

Polk County Public Libraries Collection Development Policy

The Polk County Public Libraries (PCPL) collect, curate, and make accessible library materials in a wide variety of formats that respond to community interests and demographics. The libraries' goal is to maintain popular, up-to-date collections attuned to the diverse needs of Polk County residents. Collection formats, subject matter, and target audiences will be reflective of community demand.

The purpose of this Collection Development Policy is to guide staff in the selection, retention, and withdrawal of library materials; to inform the public of the philosophy of collection development; and to establish a framework for continuous evaluation and improvement.

Collection Philosophy

A democracy relies on an informed citizenry, and the public library has an integral role in achieving that goal. Polk County Public Libraries provide an impartial environment in which individuals and their interests are brought together with ideas and information spanning the spectrum of knowledge and opinions. PCPL uphold the right of the individual to secure information, even though the content may be controversial, unorthodox, or unacceptable to others. Materials available present a diversity of viewpoints, enabling citizens to make informed choices.

Polk County Public Libraries endorse the following American Library Association statements:

- Library Bill of Rights (see Appendix A)
- Freedom to Read (see Appendix B)
- Freedom to View (see Appendix C)

The library collections are comprised primarily of popular materials directed toward the general public; an effort is made to have the most current information available. The collection contains information on a variety of subjects and views, and is organized to provide unrestricted and easy access within the limitations of space and budget. All PCPL materials are intended for public use and, with the exception of selected special or reference collections, all materials are available for check-out.

Collection Responsibility

The Library Director has ultimate authority for the collections. The director shares this responsibility with staff who are qualified by reason of education and/or experience.

Selection Criteria

Polk County Public Libraries' collections provide a wide range of literary, cultural, educational, informational and recreational materials for people of all ages. Collections include popular and in-demand materials in a variety of print, audiovisual and electronic formats.

The same evaluation criteria will be used to add and remove all materials from the collections. An item need not meet all criteria in order to be acceptable.

- Public demand, interest or need
- Current or long-term significance
- Evaluation of critics and reviewers
- Established authority of author, creator or publisher
- Accuracy and timeliness

- Underrepresented or unique perspective of an issue
- Relationship to existing collections
- Price, format, condition and ease of use

In most cases, the library will not purchase or accept as gifts self-published materials that are not reviewed in established review journals.

Withdrawal of Materials

Staff shall review items in the collection on an ongoing basis to ensure that they continue to meet customers' needs. Worn, damaged, and outdated materials shall be removed from the collection on a regular basis. Materials may also be withdrawn if they are unused or are superseded by a new edition or a more authoritative work on the same subject. Other criteria that may be applied include space, collection balance, the changing demands of users, or the replacement of materials with other formats. Withdrawn materials will be disposed of in the manner deemed most appropriate for that item, including sale by the Friends of the Library, distribution to other libraries or community service organizations, or recycling.

Gifts and Donations

When the libraries receive a monetary donation for the purchase of materials, selection is made in accordance with this Collection Development Policy.

Polk County Public Libraries accept donations of materials including works by local authors, for consideration as additions to its collections. Materials donated must be in a format collected by PCPL. Upon receipt, all donations become property of the libraries, and may be used or disposed of as needed. Donated materials are subject to the same selection criteria as all other library materials. PCPL do not return donated materials, or track their status. PCPL shall not accept materials with special conditions or restrictions imposed by the donor.

Materials not added to the collections are generally given to the Friends of the Library for sale at fundraisers to support the library. Upon request, PCPL will provide the donor a receipt, but will not appraise the value of donated materials. While all donations are appreciated, some might not be appropriate for PCPL and may be referred to a more appropriate recipient.

Complaints and Censorship

Collection development decisions are based on the merit of the work as it relates to the Libraries' mission and ability to meet the needs and interests of the community; decisions are not made on the basis of any anticipated approval or disapproval of the material. The inclusion of an item in the collections in no way represents an endorsement of its contents.

The Libraries recognize that many materials may be controversial and that any given item may offend some. Only individuals can determine what is most appropriate for their needs and can define what material or information is consistent with their personal or family values. Individuals can apply those values to the use of library materials for themselves. While anyone is free to personally reject materials of which he or she does not approve, he or she may not exercise censorship to restrict the freedom of others.

Responsibility for materials selected, read or viewed by children and adolescents rests with their parents or legal guardians, not with library staff. Selection decisions are not influenced by the possibility that materials may be accessible to minors. Materials are not labeled to show approval or disapproval or to indicate certain philosophies. No items are sequestered except to protect from damage or theft.

Comments from members of the public about the collection or individual resources frequently provide the PCPL with useful information about interests or needs that may not be adequately met by existing resources. Should a member of the community question the place of an item in the collections, the Library Director or staff may meet with the individual to discuss the concern. If a complaint cannot be resolved informally, the individual will be asked to fill out and return a written and signed Request for Reconsideration Form. Objections to particular language or point of view cannot be used as justification for the exclusion of materials.

In the absence of a fully completed form there is no formal complaint and no further action shall be taken. Upon receiving a fully completed Request for Reconsideration Form, the Library Director shall establish a staff review committee to investigate the complaint. The questioned material will be reviewed, and assessed as a complete work, and the customer will receive a written response to their concern. If the person is dissatisfied with the resolution, he/she may appeal to the Board of Trustees. The Board of Trustees will reconsider the decision based on whether or not the particular title conforms to the Collection Development Policy and offer a final decision.

Approved by the Board of Trustees of the Polk County Public Libraries

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Revised: 2/16/2011, 7/30/2015, 7/26/18

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

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.

Appendix C

Freedom to View Statement

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 guarantees 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 of 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.