

Collection Development Policy

Introduction and Purpose

The purpose of this Collection Development policy is to guide the library staff in evaluating, selecting, maintaining, and de-selecting items for the Marion Public Library's collections, and to inform the public about the principles and process upon which collection decisions are made.

Philosophy and Principles for Collection Development

- Materials are provided in a variety of formats and are geared toward the informational, recreational, and educational needs of our community.
- The Marion Public Library Board of Trustees ensures each year that there is an adequate budget amount allocated to maintaining library collections.
- The Director of the Library, in turn, works with the librarians and trained staff who order materials in each person's area of expertise. Materials are selected with the wants and needs of the Marion community in mind. Staff use public suggestions, review sources, both in print and online, and check circulation statistics in the selection procedure. The Director of the Library is charged with the ultimate selection responsibility for all materials.
- An attempt is made to focus on the needs of the entire community rather than focusing on narrow interests.

Materials Selection

"Materials" refer to anything that serve as carriers of information; for example, but not limited to books, audio and visual recordings, microforms, Playaways, Overdrive materials, computer programs, and online databases.

Materials should include the widest possible coverage of subjects and viewpoints that are consistent with the needs and interests of the community, the budget available, and the physical limitations of the collection. Materials selected shall address the needs of current and potential users regardless of age, race, sex, physical challenge, nationality, economic and social background, educational level, religion, or political affiliation. Any materials and formats may be collected or purchased to meet identified collection needs.

In addition and, if possible, the Library collection shall strive to include representative materials for all races and nationalities, and all political, religious, economic, and social views. The same criteria for selection are used for all materials regardless of format.

Selection criteria include the following:

1. Value – literary, educational, informational, or recreational
2. Authority, accuracy, objectivity, and effectiveness of expression

3. Accessibility – ease of use by general community and unique segments of the community (for example, children, young adults, adult new readers, and the physically challenged)
4. Relative importance of subject matter to the collection
5. Timeliness and social significance
6. Importance of the author or creator in the field
7. Qualities conducive to critical thought and understanding
8. Relationship to other works in the same subject field
9. Comparative scarcity of material on the subject
10. Community use or demand
11. Cost and availability elsewhere
12. Suitability of format for library purposes
13. Attention of critics, reviewers, media, and public

Print Materials

The Marion Public Library makes every attempt to build an active collection of books that circulate. Items in the collection are intended to circulate and, because of space considerations, items that do not circulate are weeded.

The Library wishes to have books that are wanted by the public. Multiple copies may be purchased based on demand. Popular books are ordered well in advance to have available when people want them. Patron requests are welcome. Interlibrary Loan is recommended to fill requests that can't be met by the Library.

Adult Fiction and Nonfiction Collections

The fiction collection consists of retrospective and current titles of general fiction including short stories, genre fiction, popular authors, literary classics, and other categories of local public interest.

The nonfiction collection combines the adult and young adult resources into one collection, offering access to the widest possible range of information. Marion Public Library seeks to maintain a well-rounded and balanced collection of nonfiction materials for the lay reader, and to support patrons in their everyday pursuit of information, education, and recreation. The collection is designed to cover broad areas of knowledge and interest, including both basic works of permanent value and timely materials on current issues.

Browsing Collections

The Marion Public Library wholeheartedly supports reading for pleasure. Special browsing collections of genre fiction are maintained for this purpose.

Guidelines for the browsing collection will follow the guidelines set forth for the Adult Fiction and Nonfiction Collection.

Large-Print Collection

Marion Public Library maintains and purchases a large-print collection for the visually impaired.

The large-print collection is primarily a duplication of titles already in the library in regular print. Guidelines for the large-print collection will follow the guidelines set forth for the Adult Fiction and Nonfiction Collection.

Materials Not Purchased

Although school and academic libraries have the primary responsibility for providing materials to their students, the Marion Public Library accepts responsibility for serving students with supplementary reading and reference materials. Textbooks may only be purchased for the collection when they supply information in areas in which they may be the best or only source of information on the subject. The Marion Public Library recognizes that many demands come from students attending nearby universities. A considered attempt is made to supply worthwhile books of a general nature in all fields, which should meet many of these needs. Due to the university collections in this area, the Marion Public Library does not attempt to provide specialized material for scholarly research.

Duplicates

Duplicate titles are supplied within reasonable limits. Current best-selling fiction and nonfiction books in great demand may be duplicated, subject to budget limitations and to prospective value of the materials.

Selection of Materials

Standard selection sources used to identify items for purchase may include, but are not limited to, *Booklist*, *Library Journal*, *Kirkus*, *New York Times Book Review*, and *Booklinks*. Preference is given to positive reviews listed in these publications.

Other sources of book selection include patron requests, award lists, “notable” and “recommended” lists, and other bibliographies prepared by professional organizations, and popular lists such as *The New York Times* bestsellers list.

Selection is based on availability, popularity, physical quality of material, currency of information, and quality of information.

Some titles may be updated annually through standing orders.

Selection Guidelines

1. Consider the identified, expressed or anticipated needs, and interests of individuals in the general community.
2. Consider the quality of content, such as timeliness, accuracy, literary merit, illustrations, indexes, and bibliographies.
3. Include different viewpoints, values, philosophies, cultures, and religions whenever possible.
4. Select a broad range of materials in all subject areas.
5. Assess the significance in relation to library sources already available.
6. Utilize specialized knowledge of library staff.
7. Consider the reputation and/or significance of author and publisher.
8. Consider patron requests within the overarching principles of selection.

However, an item need not meet all the criteria to be acceptable. The library will take into account the degree of importance of each particular item under consideration.

Self-published or print on demand materials may be purchased. Marion Public Library uses the same criteria for purchasing these items as it does for other materials.

Selectors may check WorldCat to see if other libraries own an item, considering how many other libraries have included it in their collections and what type of libraries they are. Items not held by others, unless of a local nature, should be given careful scrutiny.

Works by local, regional or Indiana authors may be given special consideration.

The collection is reviewed continually to keep it responsive to patrons' needs, assess it for deficiencies, ensure its usefulness to the community, and add newer materials.

Titles may be withdrawn, retained, updated, rebound, reclassified or duplicated as justified by need.

Reference materials retaining informational value may be transferred to the circulating collection.

The Marion Public Library has the final responsibility for selection of materials.

De-selection of Materials

It is the routine practice of the Marion Public Library to remove materials which are outdated, worn-out, mutilated or no longer in high demand. This evaluation is a continuous process. Frequency of use, community interest, and availability of newer and more relevant materials are primary reasons for retaining or discarding materials.

Inclusion of questionable language or attitudes, or a perception of factual inaccuracy are not necessarily criteria for selection.

The use of CREW guidelines provides a base for all de-selection. CREW stands for Continuous Review, Evaluation, and Weeding.

Binding

The choice of fiction or nonfiction books for rebinding is made in accordance with the established policies of original selection, weeding, and replacement. Factors for consideration are:

1. Value and use of title.
2. Possibility of replacement.
3. Physical condition, such as quality of paper margins, illustrations.
4. Cost of rebinding verses cost of replacement.
5. Number of copies available.

Replacement

Materials withdrawn because of loss, damage or general condition may be considered for replacement. The same principles for original selection shall be applied to replacements.

Indiana Room materials

The mission of the Indiana History and Genealogy Department is to collect and preserve the history of the local area and its people.

The Indiana History collection consists of general Indiana reference materials, books on the history, government, and geography of the state and general interest topics. Some works of representative Indiana authors may be included. Emphasis will be placed on collecting everything available on Marion and Grant County Indiana.

The Genealogy collection's main focus is Marion and Grant County, with emphasis on the surrounding counties and the state of Indiana. The purpose of the collection is to provide information to genealogy researchers and those interested in the history of Grant County.

Marion/Grant County – everything available in all forms will be collected and archived in the Library collection. This will include books, computer disks, microfilm, family group sheets, clippings, directories, reports, picture files, and audiovisual materials. Effort is made to microfilm and index local records as permitted.

Surrounding counties – everything available in permanent form such as books will be added from the counties surrounding Grant County. Other counties in Indiana books published as budget and space permit.

Other states: Genealogy books published about states that were feeder states to the area, primarily focusing on states east of Indiana with emphasis on Ohio and North Carolina. Purchased as budget and space allow.

Other topic areas: Sections are maintained on the topics of Native Americans from the region and African-American genealogy.

Periodicals are currently not purchased other than Indiana Genealogist, Magazine of Indiana History and publications from memberships. Due to lack of space and lack of usage, back issues are not kept long.

Online databases: Effort will be made to continue subscriptions to popular genealogy online databases. Currently the library subscribes to: Ancestry Library Edition, HeritageQuest, Newspapers.com, Newspaper Archives, Fold3+, New England Ancestors, and Indiana Genealogical Society databases. The Marion Public Library has created its own online database which includes indexes created by the Indiana Room staff and volunteers. This is available on the library webpage, Ancestry.com, and Indiana Genealogical Society at no charge to the public.

Family History Center: Marion Public Library is a Family History Center for the LDS church. Researchers using FamilySearch.org from the library can access restricted records.

Children's Collection

Children's books are purchased to meet the educational, entertainment, and information needs of patrons. The Children's collection is diverse in ethnic backgrounds, religions, and family structures. The Library's Children's collection is geared for children from birth through eighth grade. The Children's Department also includes magazines, and graphic novels. Selection guidelines follow those of the Adult Fiction and Nonfiction department. Children's review publications, i.e., *Bulletin for Children's Books*, *School Library Journal*, *Horn Book*, etc., are used extensively as well as recommendations from people in the Children's Literature field.

Collection Development

The Head of Children's Services directs the acquisitions of materials for that department. Staff in the Department makes selections for picture books, easy fiction, early readers, fiction, and nonfiction as well as some audio-visual materials. Review journals and online sources are consulted extensively. Popular authors, series, and topics are chosen as much

as possible and as quickly as possible. While school textbooks are usually not purchased, they are added when available.

Audience and Collection Overview

Books chosen for this collection are appropriate for the age groups being served. In addition, the collection may be used by parents, teachers, homeschool families, and university students who are studying Children's Literature. Every attempt is made to have a broad range of materials in all subject areas for children and youth and also a diverse collection with all points of view reflected. The Library encourages families to use tools like NoveList and Common Sense Media to help gauge the interest and suitability of books, movies, and other materials.

De-selection and Replacement of materials

Materials that are out-of-date, in poor condition, and having low circulation are weeded on a regular basis. CREW selection guidelines are followed when de-selecting books. Popular titles may be replaced when necessary. Every attempt is made to keep the nonfiction collection relevant and with enough of a supply to satisfy the needs of the public.

Teen Collection

The primary audience for the teen collection is students in the ninth through twelfth grades that could be as young as fourteen and as old as eighteen. The Library's teen collection emphasizes popular fiction and limited nonfiction topics. Emphasis is on material that widens the scope of adolescent's thinking, enriches his/her life, and helps fulfill recreational or emotional needs.

Responsibility for Collection Development

Collection Development decisions regarding the Teen Services Department collections are made by the Teen Services Librarian under the guidance of the Library Director. The Teen Services Librarian will work in conjunction with the Head of Youth Services and the selectors for the adult collections to avoid any unnecessary duplication.

Audience and Collection Overview

The Teen Services Department is intended to serve Marion youths from ninth grade & up as well as their parents/caregivers and teachers. The community has a diverse background in terms of race, faith, sexual preference, and ethnicity that shall be reflected within the Teen Services Collections. The Library encourages families to use tools like NoveList and Common Sense Media to help gauge the interest and suitability of books, movies, and other materials.

The Teen Services collection includes fiction (in hardcover, trade paperback, and mass market paperback formats), graphic novels (including traditional graphic novels in paperback or hardcover and manga), magazines, audio materials (available in a variety of medias to stay current with technological trends), and nonfiction materials that are shelved within the adult collection.

Collection Management

Selection Sources

Sources for selection decisions include, among others: user requests or recommendations, publisher or vendor catalogs, advertisements, and published reviews in journals such as *Voice of Youth Advocates* (VOYA), TeenReads.com, *School Library Journal*, *Booklist*, and *American Libraries*. Other determining factors for inclusion in this collection are: materials that are clearly reviewed and/or labeled as young adult, characters are of high school or college age, and the theme or subject matter is of interest to and intended for young adults.

Selection Criteria

The Teen Services Librarian uses his or her knowledge and expertise in combination with the Marion Public Library's Material Selection Policy and the standards listed below to select and evaluate collection items. Patron requests are considered a priority and are given careful consideration and selection or rejection will be made on the basis of the selection criteria. An item need not meet all criteria to be selected.

- General Criteria
- Price, suitability of format for library use, ease of use
- Accuracy
- The extent to which the item supplements, expands on, or supports the existing collection, rather than duplicates it
- Relevance to observed and anticipated community needs and desires
- Reputation and qualifications of the author, creator, or publisher of the work
- Local significance of the author or creator of the work
- Popular demand
- Contemporary significance or permanent value

Fiction

The fiction collection is comprised of titles meeting the recreational and educational needs of students in ninth through twelfth grades. Books are selected to meet the varying reading interests and reading abilities of the diverse community. Series and genre fiction are included as well as novels about the problems of contemporary teens that cover a wide range of subjects, themes, and life situations. Selection of fiction is made with reference to one or more of these criteria:

- It should provide pleasant reading for recreational and creative use of leisure time
- It should contribute positively to the individual's awareness of self, community, and social heritage
- It should contribute to the value of the library's collection as a whole by representing all types and styles of literature

Duplicate copies are purchased when demand requires, either by popularity or its place in the school curriculum. Popular titles or authors may also be purchased in paperback when available. Award winning titles published for ninth- through twelfth-graders are added to the collection whenever possible.

A work of fiction may be purchased despite the use of an occasional unpleasant word or incident, provided that the total impact of the book meets other selection criteria.

Nonfiction

Chief points considered in the selection of nonfiction titles include readability, authenticity, existing library holdings, and community interest. Nonfiction titles should provide a balance between popular, high interest titles and those that supplement the curriculum of the Marion Public Schools. Titles selected by the Teen Services Librarian are shelved within the Library's adult nonfiction collection to facilitate use by the entire community.

Graphic Novels and Comics

Graphic novels are fictional works unique in their pictorial presentation of a story line. Manga, graphic novels, and comics are selected based upon the age appropriateness of the text and illustrations. The collection will include titles for older teens; however, no rated M or mature titles will be selected. The collection may also include nonfiction and classics in graphic format. Selections are based upon professional reviews, customer requests, and the popularity of styles, authors, characters, and series.

Audio Materials

Audio materials that meet the selection criteria for fiction and nonfiction materials are purchased in a variety of formats to meet the listening needs of the teen community. Preference is given to popular titles and titles that appear on the summer reading lists.

Magazines

Basic popular and general informational magazines of interest to teens are selected to supplement the book collection and meet the recreational reading needs of teens.

Weeding

The Teen Services Collection undergoes systematic weeding and withdrawal in an attempt to keep the collection relevant and accurate. Materials may be withdrawn because of unnecessary duplication, poor condition, biased content, obsolete content, or disuse. Evaluation techniques are used to measure collection usefulness in terms of scope and depth, as well as strengths and weaknesses. Materials are evaluated for deletion based upon:

- Age and condition of item
- Comparison of the collection with accepted core collection lists
- Circulation
- Relevance to observed and anticipated community needs and desires
- Long-term or historical significance or interest

Controversial Materials and Request for Reconsideration

Because of the wide range of maturity and reading levels among individual teens, the suitability of any particular item for a teen must be determined on an individual basis by the parent/legal guardian of that teen. The library will not act "in loco parentis" by monitoring any items that a teen may check out of the library or read while in the library.

The Marion Public Library does not exclude titles, other than by budgetary constraints or failure to meet selection criteria. The Marion Public Library upholds the American Library Association (ALA) Library Bill of Rights.

The Library makes an attempt to judge materials on the whole, not as an isolated part. Any patron who feels that an item is inappropriate may feel free to ask for a "Request for Reconsideration of Library Materials" form from a staff member. The item will be reviewed by a staff committee that will take into consideration professional reviews. The committee will submit its recommendation to the Library Director. It is the responsibility of the Library Director to determine the Library's official response.

Subscriptions

- **Databases:** Databases are chosen based on patron needs and demand, ease of operation, compatibility with the Library's network, and what is already available in print form. Price is a consideration due to budget limitations. As much as possible, databases that are chosen are available to library patrons for use inside and outside the library.
- **Magazines/Newspapers:** Magazines and newspapers that have broad appeal and local interest are selected. Items reflect a variety of opinions and philosophies. The Library relies on the INSPIRE database for research and scholarly journals. Magazines for Teens and the Children's department may be purchased for entertainment value as well.

- **Microfilm:** Materials purchased on microfilm include local newspapers, Census data and local historical records. Microfilm is selected based on use, interest and access to indexes.

Non-Print Materials

The non-print collection exists to serve the general informational, educational, and recreational needs of the Library community. Multiple copies are purchased on high demand titles as demand and budget allow. Popular titles may be purchased despite poor reviews. Appropriateness and expected long-term use and value to the collection are deciding factors. Patron requests are considered. Patron requests may be denied for expensive items or titles for which there might be little demand. Controversial materials may be purchased to provide important information, to provide critically acclaimed works, or when they are popular in the mainstream media. Changing technology is always a factor in the long range development of the collection.

Visual Media

The Marion Public Library maintains a visual media collection to meet the entertainment and informational needs of our patrons. Occasionally, additional copies of the most popular theatrical films may be purchased before release date, based on expected demand.

Selectors anticipate public demand by consulting review sources, bestseller charts, past demand for the artists, and announced advertising budgets. Limits are established for items to enable the Library to purchase sufficient quantities of best selling movies. Visual media is purchased in the most popular format. Nonfiction may be ordered; the main focus of the visual media collection is popular entertainment. Juvenile titles are purchased for popular, educational, and entertainment value.

Music and Spoken Word

The Library maintains a music collection that reflects the diverse interests of the community. Items selected include the most popular music titles based on expected chart position and the relative popularity of the artist. Librarians consult review sources,

bestseller charts, and consider previous demand for an artist's work and requests from the public when choosing titles. There are limits established for items to enable the Library to purchase sufficient quantities of best-selling music.

Items selected include rock, country, urban, Latin, jazz, religious, folk, soundtracks, reggae, comedy/spoken word, and oldies music based on the popularity of the artist or genre. Folk or international music is chosen in order to maintain titles from a wide variety of countries and cultures. Classical and opera titles are purchased based on the popularity of the conductor, orchestra, soloists, or composers. There is also a sound effects collection. All adult and children's music titles are on CD format.

Audiobooks

The Library purchases best-selling fiction and nonfiction audiobooks for both children and adults in all popular formats. Unabridged titles are ordered whenever possible. Language audio discs and other educational titles are regularly purchased. The circulation record of the print version of a title is considered when evaluating an audiobook, although the Library may order items from popular authors and on popular subjects in advance of publication of the print version. In addition, the Library purchases Readalongs (book/audio combination), and these are added to the juvenile audio collection.

Downloadable E-Books

The Library provides patrons access to electronic downloadable audiobooks.

The Marion Public Library is a member of the Indiana Digital Download Center which is a consortium of small- and medium-sized Indiana libraries who have joined together to provide our patrons downloadable e-books. The Library purchases best-selling fiction and nonfiction audiobooks for children, adults, and teens in this e-book format.

These titles can be accessed through an Overdrive link from the Marion Public Library website. Also, mobile apps to access these titles can be downloaded onto devices for Overdrive and Libby; both have links on the website.

The Library subscribes to Hoopla – a digital service that is exclusive to public libraries. Hoopla is an online streaming service for public libraries offering feature films,

documentaries, music albums, and audiobooks. Hoopla also can be accessed through an mobile app downloaded onto devices.

Video Games

The Marion Public Library has purchased circulating video games. Titles purchased are for adults, teens, and children. Librarians consider bestseller charts, industry advertising, and patron suggestions when purchasing games for popular game systems.

Art Prints

Art Prints are selected for their artistic qualities with an emphasis on reproductions of masterworks and popular themes. Because of budgetary constraints, art prints are not purchased on an ongoing basis.

Hotspots

To further the Library's mission to provide resources to serve the informational, educational, and recreational needs of the public, we provide a Hotspot lending program to make information – and more specifically the Internet – accessible to library patrons.

De-selection and Replacement Guidelines

Non-print materials are de-selected based on circulation figures, condition, and available shelf space. It is important when withdrawing titles for space that the diversity of our non-print collection is maintained. Librarians will replace high demand items, within budgetary limits. The same principles used for original selection shall be applied to replacements.

Gifts

The Library gratefully accepts gifts of new and gently used materials for the collection using the same selection criteria that are applied to purchased materials. Staff will select items for the collection according to the Library's selection guidelines.

- Not all gifts are added to the collection. Gift materials not added to the collection are not returned to the donor.
- The Library retains unconditional ownership of the gift.

- The Library reserves the right to decide the conditions of display, housing, and access to the materials.
- Gifts added to the collection are housed in the most appropriate location, determined by evaluating staff.
- Unused gifts may be given to the Friends of the Library for public sale or further disposal as those groups deem suitable, or they may be disposed of through other means determined by the Library.
- Donors who want an appraisal of their material for income tax purposes should make such arrangements prior to donation. The Library does not perform appraisals. The donor may request and receive a receipt for tax purposes.
- Some categories of material cannot be used by the Library such as textbooks, Reader's Digest condensed books, and back files of certain periodicals. Potential donors are urged to contact the Library for more information.

Donation of monetary gifts, memorials, and commemorations to the Library are a thoughtful way to remember a special person or occasion, and to help build the Library's collection. Donors may suggest subjects or titles to be acquired with their donation, but the Library reserves the right to make the final decision. A special gift plate identifying the donor and/or person being memorialized and/or honored is placed in the material purchased, and the individual is notified by the library.

Book Sale

Discarded library books and donated books that are not needed may be turned over to the Friends of the Marion Public Library for the ongoing or yearly book sale. If items do not sell, Marion Public Library may also make arrangements with materials vendors to return discarded items for credit or for recycling.

Reconsideration of Library Materials

It is the obligation of the public library to reflect within its collection differing and diverse points of view on controversial or debatable subjects. The Marion Public Library does not declare particular beliefs or views, nor does the selection of an item express or

imply an endorsement of the author's viewpoint. Library materials will not be marked or

identified to show approval or disapproval of the contents.

Comments from members of the community about the collection or individual items in the collection frequently provide librarians with useful information about interests or needs that may not be adequately met by the collection. The Library welcomes expression of opinion by patrons, but will be governed by the library's Materials Selection Policy in making additions to or deleting items from the collection. Patrons who request the reconsideration of library materials will be asked to put their request in writing by completing and signing the form (below) entitled "Request for Reconsideration of Library Material."

Upon receipt of a formal, written request, the Director will appoint an ad hoc committee from the professional staff including the acquisition staff member for the subject area of the item in question. The committee will make a written recommendation to the Director who will then make a decision regarding the disposition of the material. The director will communicate this decision, and the reasons for it, in writing, to the person who initiated the request for reconsideration at the earliest possible date. The Director will inform the Library Board of Directors of all requests for reconsideration of library materials and their disposition.

In the event that the person who initiated the request is not satisfied with the decision of the Director, he/she may appeal for a hearing before the Board of Trustees by making a written request to the President of the Board. The Library Board of Directors reserves the right to limit the length of presentation and number of speakers at the hearing. The Board will determine whether the request for reconsideration has been handled in accordance with stated policies and procedures of the Marion Public Library. On the basis of this determination, the Board may vote to uphold or override the decision of the Director.

Appendixes

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.

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.

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](#)

Request for Reconsideration of Library Materials

Author/Artist _____

Title _____

Book _____ Periodical _____ Other _____ Publisher/Date _____

Please state the reason for your request. _____

Have you read/viewed/listened to this work/exhibition in its entirety? _____

What are the positive points of this material? _____

What would you like the library to do about this work? _____

In its place, what work would you recommend that would convey as valuable a picture and perspective of the subject? _____

Have you read the _____ Library Collection Development Policy? _____

Request initiated by _____

Address _____

State _____ Zip _____ Phone _____

Do you represent:

_____ Yourself

_____ Organization (name) _____

Date: _____ Signature of Patron: _____

Date: _____ Received by Staff Member: _____

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