MATERIALS SELECTION POLICY

I. INTRODUCTION
Recognizing the advisability of a well-defined policy outlining the Virginia Public Library's selection of books and other library materials, the Virginia Library Commission, with the approval of the Virginia City Council, hereby 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: books, periodicals, films, audio cassettes, video cassettes, phonograph recordings and compact discs, computer software, maps, and graphic arts.

II. PURPOSE OF THE VIRGINIA PUBLIC LIBRARY
The purpose of the Virginia Public Library is to serve as a resource and reference center for its service area, supplying print and non-print materials for information, recreation, and education, and engaging in other activities, such as programs, to enhance the educational and cultural life of the area. Through membership in the Arrowhead Library System and the North Country Library Cooperative, the Virginia Public Library works to improve library service in the city, region, and state.

III. RESPONSIBILITY FOR SELECTION OF MATERIALS
The Virginia Public Library Commission and the Virginia City Council vest the responsibility for selection of library materials in the Library Director who may delegate authority to other members of the professional staff and department heads. Selections made within the guidelines of this policy shall be considered Commission and Council selections, and the City Council shall assume full legal responsibility for such selections.

IV. GENERAL PRINCIPLES
A. The Library shall attempt to provide materials in all subject areas and in varied formats, print and non-print. Emphasis shall be placed upon the areas of local and regional interest but not to the exclusion of materials on other subjects.
B. Among the specific criteria to be considered are:
   1. Reputation of author, artist, or performer
   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 (quality of binding and possibility of re-binding; for books, audio and visual quality of recordings, films, video cassettes)
C. As a general practice, Virginia 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, especially in the case of local and regional artists.
IV. GENERAL PRINCIPLES, cont.

D. In selecting materials, VPL staff members shall be guided by, but not restricted to, a number of standard bibliographies and reviewing aids:

1. "Booklist"
2. "Library Journal"
4. "School Library Journal"
5. "Journal of Youth Services in Libraries"
6. "Horn Book"/"Horn Book Guide"
7. "Publishers Weekly"
8. "Video Rating Guide"
9. Children's Catalog
10. Fiction Catalog
11. Public Library Catalog
12. Specialized bibliographies

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

V. CONTROVERSIAL MATERIALS

The Virginia Public Library subscribes to the following paragraphs of the 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."

Any library which purchases only those books acceptable to everyone would have very few books. We live in a varied and multi-cultured society, and the Virginia Public Library selects its materials from a broad spectrum of subjects, interest, points of view, and tastes. The Library will attempt to provide the best materials available expressing opinions from all sides of a controversial question, and shall make no effort to influence public opinion by providing materials setting forth only one viewpoint.

The Library subscribes to Article 2 from the Freedom to Read Statement:

"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."

The Virginia Public Library respects the right of persons to express their opinion, negative as well as positive, with respect to materials purchased by the Library. VPL will vigorously resist censorious pressure and other attempts to force removal of materials from its collection. Patrons objecting to materials in VPL's collection will be invited to state their concerns in writing, and the complaint will be handled in accordance with Procedures for Dealing with Challenged Materials and Other Complaints.
VI. CHILDREN'S MATERIALS

Virginia Public Library shall apply the same principles and criteria to the selection of children's materials as to materials selected for adults. VPL shall strive to acquire books and other materials of high quality for children, but censorship, if any, of children's reading, listening, or viewing shall be and remain a parental responsibility. VPL subscribes to the position, as stated in the Library Bill of Rights and "Free Access to Libraries for Minors," that it is the parents -- and only parents -- who may restrict their children -- and only their children -- from access to library materials and services. Public libraries do not stand in loco parentis, and staff members will not restrict by age the reading, listening, or viewing of materials checked out by patrons. Parents who would rather their children did not have access to certain materials should so advise their children. Differing levels of intellectual development, family background and home reading and viewing standards, and child-rearing philosophies are significant factors which cannot be dealt with by a uniform policy based upon age.

VII. GIFTS AND DONATIONS

The Virginia Library Commission and City Council authorize the acceptance of unconditional gifts and donations. Gifts with conditions or special stipulations may be accepted only with the approval of the Library Commission, subject to Council approval. VPL staff shall apply the same standards to gift materials as to those acquired by purchase. In general, no statements of value for income tax purposes will be issued.

VIII. COLLECTION MAINTENANCE AND WEEDING

VPL staff shall maintain a program of regular review and weeding of its collection. Discarded reference materials shall be offered for distribution to other libraries in the Arrowhead Library System, in the interest of improving library service in the region. Other discarded materials may be offered for sale to the public directly or through the Friends of the Virginia Public Library.

IX. PROCEDURES FOR DEALING WITH CHALLENGED MATERIALS AND OTHER COMPLAINTS

A patron expressing concern over VPL materials or having another complaint may discuss his or her concern with the Director or Department Head, and if so desired, may put the complaint in writing on the Statement of Patron Concern. The Director and staff will then review the request and will notify the complainant in writing of the results. If the complainant is not satisfied with the administrative decision, he or she may request to appear before the Library Commission for reconsideration. If not satisfied with the Commission decision, an appearance before the City Council may be requested. The decision of the City Council shall be final.

X. CONCLUSION

The Virginia Public Library Commission, with the approval of the Virginia City Council, hereby adopts the Library Bill of Rights, The Freedom to Read Statement, and Restricted Access to Library Materials Statement, and the Statement of Concerns for, as part of its selection policy.

The Library Commission shall periodically review this policy.

Revised version adopted by Virginia Library Commission: June 4, 1991
Revised version adopted by Virginia City Council: