

Lawrence Library

Materials Selection Policy

I. Introduction

The Materials Selection Policy is a balanced philosophy reflecting a mix of knowledge of the community and its needs and resources, and an evaluation of materials in relationship to the overall mission of the library. It is the intent of this policy to provide an objective and rational means of looking at collection development and a consistency that supersedes individual staff members or individual members of the Board of the Trustees.

II. Materials Selection Philosophy

- The Lawrence Library recognizes the right of all citizens to good library service and collections. In doing so, the library recognizes the authority of each parent over their own children.
- The Lawrence Library seeks to include, rather than exclude, materials.
- The overall goal of materials selection is to develop a strong, useful collection.
- Budget constraints are not to be used as excuses for excluding materials from the collection.

III. Philosophy and General Library Objectives

The Lawrence Library is dedicated to serving the community as a source of information and provides educational, informational, cultural, and recreational materials to meet the needs of its users. It supports and responds to the educational, civic, and cultural activities of individuals, groups and organizations. It provides opportunities and resources for all people to pursue the goal of self-improvement and education.

IV. Intellectual Freedom and General Selection Criteria

The Lawrence Library subscribes fully to the American Library Association's Freedom to Read Statement and the Library Bill of Rights (Appendix A & B.)

It is the purpose of the library's collection to make available books and other library materials which support educational, informational, cultural, and recreational needs of users. Materials are selected for their importance to the total collection. Materials are selected with concern for all ages, backgrounds, abilities, and levels of education. Selection includes books of contemporary interest and those of permanent value. Within the constraints of space and budget, the library makes every effort to provide a collection that is well-developed, balanced, and representative of varied points of view on controversial issues. Inclusion of an item in the collection does not indicate library endorsement of its contents. Each reader is privileged to select books of personal interest and each reader is never under any obligation to read what he or she does not like.

It is essential for all citizens to have access to all library materials, and therefore, there are no restrictions placed on what anyone, regardless of age, may read or borrow from the collection. Although it is not possible for the library to purchase all the materials needed to satisfy the specific needs of an individual patron, such materials can often be requested through inter-library loan. At all times the library will seek to support a collection which responds to the unique characteristics and needs of the community.

V. Procedure for Complaint

All requests for the reconsideration of materials will be handled in the following manner:

1. The staff member receiving the complaint will ask the patron to fill out the *Request for Reconsideration* form (see Appendix C).
2. When the completed form has been received, it will be submitted to the Library Director.
3. The Library Director will locate published reviews and/or commentary on the title in question.
4. The Director will advise the Board of Trustees of the complaint and keep the board fully informed on the matter.

5. The Director will take all factors under advisement and come to a decision.
6. This decision will be reviewed with the Board of Trustees at the next scheduled board meeting.
7. The Director will communicate the decision to the complainant in writing.
8. If the complainant is not satisfied with the decision, he/she may appeal to the Library Board of Trustees in person.

VI. Responsibility for Selection

The Board of Trustees is responsible for adopting the Materials Selection Policy and reviewing the policy on a regular basis. The responsibility for the selection of materials rests with the Heads of the Youth and Adult Services Departments, as well as staff; ultimate responsibility lies with the Library Director. All staff members delegated with such responsibility are required to operate within the framework of the Materials Selection Policy. When selecting materials, review resources will be consulted (New York Times Book Review, Booklist, Library Journal, Kirkus, etc.)

VII. Selection Criteria

Public libraries are diverse and represent a broad demographic. With a patron base that can include infants to the elderly, selection criteria should take into account the various interests and needs of the patrons the library serves. Criteria for selection of materials should also depend on the goals and mission of that particular library/system. In general, public libraries provide collections containing a wide variety of material formats, including print, audio-visual, and electronic. In selecting materials and developing collections for adults, children, and teens, library staff includes materials that represent the broad range of human experiences, reflecting the ethnic, religious, racial, and socio-economic diversity not only of the region it serves but also the larger global perspective. Library collections will provide a broad range of opinions on current issues.

Collections contain popular works, classic works that have withstood the test of time, and other materials of general interest. Works are not excluded or included in

the collection based solely on subject matter or on political, religious, or ideological grounds. In building collections, library staff is guided by the principle of selection, rather than censorship. Furthermore, the selection of a given item for a library's collections should not be interpreted as an endorsement of a particular viewpoint.

To build a collection of merit, materials are evaluated according to one or more of the following standards. An item need not meet all of these criteria in order to be acceptable.

General Criteria:

- Present and potential relevance to community needs
- Suitability of physical form for library use
- Suitability of subject and style for intended audience
- Cost
- Importance as a document of the times
- Relation to the existing collection and to other materials on the subject
- Attention by critics and reviewers
- Potential user appeal
- Requests by library patrons
- Authority
- Comprehensiveness and depth of treatment
- Skill, competence, and purpose of the author
- Reputation and significance of the author
- Objectivity
- Consideration of the work as a whole
- Clarity
- Currency
- Technical quality
- Representation of diverse points of view
- Representation of important movements, genres, or trends
- Vitality and originality
- Artistic presentation and/or experimentation
- Sustained interest

- Relevance and use of the information
- Effective characterization
- Authenticity of history or social setting
- Ease of use of the product
- Availability of the information to multiple simultaneous users
- Equipment needed to provide access to the information
- Technical support and training
- Availability of the physical space needed to house and store the information or equipment
- Availability in full text

(Selection Criteria adapted from the ALA *Selection & Reconsideration Policy Toolkit for Public, School, & Academic Libraries*.)

VIII. Selection by Clientele Served

Adults

The library will strive to provide a full range of materials for the adult user, including books, magazines, newspapers, music CDs, DVDs, video games, and digital formats.

Young Adult

Young adult materials are those designated for patrons in grade 6 through high school. Young adults have access to the entire library collection but those designated as YA reflect and serve the needs and interests of this user group.

Children

Materials selected cover the needs and interests of infants and children through middle school. Materials for the children's collection are selected to provide pleasurable reading, support the curriculum, and provide print and non-print resources of current interest. The library strives to provide materials in all fields of knowledge that are of interest to children and that will instill a love of reading and learning.

IX. Selection by Format

Books

Hardcover, paperbacks, audio and ebooks are added to the collection on a regular basis. Textbooks are not routinely purchased except when recognized as the best source of information on a topic. It is not the role of the library to provide copies of all textbooks used by local schools. Self-published books are not routinely purchased. Local authors may donate a copy of their self-published work, but as with all gifts, they will not necessarily be added to the collection.

Periodicals

Magazines (print and digital) are selected to provide an additional source of recreational reading and to provide current information on a variety of topics. Currency and relevance is most important and after one year, or less depending on space limitations, most magazines will be withdrawn.

Newspapers

Local and national newspapers will be selected to provide news coverage on both a local as well as national and international level.

Music

Music in a variety of genres will be selected for both adults and children. Formats may vary depending on changes in technology. Every effort will be made to provide music in current formats as well as transitional formats.

DVD

Movies in a variety of genres on DVD will be selected for both adults and children. Formats may vary depending on changes in technology. Access for children and young adults to non-print materials follows the American Library Association's interpretation of the Library Bill of Rights (See Appendix B.) The library will not label materials as suitable for only certain ages. We encourage parents to clearly define limits for their own children.

Video Games

Video games will be selected for both adults and children. The library collects games for the current major consoles. New games will be added as they are released, older games may be purchased if requested. A variety of games covering different genres and interests will be provided. Access for children and young adults to non-print materials follows the American Library Association's interpretation of the Library Bill of Rights (See Appendix B). The library will not label materials as suitable for only certain ages. We encourage parents to clearly define limits for their own children.

X. Gifts

Gifts of books and other materials are welcomed by the library, but with the understanding that they will not necessarily be added to the collection. The same standards of selection are applied to gifts as to materials purchased from library funds. Gifts which do not meet the library's standards may be placed in the Friends of the Library book sale.

Generally, the library does not accept textbooks, or books in poor physical condition.

The library applies the same criteria for evaluating gift items as it applies to purchased materials. Gifts will be withdrawn in the same manner as purchased material. The library does not accept responsibility for notifying donors of withdrawal or replacement of gift items.

XI. Weeding

Weeding is the systematic evaluation of the library's collection with the purpose of de-selecting damaged or obsolete materials from the collection. In an ideal world, the library building would be large enough to retain copies of all titles published, especially those by our own favorite authors. It must be acknowledged that the building has a finite capacity and space for new materials must be provided. Librarians are entrusted with this responsibility.

Materials which fall into the following categories should be withdrawn:

1. Material which contains outdated or inaccurate information.
2. Superseded editions.
3. Worn or damaged items.
4. Duplicate copies of items no longer in high demand.
5. Titles which are seldom borrowed.

Approved by the Library Board of Trustees March 1, 2006, Amended and approved: November 7, 2018; November 4, 2021; May 7, 2025

Appendix A: American Library Association's 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 less able to deal with controversy and difference.

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

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

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

We therefore affirm these propositions:

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

Creative thought is by definition new, and what is new is different. The bearer of every new thought is a rebel until that idea is refined and tested. Totalitarian systems attempt to maintain themselves in power by the ruthless suppression of any concept that challenges the established orthodoxy. The power of a democratic system to adapt to change is vastly strengthened by the freedom of its citizens to choose widely from among conflicting opinions offered freely to them. To stifle every nonconformist idea at birth would mark the end of the democratic process. Furthermore, only through the constant activity of weighing and selecting can the

democratic mind attain the strength demanded by times like these. We need to know not only what we believe but why we believe it.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

the freedom to read requires of all publishers and librarians the utmost of their faculties, and deserves of all Americans the fullest of their support.

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

This statement was originally issued in May of 1953 by the Westchester Conference of the American Library Association and the American Book Publishers Council, which in 1970 consolidated with the American Educational Publishers Institute to become the Association of American Publishers. Adopted June 25, 1953, by the ALA Council and the AAP Freedom to Read Committee; amended January 28, 1972; January 16, 1991; July 12, 2000; June 30, 2004.

Appendix B: American Library Association's Bill of Rights Statement

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.

Appendix C: Lawrence Library Request for Reconsideration Form

Lawrence Library Request for Reconsideration Form

Requests for reconsideration will be reviewed and discussed by the Library Board of Trustees at their next scheduled meeting. The public is welcome to attend.

Date: _____
Name: _____
Address: _____
City/State/Zip: _____
Phone: _____
Email: _____

Do you represent yourself or an organization? _____
Name of Organization: _____

Resource on which you are commenting:

<input type="checkbox"/> Book	<input type="checkbox"/> Game
<input type="checkbox"/> Movie	<input type="checkbox"/> Newspaper
<input type="checkbox"/> Magazine	<input type="checkbox"/> Exhibit
<input type="checkbox"/> Audio Recording	<input type="checkbox"/> Display
<input type="checkbox"/> Digital Resource	<input type="checkbox"/> Program

Title (if applicable): _____
Author/Producer (if applicable): _____

Please answer the applicable question(s):

1. Have you read, listened to, or viewed the material completely? _____
2. Did you see the exhibit or display in person? _____
3. Did you attend the entire program? _____
4. In your view, the topic or theme of the material, program, exhibit, or display is:

5. Your objection to the material, program, exhibit, or display is:

6. The material, program, exhibit, or display came to your attention by:

7. Other materials you recommend to provide additional information or points of view on this topic:
