

Intellectual Freedom

The Public Library's unique characteristics are in its generalness. The Public Library considers the entire spectrum of knowledge to be its purview, and the entire spectrum of the community as its user population.

The Public Library shall act as a principal information source for every citizen of Ellis County. Its primary responsibility will be to identify, select, organize, retrieve, disseminate, and provide total access to the record of human thought.

The Public Library will be particularly sensitive to change as it affects information needs. It will be responsible for linking community information resources to other resources in the state, the nation, and the world.

A child's library card presents opportunities for many fascinating educational and entertaining experiences, and parents should encourage their children to explore them. The Public Library provides a wide variety of materials representing many points of view on topics of interest to the community. All libraries contain some printed and audiovisual materials which some parents find inappropriate for their children. It is the responsibility of the parent, and not the library, to decide to which ideas and materials a child should be exposed.

(Reprinted with permission of the Arapahoe Library District and the Jefferson County Public Library, Colorado)

As Public Library staff members, we should never comment on the materials we check out. It is a violation of the patron's privacy and may intimidate other patrons from checking out materials. This applies even if the comment is positive.

The American Library Association Bill of Rights and the American Library Association Freedom to Read Policy are included in the Hays Public Library's Intellectual Freedom Policy and are included in the Hays Public Library Policy Manual. (See also Hays Public Library Service Policy, page 2 and 4.)

The Freedom to Read at the Hays Public Library

The Board of Directors of the Hays Public Library affirms its belief in the following basic policies which govern the selection and availability of materials in this library:

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

The Hays Public Library strives to provide books and other materials presenting all points of view concerning the problems and issues of our times. No library materials should be proscribed or removed from the library because of partisan or doctrinal disapproval.

The Hays Public Library does not necessarily endorse every idea or presentation contained in the materials it makes available. It would conflict with the public interest for the Board of Directors or the staff of the library to establish their own political, moral, or aesthetic views as the sole standard for determining what materials should be made available by the library. It is contrary to the public interest to require a reader to accept with any book or other item the prejudice of a label characterizing that item or its author as subversive or dangerous.

Attempts to censor library materials will be challenged by the Hays Public Library in the maintenance of its responsibility to provide public information and enlightenment. The Hays Public Library cooperates with all persons and groups concerned with resisting abridgement of free expression and free access to ideas.

Objections to Books or Materials

In the event a patron objects to the existence of a library material in the collection, the following procedure is followed:

1. The patron is requested to complete a "Citizen's Request for Reconsideration of a Library Material" form (at front desk or on website). See the "Intellectual Freedom Policy" section in the Service Policy.
2. The Director reviews the material in question, as well as its critical reviews.
3. The Director makes a decision regarding the disposition of the item.
4. The Board of Trustees may, at its discretion, review the Director's decision.

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. Amended October 14, 1944; June 18, 1948; February 2, 1961; June 27,

1967; and January 23, 1980; inclusion of "age" reaffirmed January 23, 1996, by the ALA Council.

This information can be access on the internet at the ALA website:

<http://www.ala.org/advocacy/intfreedom/librarybill>

American Library Association 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

This information can be access on the internet at the ALA website:
<http://www.ala.org/offices/oif/statementspols/ftstatement/freedomreadstatement>

Citizen's Request for Reconsideration of a Book

The following form must be filled out and submitted to the Director. It is available at the front desk and also at the HPL website.

Author: _____	Hardcover	Paperback
Title: _____	Publisher (if known): _____	
Request Initiated By: _____		
Address: _____		
City: _____	State: _____	Zip: _____ Ph#: _____
Complainant Represents:	Himself	Organization
		Group
Name of Org/Group (if applicable): _____		
1. To what in the book do you object? Please specify and cite pages.		
2. What do you feel might be the result of reading this book?		
3. For what age group would you recommend this book?		
4. Is there anything good about this book?		
5. Did you read the entire book? _____ What parts?		
6. Are you aware of the judgment of this book by literary critics?		
7. What do you believe is the theme of this book?		
8. What would you like your library to do about this book?		
9. In its place, what book of equal literary quality would you recommend that would convey as valuable a picture and perspective of our civilization?		
Signature of Complainant: _____		