

Materials Selection Policy

(Covering the Materials Selection Policy, Intellectual Freedom Policy, Collections Development Policy, and Challenged Materials Policy)

I. Introduction

Recognizing the advisability of a well-defined policy outlining the Two Harbors Public Library's selection of books and other library materials, the Board of Directors of the Two Harbors Public Library herewith sets forth its official Materials Selection Policy which shall guide and direct the selection and purchase of all library materials which are made available to the Library's patrons. "Materials" shall include all print and non-print media as well as both traditional and non-traditional formats.

II. Responsibility for Selection of Material

The Library Board vests responsibility for selection of library materials in the Director who may delegate authority to other members of the professional staff. Selections made within the guidelines of this policy shall be considered Board selections, and the Board shall assume full legal responsibility for such selections.

III. General Principles

- A. The library shall provide materials in all subject areas and in varied formats, print and non-print. Emphasis shall be placed upon those areas of demonstrated local and regional interest, but not to the exclusion of materials on any subject.
- B. Among the specific criteria to be considered are:
 - 1. Reputation of author
 - 2. Reputation of publisher or producer
 - 3. Significance of the subject to the region
 - 4. Evaluations of reviews and inclusion in standard bibliographies
 - 5. Price
 - 6. Format
- C. As a general practice, the Two Harbors Public Library shall seek out works of known quality. However, we shall also identify and acquire the works of emerging and lesser-known writers and creative persons; novelists, poets, and short-story writers, especially in the case of local and regional artists.

D. In selecting materials, the Two Harbors Public Library's staff members shall be guided by, but not restricted to, a number of standing bibliographies and reviewing aids:

1. Booklist
2. Library Journal
3. Publishers Weekly
4. School Library Journal
5. Area Newspapers and Magazines, e.g. Minnesota Reviews
6. Public Library Core Collection Catalogs
7. Specialized Bibliographies

In addition, suggestions and requests from members of the public will be considered.

IV. Controversial Materials

The Two Harbors Public Library subscribes to the American Library Association's Library Bill of Rights (Appendix A).

Recognizing that we live in a varied and multi-cultured society and in a complex and fast moving age, the Two Harbors Public Library selects its materials from a broad spectrum of subjects, interests, points of view, and tastes. Some selections may be unpopular with some library patrons, but the library accepts the responsibility set forth in the Library Bill of Rights and expanded upon by the Freedom to Read Statement (Appendix B).

Question and debate are healthy and desirable to a free society; therefore, the Two Harbors Public Library will vigorously resist censorious pressure and other attempts to force removal of materials from its collections. Patrons objecting to materials in the Library's collections will be invited to state their concerns in writing and the complaint will be handled in accordance with the procedure for dealing with challenged materials (Attachment 1).

V. Children's Materials

The Two Harbors Public Library shall apply the same principles and criteria to the selection of children's materials as to materials selected for adults. The Library shall strive to acquire books and other media of high quality for children, but will not act *in loco parentis*. The Library will not restrict the reading, listening, or viewing of any piece of material acquired within the guidelines of this policy. This position, set forth in two American Library Association Statements, "Free Access to Libraries for Minors" (Appendix C), and "Restricted Access to Library Materials" (Appendix D), is that parents – **and parents only** – may restrict children – **and only their children** – from library materials.

VI. Procedures

A. GIFTS AND DONATIONS

The Library Board authorizes the acceptance of unconditional gifts and donations to the Library. Gifts with conditions or special stipulations can only be accepted with the approval of the Library Board. The Library staff shall apply the same standards to gift materials as to those acquired by purchase. For further information, please refer to the library's Gift Policy.

B. TEXTBOOKS AND CURRICULAR MATERIALS

Instructional materials may be acquired only if they are of interest to the general public. The Library will not acquire texts and curricular materials as such.

C. SPECIAL COLLECTIONS

The Two Harbors Public Library recognizes that there is a special interest in material on local, county, and state history. A broad view will be taken of works by and about Minnesota authors as well as general works relating to the State of Minnesota. However, the Library is under no obligation to purchase all materials about Minnesota or materials by or about Minnesotans.

D. COLLECTION MAINTENANCE AND WEEDING

The Library shall maintain a program of regular review and weeding of its collections. In accordance with Public Library Goals for Minnesota (1980), a minimum of 5% of the collections will be withdrawn annually.

VII. Procedures for Dealing With Challenged Materials

A patron expressing concern over Library materials will be invited to discuss his or her concern with the Director, and if he or she wishes, to put the complaint in writing on the "Statement of Patron Concern" (Attachment 2). The Director and Staff will then review the request and the facts in accordance with internal written procedures, and will notify the complainant in writing of the decision. If the complainant is not satisfied with the administrative decision, he or she may request to appear before the Library Board for reconsideration. The Library Board shall consider all relevant facts and shall notify the complainant in writing of its decision. The decision of the Library Board shall be final.

VIII. Conclusion

A. The Two Harbors Public Library hereby adopts the Library Bill of Rights, the Freedom to Read Statement, the Free Access to Libraries for Minors Statement, and the Restricted Access to Library Materials Statement (Appendices A, B, C, and D) as part of its selection policy.

B. The Library Board shall periodically review this policy.

Adopted by: The Two Harbors Public Library Board of Directors

Date: September 4th, 1990

Updated: January 2016

Appendix A - 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.

Appendix B – 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.

Appendix C - Free Access to Libraries for Minors, An Interpretation of the Library Bill of Rights

Library policies and procedures that effectively deny minors equal and equitable access to all library resources available to other users violate the [Library Bill of Rights](#). The American Library Association opposes all attempts to restrict access to library services, materials, and facilities based on the age of library users.

Article V of the *Library Bill of Rights* states, "A person's right to use a library should not be denied or abridged because of origin, age, background, or views." The "right to use a library" includes free access to, and unrestricted use of, all the services, materials, and facilities the library has to offer. Every restriction on access to, and use of, library resources, based solely on the chronological age, educational level, literacy skills, or legal emancipation of users violates Article V.

Libraries are charged with the mission of developing resources to meet the diverse information needs and interests of the communities they serve. Services, materials, and facilities that fulfill the needs and interests of library users at different stages in their personal development are a necessary part of library resources. The needs and interests of each library user, and resources appropriate to meet those needs and interests, must be determined on an individual basis. Librarians cannot predict what resources will best fulfill the needs and interests of any individual user based on a single criterion such as chronological age, educational level, literacy skills, or legal emancipation.

Libraries should not limit the selection and development of library resources simply because minors will have access to them. Institutional self-censorship diminishes the credibility of the library in the community, and restricts access for all library users.

Children and young adults unquestionably possess [First Amendment](#) rights, including the right to receive information in the library. Constitutionally protected speech cannot be suppressed solely to protect children or young adults from ideas or images a legislative body believes to be unsuitable for them.¹ Librarians and library governing bodies should not resort to age restrictions in an effort to avoid actual or anticipated objections, because only a court of law can determine whether material is not constitutionally protected.

The mission, goals, and objectives of libraries cannot authorize librarians or library governing bodies to assume, abrogate, or overrule the rights and responsibilities of parents. As "[Libraries: An American Value](#)" states, "We affirm the responsibility and the right of all parents and guardians to guide their own children's use of the library and its resources and services." Librarians and governing bodies should maintain that parents—and only parents—have the right and the responsibility to restrict the access of their children—and only their children—to library resources. Parents who do not want their children to have access to certain library services, materials, or facilities should so advise their children. Librarians and library governing bodies

cannot assume the role of parents or the functions of parental authority in the private relationship between parent and child.

Lack of access to information can be harmful to minors. Librarians and library governing bodies have a public and professional obligation to ensure that all members of the community they serve have free, equal, and equitable access to the entire range of library resources regardless of content, approach, format, or amount of detail. This principle of library service applies equally to all users, minors as well as adults. Librarians and library governing bodies must uphold this principle in order to provide adequate and effective service to minors.

¹See [Erznoznik v. City of Jacksonville](#), 422 U.S. 205 (1975)-"Speech that is neither obscene as to youths nor subject to some other legitimate proscription cannot be suppressed solely to protect the young from ideas or images that a legislative body thinks unsuitable [422 U.S. 205, 214] for them. In most circumstances, the values protected by the First Amendment are no less applicable when government seeks to control the flow of information to minors. See [Tinker v. Des Moines School Dist.](#), *supra*. Cf. [West Virginia Bd. of Ed. v. Barnette](#), 319 U.S. 624 (1943)."

Adopted June 30, 1972, by the ALA Council; amended July 1, 1981; July 3, 1991, June 30, 2004.

Appendix D - Restricted Access to Library Materials: An Interpretation of the Library Bill of Rights

Libraries are a traditional forum for the open exchange of information. Restricting access to library materials violates the basic tenets of the American Library Association's *Library Bill of Rights*.

Some libraries block access to certain materials by placing physical or virtual barriers between the user and those materials. For example, materials are sometimes labeled for content or placed in a "locked case," "adults only," "restricted shelf," or "high-demand" collection. Access to certain materials is sometimes restricted to protect them from theft or mutilation, or because of statutory authority or institutional mandate.

In some libraries, access is restricted based on computerized reading management programs that assign reading levels to books and/or users and limit choices to titles on the program's reading list. Titles not on the reading management list have been removed from the collection in some school libraries. Organizing collections by reading management program level, ability, grade, or age level is another example of restricted access. Even though the chronological age or grade level of users is not representative of their information needs or total reading abilities, users may feel inhibited from selecting resources located in areas that do not correspond to their assigned characteristics.

Physical restrictions and content filtering of library resources and services may generate psychological, service, or language skills barriers to access as well. Because restricted materials often deal with controversial, unusual, or sensitive subjects, having to ask a library worker for access to them may be embarrassing or inhibiting for patrons desiring access. Even when a title is listed in the catalog with a reference to its restricted status, a barrier is placed between the patron and the publication. (See also "Labeling and Rating Systems.") Because restricted materials often feature information that some people consider objectionable, potential library users may be predisposed to think of labeled and filtered resources as objectionable and be discouraged from asking for access to them.

Federal and some state statutes require libraries that accept specific types of federal and/or state funding to install content filters that limit access to Internet resources for minors and adults. Internet filters applied to Internet resources in some libraries may prevent users from finding targeted categories of information, much of which is constitutionally protected. The use of Internet filters must be addressed through library policies and procedures to ensure that users receive information and that filters do not prevent users from exercising their First Amendment rights. Users have the right to unfiltered access to constitutionally protected information. (See also "Access to Digital Information, Services, and Networks.")

Library policies that restrict access to resources for any reason must be carefully formulated and administered to ensure they do not violate established principles of intellectual freedom. This caution is reflected in ALA policies, such as "Evaluating Library Collections," "Free Access to

Libraries for Minors,” “Preservation Policy,” and the ACRL “Code of Ethics for Special Collections Librarians.”

Donated resources require special consideration. In keeping with the “Joint Statement on Access” of the American Library Association and Society of American Archivists, libraries should avoid accepting donor agreements or entering into contracts that impose permanent restrictions on special collections. As stated in the “Joint Statement on Access,” it is the responsibility of a library with such collections “to make available original research materials in its possession on equal terms of access.”

A primary goal of the library profession is to facilitate access to all points of view on current and historical issues. All proposals for restricted access should be carefully scrutinized to ensure that the purpose is not to suppress a viewpoint or to place a barrier between users and content. Libraries must maintain policies and procedures that serve the diverse needs of their users and protect the First Amendment right to receive information.

Adopted February 2, 1973, by the ALA Council; amended July 1, 1981; July 3, 1991; July 12, 2000; June 30, 2004; January 28, 2009; and July 1, 2014.

Attachment 1. – Procedures for Handling Patron Complaints about Library Materials

I. Introduction

The Two Harbors Public Library Staff should be aware of the most recently revised and approved Materials Selection Policy. The policy contains sections on controversial materials and a statement for dealing with challenged materials. The procedures below are internal staff procedures for handling patron concerns and complaints.

II. Receiving Questions or Complaints

A staff member receiving a question or complaint about books or other materials should inform the patron that all Library materials are professionally selected according to the current selection policy. Staff members should not attempt to debate the merits of the work in question with the patron. The patron should be invited to communicate his or her concerns to the Library Director. If the patron wishes to put the complaint in writing, he/she should be given a copy of the form “Statement of Concern about Library Resources” and asked to submit the completed form to the Director. All Library personnel dealing with the public will have a supply of the forms. Staff members will notify the Director as soon as possible of any complaint or challenge.

III. Internal Procedures

Upon receiving a “Statement of Concern about Library Resources,” the Director will review the complaint with appropriate staff members. Facts of the selection will be researched and documented: reviewing sources consulted, relevance to the collection considered, and merits of the work taken as a whole. If the work is found to be unsuitable, it will be removed and the complainant so notified. If the work is found to be within the scope of the selection policy, it will be retained and the patron so notified. The response should contain a copy of the Selection Policy with supporting documents and such additional data concerning the questioned work as are necessary. The Library Board shall be apprised of any serious problems, but it is expected that most questions and complaints will be handled by the Director and staff.

Any complainant may appeal a decision by the Director to the Library Board whose decision in the matter shall be final.

Adopted by: The Two Harbors Public Library Board of Directors
Date: September 4th, 1990
Updated: January 2016

Attachment 2. – Statement of Concern About Library Resources

The Two Harbors Public Library Board has authorized use of this form in accordance with its written selection policy and administrative procedures. This form should be returned to the Library Director.

Name: _____ Date: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____ Phone #: _____

1. Resource on which you are commenting:

_____ Book

_____ Audiovisual Resource

_____ Magazine

_____ Content of Library Program

_____ Newspaper

_____ Other

Title: _____

Author/Producer: _____

2. What brought this title to your attention?

3. Please comment on the resource as a whole as well as being specific on those matters which concern you. (Use other side if needed.)

Optional

4. What resource(s) do you suggest to provide additional information on this topic, or as alternatives to this item?