

FREE LIBRARY OF PHILADELPHIA
MATERIALS SELECTION POLICY, PS #56 (REV)
OCTOBER 2007

OVERVIEW

The Free Library of Philadelphia is guided by the principle that it is an educational force, an intellectual and cultural center, and a catalyst for individual, economic, and community development. The Library provides materials, resources and programs to satisfy the widely varied interests of the citizens of Philadelphia. It makes information and resources freely and easily available, providing the freedom to explore ideas without fear of judgment or censure.

The Free Library seeks to be responsive to the needs of a changing and dynamic city and region with a diverse population by offering a collection of materials that is, inclusive, wide-ranging in view and format, and which sustains the principles embodied in the Library Bill of Rights and the Freedom to Read statements as articulated by the American Library Association (see appendices). Materials are selected for different age and educational levels; different racial, ethnic, cultural, economic and religious groups; a wide spectrum of political points of view; and people with different sexual orientations.

Selection of a given item for the Library's collections should not be interpreted as an endorsement of a particular viewpoint. No material is excluded because of the race, nationality, religion, gender, sexual orientation, political or social views of the author. In following this policy, neither the Library nor its Trustees endorses every thought, expression or belief represented in the Library's collections.

RESPONSIBILITIES FOR SELECTION OF LIBRARY MATERIALS

In the Free Library Trustees by-laws, authority for "the selection and purchase of all books, periodicals, newspapers, maps, manuscripts and other material for acquisition" is delegated to the Director, subject to the policies approved by the Trustees. The Library's President and Director delegates the development and maintenance of the Library's collection to knowledgeable librarians in the Materials Management Division and other designated divisions.

LIBRARY COLLECTION PRIORITIES

The Materials Selection policy serves as a guide in the selection and retention of materials; outlines the criteria by which these decisions are made; and supports the Free Library's mission of providing for all segments of Philadelphia's diverse population a comprehensive collection of recorded knowledge, ideas, artistic expression, and information in a variety of media, including current technology.

The Library's collections include current materials of high interest in a variety of formats for persons of all ages; offer timely and accurate information; support the educational goals of all Philadelphians by providing the resources which correspond to their needs; and encourage children of all ages to develop an enjoyment and love of reading, learning and libraries. In general, selection decisions will be made on the basis of expected popularity, content, currency, and ease of use. The Library will also consider the importance of emerging new trends, as well as changing information formats and technologies.

The Free Library strives to support the latest technology in its commitment to providing citizens of Philadelphia with timely, accurate information in a variety of formats. In addition to meeting its customers' current interests and informational needs, the Free Library endeavors to anticipate future informational needs and formats as more Philadelphians integrate technology into their daily lives. The Free Library recognizes that its virtual presence is increasingly central to the lives of its users.

In selecting materials, the Library considers the availability of materials through other community institutions. The Free Library also recognizes its responsibility as the Public Library for the City of Philadelphia, as a District Library Center for the library system of the County of Philadelphia, and as a Statewide Resource Center for the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania.

SELECTION CRITERIA

The Free Library provides collections containing a wide variety of materials in print, audio-visual, electronic formats and other formats. In selecting materials and developing collections for adults, as well as for children and teens, library staff includes materials that represent the broad range of human experience, reflecting the ethnic, religious, racial, and socio-economic diversity of the Philadelphia region; as well as a broad range of opinion on issues of the day. Collections contain popular works, classic works that have withstood the test of time, and other materials of general interest. Works are not excluded or included in the collection based solely on subject matter or on political, religious or ideological grounds.

The Library recognizes that customers will utilize materials from all parts of the system which includes the Central Library, regional libraries, neighborhood branches, and virtually via the Library's website. Staff develops collections in these libraries that complement each other but are also distinct. The Central Library provides in-depth resources through its subject departments, and regional libraries and branches offer materials that respond to the informational needs of the service area in which they are located. Individual branch collections are customized to reflect what is of interest in the surrounding community and population. For example, materials in specific different languages are available at agencies with significant immigrant populations who speak those languages.

In building collections, library staff is guided by the principle of selection, rather than censorship. General criteria include, but are not limited to, the following for all formats: inclusion on well-regarded best seller lists such as *The New York Times*, *Essence* or *Billboard* magazines; media tie-ins; local demand; award winners; reputation of the author or creator; availability of other material on the same topic in different formats; depth and scope of coverage; and accuracy of the information.

The Internet

The Library recognizes and embraces the impact of the Internet. It is not only a place where people get information, but also a place where they interact, exchange, and create information. The Free Library plays a critical role in creating and hosting content, and as a provider of access to these resources for City residents who would otherwise not be able to participate in this process. As noted in the Free Library's policy about Electronic Resources and the Internet (P.S. #90, rev.), access to the Internet allows users to reach sites that are well beyond the scope of the Library's collections and mission of the Library. However, some uses of the Internet may not be

legal and/or appropriate for a public library. The Library may de-select or otherwise limit access to certain sites on library computers as outlined in library procedures.

Electronic Resources

Electronic materials play an increasingly important role in the Library's collections and are selected in accordance with this Materials Selection Policy. These materials include, but are not limited to, databases, internet based tools, downloadable and e-books, and downloadable and streaming music and video. In addition to standard criteria used in selecting other formats, special selection criteria include ability to offer to remote users, availability of content in other formats, compatibility with existing technical set-ups, vendor usage statistics, and cost.

Special Collections

The Free Library maintains and enhances a number of special collections donated to it over time which are of significant research value such as sheet music, historical children's materials, and rare books, among others. Priorities for these special collections are outlined in the Special Collections Policy (PS #2). The Library is a selective depository of the Federal Depository Library Program, as well as a state resource collection for the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. In accordance with the Philadelphia City Code, it is a depository for City of Philadelphia publications. The Free Library also administers the Library for the Blind and Physically Handicapped, which, as a regional service of the Pennsylvania Commonwealth Libraries, selects Braille and recorded books provided by the National Library for the Blind and Physically Handicapped, Library of Congress.

Acquisitions/gifts

Gifts of materials are reviewed using the same criteria as purchases. (See PROC#2 Gift Receipt and Acknowledgement.) The Library reserves the right to dispose of any gifts that are given to the Library. Materials not added to library collections may be used for programs, or given to other organizations such as schools or the Friends of the Free Library.

COLLECTION MAINTENANCE

The continuous review of library materials in all formats by knowledgeable staff is part of a systematic evaluation process designed to maintain library collections that are current, accurate, vital, and relevant to customers' information needs. Evaluation is based on both direct observation and statistical use data compiled by library staff and/or provided by vendors. Circulation and registration statistics, turnover rate, in-house use surveys, reference transactions, customer surveys and community profiles are examples of the type of information that is gathered as part of this review.

De-selection

Materials are withdrawn from library collections when the information in the material becomes outdated or obsolete, when the materials are no longer of interest or in demand, or when the condition of the material is damaged beyond repair. PS#1 (Collection Maintenance, Central Library), P.S. #61, 61A, and 61B outline criteria used in deselecting or weeding of Central Library and branch collections.

AGE LEVEL GUIDANCE

Teens

The Free Library provides materials to meet the interests and needs of youth between the ages of 12 and 18. Teen Collections encourage teens to read for pleasure and self-awareness, and support the school curriculum. They also are intended to support teens' transition from children's to adult materials, with an emphasis on providing a wide range of popular materials for teens in a variety of subjects, formats, and reading levels.

Teens have unrestricted use of all materials while in library agencies. Parents and guardians are responsible for overseeing their teen's exposure to and use of library materials, including online resources and the Internet. Additionally, they may restrict their teen's borrowing of audio visual materials.

Children

The children's collection serves the wide range of needs and interests of children from birth to age 11. It also includes a limited selection of adult materials about children's literature and its use in developing reading skills in children. The main purpose of the children's collection is to develop in children the enjoyment of reading by providing quality materials that are current, up-to-date, of immediate interest to them, and fun to read. Staff acquires material and formats, including appropriate electronic resources and software, that cover a broad range of knowledge and a wide variety of fictional genres. Selection criteria include consideration of the developmental, educational, and recreational needs of children; popularity; accuracy and timeliness of factual materials; quality of writing and illustrations; and the diversity of Philadelphia's community. Additionally, materials are available to supplement the city's school curriculum.

While in the Library, children have access to materials regardless of their age. Parents and guardians are responsible for overseeing their child's exposure to and use of materials, including online resources and the Internet. In addition, parents and guardians may: restrict borrowing to only those titles specifically selected for children, including books, videos, CDs, and DVDs; prohibit their child from borrowing all videos, whether intended for children or adults; permit their child to have an adult card (an "open access" card) which automatically includes permission to borrow adult videos; or permit their child to have an open access card but restrict the borrowing of all videos, whether for children or adults.

REEVALUATION OF MATERIALS

Staff and members of the public may recommend titles for removal or inclusion in the collection at any time. Formal requests to have titles reconsidered are made by filling out the "Request for Reconsideration of Library Materials" (attached).

APPENDICES

- **American Library Association's Library Bill of Rights**
- **American Library Association's Freedom to Read**
- **Form: Request for Reconsideration**

Library Bill of Rights

The American Library Association affirms that all libraries are forums for information and ideas, and that the following basic policies should guide their services.

I. Books and other library resources should be provided for the interest, information, and enlightenment of all people of the community the library serves. Materials should not be excluded because of the origin, background, or views of those contributing to their creation.

II. Libraries should provide materials and information presenting all points of view on current and historical issues. Materials should not be proscribed or removed because of partisan or doctrinal disapproval.

III. Libraries should challenge censorship in the fulfillment of their responsibility to provide information and enlightenment.

IV. Libraries should cooperate with all persons and groups concerned with resisting abridgment of free expression and free access to ideas.

V. A person's right to use a library should not be denied or abridged because of origin, age, background, or views.

VI. Libraries which make exhibit spaces and meeting rooms available to the public they serve should make such facilities available on an equitable basis, regardless of the beliefs or affiliations of individuals or groups requesting their use.

Adopted June 18, 1948, by the ALA Council; amended February 2, 1961; amended June 28, 1967; amended January 23, 1980; inclusion of "age" reaffirmed January 24, 1996.

"Library Bill of Rights." American Library Association. 2006.
<http://www.ala.org/work/freedom/lbr.html> (Accessed 20 Aug, 2007)

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

THE FREE LIBRARY OF PHILADELPHIA

REQUEST FOR RECONSIDERATION OF LIBRARY MATERIALS

MATERIAL

TITLE: _____

AUTHOR: _____

BOOK MAGAZINE AUDIO DVD/VIDEO MUSIC CD OTHER

REQUEST INITIATED BY

NAME: _____

ADDRESS: _____

TELEPHONE NO: _____

E-MAIL ADDRESS: _____

DO YOU REPRESENT YOURSELF?

GROUP OR ORGANIZATION? PLEASE NAME: _____

PLEASE LIST SPECIFIC OBJECTIONS TO THIS MATERIAL: _____

WHAT WOULD YOU LIKE THE FREE LIBRARY TO DO ABOUT THIS MATERIAL?

A FREE LIBRARY OF PHILADELPHIA STAFF MEMBER WILL RESPOND TO THIS REQUEST.
PLEASE INDICATE HOW YOU WISH TO BE CONTACTED:

BY TELEPHONE BY E-MAIL BY LETTER

SIGNATURE: _____

DATE: _____