

# **LMLS MATERIAL SELECTION POLICY AND INTELLECTUAL FREEDOM STATEMENTS**

## **1. PURPOSE**

The Materials Selection Policy defines the Lower Merion Library System's philosophy, principles, and criteria for the selection of books, periodicals, audio-visual and other materials to be included in the collections of its six member libraries. Its purpose is to guide staff and to inform the public about the principles upon which selection decisions are made. The Collection Development Policy attempts more specifically to identify by subject areas the depth and breadth of the various collections.

### **Introduction**

The Lower Merion Library System endorses the American Library Association's Library Bill of Rights, Freedom to Read, and Freedom to View Statements as the foundation of this policy. Selection of materials will be based on each library's role in support of the educational, informational, cultural and recreational needs of its community. It is the Library System's aim to provide materials with the widest possible diversity of view and expression.

The selection of any material for the collection does not constitute an endorsement of its contents. The System recognizes that many materials are controversial and that any given item may offend some patrons. Decisions are not made on the basis of any anticipated approval or disapproval, but solely on the merits of the work in relation to the building of the collection and to serving the interests of patrons.

Responsibility for children's use of library materials rests with their parents or legal guardians. Library materials are not labeled as to contents, and materials are not sequestered except for the purpose of protecting them from damage or theft.

The system cooperates with area and regional libraries. It is the expectation of the public libraries that school and college libraries will assume the primary responsibility for meeting the needs of their students. The Lower Merion libraries will, however, provide materials that supplement and enrich the reference, research and recreational needs of student borrowers of all ages. (In general, textbooks are not purchased.) Due to budgetary and space limitations, extensive duplication to meet mass assignment demands is not feasible.

## **2. AUTHORITY AND RESPONSIBILITY**

The Director of Libraries delegates the responsibility for selection of adult materials to each Head Librarian and for Juvenile materials to Children's Services personnel, subject to the policies stated in this document. Materials

are purchased with a combination of funds raised locally at each library, state monies appropriated to the Lower Merion Library System, as well as gifts and grants from various sources.

To facilitate the selection and ordering process, library system staff meets regularly before preparing orders. Through these meetings it is determined which materials are best suited for each collection. While each library's collection is meant to stand alone in meeting the particular needs of its clientele, it is also recognized that together the individual collections form a more comprehensive collection for all residents of the township.

The unity of the collection is enhanced by the online public catalogs at each library which identify the materials of the entire System. The overall responsibility of assuring a unified and complete collection development plan rests with the Director of Libraries. Local library boards represent the community in developing an annual materials budget for their respective libraries which may define emphases for the year.

### **3. CRITERIA FOR SELECTION**

Materials are evaluated as a whole and not on the basis of a particular passage or passages. A work will not be excluded from the library's collection because it presents an aspect of life honestly or because of frankness of expression.

While a single standard cannot be applied to each potential item for selection, materials are judged by appropriate criteria which may include:

- Purpose
- Scope
- Audience
- Artistic merit
- Timeliness
- Scholarship
- Accessibility (lay/technical treatment, indices)
- Authority and credibility of the author and/or publisher
- Subject matter
- Comparison with similar works
- Price
- Value in meeting collection needs
- Demand by the public
- Format
- Readability (print size, white space, vocabulary)
- Illustrations, graphs
- Binding

Final selection of all materials, both print and non-print, is made after careful and thoughtful study of professional and reputable review sources. Standard review sources include:

*Booklist*  
*Kirkus Reviews*  
*Library Journal*  
*The New York Times Book Review*  
*Philadelphia Inquirer Book Review*  
*Publishers Weekly*  
*School Library Journal*  
Vendor and publisher catalogs  
Other Professional Review Media

Some of these standard review sources are checked as each issue is received. Others are not part of the regular selection process, but are relied on or referred to for reviews and announcements.

Multiple copies are purchased in response to popular demand as allowed by budgetary restrictions and the anticipated permanent value or anticipated life expectancy of the material.

Materials acquired should meet high standards of quality in content, expression, and format, significance of subject, sincerity and responsibility of opinion. These and other factors must be considered and at times balanced one against the other.

### **Adult Fiction**

In selecting fiction, the library attempts to satisfy a public varying in formal education, background and taste. Thus, the fiction collection consists of not only the most distinguished novels, but also popular best sellers, first novels by authors with no track record, short stories, novels translated from foreign languages, historical and regional fiction, mysteries and suspense, romance, fantasy, science fiction, westerns, and classics.

### **Adult Non-Fiction**

In order to meet the current and future informational needs of its community, the library selects non-fiction materials on a wide variety of subjects. Various levels of education and abilities identifiable in the community will be considered in the selection process. While many items selected will be of general and popular interest, some materials of technical, scientific and professional interest may warrant inclusion.

Within the limits of space, budget, and availability, materials will be chosen to represent a variety of opinion on subjects that may have valid differing points of view.

### **Young Adult**

In purchasing material to meet the needs of young people between the ages of twelve and eighteen, the library takes into consideration the varied needs of its

clientele. Developmental, ethnic, educational, cultural, and personal differences make materials selection challenging for this patron group. Effort is made to include both standard titles and popular works. Fiction and non-fiction are purchased. School assignments are taken into consideration, as are current interests.

### **Juvenile Works**

**Picture Books** are highly illustrated stories for children from preschool through about age seven. Illustration and text are equally important. Some picture books may be wordless, have minimal text, or have a great deal of text. Children may or may not be able to read them independently. Durability is an important factor to consider. Toy books, such as pop-ups, are not suitable to library collections due to their fragile nature. The emphasis of the picture book collection is on quality books, with mass market titles and licensed character titles being rarely selected.

**Easy Readers** are illustrated fiction books that are of interest to children up to about age seven and which can be read by them. The print is large and well spaced, and the books often have controlled vocabularies. While illustrated, they are less lavishly so than picture books.

**Juvenile Fiction (JF)** refers to books of interest to children of about ages eight to fourteen. The collection varies in difficulty and length. While these books may have some illustrations, the text is the most significant part. They are most children's introduction to the novel.

**Juvenile Non-Fiction** meets the needs of children of all ages for treatment of subjects of interest to them and as supplementary material for school assignments.

### **Large Print Books**

The library system maintains a collection of Large Print fiction and non-fiction to meet the needs of readers who may have difficulty with regular print. The collection is meant primarily as a popular reading collection.

### **Pamphlets**

Selection of pamphlets, including government publications, follows the general policies outlined for the selection of other print materials. Most pamphlets are filed by subject in cabinets referred to as the Vertical File.

### **Periodicals**

Periodicals (magazines and newspapers) are purchased for one or more of the following reasons:

1. To keep the library's collection up to date with current thinking in various fields.
2. To supplement the book collection
3. As recreational reading.
4. As selection aids and professional reading.

Individual titles are chosen based on:

- Accuracy and objectivity;
- Accessibility of contents through indices;
- Ease of consultation;
- Usefulness in reference work;
- Representation of point of view;
- Need for subject in the collection;
- Local interest in subject matter;
- Cost.

### **Microforms**

In general microforms are acquired in order to reduce storage space requirements for older runs of newspapers and magazines and because of their durability compared to hard copy periodicals. In the current technology environment, storing microforms may have less emphasis as electronic resources become the method of choice for research needs.

### **Audio-Visual Materials**

Audiovisual materials are selected to complement the print collections in meeting the educational and recreational needs of library users. In addition to some of the criteria used in selecting print materials other factors to be weighed are:

- Technical quality
- Format
- Equipment required

Audio formats include cassette tapes and compact discs. The collections include:

1. Materials of educational or instructional value which coincide with patron requests and interests
2. Works of fiction and non-fiction (abridged and unabridged), speeches, historical and documentary materials

3. Popular and classical music which is of lasting artistic value, as evidenced by reviews, awards and librarian evaluation

Visual formats include DVDs and videocassettes in VHS format. The collection contains:

1. Materials of educational or instructional value which coincide with patron interest and requests.
2. Copies of popular films which are of lasting artistic value as evidenced by critical reviews, awards and librarian evaluation; the works of well-known filmmakers; works which show an important contribution to filmmaking; theatrical versions of works of literature; and titles that are in demand.

### **Computer Software**

Circulating collections of computer software will be restricted to the CD-ROM format. As with other audio-visual formats CD-ROM materials will be selected to complement the print collections in meeting the educational and recreational needs of our patrons. Criteria for the selection of CD-ROM materials will include:

- quality of materials
- educational value
- public demand
- budgetary and space constraints
- ease of use
- timeliness of materials and format

CD-ROM collections will include materials for both adults and children. The collections will include but not be limited to:

- materials of educational and instructional value
- interactive books
- self-help materials
- materials in both Mac and Windows wherever possible

Computer software in any format may be purchased for in-house use only. Software purchased for use in a library must meet one or more of the following criteria:

- Educational value
- Utility programs such as processing, accounting, filing, etc.
- Popular and public domain programs which are of good quality as evidenced by reviews.

The Lower Merion Library System is committed to abiding by all copyright laws.

### **Inter-library Loan**

Interlibrary loan (ILL) refers to the lending of books between institutions. A library may, under the Pennsylvania Interlibrary Loan Code and generally accepted American Library Association practices, borrow a book from another library for eventual loan to its own patron. For the purposes of this policy, ILL does not refer to loans among the six libraries constituting the Lower Merion Library System. These loans are considered Intra-system Loans (ISLs). Staff will follow the guidelines set out in Pennsylvania's ILL Code and Interlibrary Loan Training Manual.

The Interlibrary Loan process is not a substitute for collection development, but is meant to expand the range of materials available to library users without needlessly duplicating the resources of other libraries. All ILL requests should first be considered for purchase. In addition, any title that has to be obtained on ILL several times should be given high selection priority. Materials published within the last six months will only be requested on interlibrary loan under unusual circumstances.

Titles for ILL consideration include those that do not fit the scope of the collection, are too dated, or are out of print.

### **Gifts and Memorials**

Gifts to the collection may be in the form of monetary donations or actual materials. All gifts become part of the general collection and cannot be shelved as a separate collection. In the case of memorials or commemorative monetary donations for the collection, the donor may want to specify a subject or format for the materials to be purchased. Staff will work with donors to select appropriate titles both to honor someone and to meet the library's collection needs. Gift plates and letters of acknowledgment are appropriate stipulations by a donor, but other special requirements must be carefully evaluated before acceptance of a gift.

Gifts of books, periodicals, compact discs, video and audio tapes are accepted if they are in good condition with the understanding that those which are useful to the library collection will be retained, and other items will be disposed of through book sales or otherwise. Titles acquired in this manner, which are not already in the collection, are subject to the basic standards of selection enumerated in Section 3. Replacements and duplicate copies are added to the collection if needed. The costs of processing and the availability of shelving space are also factors in determining the acceptance of gifts.

Libraries reserve the right to decline gifts of used books or materials at any time.

The libraries cannot appraise used books for tax deductions or other purposes but will acknowledge in writing receipt of such gifts, without attaching a value, if requested by the donor.

#### **4. COLLECTION MAINTENANCE**

Systematic weeding of all collections is essential. Materials are withdrawn for the following reasons:

- Materials are out-of-date
- Materials are badly worn or damaged so that they cannot be bound or mended
- Lack of use
- Availability of new and revised editions
- Duplication

It is not library policy to replace automatically all materials withdrawn because of loss, damage or wear. Need for replacement in each case is determined by availability, number of duplicate copies, existence of adequate coverage of the field, other similar materials in the collection, especially later and better material, and demand for that particular title or subject.

#### **5. DISPOSITION OF MATERIALS**

Some materials considered for withdrawal from the collection of a library will be made available to other libraries in the system. Such items are transferred from one collection to another rather than withdrawn and reentered.

Consideration will be given to the last copy of any title in the system.

Withdrawn copies will generally be offered for sale in the library's used book sale with profits going to further collection development. Materials meeting criteria for withdrawal may be recycled.

#### **6. RECONSIDERATION PROCEDURES**

Free access to all points of view on public questions will be provided. Because the Lower Merion libraries serve many varied individuals and groups, the interest of one cannot take precedence over the interest of another. Parents and legal guardians must assume responsibility for their children's and adolescents' use of library materials.

The Lower Merion Library System is opposed to the withdrawal, at the request of an individual or group, of materials which have been chosen based on the policy and the accompanying statements of principle. The System asks library users who are troubled by the inclusion of any title in the collection to first discuss their objections with the Head Librarian. This begins the formal process of complaint and response. Specific procedures are outlined below.

## **7. PROCEDURES FOR COMPLAINTS ABOUT LIBRARY RESOURCES**

The following guidelines are written both to describe steps in the process and to assign responsibility and authority.

### **STAFF**

1. Inquiries about book selection policy and complaints about library resources should be referred to the Head Librarian immediately.
2. If the Head Librarian is not on duty, listen calmly to the person's complaint. Be courteous while explaining that the library has a formal procedure for reconsideration of resources. Remain neutral about the resource in question – don't offer your own opinion. Take the person's name and phone number, and ask what would be a good time for the Head Librarian to contact the person. Make sure that the Head Librarian receives the person's name and his or her complaint promptly.

### **HEAD LIBRARIANS**

1. Listen calmly and courteously to the patron voicing the complaint. Complainants must know that their objections will be given serious consideration and that interest in the library is welcome. Be sure to outline, in private, the nature of our selection policy, intellectual freedom, and open access to materials.

A lengthy speech on these issues should be avoided at this initial meeting. It tends to have an adverse effect on the complainant. (Review the ALA Intellectual Freedom Handbook prior to meeting with the patron, if possible).

If the complaint comes by letter, it should be acknowledged promptly. In either case, the complainant should be offered *the Request for Reconsideration of Library Resources* (see below) that may be filled in at home, in order that a formal complaint may be submitted.

2. Notify the Director of Libraries and the local library Board President immediately, giving as much information as possible; i.e. the title of the item in question, date of complaint, patron's name, your assessment of the problem, etc.
3. If the complaint form is completed and returned, forward it to the Director of Libraries and await further instructions.

### **DIRECTOR OF LIBRARIES**

1. After the written complaint form has been forwarded from the Head Librarian, the Director shall notify the LMLS Board President.

2. The Director of Libraries shall respond on behalf of the Library System. In the preparation of that response the Director may undertake any one or more of the following:
  - a. Telephone the complainant, and back up the Head Librarian's earlier effort by explaining again the *Materials Selection Policy*, *The Library Bill of Rights*, the *Freedom to Read* and *Freedom to View Statements*, and the approach to balanced collections. Enclose these documents in a letter to the person if this seems appropriate.
  - b. Send a letter to the complainant, inviting him or her to appear for a private conference concerning the complaint.
  - c. Appoint a *Reconsideration Committee*. This committee should undertake the following:
    - 1) Read, view, or listen to the challenged material in its entirety;
    - 2) Review the selection process and the criteria for selection;
    - 3) Check reviews and recommended lists to determine recommendations by experts and the critics;
    - 4) Meet to discuss the challenge;
    - 5) Make a written recommendation to the Director of Libraries on removal, retention, or replacement.
  - d. The response to the complainant shall be in writing and shall serve to notify the complainant of the Library System's decision and the procedure for appealing the decision as provided below.
3. The complainant may appeal the decision of the Director of Libraries by filing a request within thirty (30) days of its date for a hearing before the LMLS Board. The appeal must be in writing in order for the LMLS Board President to place it on the agenda for a future meeting and contain the name and address of the complainant, an identification or description of the challenged material, the basis for the complainant's objections and copies of any documents the complainant intends to submit for the Board's consideration.

The LMLS Board shall schedule a hearing no more than 45 days after receipt of the appeal at which time the complainant shall be given the opportunity to appear and present sworn testimony. The complainant may be represented by counsel. All testimony shall be stenographically recorded. The hearing shall be open to the public and advertised in the same manner as a public meeting. The LMLS Board shall render a written decision containing findings of fact and legal conclusions within 45 days following the close of the hearing.

An appeal from the decision of the LMLS Board shall be taken in the same manner as an appeal from any other local agency.

4. A decision of the LMLS Board may be appealed to the Montgomery County Court of Common Pleas.

## REQUEST FOR RECONSIDERATION OF LIBRARY RESOURCES

The Director of the Lower Merion Library System has delegated the responsibility for selection and evaluation of library resources to the Head Librarians and Children's Services personnel, and has established reconsideration procedures to address concerns about those resources. Completion of this form is the first step in those procedures. If you wish to request reconsideration of library resources, please return the completed form to the Head Librarian.

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip Code \_\_\_\_\_ Phone (    ) \_\_\_\_\_

Do you represent yourself? \_\_\_\_\_ Your organization? \_\_\_\_\_

Name of organization \_\_\_\_\_

1. RESOURCE ON WHICH YOU ARE COMMENTING:

_____ Book	_____ Textbook	_____ Video
_____ Magazine	_____ Library Program	_____ Audio
_____ Newspaper	_____ Electronic Information	
_____ Display		
_____ Other	_____	

Title \_\_\_\_\_

Author/Producer \_\_\_\_\_

2. WHAT BROUGHT THIS RESOURCE TO YOUR ATTENTION?

\_\_\_\_\_

3. HAVE YOU EXAMINED THE ENTIRE RESOURCE? \_\_\_\_\_

If not, what parts? \_\_\_\_\_

4. WHAT CONCERNS YOU ABOUT THE RESOURCE? (USE OTHER SIDE OR ADDITIONAL PAGES IF NECESSARY.)

5. ARE YOU AWARE OF JUDGMENTS OF THIS RESOURCE BY REVIEWERS?

\_\_\_\_\_ Yes      \_\_\_\_\_ No

6. ARE THERE RESOURCE(S) YOU SUGGEST TO PROVIDE ADDITIONAL INFORMATION AND/OR OTHER VIEWPOINTS ON THIS TOPIC?

\_\_\_\_\_

7. WHAT WOULD YOU LIKE YOUR LIBRARY TO DO ABOUT THIS RESOURCE?

\_\_\_\_\_

YOUR SIGNATURE \_\_\_\_\_

## **8. SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS**

The Lower Merion Library System endorses the following statements of principle.

### **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.

- 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 18, 1948.  
Amended February 2, 1961, and January 23, 1980,  
inclusion of "age" reaffirmed January 23, 1996,  
by the ALA Council.

## **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 avoid the subversion of politics and the corruption of morals. We, as citizens 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 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 what is bad for their fellow citizens.

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 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.

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.

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 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 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 with any expression the prejudgment of a label characterizing it 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 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 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 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 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.

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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, July 12, 2000, by the ALA Council and the AAP Freedom to Read Committee.

A Joint Statement by:

**American Library Association and  
Association of American Publishers**

Subsequently Endorsed by:

- **American Association of University Professors**
- **American Booksellers Foundation for Free Expression**
  - **American Society of Journalists and Authors**
  - **American Society of Newspaper Editors**
  - **Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith**
  - **Association of American University Presses**
    - **Center for Democracy & Technology**
      - **The Children's Book Council**
    - **The Electronic Frontier Foundation**
    - **Feminists for Free Expression**
    - **Freedom to Read Foundation**
    - **International Reading Association**
      - **The Media Institute**
    - **National Coalition Against Censorship**
      - **National PTA**
  - **Parents, Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays**
    - **People for the American Way**
    - **Student Press Law Center**
- **The Thomas Jefferson Center for the Protection of Free Expression**

## **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 pre-judging 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.

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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 by the ALA Council January 10, 1990