

Collection Development Policy

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I. Collection Mission – General Statement

The mission of the New Haven Free Public Library is to provide free and equal access to recorded knowledge and information to individuals and the community at large. The library promotes literacy, reading, personal and community development and cultural understanding.

To support that mission the library collects, organizes and provides access to information in order to enhance the cultural, creative, civic and spiritual growth of the New Haven community. The library actively seeks to promote awareness of its resources and services to community members and organizations. It functions as a place of public dialog and informal social interaction.

The Collection Development Policy supports the library in its mission, defines the purposes and objectives of NHFPL's collections and gives direction to their growth and development.

As part of its role of providing education for decision-making in a democratic society, the library collects information within a broad spectrum of responsible viewpoints on current issues. The library endorses the statement that ... "Democratic education communicates rational knowledge and shared social values while honoring the individual's freedom to challenge these ideas and values."*

It is the library's responsibility to provide free access to such materials and, therefore, it incorporates, as part of this policy, the **Library Bill of Rights**, adopted by the Council of the American Library Association, the **Freedom To Read Statement**, prepared by the Westchester Conference of the American Library Association and the American Book Publisher's Council, the American Library Association's **Freedom to View Statement** and the **First Amendment of the Constitution of the United States**. (copies attached). The principles embodied in the above three documents apply to all materials, not only to printed matter.

The final approval of this policy rests with the Library Board of Directors. Responsibility for the implementation and oversight of this policy rests with the City Librarian. The selection of materials will be delegated to qualified employees in the various departments and services of the library, subject to review by the City Librarian.

*McCabe, Civic Librarianship, 2001

II. Description Of Our Community

Cultural and Educational Center

New Haven is a city of contrasts and variety, a vibrant cultural and educational center in Connecticut. It is home to nationally recognized theaters and museums: Long Wharf Theater, Yale Repertory Theater and the Shubert Theater, the Yale Art Gallery, the British Museum and the Peabody Museum of Natural History. The New Haven Symphony Orchestra is the fourth oldest orchestra in the United States. Six institutions of higher learning are located in the New Haven area: Yale University, Southern Connecticut State University, Gateway Community College, Albertus Magnus College, the University of New Haven and Quinnipiac College. These institutions draw thousands of students and visitors to new Haven every year. Yale University is the city's largest employer. Almost 59% of the city's jobs are in the service sector. According to Connecticut Town Profiles 2001 over 32,000 people commute into New Haven from surrounding towns to work.

Demographics: A Changing Picture

Population and Age: The City's population in 2000 was 123,626. This figure represents an overall decrease of 5% since 1990. The percentage of white citizens has decreased by 12% (from 47.7% in 1990 to 35.6% in 2000) while the African-American population has grown by almost 4% (from 32.2% to 36.1%) in the same time period.

Asians also show an increase in numbers; in 2000 they comprise 3.9% of the total city population. In 1990 Hispanics represented 11% of New Haven's overall population; by 2000 they represent 21.4% - a substantial gain of over 10%. The percentage of foreign born residents has increased by from 8% in the 1990 census to 12% in 2000.

25% of New Haven's residents are under 18 years of age; of this age range 13% are African American, 8% are Hispanic and 7% are white. 7% of the total population is age four or under. Those 25 to 64 comprise close to 50% of New Haven's residents. Those 65 and older represent 10% of residents.

Language and Literacy: Of the 28% who speak a language other than English 2.8% speak English "less than very well." Of those 22,000 citizens who are Spanish-speaking almost 25% speak English "not well" or "not at all." 31% of students live in homes where English is not the primary language spoken.

There is no data for ESL literacy rates specifically for New Haven, however local estimates of literacy rates show that as many as 30% of the adults in the New Haven area function at the lowest level of literacy based on the National Adult Literacy Survey (1992) standards.

Educational Attainment: 73% of New Haveners have at least a high school degree; 27% have a BA or higher degree. 64% of children enter kindergarten with some preschool experience. Preschool experience is widely viewed as an indicator of initial success in school. Over 88% of students attend public school and 76% pursue post-secondary education.

Income: Median household income (1999) was \$29,604; in contrast the median household income for Connecticut is \$53,935. The poverty rate is 24%.

In order to acquire a collection of resources that is responsive to the community's actual and future needs and interests, it is necessary to keep in mind the conditions and demographics of New Haven, and to keep abreast of the ways the city's population is changing.

As the major urban center in Connecticut's south central region, NHFPL serves as an important information center for surrounding communities; this is reflected in our investment in reference and other research sources. However, the growth of the Internet as a major and widely available resource and the number of academic and special libraries providing citizens at least some access to their collections is having an increasing influence on materials selection and budgeting decisions.

III. Criteria for Selection

Library materials shall be chosen for values of interest, information, enlightenment and recreation from standard, recognized review media. They shall be selected according to the following guidelines:

General Criteria

1. Suitability of subject and treatment for intended audience.
2. Present and potential relevance to assessed community needs.
3. Insight into human and social condition.
4. Importance as a document of the times.
5. Relation to existing collection and other material held on the subject.
6. Reputation and/or significance of author.
7. Skill, competence and purpose of author.
8. Attention of critics, reviewers and public as evidenced in standard review sources.
9. Suitability of physical form, content and style for library use.

Non-Fiction

The library's non-fiction collection includes material on topics of interest or concern to the New Haven community. The library also purchases books and audiovisual items for those whose interests or needs are note widely shared. Unusually expensive materials and those with an extremely narrow or limited focus are not normally acquired. In addition textbooks and academic titles are not normally acquired.

The library attempts to collect materials representing all significant points of constitutional, political, economic, medical, ethical, religious, social, sexual, and other issues. Inclusion of material representing a particular belief, opinion or point of view in the library's collection does not constitute endorsement by the library.

Specific Criteria for the Evaluation of Nonfiction

1. Authority.
2. Comprehensiveness and depth of treatment.
3. Objectivity.
4. Clarity, accuracy and logic of presentation.

5. Currency.
6. Representation of various, including minority and challenging, points of view.

Fiction

This collection provides classic, critically-acclaimed, current and popular works of fiction. There is an emphasis on meeting the demand from recreational readers for popular, new titles. Outside of general fiction, which includes historical fiction and romances, the library collects in the mystery and, to a lesser extent, the science fiction genres. Mass market paperbacks are also offered and include a very popular romance section.

Specific Criteria for the Evaluation of Fiction

1. Representation of movement, genre, trend or national culture.
2. Vitality and originality.
3. Artistic presentation and experimentation.
4. Sustained interest.
5. Effective characterization.
6. Authenticity of historical or social setting.

There is no single standard that can be applied to in all cases when making a decision on whether or not to add items to the collection. For example, some materials may be judged primarily in terms of artistic merit, scholarship, or their value as human documents; some are selected on the basis of their interest to a particular age group; others may be selected to satisfy recreational and entertainment demands. No publication will be excluded solely because of the race, nationality, politically or social views of the author.

The Library will add the best literary and nonfiction works produced each year based on critical acclaim and literary awards. The goal is to create, for the layperson, a collection representative the best of human thought, creativity and knowledge.

A certain portion of books are subject to heavy local demand for a short period of time. Such items may or may not meet the general and specific criteria contained in this policy. The volume and nature of requests and demand by the public will be given serious consideration. Within budgetary constraints these materials will be added to the collection and discarded when demand subsides. The library will lease extra copies of books in adequate quantities to allow reasonable access to bestsellers and other high- demand books. Leased copies are returned to the vendor in exchange for more current books.

Materials will be chosen on the basis of the content as a whole. Evaluation will be based on the total effect of the work and not on the presence of words, phrases or situations which in themselves, when taken out of context, might be objected to.

Material representing as many responsible points of view as possible on the controversies, problems and issues of our times will be selected. From these members of the community may form their own judgments.

IV. Collections

Reference

The reference collection consists of both standard reference tools – encyclopedias, dictionaries, directories and statistical handbooks and online databases – that provide quick and concise answers to a variety of questions. It also includes more specialized tools geared towards the demands of our users. This collection is for use in the library only, with the most complete collection of the library’s research holdings housed at Ives. The branches all maintain smaller reference collections geared to neighborhood needs. Inclusion in the collection is determined by cost, ease of use, format frequency of use, patron demand and authoritativeness based on favorable reviews, inclusion in bibliographies or guides, or the reputation of the author or publisher.

Our electronic databases, at present, supplement our book collection. All are accessible in the library and most are accessible from home computers through the library’s website.

The expectation is that reliance on electronic sources will grow. The goal is to decrease costs, provide up-to-date information and ease of access to the greatest number of users. Selection of electronic resources is based on criteria for print sources, including anticipated demand also careful cost analysis-the price of print versus electronic format, licensing fees, usage restrictions and remote access capability.

Connecticut Documents Depository and Census Data

NHFPL participates in the Connecticut State Documents Depository Library program as a partial depository. In this capacity the library provides access to state documents primarily in print but also in some digital formats via the Internet. It is expected that more material will be digitized in the future. Materials are selected to support the needs and demands of a large urban public library. Emphasized are the areas of education and training, commerce and economic development, labor, transportation, public health, local/state census data and advocacy for special groups such as the elderly, the disabled, etc.

The library participates in the Decennial U.S. Government Census through the State Data Center and collects census information at the federal and state levels. Census data in print is retained indefinitely. The library refers patrons to the Seely Mudd Library at Yale, which is a full federal depository, for materials not in our collection.

Local History

The Local History Room preserves and promotes the history and cultural heritage of New Haven. It seeks, through its collection, to relate the city’s rich history to its present.

The Local History collection supports public interests by archiving books, pamphlets, newspaper clippings, photographs, genealogical materials, municipal documents, maps, atlases, audiovisual materials, electronic resources and indices which document the economic, natural, political and social history of New Haven. The collection also includes works on general Connecticut history, historical methodology and the history of the New Haven Free Public Library.

Selected sound recordings of the New Haven Oral History Project will be added to the collection as these interviews with New Haven residents are produced. The recordings will be available on CD, and a listening device will be provided in the Local History Room.

Artifacts, valuable manuscripts and other items of relatively high intrinsic value and/or rarity may be considered for addition to the collection. However, the special considerations these items may entail may not be consistent with the public nature of the Local History collection. Should the library decline any donated local history items, suggestions will be provided for placement in other New Haven area special collections

Business, Job and nonprofit Collections

The business, Job and Nonprofit collections support businesses and the nonprofit community as well as job seekers and career explorers with a reference and circulating collection of books, periodicals, pamphlets, audiovisual items and specialized databases.

Business resources are used to review investments, investigate a business startup, find marketing information, to review a company's background for job applicants and to research state, regional, national and world economic conditions. Emphasis is given to current popular management and business books.

The Nonprofit & Philanthropic Resource Center provides resources for grantmakers, grantseekers and the general public. These resources emphasize such topics as starting a nonprofit, board development, strategic planning, grantwriting, grantseeking, fundraising and nonprofit careers. The NPRC is a cooperating collection of the Foundation Center with a core FC print collection and databases which enable agencies to search for funding and other foundation information.

Job Center books and videos offer help with resume writing, cover letters, interviewing, career exploration – including trends and salary information, exam preparation and job training. Internet resources supplement this collection with current job postings and other online job search information.

Consumer Health Information Network

There are CHIN centers at each library in the NHFPL system. Each consists of a computer with health databases and Internet access and a book, video and pamphlet collection. The collections aim to provide accurate and timely information on a variety of health topics of interest to the consumer. Although the materials are written primarily for laypeople, the collections also include technical sources and professional literature. Materials in Spanish are available as well.

Reading/ESL Centers

The Reading Center collection is designed for adults who are learning to read for the first time, improving reading levels, learning to speak English as a second language and for literacy tutors. The collection includes fiction and nonfiction and consists of both print (books, newsletters and newspapers) and non-print materials (videos, audio and software), with print materials arranged within specific subject categories. It also includes a "tutor resources" section with general information on literacy for tutors and teachers. Each branch has a

Reading Center collection.

This collection will continue to broaden its coverage in all literacy subject areas with special attention given to English as a second language and basic reading and math skill development. Consumer information and citizenship are also subjects in high demand. Developing the areas of family literacy, resources for new Americans and information literacy are important as well.

Materials selected are chosen by reading levels, generally grade six and below, and emphasize the enhancement of life skills. Because most materials in this area are published in paperback format, weeding must be done on an ongoing basis to keep this collection in good physical condition.

Juvenile Collection

The collection of books for children is an integral part of the library's overall collection. It is guided by the same educational and cultural principles that guide the library as a whole. The collection is planned for children and for parents and adults working with children. Its purpose is to foster a lifelong love of reading and to provide information, enjoyment and enlightenment to New Haven's young people.

Materials in the children's collection are chosen in response to the needs and interests of children from infancy to age thirteen. The collection reflects the diverse tastes, ethnic backgrounds and abilities of our users. The goal is a well-balanced collection, with a range of titles at various reading levels on all subjects of interest to children. In choosing materials for children age is a determining selection principle.

Materials are purchased in print and non-print formats and include books, magazines, audio cassettes, compact discs, video cassettes and DVDs.

Books are evaluated for interests, appeal and treatment of the subject for readers at various reading levels:

- For babies and toddlers *board books* with bright, clear illustrations and appropriate themes are selected.
- *Picture books* are considered for their quality of format and illustration and for theme and use of language.
- Books for *beginning* readers are selected for suitability of vocabulary for appeal to new readers.
- *Early chapter books* for readers in grades two through four are selected for appropriate reading level and interest to this age group.
- For readers through age thirteen works of *fiction* are evaluated based on quality of writing and treatment of theme for intended audience. Demand is also considered in the selection of fiction.
- *Nonfiction* is selected at all reading levels through the age of thirteen. The nonfiction criteria are also used to select for the *reference collection* where

there is an emphasis on general and subject encyclopedias along with ready reference tools, bibliographies and atlases. Criteria include:

1. Currency
2. Attractiveness of format
3. Authority
4. Accuracy
5. Appropriateness for intended audience
6. Interest to audience

The *Audiovisual* collection includes books on tape and CDs, music in either cassette or CD format, video cassettes and DVDs. Selection is influenced by patron interest and demand. It is done primarily from professional reviews and publisher's catalogs.

Magazines are selected for their recreational and informational content. Back issues circulate and no attempt is made to maintain a complete backfile.

Juvenile materials in the languages of representative groups within our community, with an emphasis on Spanish and Chinese, are purchased. Other foreign language purchases are determined by immigrant demographics and user demand.

The Corinne Levin Parenting Collection contains books, magazines and videos about baby and child care and other topics of interest to parents. Subjects include adoption, child birth, newborn care, fatherhood, child development, raising teenagers, disabilities, nutrition and health. This collection is further supported by the adult nonfiction collection.

Young Adult

The Young Adult collection functions as a transitional collection between the juvenile and adult collections. Its purpose is to serve the academic, personal and recreational needs of young adults aged thirteen through seventeen in New Haven. In addition, a resource collection of books and other materials for youth service providers and others working with young adults is being developed.

A core set of age-appropriate materials covering the social sciences, health and wellness, geography and history serves as a starting point for research before accessing adult sources for more comprehensive information.

A popular *fiction* collection, in both paperback and hardcover, offers reluctant and avid YA readers a variety of genres. For growth and personal development a selection nonfiction titles provide pertinent information on popular topics.

Magazines that reflect a variety of aspects of youth culture are available for browsing.

A growing section of *comic books*, also known as graphic novels, ranging from classic to the popular Japanese anime, completes the YA print collection.

Audiovisual materials for YA s consist of unabridged books on CD, videos and select music CDs. Books on CD

are of current bestsellers as well as classic YA fiction.

The videos and music CDs collection is expanding due to high interest and circulation rate.

Foreign Language Collection

The Library collects material in nine foreign languages, with strong emphasis placed on Spanish and Chinese. Spanish currently has the largest, most up-to-date holdings, with substantial collections at both Ives and the Fair Haven Branch. In addition materials are available in Arabic, French, German, Italian, Japanese, Korean and Russian. Selection of these languages is based on response to demographic trends, immigration patterns and patron requests. The collections, with the exception of Spanish and Chinese, are dated and worn: they are being weeded heavily and are being replenished on a yearly schedule. The primary emphasis for selection for all languages is on general reading materials aimed at a non-academic audience with a focus on classics, practical information and popular works. Fiction emphasizes current works by contemporary authors writing in that language. The Spanish collections also contain reference material helpful to non-academic readers, primarily students through high school and self-learners.

Budget constraints, rather than lack of interest, have been responsible for the unevenness in foreign language book acquisitions. Purchasing will continue to stress the needs of current immigrants and will aim to update existing collections.

Periodicals and Newspapers

A broad range of popular magazines, newspapers, business serials and other periodicals are purchased. They provide new ideas, current topics, consumer information, and practical and recreational information. A small percentage consists of scholarly journals on pertinent subjects and well-known literary journals. Some periodicals are acquired for staff professional reading; these include review media for materials selection.

Basic criteria for periodical acquisitions are:

1. Titles should be of interest to a substantial number of patrons.
2. Titles are written for the layperson rather than the scholar.
3. Titles contain up-to-dates information.
4. Titles have been favorably reviewed in the professional literature.
5. Titles do no overlap or duplicate subjects areas already covered.
6. Titles should be indexed in at least one of the indexes, including online sources, subscribed to by the library, if the nature of the journal is informational.

For selected print titles the library also subscribes to the microform versions in order to maintain permanent backfiles for reference purposes. Frequency of use, storage space, and price are criteria used to determine whether to acquire a serial in microform.

Backfiles of bound paper remain the preferred format for the limited number of titles that require superior image quality or those unavailable in microform. With increasing use of online periodical indexes that include full-text articles the need for access to backfiles of periodicals has diminished. Our holdings and purchasing policy will reflect evolving usage patterns.

The periodical collection is reviewed annually by a committee chaired by the Serials Librarian. Critical reviews of new journals, samples, staff suggestions and patron requests are considered.

Audiovisual

This circulating collection includes DVDs, CDs, videocassettes, audiocassettes, books-on-tape, and audio language instruction materials. Acquired formats reflect current technology and user demand.

The video collection is undergoing a shift in format from videocassette to DVD. However, the shift will be gradual since the preferred format for nonfiction programming is still videotape. The collection consists of a mix of educational and cultural subjects, including travel, biography, documentaries, children's stories and feature films. Films are selected that appeal to the broadest range of the library's users. Standards governing decisions are favorable reviews, technical quality, cost, timeliness, social significance and public demand.

The book-on-tape collection is also undergoing a format change from cassette to CD. Subject matter includes fiction, with an emphasis on mysteries, suspense and bestsellers; nonfiction, mainly biographies, history and personal development; and American and world classics of literature. The collection contains both abridged and unabridged titles, with selection preference for the unabridged.

Musical recordings generally fall into the category of either classical or popular. The classical collection is well developed; the current emphasis is on critically acclaimed performances and contemporary classical works. Popular music is selected for the following criteria: critical acclaim, patron request, and developing New Haven demographics. Styles include world beat, pop, rock, folk, jazz and country music.

Language instruction materials, video and audio, are selected according to patron interest and complement our print resources. The strategy is to maintain a collection of the most widely spoken or studied languages, e.g. French, German, Spanish and Italian, while providing some material on less in-demand languages such as Greek, Portuguese and Swahili.

Municipal Art Collection

The Municipal Art Collection promotes appreciation for the role of visual art in the economic and cultural life of the city; it documents and preserves the work of contemporary artists in New Haven; it supports and encourages the unique contribution art and artists make to the cultural health of the city; and it extends the possibilities of literacy through programs that integrate the arts and reading.

Art is acquired for the collection by gift, purchase or bequest. The City Librarian is ultimately responsible for initiating the purchase of artwork and may instruct a committee, collections manager, staff member or another to assist in the process of identifying art and artists for possible inclusion. The City Librarian and his designees are responsible for encouraging and evaluating gifts and bequests. The funds available for purchases will be used to improve the collection through the acquisition of:

- Exemplary works of art that feature New Haven subjects or themes associated with a person, place or event in New Haven.
- Exemplary works of art by New Haven resident artists.

- Strong works of art by emerging New Haven resident artists with great potential.

This is a recently created collection, which is hung at Ives. Acquisitions continue and are based on available funds.

Evolving Special and New Collections

A major current project is the planning and purchase of the opening day collection for the new Hill branch, to be called the *Courtland Wilson Branch*. This branch is scheduled for completion in Spring, 2005. The collection will offer a range of items from early learning and preliteracy materials through high school level resources and a popular collection highlighting bestsellers, how-to and personal development books, audio books and DVDs. A current collection of periodicals and manuals will support a state-of-the-art computer center.

The Yale University/New Haven Historical Association's *Oral History Project* will add interviews and other materials to the Local History Collection. See above.

A grant to establish a *Life Options/Transitions Center* will initiate a collection of resources for active, older adults entering a new phase of life. The collection will emphasize retirement planning, finances, travel, health, re-careering, volunteering and other pursuits of interest to those fifty-five and older.

V. Branch Collections

Branch materials selection is based on the same criteria for individual works as the Ives library. In general, branches serve as popular libraries and local information centers for their communities.

Collection development is based on the branch's role as a civic, cultural and informational center for their neighborhood. At every branch emphasis is placed on board and picture books for young children and school readiness materials for preschoolers. The branch collections also provide supplemental educational support for students through middle school and for adult self-learners. Each collection is responsive to its community's recreational needs and demands. Special collections facilitate access to areas of particular interest to each neighborhood. Materials – books, videos, CDs and periodicals – are selected in the languages spoken in the branch's service area where necessary.

The Ives collections supplement branch resources as required.

VI. Donated Materials

The library accepts and welcomes donated books and other materials. However, ability to receive large donations is dependant on the availability of staff to evaluate and process gift materials. The same selection criteria are applied to unsolicited items as to purchased items. The library will dispose of gifts that are not added to the collection according to the guidelines outlined under Collection Maintenance. The donor may impose no restrictions on the use of gift books or other gift materials added to the collection and no special collections shall be set up as a condition for such a gift unless approved by the Library Board of Directors.

The Library receives, as a standing order gift, all Yale University Press publications. All of these books are cataloged and integrated into the collection.

VII. Interlibrary Loan

The Interlibrary Loan Department supports collection development by obtaining books or articles not available in our collection from other libraries. This is a service to provide New Haven residents with access to materials not in the library's collection or that fall outside the library's overall collection development policy. Titles frequently requested and falling within selection criteria will be purchased and added to the collection.

VIII. Collection Maintenance

The library will maintain an active, useful collection by retaining or replacing essential material and removing on a continuous basis those publications which are either obsolete, of little historical significance, no longer in demand, or in poor physical condition. Criteria applied to the selection of books and audiovisual items will also be applied to their removal.

Books which have been deaccessioned may be offered for sale to the public through the library book sale or be offered to organizations which accept books. Withdrawn or donated items of little or no value or interest will be discarded.

IX. Requests by The Public/Requests for Reconsideration of Library Materials

Suggestions by the public for materials that they would like to have added to the library's collection will be considered for purchase, using the criteria described in this policy. A "Request to Purchase" form is available for this purpose. (copy attached) The forms are forwarded to selectors who make the decision whether to purchase the item. If the item is ordered a hold is placed for the requesting patron.

A complaint by a member of the public regarding the inclusion of a specific item in the library must be filed in writing by having the complainant fill out the form entitled "Request for Reconsideration of Library Materials." (copy attached) No anonymous complaint will be considered. The completed form will be immediately forwarded to the City Librarian, who may refer the complaint to a staff member or subject specialist for more information on the item in question prior to conferring with the library trustees. Material being questioned will remain in the active collection until a final decision is made. The Library subscribes to the American library Association's statement on Expurgation of Library Materials: An **Interpretation of the Library Bill of Rights**. (see attached)

X. Revision of Policy

This policy will be periodically reviewed no less frequently than every three years by the City Librarian, the Chief of public Services, the Acquisitions Librarian and assigned staff. Recommendations for revision will be brought before the Library Board of Directors.

Library Director: James C. Welbourne
Collection Development Policy Committee: Cathleen DeNigris, Kristin Whitehead, Nancy Abbey, Xia Feng, Dale Johnson, Nancy Moscoso-Guzman... with input from the professional staff.

Approved by the NHFPL Board of Directors, June 2004.

First Amendment of the Bill of Rights to the United States Constitution

| [Selected U.S. Supreme Court Decisions](#) | [Findlaw First Amendment Annotations Expanded](#) |

CONGRESS SHALL MAKE NO LAW RESPECTING AN ESTABLISHMENT OF RELIGION, OR PROHIBITING THE FREE EXERCISE THEREOF; OR ABRIDGING THE FREEDOM OF SPEECH, OR OF THE PRESS; OR THE RIGHT OF THE PEOPLE PEACEABLY TO ASSEMBLE, AND TO PETITION THE GOVERNMENT FOR A REDRESS OF GRIEVANCES.

The Bill of Rights to the U.S. Constitution was ratified on December 15, 1791

“Censorship reflects a society’s lack of confidence in itself. It is a hallmark of an authoritarian regime . . .” — Supreme Court Justice Potter Stewart, dissenting *Ginzberg v. United States*, 383 U.S. 463 (1966)

“The very purpose of a Bill of Rights was to withdraw certain subjects from the vicissitudes of political controversy, to place them beyond the reach of majorities and officials and to establish them as legal principles to be applied by the courts. One’s right to life, liberty, and property, to free speech, a free press, freedom of worship and assembly, and other fundamental rights may not be submitted to vote; they depend on the outcome of no elections.” — Supreme Court Justice Robert Jackson, [West Virginia State Board of Education v. Barnette](#), 319 U.S. 624 (1943)

“First Amendment freedoms are most in danger when the government seeks to control thought or to justify its laws for that impermissible end. The right to think is the beginning of freedom, and speech must be protected from the government because speech is the beginning of thought.”—Supreme Court Justice Anthony M. Kennedy, [Ashcroft V. Free Speech Coalition](#)

“Almost all human beings have an infinite capacity for taking things for granted.” — Aldous Huxley, author of *Brave New World*

“Men feared witches and burnt women. It is the function of speech to free men from the bondage of irrational fears.” — U.S. Supreme Court Justice Louis D. Brandeis (1856–1941), [Whitney v. California](#), 274 U. S. 357 (1927)

U.S. Supreme Court Links

[The Supreme Court of the United States Home Page](#)

[The Federal Judiciary Home Page](#)

[Historic Supreme Court Decisions - by Justice](#)

[Historic Supreme Court Decisions - by Topic](#)

[Oyez Oyez Oyez, Northwestern University](#)

[Supreme Court Collection, Legal Information Institute, Cornell Law School](#)

[Supreme Court Decisions, Findlaw](#)

[Supreme Court Justices Information](#)

[U.S. Judicial Branch Resources](#)

Findlaw First Amendment Annotations Expanded

- [Freedom of Expression–Speech and Press](#)
- [Freedom of Expression–The Philosophical Basis](#)
- [Freedom of Expression: Is There a Difference Between Speech and Press?](#)
- [The Doctrine of Prior Restraint](#)
- [Obscenity and Prior Restraint](#)
- [Subsequent Punishment: Clear and Present Danger and Other Tests](#)
- [Freedom of Belief](#)
- [Right of Association](#)
- [Maintenance of National Security and the First Amendment](#)
- [Particular Governmental Regulations Which Restrict Expression](#)
- [Government Restraint of Content of Expression](#)
- [Invasion of Privacy](#)
- [Obscenity](#)
- [Non-obscene But Sexually Explicit and Indecent Expression](#)
- [Speech Plus–The Constitutional Law of Leafleting, Picketing, and Demonstrating](#)

See also [U.S. Constitution: First Amendment Annotations from FindLaw](#)

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.

A history of the Library Bill of Rights is found in the latest edition of the [Intellectual Freedom Manual](#).

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](#)

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 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 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.

Endorsed January 10, 1990, by the ALA Council

Expurgation of Library Materials

An Interpretation of the Library Bill of Rights

Expurgating library materials is a violation of the Library Bill of Rights. Expurgation as defined by this interpretation includes any deletion, excision, alteration, editing, or obliteration of any part(s) of books or other library resources by the library, its agents, or its parent institution (if any) when done for the purposes of censorship. Such action stands in violation of Articles I, II, and III of the Library Bill of Rights, which state that “Materials should not be excluded because of the origin, background, or views of those contributing to their creation,” that “Materials should not be proscribed or removed because of partisan or doctrinal disapproval,” and that “Libraries should challenge censorship in the fulfillment of their responsibility to provide information and enlightenment.”

The act of expurgation denies access to the complete work and the entire spectrum of ideas that the work is intended to express. This is censorship. Expurgation based on the premise that certain portions of a work may be harmful to minors is equally a violation of the Library Bill of Rights.

Expurgation without permission from the rights holder may violate the copyright provisions of the United States Code.

The decision of rights holders to alter or expurgate future versions of a work does not impose a duty on librarians to alter or expurgate earlier versions of a work. Librarians should resist such requests in the interest of historical preservation and opposition to censorship. Furthermore, librarians oppose expurgation of resources available through licensed collections. Expurgation of any library resource imposes a restriction, without regard to the rights and desires of all library users, by limiting access to ideas and information.

Adopted February 2, 1973, by the ALA Council; amended July 1, 1981; January 10, 1990; July 2, 2008.

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Challenged Materials:

An Interpretation of the *Library Bill of Rights*

Libraries: An American Value states, “We protect the rights of individuals to express their opinions about library resources and services.” The American Library Association declares as a matter of firm principle that it is the responsibility of every library to have a clearly defined written policy for collection development that includes a procedure for review of challenged materials. Selection of online resources, including Web sites, should also be governed by this collection development policy and be subject to the same procedures for review of challenged materials. This policy reflects the *Library Bill of Rights* and is approved by the appropriate governing authority.

Challenged materials should remain in the collection during the review process. The *Library Bill of Rights* states in Article I that “Materials should not be excluded because of the origin, background, or views of those contributing to their creation,” and in Article II, that “Materials should not be proscribed or removed because of partisan or doctrinal disapproval.” Freedom of expression is protected by the Constitution of the United States, but constitutionally protected expression is often separated from unprotected expression only by a dim and uncertain line. The Supreme Court has held that the Constitution requires a procedure designed to examine critically all challenged expression before it can be suppressed.¹ A hearing is a part of this procedure. Materials that meet the criteria for selection and inclusion within the collection should not be removed.

Therefore, any attempt, be it legal or extra-legal,* to regulate or suppress materials in libraries must be closely scrutinized to the end that protected expression is not abridged.

Adopted June 25, 1971; amended July 1, 1981; amended January 10, 1990; January 28, 2009, by the ALA Council.

* “Extra-legal” refers to actions that are not regulated or sanctioned by law. These can include attempts to remove or suppress materials by library staff and library board members that circumvent the library's collection development policy, or actions taken by elected officials or library board members outside the established legal process for making legislative or board decisions. “Legal process” includes challenges to library materials initiated and conducted pursuant to the library's collection development policy, actions taken by legislative bodies or library boards during official sessions or meetings, or litigation undertaken in courts of law with jurisdiction over the library and the library's governing body.

¹ *Bantam Books, Inc. v. Sullivan*, 372 U.S. 58 (1963)

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