

Merrill Public Library
Collection Development Policy

Section 1: Responsibility for Selection

The responsibility for selecting materials for purchase and withdrawal is delegated by the Merrill Public Library Board of Trustees to the Library Director.

Section 2: Sources for Selection

Reviews in library and publishing industry periodicals are primary sources for materials selection. Suggestions from library staff and patrons are considered also.

Section 3: Criteria for Selection

Adult Book Collection:

The general adult book collection is mainly developed through the selection of materials based on demand, need, and information. There are other criteria that affect the selection process. The library does not support any educational curriculum through the purchase of textbooks. Patrons are an important part of selection process. Every effort will be made to fill those requests as availability and money allow. Price, accuracy, and timeliness are other factors influencing selection.

Fiction:

The fiction collection is intended to meet the needs and interests of readers with widely differing tastes, interests, and reading levels. The collection includes representative novels, short stories, and light fiction of the past and present, including character studies, biographical, psychological, and historical novels, humor and satire, mystery, suspense, westerns, science fiction, fantasy, and so forth. The library does not seek to include weak or incompetent writing, nor that which is merely sensational, morbid, or erotic. If an item meets other criteria listed in this policy, it may be included in the collection even though the author has felt it necessary to use vulgar language or frank detail in accomplishing his or her purpose. Occasionally, a desired item may only be available in a paperback edition.

Nonfiction:

The library's nonfiction collection is intended to serve a wide variety of interests and a diversified clientele. Books of high current interest, which may be of only temporary use in the collection, are purchased if their timeliness gives them relevance and importance. Likewise, books of potential or long-range usefulness, for which current demand is low, may be included. The library seeks to purchase materials appropriate for independent learners in the community.

Local History:

The library will seek to acquire and maintain any items of local interest. This includes any item about the area or including information of local interest as well as any item written and produced by individuals or groups from the Plymouth County area. The collection and preservation of local history material is generally confined to the printed word. The library does not attempt to include artifacts as part of the collection.

Section 4: Materials for Children and Teens (Young Adults)

The children's collection contains materials best suited to the abilities and interests of library users from birth through grade 6, while teen (Young Adult) materials are those best suited to the abilities and interests of library user from grade 7 through grade 12.

Children and teen (Young Adult) materials will be selected with the same care and judgment and following the same criteria as are adult materials.

Providing textbooks is the responsibility of the schools. The library's role is to provide supplementary materials to enrich the resources available to students and teachers through the educational system.

Section 5: Choice of Library Materials by Minors

The role of the parent or legal guardian in supervising the reading, listening, and viewing choices made by a minor child is recognized by this library.

The library staff and trustees are charged with the responsibility of providing free and equal access to library materials and services to all eligible people. It is impossible for them to know or predict the opinions of parents and guardians regarding the specific borrowing selections made by minor children.

It is the policy of the Merrill Public Library that parents and guardians, not the library staff or trustees, are responsible for monitoring and approving the selection of materials made by minor children. It is only the parents or guardians who may restrict their children from borrowing specific library materials. Parents or guardians who wish their children not to have access to certain materials should accompany or otherwise advise their children.

Selection of materials for the community as a whole cannot be inhibited by the possibility that specific items of an advanced nature may come into the possession of minor children.

Section 6: Requests for Reconsideration of Materials

Any patron who wishes to object to the presence of a particular item in the collection may do so by completing the Citizen Request for Reconsideration of Library Materials form. The Library Director and the Library Board of Trustees will review such objections. While an item is under review, it will remain in the collection. The patron will be informed of the Library Board's decision regarding the objection. The patron submitting the request must be a resident of the Merrill Public Library's service area and hold a valid library card.

Section 7: Withdrawals (Weeding)

An up-to-date, attractive, and reliable collection can be maintained only by purchasing and retaining appropriate materials, and by removing items that are damaged, outdated, inaccurate, duplicated, and otherwise no longer useful. The collection should be evaluated by authorized and qualified staff on a systematic and continuous basis to identify materials that should be withdrawn.

Section 8: Gifts

The library accepts gifts of books and other collection materials without commitment as to final disposition. It assumes unconditional ownership of all items donated and retains the right to use or dispose of them as it sees appropriate.

Gift items must meet the same selection criteria as purchased materials. Items in poor physical condition or written in will not be kept. Duplicate copies of items already in the collection will be added only if needed. Gift materials will not be accepted with restrictions or conditions that necessitate special and separate housing, processing, or treatment. The only form of donor or memorial identification will be a gift plate.

The library cannot give a dollar valuation for gifts of materials, but it will provide the donor with a statement verifying the number and type of materials donated and accepted, upon request.

Section 9: 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.

1. 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.
2. 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.
3. Libraries should challenge censorship in the fulfillment of their responsibility to provide information and enlightenment.
4. Libraries should cooperate with all persons and groups concerned with resisting abridgment of free expression and free access to ideas.
5. A person's right to use a library should not be denied or abridged because of origin, age, background, or views.
6. 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 18, 1948. Amended by the ALA Council February 2, 1961, June 27, 1967, and January 23, 1980, inclusion of "age" reaffirmed January 23, 1996.

Section 10: The Freedom to Read

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 enable 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 effort 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 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

Section 11: The Freedom to View

The Freedom to View, along with the freedom to speak, to hear, and to read, is protected by the First Amendment to the Constitution of the United States. In a free society, there is no place for censorship of any medium of expression. Therefore these principles are affirmed:

1. To provide the broadest access to film, video, and other audiovisual materials because they are a means for the communication of ideas. Liberty of circulation is essential to insure the constitutional guarantee of freedom of expression.
2. To protect the confidentiality of all individuals and institutions using film, video, and other audiovisual materials.
3. To provide film, video, and other audiovisual materials which represent a diversity of views and expression. Selection of a work does not constitute or imply agreement with or approval on the content.
4. To provide a diversity of viewpoints without the constraint of labeling or prejudging film, video, or other audiovisual materials on the basis of the moral, religious, or political beliefs of the producer or filmmaker or on the basis of controversial content.
5. To contest vigorously, by all lawful means, every encroachment upon the public's freedom to view.

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

Endorsed January 10, 1990, by the ALA Council

Approved December 11, 2014

Reviewed December 16, 2017

Reviewed November 13, 2019

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