

## **DRAKE COMMUNITY LIBRARY MATERIAL SELECTION POLICY**

### **Introduction and Scope**

The purpose of the Drake Community Public Library is to provide circulating and reference materials to meet the needs of library users regardless of age, sex, origin, background, or views. It is the policy of the library to select materials (including print and non-print media) that fulfill literary, informational, occupational, educational, and pleasurable needs. Materials of contemporary and historical significance, permanent value, as well as materials for purely recreational interest will be provided in order to meet the needs of all members of the community.

The basic principles set forth in the American Library Association's publications, the "Library Bill of Rights", the "Freedom to Read" statement, and the "Labeling and Ratings" interpretation, shall be maintained in the selection of library materials. See Appendices A-C.

In choosing materials for its collection it is the intent of the library to serve all of the community, neither to promote nor to censor the ideas or opinion of any particular group within or outside Grinnell.

The Library does not consider it necessary or desirable to collect all materials on a subject if the materials tend to duplicate each other. Because Burling Library at Grinnell College is open to the public, and because of the availability of materials in school media centers and on Interlibrary Loan, Drake Community Library does not attempt to act as a research library, nor to supply materials that relate only to the curriculum of the schools. Curricular items, however, that are also of interest to the general public or that might be considered a supplement to the curriculum will be considered for purchase.

The Library acts as a selector rather than a censor. In censoring, materials are intentionally withheld because of their contents. In selecting, materials are judged in their entirety, balancing the item under consideration with the Library's present collection, community needs and desires, and budget. Works are viewed with regard to their value, authority and effectiveness of presentation.

### **Responsibility**

Responsibility for materials selection rests with the Director, and those designated by the Director, working under the authority of and the policies determined by the Board of Trustees. Selectors attempt to identify community needs, determine areas of the collection that are inadequate and/or are out-of-date.

Because it is difficult to determine all community interests and needs, the Director welcomes recommendations from the public, the Board of Trustees, and staff. These suggestions are given immediate consideration and research is done to find professional reviews for each title. Such requests are subject to the normal selection criteria.

### **Legal, Medical, and Religious Works**

Only those legal and medical works that are useful to laymen will be purchased. Advice in the areas of law and medicine will not be given.

Books proselytizing for the principles and practices of a specific religious denomination are not purchased with tax money.

### **Donations**

The Drake Community Library may accept donations of real or personal property at the discretion of the Director and the Board of Trustees. Donations will be received as detailed in the Drake Community Library Donations Policy.

### **Selection Aids**

The Director relies on professional reviews and recommendations in library journals as the major sources of information in making acquisitions. Subject bibliographies and books listing basic library collections are used, as well as the recommendations of professionals in fields relating to the books under consideration. No one source is used exclusively.

### **Evaluation and Withdrawal**

To keep the collection current and to meet the needs of the library's users, materials are evaluated on an ongoing basis. Items that are no longer considered useful may be withdrawn. Criteria for withdrawal may include currency of information, inclusion in standard bibliographic sources, circulation history, or physical condition. No single criterion will be applied automatically to identify an item for withdrawal.

### **Use of Library Resources**

Each item selected for the Library is judged on its own merit. Materials purchased will not be marked to show approval or disapproval of their contents or any parts thereof. No item will be sequestered except to protect it from injury or theft. Library user's concerns regarding the presence or absence of any library materials shall be presented to the Director.

The Library welcomes comments and criticisms of its collections. However, no citizen in a democracy has a right to prevent another from reading a specific book by demanding its removal from the library's shelves. A library user who is not satisfied with the Director's determination will be asked to obtain the form "Citizen's Request for Reconsideration of Materials" (Appendix D) from the Director or Youth Services Director and to complete it in its entirety. Once the request for reconsideration has been submitted to the Director, the Board of Trustees will determine appropriate action according to normal parliamentary procedure of the Board. The Board declares, as a matter of firm principle, that no challenged library material shall be removed from this library under any putative legal or extra-legal pressure, save after an independent determination by a judicial officer in a court of competent jurisdiction and only after an adversary hearing, in accordance with well-established principles of law.

Responsibility for the reading by children rests with the parents or legal guardian. Selection of materials is not restricted by the possibility that children may obtain materials their parents consider inappropriate.

Reviewed 9/09

Revised 01/14

# 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.

## **THE FREEDOM TO READ**

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; revised January 28, 1972, January 16, 1991, July 12, 2000, June 30, 2004, by the ALA Council and the AAP Freedom to Read Committee.

*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

# **LABELING AND RATING SYSTEMS**

---

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

Libraries do not advocate the ideas found in their collections or in resources accessible through the library. The presence of books and other resources in a library does not indicate endorsement of their contents by the library. Likewise, providing access to digital information does not indicate endorsement or approval of that information by the library. Labeling and rating systems present distinct challenges to these intellectual freedom principles.

Labels on library materials may be viewpoint-neutral directional aids designed to save the time of users, or they may be attempts to prejudice or discourage users or restrict their access to materials. When labeling is an attempt to prejudice attitudes, it is a censor's tool. The American Library Association opposes labeling as a means of predisposing people's attitudes toward library materials.

Prejudicial labels are designed to restrict access, based on a value judgment that the content, language, or themes of the material, or the background or views of the creator(s) of the material, render it inappropriate or offensive for all or certain groups of users. The prejudicial label is used to warn, discourage, or prohibit users or certain groups of users from accessing the material. Such labels sometimes are used to place materials in restricted locations where access depends on staff intervention.

Viewpoint-neutral directional aids facilitate access by making it easier for users to locate materials. The materials are housed on open shelves and are equally accessible to all users, who may choose to consult or ignore the directional aids at their own discretion.

Directional aids can have the effect of prejudicial labels when their implementation becomes proscriptive rather than descriptive. When directional aids are used to forbid access or to suggest moral or doctrinal endorsement, the effect is the same as prejudicial labeling.

Many organizations use rating systems as a means of advising either their members or the general public regarding the organizations' opinions of the contents and suitability or appropriate age for use of certain books, films, recordings, Web sites, games, or other materials. The adoption, enforcement, or endorsement of any of these rating systems by a library violates the Library Bill of Rights. When requested, librarians should provide information about rating systems equitably, regardless of viewpoint.

Adopting such systems into law or library policy may be unconstitutional. If labeling or rating systems are mandated by law, the library should seek legal advice regarding the law's applicability to library operations.

Libraries sometimes acquire resources that include ratings as part of their packaging. Librarians should not endorse the inclusion of such rating systems; however, removing or destroying the ratings—if placed there by, or with permission of, the copyright holder—could constitute expurgation. In addition, the inclusion of ratings on bibliographic records in library catalogs is a violation of the Library Bill of Rights.

Prejudicial labeling and ratings presuppose the existence of individuals or groups with wisdom to determine by authority what is appropriate or inappropriate for others. They presuppose that individuals must be directed in making up their minds about the ideas they examine. The American Library Association affirms the rights of individuals to form their own opinions about resources they choose to read or view.

Adopted July 13, 1951, by the ALA Council; amended June 25, 1971; July 1, 1981; June 26, 1990; January 19, 2005; July 15, 2009.

**Drake Community Library  
Material Selection Policy, Appendix D**

**CITIZEN'S REQUEST FOR RECONSIDERATION OF MATERIALS**

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Author \_\_\_\_\_

Title \_\_\_\_\_

Publisher (if known) \_\_\_\_\_

Request initiated by \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_ Telephone \_\_\_\_\_

Individual represents:  Him/herself

Organization (Please list name) \_\_\_\_\_

Other \_\_\_\_\_

(Use back of form if necessary.)

1. To what in the material do you object? (Please be specific; cite pages)
2. What do you feel might be the result of using (or reading) this material?
3. For what age group would you recommend this material?
4. Is there anything good about this material?
5. Did you read, view, or listen to the entire work?  
If not, what parts?
6. What do you believe is the theme of this material?
7. What would you like your library to do about this material?
8. In its place, what material of equal quality would you recommend that would convey as valuable a picture and perspective of this subject?

Signature \_\_\_\_\_