

Ely Public Library

Materials Selection Policy

The Library Board of the Ely Public Library, realizing that the library provides materials for a diverse array of needs and interests of individual library users of all ages, beliefs, and backgrounds, holds the following points as the library's selection policy.

1. The Head Librarian shall be responsible for selection of books, audio-visual materials, serials, and electronic resources for the library. The Head Librarian may also delegate other library staff members to recommend titles under specific guidelines for purchase by the library. Any material that is selected in this manner shall be considered to have been selected by the library board.
2. Materials for the library shall be selected for their value to all people of the community. Value lies in the material's ability to inform, enlighten, or entertain members of the community. Materials will not be excluded from the collection based on the author's race, nationality or political / social views. Specific selection criteria are listed in Appendix A.
3. Materials donated to the library will be placed in the collection under the same guidelines as those that the library purchases directly. See the library's gift policy for more information.
4. The library board members and library staff realize that this is an age of rapidly changing and expanding information. To expand the library's information resources, the library provides access for patrons to electronic resources (i.e. the Internet). However, the library realizes that electronic resources may change in format or content after being selected; this creates the possibility that some areas of an electronic resource may not meet the library's general selection criteria. Selection decisions about electronic resources will be reviewed periodically (on a level with selection decisions about serial purchases) by library staff.
5. Parents have the right and responsibility to guide their children's choices of library materials. The library does not serve in loco parentis. Parents should work with their children to select materials appropriate to their personal family beliefs.
6. The library board recognizes the right of each individual to approve or reject material for personal consideration and use based on his or her ideals and beliefs. However, individuals do not have the right to make these choices for the community as a whole. The board defends the library's inclusion of materials with wide variety of topics and styles and will not remove controversial materials from the library when censorship is involved except under the orders of a court of competent jurisdiction.
7. The library board supports the Library Bill of Rights and the Freedom to Read Statement from the American Library Association. See Appendix B.

This policy was adopted 10/28/99 by the Ely Public Library Board.

Appendix A: Selection Guidelines

The following general criteria will be considered when purchasing materials.

- Analysis from standard review sources (Booklist, Publisher's Weekly, etc.)
- Patron demand and prominence of book on bestseller lists
- Accuracy and objectivity of viewpoint
- High standards of quality in format, content, artistic quality and literary style
- Authors or publishers who excel in knowledge or authority of subject content
- Clarity in the presentation and organization of subject matter
- Value to collection based on permanency, timeliness, and lack of other library materials on topic
- Broad coverage of viewpoints and subjects within budget limitations.
- Duplication of titles will be held to a minimum in an effort to expand the library's overall subject resources as much as possible.

In addition, the library will make the following considerations for special materials as listed.

- Local history or area authors – the library tries to collect local materials whenever possible. These materials may be purchased in duplicate, so that the library may have one copy to circulate to patrons and another for in-house use.
- Gifts – gifts must be in good condition and meet the same criteria as library purchased materials to be included in the library's collection. See the library gift policy.
- Reference – because the library emphasizes a circulating collection, the reference collection will be kept small and updated with the latest titles. Reference titles that are being updated will be moved to the circulating collection.

- Sponsored Materials – Commercially prepared materials will be accepted if they meet the general selection criteria, are free from excessive advertising, and are intended to inform rather than promote sales.

The library may remove titles from the library under the following guidelines:

- Duplicate titles that are not in high demand (excluding local authors/history).
- Items in poor physical condition
- Items that contain obsolete or inaccurate subject matter.
- Items that have not been used for a considerable length of time

When materials are removed from the library, consideration shall be given to replacing the title or subject matter to ensure a well-rounded collection.

*Appendix B: Library Bill of Rights
and Freedom to Read Statement*

ALA 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 February 2, 1961 and January 23, 1980, inclusion of "age" reaffirmed January 23, 1996 by the ALA Council.

ALA 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 books from sale, to censor textbooks, to label “controversial” books, 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 avoid the subversion of politics and the corruption of morals. We, as citizens devoted to the use of books and as librarians and publishers responsible for disseminating them, wish to assert the public interest in the preservation of the freedom to read.

We are deeply concerned about these attempts at suppression. Most such attempts rest on a denial of the fundamental premise of democracy: that the ordinary citizen, by exercising critical judgment, will accept the good and reject the bad. The censors, public and private, assume that they should determine what is good and bad for their fellow-citizens.

We trust Americans to recognize propaganda, and to reject it. We do not believe they need the help of censors to assist them in this task. 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.

We are aware, of course, that books are not alone in being subjected to efforts at suppression. We are aware that these efforts are related to a larger pattern of pressures being brought against education, the press, films, radio, and television. 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.

Such pressure toward conformity is perhaps natural to a time of uneasy change and pervading fear. Especially when so many of our apprehensions are directed against an ideology, the expression of a dissident idea becomes a thing feared in itself, and we tend to move against it as against a hostile deed, with suppression.

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 stress.

Now as always in our history, books are among our greatest instruments of freedom. They are almost the only means for making generally available ideas or manners of expression that can initially command only a small audience. They are the natural medium for the new idea and the untried voice from which come the original contributions to social growth. They are essential to the extended discussion which 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 towards 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 which are unorthodox or unpopular with 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 which 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 contained in the books 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 books 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 determine the acceptability of a book on the basis of the personal history or political affiliations of the author.**

A book should be judged as a book. 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 which 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 literature 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 taste differs, and taste cannot be legislated; nor can machinery be devised which 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 with any book the prejudice of a label characterizing the book or 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 the citizen. 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.**

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.

- 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 expended on the trivial; it is frustrated 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 their freedom and integrity, and the enlargement of their service to society, requires of all publishers and librarians the utmost of their faculties, and deserves of all citizens 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 books. We do so because we believe that they are good, 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; revised January 28, 1972, January 16, 1991, by the ALA Council and the AAP Freedom to Read Committee.