

POLICY TITLE: Material Selection Policy

ADOPTION/LAST REVIEW: Adopted 1-19-88, Revised 4-12-94

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this policy is to guide librarians and to inform the public about the principles upon which decisions are made. A policy cannot replace the judgment of librarians, but stating goals and in dictating boundaries will assist them in choosing from the best array of available materials.

The term "materials," as used in this document, refers to physical entities of any substance that serve as carriers of information, e.g. books, graphics, audio-recordings, film, video, machine-readable data files, etc.

On September 16, 1986 the Board of Trustees adopted a mission statement that placed in priority order the roles of the Marshfield Public Library. These roles have a direct influence on the type of materials purchased within the guidelines established below. The primary roles that the Board adopted are those of:

A POPULAR MATERIALS CENTER which provides materials of recognized quality to persons of all ages for reading, viewing, and listening. The library features current, high-demand, high-interest materials in a variety of formats for persons of all ages.

A REFERENCE CENTER which provides library users with convenient, timely access to information needed for daily living and decision making. The library actively provides timely, accurate, and useful information for community area residents in their pursuit of job-related and personal interests. The library also promotes on-site and telephone reference/information services to aid users in locating needed information.

AN INDEPENDENT LEARNING CENTER which provides materials and services for adults to pursue such endeavors as citizenship education, cultural interests, job-related competencies, and self-improvement. The library supports individuals of all ages pursuing a sustained program of learning independent of any education provider.

As secondary priorities the library adopts the secondary, but still important roles of:

A PRESCHOOL CHILD'S DOOR TO LEARNING which provides materials, child and parent services, and program to enhance an interest in books and learning.

A FORMAL EDUCATION SUPPORT CENTER which works closely with educational institutions in the Marshfield area to share resources and assist students with their library needs.

The library provides community meeting rooms, programs, and information, and assists patrons with their scholarly research through interlibrary loan service. However, the library roles of COMMUNITY CENTER, COMMUNITY INFORMATION CENTER, and SCHOLARLY RESEARCH CENTER currently receive the lowest priority.

I. THE COMMUNITY

A knowledge of the community is a vital ingredient in the responsible selection of library materials. There must be knowledge of residents' interests, capacities and problems. The Marshfield area population encompasses a wide variety of interests, educational backgrounds, and financial abilities. The library recognizes that the community is diverse in its make-up and its needs and endeavors to meet the community's needs within the framework of available staff and funds.

II. PURPOSE AND OBJECTIVES OF THE MARSHFIELD PUBLIC LIBRARY

The Marshfield Public Library is a public service agency and is dedicated to providing the residents of Marshfield and the surrounding areas with a well-rounded collection of books and other media that record the knowledge of humankind, their ideas and culture. It is also the library's prime aim to organize said materials in a way that will permit ready access to them. The library also makes available qualified staff to offer guidance and encouragement in use of materials and to make the library an easily available and reliable source of information and reference.

Though the library attempts to give the best service possible to its regular users, it also has an obligation to collect materials and search for methods of service that will satisfy the needs of those in the community who have not traditionally been library users. The library must consider not only the present needs of the community but must anticipate the future needs in order to give timely service.

Materials should be selected and services and programs planned that satisfy residents' needs as individuals and as members of groups with concern given for all ages, backgrounds, interests, abilities, and levels of education. Staff, materials and services should be in ample supply to allow the library to be a dependable resource for most people most of the time.

The general objectives of the Marshfield Public Library shall be:

- A. To assemble, preserve and administer, in organized collections, books and related educational and recreational materials in order to promote, through guidance and stimulation, the communication of ideas, an enlightened citizenship, and enriched personal lives.
- B. To serve the community as a center of reliable information.
- C. To provide a place where inquiring minds may encounter the original, sometimes unorthodox and critical, ideas so necessary as correctives and stimulants in a society that depends for its survival on free competition in ideas.
- D. To support educational, civic and cultural activities of groups and organizations.
- E. To provide opportunity and encouragement for children, young adults, and adults to continually educate themselves.
- F. To seek continually to identify community needs, to provide programs of service to meet such needs, and to cooperate with other organizations, agencies, and institutions which can provide programs or services to meet community needs.
- G. To provide opportunity for recreation through the use of literature, music and other art forms.

In the formulation or revising of these objectives, the library is guided by professional standards: it supports and is supported by the American Library Association Library "Bill of Rights" and "Freedom to Read" statements; the American Film and Video Association's "Freedom to View" statement; and the "Resolution on the Constitutional Protection of Library Materials, Services and Programs" (see Appendixes A,B,C & D respectively).

The library strives to stimulate not only learning but also concern and understanding. It attempts to provide materials and guidance in their use so that as many people as possible can utilize the collective knowledge of humankind. It is vitally important that every citizen today have ready access to the world of ideas, information and creative experience.

III. SELECTION OF MATERIALS

The authority and responsibility for the selection of library materials lies with the Library Director and, under his/her direction, delegated to the professional staff who are qualified for this activity by reason of education, training, and experience. Suggestions are

welcome and are given serious consideration within the criteria for selection.

A. Adult and Reference

Librarians assigned the areas of selecting materials for the Adult and Reference Section select materials for persons 14 years of age and older. **Selection must be as broad in scope as the interests of the community.** The collection, besides aiming at a variety and depth in content, must recognize a wide range of reading ability.

B. Children

The Children's Librarian is responsible for selecting materials for the collection that satisfy the information, recreational and cultural reading needs and potentials of children from preschool to age 14. Materials are judged on their own literary and artistic merits, their contributions to the balance of the total collection and their suitability of content and vocabulary to the age of the readers.

Other staff members participate in the selection process through suggestions of areas or titles for consideration.

IV. CRITERIA FOR SELECTION

To build collections of merit and significance, materials must be measured by objective guidelines. All acquisitions, whether purchased or donated, are considered in terms of the following standards. Clearly, however, an item need not meet all of the criteria in order to be acceptable. When judging the quality of materials several standards and combinations of standards may be used, as some materials may be judged on artistic merit, while others are considered because of scholarship, value as human documents, or ability to satisfy the recreational and entertainment needs of the community.

A. General Criteria

1. Suitability of physical form for library use.
2. Insight into human and social conditions.
3. Suitability of subject and style for intended audience.
4. Present and potential relevance to community needs.
5. Appropriateness and effectiveness of medium to content.
6. Importance as a document of the times.
7. Relation to existing collection and other materials on the subject.
8. Reputation and/or significance of author/artist.
9. Attention given by critics, reviewers, professional selection aids and the public.
10. Quality of writing and/or presentation.

B. Specific Criteria for the Evaluation of Works of Information and Opinion.

1. Authority.
2. Comprehensiveness and depth of treatment.
3. Clarity, accuracy, and logic of presentation.
4. Statement of challenging or original point of view.

C. Specific Criteria for the Evaluation of Works of Imagination.

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

D. Other Criteria.

1. Widespread demand. Such items may or may not meet the general and specific criteria in material selection, but it shall be considered an important factor. Example: Local demand for books on Best Seller lists. If such materials had poor reviews, they should be examined before adding them to the collection.
2. Social and intellectual changes in the climate of the community with continuing re-evaluation of materials to meet new conditions.
3. Flexible attitudes to reflect a rapidly changing society. Consideration of new forms and new styles of expression. Forms such as films, videos, audio recordings, and paperbacks should be judged for their own kind of excellence and the intended audience.
4. Controversial or complicated questions, including unpopular and unorthodox positions, covered from various points of view. The library does not promote particular beliefs or views. Resources should be provided whereby the individual can examine issues freely and make their own choice.

V. GIFTS

A gift to the library may consist of materials or of funds for the purchase of materials. Funds may be given for acquiring materials recommended by the library's staff or for the

purchase of specific items suggested by the donor. The library encourages gifts not earmarked for specific items in order to permit the most flexible use of the donation.

Gift additions must meet the same selection criteria as purchased materials. In some cases, materials are received or purchased which could not have been acquired from library funds because of budget limitations. If gifts of marginal value are offered, processing costs, duplication of titles, and use of shelf space are considered before addition to the collection. Used materials donated to the library are assessed for their suitability for the library collection and otherwise added to materials for the library book sale.

Gifts are accepted subject to the following limitations:

1. The library retains unconditional ownership of the gift.
2. The library makes the final decision on the use or other disposition of the gift.
3. The library reserves the right to decide the conditions of display, housing and access to the materials.

VI. ISSUES RELATED TO ACCESS AND INTELLECTUAL FREEDOM

The library recognizes that many library materials are controversial and that any item may offend some patrons. Selection is not made on the basis of any anticipated approval or disapproval, but solely on the merits of the work in relation to developing the library's collection and serving a wide variety of patron needs and interests.

Responsibility for what minors read rests with parents or legal guardians. The library does not serve a parental role. Selection of adult material is not limited by the possibility that materials may come into the possession of minors.

The library does not restrict access to any of its materials or services based on age. Any parent wishing to restrict (until graduation from eighth grade) their minor child's borrowing privileges to only those materials in the children's section, must so advise the library in writing. The library will then enter the restriction into the computer system so that no adult Marshfield Public Library materials can be borrowed with that card.

If a parent wishes to continue the restriction after eighth grade, the library must be informed of that wish in writing and the restriction will be extended until the child becomes 18 years old. Parents are advised that materials selected for ninth grade level and beyond are housed in the adult department; a teenager with a restricted library card would not be able to borrow such materials.

VII. WEEDING AND DISPOSITION OF WEEDED MATERIALS

For proper maintenance of the library's collection, occasionally it becomes necessary to remove materials that are no longer relevant in that they have become outdated or inaccurate with the passing of time and the acquisition of knowledge. It may also become necessary, as the library adds more and more materials, to remove old materials that are no longer used by or of interest to the public.

When removing an item from the collection, the following are considered:

1. How long has the material remained in the library without being used?
2. Is the information found therein incorrect or misleading because of new information or discoveries?
3. Does the library own more recent and more accurate material on the same subject?
4. Is there any historical significance that may make the material valuable at present or in the future?
5. Is this work a standard in its particular field?
6. What is the general condition of the material?

Materials will be disposed of at the discretion of the library director who will insure that it is done in such a manner that no for-profit organization or private individual will realize any financial gain.

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.

www.ala.org/advocacy/intfreedom/librarybill

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](#)

www.ala.org/offices/oif/statementspols/ftstatement/freedomreadstatement

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

www.ala.org/offices/oif/statementspols/ftvstatement/freedomviewstatement



RESOLUTION ON THE CONSTITUTIONAL PROTECTION OF LIBRARY MATERIALS, SERVICES AND PROGRAMS

- WHEREAS, The publicly supported library is the only institution established to provide free and equal access to information for all people of the community it serves; and
- WHEREAS, The Library Bill of Rights and its interpretations are the basic policies that guide libraries in the provision of services, materials and programs in a manner that guarantees each individual's right to access to constitutionally protected expression; and
- WHEREAS, Throughout the United States there are attempts to seek legal action such as legislation, ballot initiatives, and state constitutional amendments, that would have the effect of limiting the diversity of library collections, services or programs or restricting minors' access to specific materials, services or programs; and
- WHEREAS, These limitations are intended to require libraries to discriminate in favor of one set of values over all others; and
- WHEREAS, Requiring libraries to limit access to minors interferes with the rights and responsibilities of parents to guide their own children in their use of the library; now, therefore, be it
- RESOLVED, That the Wisconsin Library Association affirms that forcing libraries to violate the principles embodied in the Library Bill of Rights and its Interpretations seriously abridges the First Amendment rights of people of all ages served by the affected libraries; and be it further
- RESOLVED, That The Wisconsin Library Association opposes any action that would limit the diversity of library collections, services or programs, or would restrict minors' access to library materials, services or programs; and be it further
- RESOLVED, That the Wisconsin Library Association opposes any action that forces libraries to set policies that violate First Amendment Rights; and be it further
- RESOLVED, That copies of this resolution be transmitted to all Wisconsin Library Association units and be made widely available throughout the state.

ADOPTED BY THE COUNCIL OF THE AMERICAN LIBRARY ASSOCIATION
June 30 1993

ADOPTED BY THE WISCONSIN LIBRARY ASSOCIATION
November 24, 1993