



Collection Development Policy

Purpose

This policy outlines the rationale, goals, and criteria that shape the Stevens Memorial Library's collection. It also offers guidance to Library staff for materials selection and collection maintenance. This policy allows the Library to respond to community needs and interests while safeguarding the collection from societal and political pressures. The Collection Development Policy is periodically evaluated and updated to ensure its relevance and to align it with the Library's Strategic Plan and its mission and goals.

Rationale

The Stevens Memorial Library supports the community as a source of print and non-print information. The Library provides educational, cultural, historical, and recreational materials to meet the present and future needs of its users within the constraints of its budget. Resource development is guided by the American Library Association's Library Bill of Rights and the Freedom to Read statement.

The goal of the Stevens Memorial Library is to develop a collection that is used intensely. The Library does not approve or disapprove of the views expressed in materials included in the collection. The inclusion of an item does not constitute an endorsement by the Library. Selections for the collection will not be made on the basis of anticipated approval or disapproval, but solely on the merits of satisfying selection goals and criteria.

The Library recognizes the critical role it plays in developing the information literacy skills of its community. Information literacy is defined as, *the ability to find, evaluate, organize, use, and communicate information in all its various formats, most notably in situations requiring decision making, problem solving, or the acquisition of knowledge*. As part of the Library's commitment to information literacy, the Library collects credible resources with reliable information from authors and organizations with acknowledged expertise.

Materials Selection

Selection is the process by which the Library staff decide what material to add to the collection. The ultimate responsibility for collection development rests with the Library Director who operates within the framework of policies administered by the Library Board of Trustees. The Library Director delegates the selection of materials to Library staff.

Selection Goals and Criteria

Material selection provides a collection that satisfies the needs for recreational and reference reading for users of all ages. Books, periodicals, electronic, and audiovisual materials are selected using the following criteria:

- Well-reviewed by known review sources
- In demand or recommended by Library users
- Appeal and relevance to community interests
- Extent of publicity, critical review, and current or anticipated demand
- Authority and reputation of the author
- Accuracy, clarity, usability, and timeliness
- Date of publication
- Aligned with the Library's mission
- Relation to the existing collections
- Format, durability, and ease of use
- Price and availability of funds
- Longevity of the work is reflected in its price
- Availability from another library or resource (i.e. system-wide holds, Interlibrary Loan, electronic databases, etc.)
- Importance as an historical record
- Library space considerations
- Condition of material

Library collections are continually evaluated to meet these criteria. No single criterion can be applied to all materials. Various criteria will be applied to material according to different circumstances. Library staff weigh selection criteria and goals, evaluate selection tools, and exercise judgment and professional expertise in determining a material's appropriateness for the Library's collection.

Collection Policies

General Collections

The Library:

- Refrains from purchasing or collecting (including donations) textbooks, toy or pop-up books, abridged or condensed books or audiobooks, and professional titles.
- Limits or ceases purchase of outmoded non-print formats (e.g., VHS format videos, cassette tapes, compact discs) in favor of newer technologies once that new technology is firmly established.
- Is not responsible for the reading, viewing, or listening choices of children and young adults using the resources offered by the Library. Responsibility for these choices rests with the child's parent or legal guardian.
- Does not label controversial material, or restrict its use in any way. Ratings will not be added to or removed from the manufacturer's packaging.

Special Collections

- The Whittemore Preservation Room houses local history materials, with a strong emphasis on the history of Ashburnham.

Collection Maintenance

Library collections are curated to be relevant, exciting, and attractive. With the exception of the Preservation Room collection, the Library does not serve an archival function. Maintenance of the collection is an ongoing process.

Materials which are no longer appropriate for the collection because of outdated or incorrect content, poor condition, irrelevancy to the needs and interests of the community, or lack of use will be identified by appropriate staff members and discarded from the collection according to the accepted professional practices as described in the publication, *The CREW (Continuous, Review, Evaluation, Weeding) Manual: Expanded Guidelines for Collection Evaluation and Weeding for Small and Medium-Sized Public Libraries*. Weeding is the process of removing materials from the collection.

It is rare that material in the archives is weeded or deaccessioned. Items will be considered on a case-by-case basis by the Library Director and may include:

- Items previously added to the archives that are not central to the Library's mission and collection policy
- Duplicate items
- Items that may more appropriately reside at another library or at another organization
- Items that are available in digital format and/or available in other libraries

Materials discarded because of loss, vandalism, poor condition, or outdated content will be considered for replacement.

Disposition of deaccessioned materials will be at the Library's discretion.

Requests for Reconsideration of Library Materials

In an effort to provide Library patrons with diverse sources of information and the widest possible range of ideas and viewpoints, the Library will acquire some controversial materials. Some of these materials may be offensive to individuals or groups because of perceived profanity, social, economic and political ideas, religious viewpoints, the background of the author, the kinds of information provided, illustrations, or other reasons. Acquisition or use of any item does not imply approval or endorsement of the contents.

If a Library card holder feels that an item in the Library's collection should be moved or removed, they may fill out a "Request for Reconsideration" form. Challenged material will be reviewed with consideration for the objections raised to determine if further action is needed. The Library, upon receipt of a completed form, reviews the item for inclusion in the collection in terms of the Library's Strategic Plan, mission and vision, its Collection Development Policy, the Library Bill of Rights, and ALA guidelines on intellectual freedom. The Library Director will respond in writing to the patron within 30 days of receiving the formal request. Appeals may be directed to the Library Board of Trustees. Trustees will consider the matter at their next regularly scheduled meeting provided that the appeal is presented to the Board 48 business day hours in advance of their next meeting. Trustee decisions will be final.

Appendix 1: 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.

Appendix 2: 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 Approved by Library Board of Trustees, March 2015 Revised and Updated April 2020 5 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.

Approved by the Library Board of Trustees, November 2022.

Request for Reconsideration of Library Materials

Name:

Date:

Address:

Phone:

Type of material on which you are commenting:

Book

Audio-Visual Resource (CD, DVD, etc.)

Magazine

Newspaper

Other

Title:

Author/Publisher/Producer and Date:

Please answer the following questions (you may use the back of this form or additional paper if needed):

What brought this resource to your attention?

What about the material concerns you? Please be as specific as possible.

Have you read, listened, or viewed the entire content of the material? If not, which parts did you review?

Have you read any professional reviews about this material? If so, which ones?

What do you feel might be the result of reading/listening to/viewing this material?

For what age group would you recommend this material?

What material of equal or better quality would you recommend to replace this item?

How would you like to see the Library resolve your concerns about this material?