended to this document. This form is for Mount Laurel Library cardholders only.

Upon receipt of a written request, the Director will discuss the matter with the appropriate professional staff, and the Director will contact the library customer in writing with the final decision. The library customer, if unsatisfied with the decision, may request a hearing before the Board of Trustees. The Board will then determine whether the request for reconsideration has been handled in accordance with stated policies and procedures of the Mount Laurel Library. Based on this determination, the Board may vote to uphold or override the decision of the Director.

Collection Maintenance

To maintain the quality and relevancy of the collection, the library maintains an on-going schedule of withdrawing or replacing worn, outdated materials which are no longer useful to the collection. The collection is not intended to be archival in nature. Worn, damaged, and outdated materials as well as unnecessary duplicate copies are weeded from the collection on a regular basis. Due to space limitations, materials may also be withdrawn if they are not used or are superseded by a new edition or a more authoritative work on the same subject. Items may also be deleted if a more desirable format for the content has been added to the collection. Items deleted from the system are plainly marked and are made available for sale through Better World Books or other methods that comply with state and local regulations. The library will maintain a list of items withdrawn from the collection.

The library conducts a full inventory of the library collection every 3 years and may conduct a more frequent inventory of specific sections of the library on an as needed basis.

Material Donations

All gifts become the property of the Library and may be used or sold by the library according to the criteria described elsewhere in this document. In accepting a gift of materials the library reserves the privilege of deciding whether items donated should be added to the collection. Library staff makes no judgment as to the value of donated materials. Out of the many books and other materials which citizens so generously give, a proportion may be added to the collection and interfiled with other materials on the same subject. Many material donations can not be added to the collection because the material may be; (1) a duplicate of an item of which the library already has a sufficient number; (2) outdated - interesting but not of sufficient present reference or circulating value to the library; and/or (3) in poor condition - which would not justify the expense of processing it, i.e. cataloging and preparing it for circulation. All donated material is judged by the same standards of selection as those applied to the purchase of new materials.

Appendices

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.
- VII. All people, regardless of origin, age, background, or views, possess a right to privacy and confidentiality in their library use. Libraries should advocate for, educate about, and protect people's privacy, safeguarding all library use data, including personally identifiable information.

Adopted June 19, 1939, by the ALA Council; amended October 14, 1944; June 18, 1948; February 2, 1961; June 27, 1967; January 23, 1980; January 29, 2019. Inclusion of "age" reaffirmed January 23, 1996.

The Freedom to Read Statement

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

Most attempts at suppression rest on a denial of the fundamental premise of democracy: that the ordinary individual, by exercising critical judgment, will select the good and reject the bad. We trust Americans to recognize propaganda and misinformation, and to make their own decisions about what they read and believe. We do not believe they are prepared

to sacrifice their heritage of a free press in order to be "protected" against what others think may be bad for them. We believe they still favor free enterprise in ideas and expression.

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

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

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

We believe that free communication is essential to the preservation of a free society and a creative culture. We believe that these pressures toward conformity present the danger of limiting the range and variety of inquiry and expression on which our democracy and our culture depend. We believe that every American community must jealously guard the freedom to publish and to circulate, in order to preserve its own freedom to read. We believe that publishers and librarians have a profound responsibility to give validity to that freedom to read by making it possible for the readers to choose freely from a variety of offerings.

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

We therefore affirm these propositions:

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

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

2. *Publishers, librarians, and booksellers do not need to endorse every idea or presentation they make available. It would conflict with the public interest for them to*

establish their own political, moral, or aesthetic views as a standard for determining what should be published or circulated.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

It is inevitable in the give and take of the democratic process that the political, the moral, or the aesthetic concepts of an individual or group will occasionally collide with those of another individual or group. In a free society individuals are free to determine for themselves what they wish to read, and each group is free to determine what it will recommend to its freely associated members. But no group

has the right to take the law into its own hands, and to impose its own concept of politics or morality upon other members of a democratic society. Freedom is no freedom if it is accorded only to the accepted and the inoffensive. Further, democratic societies are more safe, free, and creative when the free flow of public information is not restricted by governmental prerogative or self-censorship.

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

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

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

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 and Association of American Publishers

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 guarantees of freedom of expression.
2. To protect the confidentiality of all individuals and institutions using film, video, and other audiovisual materials.
3. To provide film, video, and other audiovisual materials which represent a diversity of views and expression. Selection of a work does not constitute or imply agreement with or approval of the content.

4. To provide a diversity of viewpoints without the constraint of labeling or prejudging film, video, or other audiovisual materials on the basis of the moral, religious, or political beliefs of the producer or filmmaker or on the basis of controversial content.
5. To contest vigorously, by all lawful means, every encroachment upon the public's freedom to view.

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

Endorsed by the ALA Council January 10, 1990

Labeling and Rating Systems: An Interpretation of the Library Bill of Rights

Libraries do not advocate the ideas found in their collections or in resources accessible through the library. The presence of books and other resources in a library does not indicate endorsement of their contents by the library. Likewise, providing access to digital information does not indicate endorsement or approval of that information by the library. Labeling and rating systems present distinct challenges to these intellectual freedom principles.

Labels on library materials may be viewpoint-neutral directional aids designed to save the time of users, or they may be attempts to prejudice or discourage users or restrict their access to materials. When labeling is an attempt to prejudice attitudes, it is a censor's tool. The American Library Association opposes labeling as a means of predisposing people's attitudes toward library materials.

Prejudicial labels are designed to restrict access, based on a value judgment that the content, language, or themes of the material, or the background or views of the creator(s) of the material, render it inappropriate or offensive for all or certain groups of users. The prejudicial label is used to warn, discourage, or prohibit users or certain groups of users from accessing the material. Such labels sometimes are used to place materials in restricted locations where access depends on staff intervention.

Viewpoint-neutral directional aids facilitate access by making it easier for users to locate materials. The materials are housed on open shelves and are equally accessible to all users, who may choose to consult or ignore the directional aids at their own discretion.

Directional aids can have the effect of prejudicial labels when their implementation becomes proscriptive rather than descriptive. When directional aids are used to forbid access or to suggest moral or doctrinal endorsement, the effect is the same as prejudicial labeling.

Many organizations use rating systems as a means of advising either their members or the general public regarding the organizations' opinions of the contents and suitability or appropriate age for use of certain books, films, recordings, Web sites, games, or other materials. The adoption, enforcement, or endorsement of any of these rating systems by a library violates the Library Bill of Rights. When requested, librarians should provide information about rating systems equitably, regardless of viewpoint.

Adopting such systems into law or library policy may be unconstitutional. If labeling or rating systems are mandated by law, the library should seek legal advice regarding the

law's applicability to library operations.

Libraries sometimes acquire resources that include ratings as part of their packaging. Librarians should not endorse the inclusion of such rating systems; however, removing or destroying the ratings—if placed there by, or with permission of, the copyright holder—could constitute expurgation. In addition, the inclusion of ratings on bibliographic records in library catalogs is a violation of the Library Bill of Rights.

Prejudicial labeling and ratings presuppose the existence of individuals or groups with wisdom to determine by authority what is appropriate or inappropriate for others. They presuppose that individuals must be directed in making up their minds about the ideas they examine. The American Library Association affirms the rights of individuals to form their own opinions about resources they choose to read or view.

Adopted July 13, 1951, by the ALA Council; amended June 25, 1971; July 1, 1981; June 26, 1990; January 19, 2005; July 15, 2009.

Free Access to Libraries for Minors: An Interpretation of the Library Bill of Rights

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



Request for Reconsideration of Library Material

Mount Laurel
Library

This form is for Mount Laurel Library Card Holders only

The trustees of Mount Laurel Library have established a materials selection policy and a procedure for gathering input about items. Completion of this form is the first step in that procedure. If you wish to request reconsideration of a resource, please return the completed form to a library staff member.

Title _____

Author/Producer _____

Format (book, movie, magazine, etc.) _____

I would like this item to be:

_____ moved from its current location to another part of the library.

_____ removed from the library's collection.

Have you read or viewed the material in its entirety? Yes _____ No _____

What are your concerns or objections to this material? (Please be as specific as possible. Use examples and citations if necessary. Attach additional pages as needed.)

Name: _____

Address: _____

City/State/Zip Code: _____

Email: _____ Phone: _____

Library Card Number: _____

Signature of Requester: _____ Date: _____

Received by Staff Member: _____ Date: _____

