

# Collection Development Policy

## Resolution MARYLAND STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION

June 24, 1981

Resolution 1981-32

Re: Public Libraries  
Book Selection Policy

WHEREAS, The freedom to read is essential to our democracy;

And

WHEREAS, Public libraries have a responsibility to make available to the public books and other material offering the widest diversity of knowledge and ideas, views and expressions, so that citizens may choose freely from among a broad range of conflicting ideas; and

WHEREAS, It is in the public interest for libraries to reaffirm this principle in policies and procedures for the selection of library material and for dealing with complaints and requests for the removal of material by individuals or groups; therefore be it

RESOLVED, That the State Board of Education endorses the Freedom to Read principle and requires boards of library trustees of each public library system to adopt policies that will affirm and guide the effective implementation of this principle, and be it further

RESOLVED, That the Board directs the Assistant State Superintendent for Libraries to provide assistance to libraries and to report the result to the Board by June, 1982.

## Section I: Philosophy of Collection Development

The residents of Somerset County support the Somerset County Library System with their tax payments and their patronage. The Library endeavors to provide materials and services to meet the recreational, informational and education needs of Somerset County citizens effectively, courteously and equally. This document sets forth the guidelines by which the contents of the Somerset County Library System's collection are determined.

The Somerset County Board of Library Trustees and the staff of the Somerset County Library System endorse the Freedom to Read, the Freedom to View and the Library Bill of Rights as adopted, amended and interpreted by the American Library Association Council.

The Library sets the following goals for service in compliance with these documents:

- To serve Somerset County residents regardless of age, background, interests, abilities, origin or education and,
- To develop the Library collection with flexibility, open-mindedness, and responsiveness to the community's changing needs.

The Library will select, organize and make accessible materials and other resources for the interest, information and enlightenment of all county residents. Those items which the Library is unable to provide through its collection will be requested through the network services of the Eastern Shore Regional Library or other libraries.

See Appendices:

Appendix A: Freedom to Read

Appendix B: Freedom to View

Appendix C: Library Bill of Rights

## Section 2: Responsibility for Selection

The Somerset County Board of Library Trustees delegates to the Library Director the authority to interpret and guide the application of this collection development policy. The Director may authorize other qualified staff members to apply this policy in building location collections. While it is the responsibility of the qualified librarian to select and discard materials, it is recognized that limitations of budget, space and individual knowledge may exist. Suggestions from community members, trustees, or authorities on special subjects are welcomed. Final choices of materials, however, must rest with the Director, based on the needs of the community and the collection.

### Section 3: Criteria for Selection

When making decisions to acquire or discard library materials no item can be indisputably accepted or rejected by any one established standard. The following general criteria will be consulted as guidelines in selecting materials for inclusion in the Library's collection:

- Relevance to informational, recreational and educational needs of the community
- Relationship to existing material in the collection on the same topic
- Critics' and staff's reviews
- Authority and competence of the author
- Clarity and accuracy of presentation
- Public demand
- Suitability of style and reading level for the intended audience

The Library may be restricted by limited demand, budget, or space from providing materials on every topic. However, the purposes, resources and loan services of the Eastern Shore Regional Library and the State Library Resource Center are recognized and will be called upon to supply to local patrons those items beyond Library scope and budget.

The Library acknowledges an interest in Somerset County history and attempts to provide a limited collection of such materials. In addition, the educational, cultural, commercial and civic enterprises of individual communities will not be ignored when considering materials for inclusion in the Library collection.

The Somerset County Library System recognizes its special role in the community libraries to serve as both public libraries and school media centers. While the school system retains primary responsibility for the needs of the school audience, the public library will attempt to provide supplementary materials to assist students and teachers in their endeavors. Provision of such materials is also the policy in the county's non-school based library branches.

Selection criteria apply equally to all formats of library materials. Books, newspapers, paperbacks, magazines, pamphlets, films, recordings, and any new types of materials are acquired and made accessible as they are judged suitable, meaningful, and relevant to the collection, and as budget and space permit.

Responsibility for the reading done by children rests with their parents and guardians. Previously stated selection criteria apply to all children's materials. The Library Board of Trustees and staff fully support the Free Access to Libraries for Minors as interpreted from the Library Bill of Rights.

See Appendices:

Appendix D: Free Access to Libraries for Minors

Appendix E: Sexism, Racism and Other "Isms" in Library Materials

## Section 4: Collection Maintenance

The Somerset County Library System attempts to provide a flexible, responsive and broad collection of materials for the interests, information and enlightenment of all county residents. New materials are added on a continuing basis in compliance with the criteria set forth in this document. Materials initially considered not to fit the selection criteria, may later be reconsidered and included in the collection.

Also, materials are withdrawn regularly from the Library collection. The following criteria are consulted when considering materials for withdrawal:

- Severely outdated and misleading information
- Duplicate copies in excess of current demand
- Worn or damaged copies
- Materials no longer in sufficient demand
- Space limitations (*Revised Dec. 13, 2006 at Board of Trustees Meeting*)

Replacement of a lost or withdrawn item with an identical title is determined by the existence of adequate materials in the current collection on the same topic, availability of more current and accurate information, or continued demand for the specific title.

Undamaged materials withdrawn from the Library collection will be sold at sales as designated by the Board of Library Trustees or will be donated to other agencies (e.g., Somerset County Headstart).

The Library accepts with appreciation, gifts of books and other library materials, but reserves the right to evaluate and use or dispose of such gifts in accordance with the criteria stated in this document. No conditions may be imposed relating to the gifts. Magazines entered in the name of the Library and arriving free without prior arrangement are generally discarded as received. In gift books, a plate giving the name of the donor and the person remembered will be mounted upon request.

The Library System cannot accept responsibility for assigning value to donations of materials for tax purposes. Such valuation must be done by a book dealer at the donor's expense if an official tax statement is required.

See Appendices:

Appendix F: State on Labeling

Appendix G: Restricted Access to Library Materials

Appendix H: Reevaluating Library Collections

## Section 5: Reconsideration

A patron's selection of library materials for personal use is a purely individual matter. The Library strives to provide materials representative of the broad spectrum of views inherent in a democratic society. While a person may reject materials on an individual basis, no one may exercise censorship to restrict access to those same materials by others. Library materials will not be removed from the collection when censorship is involved except under the orders of a court of competent jurisdiction.

A patron expressing disagreement with the inclusion or exclusion of a specific title in the Library's collection will receive a courteous hearing from library staff or Board members. A copy of this document will be offered and explained to the patron. The opportunity to speak with the Library Director will also be offered. If the patron wishes reconsideration of the material based on the interpretation of the collection development policy, a Request for Reconsideration form will be given to the patron. This form should be completed and returned to the Library Director. The Director will respond to a written request within ten business days. If the action taken by the Director is not satisfactory, the patron may request reconsideration by the Board of Library Trustees.

See Appendices:

Appendix I: Resolution on Challenged Materials

Appendix J: Request for Reconsideration Form

## Appendix A: 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.

*A Joint Statement by:*

American Library Association

Association of American Publishers

*Subsequently endorsed by:*

American Booksellers Foundation for Free Expression

The Association of American University Presses, Inc.

The Children's Book Council

Freedom to Read Foundation

National Association of College Stores

National Coalition Against Censorship

National Council of Teachers of English

The Thomas Jefferson Center for the Protection of Free Expression

## Appendix B: 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 in any medium of expression. Therefore, these principles are affirmed:

1. To provide the broadest possible 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 guarantee 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 content.
4. To provide a diversity of viewpoints without the constraint of labeling or prejudging film, video, and 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.

## Appendix C: 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 that 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.

A history of the Library Bill of Rights is found in the latest edition of the Intellectual Freedom Manual

American Library Association Council  
Approved June 30, 1972

## Appendix D: 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 and services 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 providing services and 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. Equitable access to all library resources and services shall not be abridged through restrictive scheduling or use policies.

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 through the library in print, nonprint, or digital format. 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.<sup>1</sup> 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 and guardians. 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 library governing bodies cannot assume the role of

parents or the functions of parental authority in the private relationship between parent and child. Librarians and governing bodies should maintain that only parents and guardians have the right and the responsibility to determine their children's—and only their children's—access to library resources. Parents and guardians who do not want their children to have access to specific library services, materials, or facilities should so advise their children.

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.

See also *Access to Resources and Services in the School Library Media Program and Access to Children and Young Adults to Nonprint Materials*.

<sup>1</sup> See *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 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 also *Tinker v. Des Moines School Dist.*, 393 U.S.503 (1969); *West Virginia Bd. of Ed. v. Barnette*, 319 U.S. 624 (1943); *AAMA v. Kendrick*,. 244 F.3d 572 (7th Cir. 2001).

Adopted June 30, 1972, by the ALA Council; amended July 1, 1981; July 3, 1991; June 30, 2004; and July 2, 2008.

## Appendix E: Sexism, Racism and Other “Isms” in Library Materials

### *An Interpretation of the LIBRARY BILL OF RIGHTS*

Traditional aims of censorship efforts have been to suppress political, sexual or religious expressions. The same three subjects have also been the source of most complaints about materials in library collections. Another basis for complaints, however, has become more and more frequent. Due, perhaps, to increased awareness of the rights of minorities and increased efforts to secure those rights, libraries are being asked to remove, restrict or reconsider some materials which are allegedly derogatory to specific minorities or which supposedly perpetuate stereotypes and false images of minorities. Among the several recurring “isms” used to describe the contents of the materials objected to are “racism” and “sexism”.

Complaints that library materials convey a derogatory or false image of a minority strike the personal social consciousness and sense of responsibility of some librarians who—accordingly—comply with the requests to remove such materials. While such efforts to counteract injustices are understandable, and perhaps even commendable as reflections of deep personal commitment to the ideal of equality for all people, they are—nonetheless—in conflict with the professional responsibility of librarians to guard against encroachments upon intellectual freedom.

This responsibility has been espoused and reaffirmed by the American Library Association in many of its basic documents on intellectual freedom over the past thirty years. The most concise statement of the Association’s position appears in Article II of the LIBRARY BILL OF RIGHTS which states that “Libraries should provide books and materials presenting all points of view concerning the problems and issues of our times; no library materials should be proscribed or removed because of partisan or doctrinal disapproval”.

While the application of this philosophy may seem simple when dealing with political, religious or even sexual expressions, its full implications become somewhat difficult when dealing with ideas, such as racism or sexism, which many find abhorrent, repugnant and inhumane. But, as stated in the FREEDOM TO READ STATEMENT:

*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 each individual is free to determine for himself what he wishes 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 politics or morality upon other members of a democratic society. Freedom is not freedom if it is accorded only to the accepted and the inoffensive\*. We realize that 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.*

Some find this creed acceptable when dealing with materials for adults but cannot extend its application to materials for children. Such reluctance is generally based on the belief that children are more susceptible than are adults. The LIBRARY BILL OF RIGHTS, however, makes no distinction between materials and services for children and adults. Its principles of free access to all materials available apply to every person, as stated in Article V, “The rights of an individual to the use of a library should not be denied or abridged because of his age, race, religion, national origins or social or political views.”

Some librarians deal with the problem of objectionable materials by labeling them or listing them as “racist” or “sexist”. This kind of action, too, has long been opposed by the American Library Association in its STATEMENT ON LABELING, WHICH SAYS,

*If materials are labeled to pacify one group, there is no excuse for refusing to label any item in the library’s collection. Because authoritarians tend to suppress ideas and attempt to coerce individuals to conform to a specific ideology the American Library Association opposes such efforts which aim at closing any path to knowledge.*

Others deal with the problem of objectionable materials by instituting restrictive circulation or relegating materials to closed or restricted collections. This practice, too, is in violation of the LIBRARY BILL OF RIGHTS as explained in RESTRICTED ACCESS TO LIBRARY MATERIALS which says,

*Too often only “controversial” materials are the subject of such segregation, leading to the conclusion that factors other than theft and mutilation were the true considerations. The distinction is extremely difficult to make, both for the librarian and for the patron. Unrestrictive selection policies, developed with care for the principles of intellectual freedom and the LIBRARY BILL OF RIGHTS, should not be vitiated by administrative practices such as restricted circulation.*

The American Library Association has made clear its position concerning the removal of library materials because of partisan or doctrinal disapproval, or because of pressures from interest groups, in yet another policy statement, the RESOLUTION ON CHALLENGED MATERIALS:

*The American Library association declares as a matter of firm principle that no challenged material should be removed from any library under any legal or extralegal pressure, save after an independent determination by a judicial officer in a court of competent jurisdiction and only after an adversary hearing, in accordance with well-established principles of law.*

Intellectual freedom, in its purest sense, promotes no causes, furthers no movements, and favors no viewpoints. It only provides for free access to all ideas through which any and all sides of causes and movements may be expressed, discussed and argued. The librarian cannot

let his own preference limit his degree of tolerance, for freedom is indivisible. Toleration is meaningless without toleration for the detestable.

American Library Association Council  
Adopted February 2, 1973



## Appendix F: Statement on Labeling

### *An Interpretation of the LIBRARY BILL OF RIGHTS*

Because labeling violates the spirit of the LIBRARY BILL OF RIGHTS, the American Library Association opposes the technique of labeling as a means of predisposing readers against library materials for the following reasons:

1. Labeling\* is an attempt to prejudice the reader, and as such, it is a censor's tool.
2. Although some find it easy and even proper, according to their ethics, to establish criteria for judging publication as objectionable, injustice and ignorance rather than justice and enlightenment result from such practices, and the American Library Association must oppose the establishment of such criteria.
3. Libraries do not advocate the ideas found in their collections. The presence of a magazine or book in a library does not indicate an endorsement of its contents by the library.
4. No one person should take the responsibility of labeling publications. No sizable group of persons would be likely to agree either on the types of material which should be labeled or the sources of information which should be regarded with suspicion. As a practical consideration, a librarian who labels a book or magazine might be sued for libel.
5. If materials are labeled to pacify one group, there is no excuse for refusing to label any item in the library's collection. Because authoritarian tend to suppress ideas and attempt to coerce individuals to conform to a specific ideology, the American Library Association opposes such efforts which aim at closing any path to knowledge.

\*"Labeling" as it is referred to in the STATEMENT OF LABELING, is the practice of describing or designating certain library materials, by affixing a prejudicial label to them or segregating them by a prejudicial system, so as to pre-dispose readers against the materials.

American Library Association Council

Adopted July 13, 1951

Amended June 25, 1971

*An Interpretation of the LIBRARY BILL OF RIGHTS*

Restricting access of certain titles and certain classes of library materials is a practice common to many libraries in the United States. Collections of these materials are referred to by a variety of names such as “closed shelf”, “locked case”, “adults only”, or “restricted shelf” collections.

Three reasons generally advanced to justify restricted access are:

1. It provides a refuge for materials that belong in the collection but which may be considered “objectionable” by some library patrons;
2. It provides a means for controlling distribution of materials which allegedly should not be read by those who are not “prepared” for such materials by experience, education, or age;
3. It provides a means to protect certain materials from thefts and mutilation.

Though widely used—and often practical—restricted access to library materials is frequently in opposition to the principles of intellectual freedom. While the limitation differs from direct censorship activities, such as removal of library materials or refusal to purchase certain publications, it nonetheless constitutes censorship, albeit a subtle form. As a form of censorship, restricted access violates the spirit of the LIBRARY BILL OF RIGHTS in the following ways:

1. *It violates that portion of Article II which states that\*.” no library materials should be proscribed\*.because of partisan or doctrinal disapproval.”*

The word “proscribed”, as used in Article II, means “suppressed”. Restricted access achieves *de facto* suppression of certain materials.

Even when a title is listed in the card catalog with a reference to its restricted shelf status, a barrier is placed between the patron and the publication. Because a majority of materials placed in restricted collections deal with controversial, unusual, or “sensitive” subjects, asking a librarian or circulation clerk for them is an embarrassment for patrons desiring the materials. Because collections are often composed of materials which some library patrons consider “objectionable”, the potential user is predisposed to thinking of the materials as “objectionable”, and is accordingly inhibited from asking for them. Although the barrier between the materials and the patron is psychological, it is nonetheless a tangible limitation on his access to information.

2. It violates Article V which states that, “The rights of an individual to the use of a library should not be denied or abridged because of his age...”

Limiting access of certain materials to adults only abridges the use of the library for minors. “Use of the library” includes use of, and access to, library materials. Such restrictions are generally instituted under the assumption that certain materials are “harmful” to minors, or in an effort to avoid controversy with parents who might think so.

The librarian would restrict the availability of materials to minors because of actual or suspected parental objection should bear in mind that he is not *in loco parentis* in his position as librarian. The American Library Association holds that it is the parent—and only the parent—who may restrict his children—and only his children—in reading matter.

When restricted access is implemented to protect materials from theft or mutilation, the use of the practice may be legitimate. However, segregation of materials to protect them must be administered with express attention to the rationale for restricting access. Too often only “controversial” materials are the subject of such segregation, leading to the conclusion that factors other than theft and mutilation were the true considerations. The distinction is extremely difficult to make, both for the librarian and the patron.

Selection policies, carefully developed on the basis of principles of intellectual freedom and the LIBRARY BILL OF RIGHTS, should not be vitiated by administrative practices such as restricted access.

*See also FREE ACCESS TO LIBRARIES FOR MINORS*

American Library Association Council  
Adopted February 2, 1973

## Appendix H:       Reevaluating Library Collections

### *An Interpretation of the LIBRARY BILL OF RIGHTS*

The continuous review of library collections to remove physically deteriorated or obsolete materials is one means to maintain active library collections of current interest to users. Continued reevaluation is closely related to the goals and responsibilities of libraries and is a valuable tool of collection building. This procedure, however, is sometimes used as a convenient means to remove materials thought to be too controversial or disapproved of by segments of the community. Such abuse of the reevaluation function violates the principles of intellectual freedom and is in opposition to Articles I and II of the LIBRARY BILL OF RIGHTS, which state that:

*As a responsibility of library service, books and other library materials selected should be chosen for values of interest, information and enlightenment of all the people of the community. In no case should library materials be excluded because of the race or nationality or the social, political, or religious views of the author.*

*Libraries should provide books and other materials presenting all points of view concerning the problems and issues of our times; no library materials should be proscribed or removed from libraries because of partisan or doctrinal disapproval.*

The American Library Association opposes such “silent censorship” and recommends that libraries adopt guidelines setting forth the positive purposes and principles for reevaluation of materials in library collections.

The traditional term “weeding” implying “the removal of a noxious growth”, is purposely avoided because of the imprecise nature of the term.

American Library Association Council  
Adopted February 2, 1973

## Appendix I: Resolution on Challenged Materials

### *An Interpretation of the LIBRARY BILL OF RIGHTS*

WHEREAS, The LIBRARY BILL OF RIGHTS states that no library materials should be proscribed or removed because of partisan or doctrinal disapproval, and

WHEREAS, Constitutionally protected expression is often separated from unprotected expression only by a dim and uncertain line, and

WHEREAS, Any attempt, be it legal or extra-legal, to regulate or suppress material must be closely scrutinized to the end that protected expression is not abridged in the process, and

WHEREAS, The Constitution requires a procedure designed to focus searchingly on the question before speech can be suppressed, and

WHEREAS, The dissemination of a particular work which is alleged to be unprotected should be completely undisturbed until an independent determination has been made by a judicial officer, including an adversary hearing,

THEREFORE, THE PREMISES CONSIDERED, BE IT RESOLVED, That the American Library Association declares as a matter of firm principle that no challenged library material should be removed from any library under any legal or extra-legal pressure, save after an independent determination by a judicial officer in a court of competent jurisdiction and only after an adversary hearing, in accordance with well-established principles of law.

American Library Association Council  
Adopted June 25, 1971

## Appendix J: Request for Reconsideration of Library Resources

The Somerset County Library System welcomes input from library users regarding the community's library resources. The Board of Trustees has delegated the responsibility for selection and evaluation of library resources to library staff and the Director.

Completion of this form is the first step in our process for evaluating a resource and considering your request. If you wish to request reconsideration, please return the completed form to Library Director, Somerset County Library, 11767 Beechwood Street, Princess Anne, Maryland 21853.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_

State \_\_\_\_\_

Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail \_\_\_\_\_

Do you represent self? \_\_\_\_ Organization? \_\_\_\_ (please specify)

1. Resource on which you are commenting:

\_\_\_\_ Book \_\_\_\_ DVD \_\_\_\_ Display

\_\_\_\_ Magazine \_\_\_\_ Library Program \_\_\_\_ Audio Recording

\_\_\_\_ Newspaper \_\_\_\_ Electronic information

\_\_\_\_ Other \_\_\_\_\_

Title \_\_\_\_\_

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

URL \_\_\_\_\_

2. What brought this resource to your attention?

3. Have you examined the entire resource?

4. What concerns you about the resource? (use other side or additional pages if necessary)

5. Are there resource(s) you suggest to provide additional information and/or other viewpoints on this topic?