

7. Materials Evaluation and Selection

7.1 Purpose of this Policy

The Minerva Public Library works to meet its patrons' interests in information, education, and cultural development while also supporting the patrons' equally important interest in library materials for recreation and enjoyment. The library materials selection process builds a collection of a variety of materials to further the library's program of information, education, and recreation. Developing a library's collection is an ongoing activity; a library's collection will evolve as the needs and interests of the community evolve and as changing technology provides additional or alternative types of resources. Because no library budget is large enough to permit the purchase of all materials that might prove useful, nor is any library building large enough to store all such materials, this policy guides the staff in most effectively using the Minerva Public Library's financial resources to meet the present and anticipated needs of the community it serves. A policy cannot replace the judgment of trained and experienced staff, but stating goals and indicating boundaries will assist staff in selecting library resources, evaluating the collection, and maintaining the collection's currency, relevancy, and usefulness.

7.2 Responsibility to the Community

The Minerva Public Library plays an active and positive role in the community. The Board of Trustees, administration, and staff of Library are committed to the principle that free and open access to information is necessary for informed citizens who think and make choices for themselves. And, that ready access to a wide variety of facts, opinions, and ideas from which to choose makes possible an informed and enlightened populace.

The Library fulfills its mission when it makes available materials for the enlightenment, education, cultural development, recreation, and enjoyment of all members of the public, including all age levels and many levels of interest and ability. Moreover, the collection should include materials that represent topics of current interest as well as those of enduring value.

Decisions about what materials are suitable for particular children should be made by people who know them best—their parents or guardians. Library staff is willing to work with the parent or guardian to choose materials that may be best suited for a child's needs within the framework or guidelines established by the parent or guardian. Selection of materials for the library collection is not limited by the possibility that a child may obtain materials that a parent or guardian might consider inappropriate for that child.

All libraries are likely to contain some materials that some patrons may find objectionable. In addition, collections may not contain all materials that some patrons

feel are important. In both cases, the Library has established procedures to hear the voices of the community. (see Section 7.5 and 7.6 below)..

The Minerva Public Library Board of Trustees supports the American Library Association's *Library Bill of Rights* and the interpretations of that document relating to materials evaluation and selection including: *The Freedom to Read Statement*; *The Freedom to View Statement*; and the Statement on *Diversity Collections*, and the statement on *Access to Digital Resources and Services*. Copies of these documents are in the appendices.

7.3 Responsibility for Selection

Ultimate responsibility for the selection of library materials, as with all library activities rests with the Library Director, operating within a framework of policies approved by the Library's Board of Trustees. While the Director may also delegate selection duties to Library staff who are qualified for the task by education, training, and interest, the Director retains final authority to approve or reject any items selected by staff.

7.4 Principles of Collection Development

The Library considers the diversity of community needs, interests, and demands for titles and formats in the materials selection process. A work that inspires one reader may sometimes offend another. However, by providing free and open access to diverse information and viewpoints, the public library serves as a cornerstone of the principles of democratic society. Inclusion of a diversity of materials in the Library's collection acknowledges the importance of a diversity of views and interests. Staff work to provide materials that represent a variety of viewpoints on controversial issues; this goal does not require numerical balance in the number of items representing different viewpoints. Inclusion in the collection does not represent an endorsement by the Library nor imply agreement with any particular viewpoint, or suggest approval or certification of the content of any particular item.

The Library may label materials to aid the public in finding them in the collection. The Library does not use labels on any material in such a way as to show approval or disapproval of the content of that material. Materials are not sequestered to show approval, disapproval, or judgement as to the suitability of content for a particular audience. The Library does not remove or obscure ratings attached to a material by a publisher, industry group, or distributor.

7.41 General Selection Standards

Because its ability to purchase and store materials is limited by both the size of its budget and the size of its building, the Library has established guidelines for purchase and retention. These guidelines may be applied to all formats and include, but are not limited to:

- Current interest
- Timeliness

- Educational significance
- Positive reviews
- Recommendations by professionals
- Patron requests
- Accuracy
- Duplication of other resources
- Contribution to the breadth of representative viewpoints
- Value of resource commensurate with cost and/or need
- Reputation of author/publisher/producer

Library staff have a professional responsibility to be inclusive, not exclusive, in collection development and in the provision of materials through resource sharing. Staff will strive to provide access to all materials legally obtainable, and policies should not exclude materials even if such materials offend a staff member or some members of the community. An item is evaluated as a whole, not on the basis of a particular section or sections. Thus, an item will not be included in, or excluded from, the collection because of:

- The race, religion, nationality, sexual orientation or identification, or views of the author;
- Depictions or descriptions of violence or sexual activity;
- Controversial content;
- Endorsement or disapproval by any individual or community group

The Library strives to provide material that promotes continuing, independent learning. The Library makes an effort to provide materials that will help support the curricula for area schools and other teaching situations. However, the Library does not usually acquire textbooks, professional or academic journals, or syllabus-specific materials. Nor does the Library purchase multiple copies of titles in sufficient quantity to meet the assignment demands of local institutions, schools and colleges, or non-library reading groups.

7.42 Resource Sharing with Other Libraries

The Library is a member of the SEO library consortium made up of over 95 libraries across the state with a combined collection of over 8,000,000 items. These materials are directly available for patrons of all consortium member libraries to request through the shared library catalog. Patrons are encouraged to take full advantage of this access and to use this network to request materials for delivery to the Library for local check out. Such direct access may be considered an adequate substitute for local ownership when deciding whether to purchase a title for the Library's collection. However, convenient resource sharing is not a substitute for sound local collection development, and the ready availability of a title through the consortium does not preclude purchase of the same title for the local collection. The Library also recognizes a responsibility to assist in meeting consortium-wide demand for popular titles even when there may be less demand locally.

7.43 Reference Information Sources

While the Library maintains a basic print reference collection, it is understood that many reference questions are now answered with online resources. The Library also provides access to the Ohio Web Library (OWL) and its contracted reference databases, most of which are available for patron use off-site as well as in the library building. The Library provides access to the full range of Internet sites permissible under Ohio law.

7.44 Downloadable and Streaming Content

Technology provides the means for the Library to deliver content directly to patrons wherever they may have internet access. The Library participates in the Ohio Digital Library, a collection supported and maintained by a consortium of public libraries to share with all the patrons of ODL member libraries. Library staff purchase titles to add to this online collection, as do the staff of the other ODL member libraries. The Library also purchases direct pay-per-use access for local library patrons to downloadable and streaming services, e.g. Hoopla and Kanopy. The content provided by such services is not selected by library staff, but rather is provided as packages of titles.

7.45 Collection Maintenance

In order to maintain a collection that is current, relevant, and useful to the community's needs and interests, Library staff periodically re-examine materials, including gift items, in an ongoing effort to evaluate the overall collection and specific items within it. Staff consider the condition, use, and timeliness of materials when deciding what items to withdraw from the collection. The Library may offer withdrawn materials to the Library Friends or other groups or organizations whose purpose is consistent with, or furthers, the Library's mission. These groups, or the Library, may resell these materials, or use them for other purposes consistent with the Library's mission. See Section 1.7 of the *Public Service Policies Manual*.

7.46 Gift Materials Guidelines

Minerva Public Library accepts or rejects donated materials at its discretion as described in Section 1.6 of the *Public Service Policies Manual*. The Library discourages gifts with restrictions. Donated books and other materials are added to the collection according to the same general criteria applied to other library materials. Donated materials not added to the collection may be disposed of in the same manner as withdrawn library materials. .

7.47 Memorial Gifts

A gift of money for the purchase of materials, including memorial gifts, is a thoughtful way to honor someone's memory or to honor and acknowledge a special occasion such as a birthday, anniversary, or graduation.

The donor may suggest the subject areas or authors to be considered for purchase. Every effort will be made by selectors to choose materials which will both benefit the collection and please the donors. A gift or memorial plate will be placed in the material if requested.

All library materials are subject to theft, damage, wear, and lack of use, and the library cannot guarantee that “in memoriam” or other gift materials will remain a part of the collection forever. These items will be withdrawn on the same basis as other items in the collection.

7.5 Request for Purchase

The Library serves a diverse public. On occasion, a patron may think that the Library should add a particular title to the collection. Patrons may request the addition of a title by contacting Library staff in person, and most requests are handled in this manner. However, if a patron wishes, the request may be handled more formally by using the "Request for Addition of a Title" form (see appendix). Forms are available at the Library service desks. The completed form will be referred to the staff member responsible for selecting in that area of the Library's collection. Staff will determine whether to purchase a requested title using the same general selection standards described above in section 7.41.

7.6 Request for Reconsideration

The Library serves a diverse public. On occasion, a patron may believe that a specific title or source should not be in the collection. In this instance, the patron should first discuss the material with the Library staff. If, following the discussion, the patron still wishes the Library to reconsider the title, he or she must fill out a "Request for Reconsideration of a Title" form (see appendix). Forms are available at the Library service desks. Because items are evaluated as a whole, a title will not be reconsidered unless the patron making the request has read/viewed/heard the entire item. A reconsideration form submitted without the name of the person making the objection will not be considered. Also, if the material has been previously reconsidered, it will not be reconsidered again unless the more recent request is based on substantially different reasons than an earlier request.

The request will be referred to a collection-development committee for review. The patron will be informed in writing of (1) the receipt of the request and (2) the decision. If the patron is not satisfied with the decision, he or she may appeal in writing to the Library Board of Trustees. The letter should be addressed to President, Board of Trustees, Minerva Public Library, 677 Lynnwood Dr., Minerva, OH 44657. The Board will make a decision and inform the patron in writing, usually following the next regularly scheduled Board meeting

The title under consideration will remain in the collection throughout the process to support the freedom of other patrons to read, view, or listen.

Appendix A: Statements on Intellectual Freedom

A1. 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.

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

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

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.

VI'. All people, regardless of origin, age, background, or views, possess a right to privacy and confidentiality in their library use. Libraries should advocate for, educate about, and protect people's privacy, safeguarding all library use data, including personally identifiable information.

Adopted June 19, 1939, by the ALA Council; amended October 14, 1944; June 18, 1948; February 2, 1961; June 27, 1967; January 23, 1980; January 29, 2019.

Inclusion of "age" reaffirmed January 23, 1996.

Although the Articles of the Library Bill of Rights are unambiguous statements of basic principles that should govern the service of all libraries, questions do arise concerning application of these principles to specific library practices. See the documents designated by the Intellectual Freedom Committee as

Interpretations of the Library Bill of Rights

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

A2. 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 (<http://www.publishers.org/>)

Subsequently endorsed by:

American Booksellers for Free Expression (<http://www.bookweb.org/abfe>) The

Association of American University Presses (<http://www.aaupnet.org/>)

The Children's Book Council (<http://www.cbcbooks.org/>)

Freedom to Read Foundation (<http://www.ftfrf.org>)

National Association of College Stores (<http://www.nacs.org/>)

National Coalition Against Censorship (<http://www.ncac.org/>)

National Council of Teachers of English (<http://www.ncte.org/>)

The Thomas Jefferson Center for the Protection of Free Expression

A3. 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

A4. Diverse Collections: An Interpretation of the Library Bill of Rights

Collection development should reflect the philosophy inherent in Article I of the Library Bill of Rights: "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." A diverse

collection should contain content by and about a wide array of people and cultures to authentically reflect a variety of ideas, information, stories, and experiences.

Library workers have an obligation to select, maintain, and support access to content on subjects by diverse authors and creators that meets—as closely as possible—the needs, interests, and abilities of all the people the library serves. This means acquiring materials to address popular demand and direct community input, as well as addressing collection gaps and unexpressed information needs. Library workers have a professional and ethical responsibility to be proactively inclusive in collection development and in the provision of interlibrary loan where offered.

A well-balanced collection does not require a one-to-one equivalence for each viewpoint but should strive for equity in content and ideas that takes both structural inequalities and the availability of timely, accurate materials into account. A diverse collection should contain a variety of works chosen pursuant to the library's selection policy and subject to periodic review.

Collection development, as well as cataloging and classification, should be done according to professional standards and established procedures.

Developing a diverse collection requires:

- selecting content in multiple formats;
- considering resources from self-published, independent, small, and local producers;
- seeking content created by and representative of marginalized and underrepresented groups;
- evaluating how diverse collection resources are cataloged, labeled, and displayed;
- including content in all of the languages used in the community that the library serves, when possible; and
- providing resources in formats that meet the needs of users with disabilities.¹

Best practices in collection development assert that materials should not be excluded from a collection solely because the content or its creator may be considered offensive or controversial. Refusing to select resources due to potential controversy is considered censorship, as is withdrawing resources for that reason. Libraries have a responsibility to defend against challenges that limit a collection's diversity of content. Challenges commonly cite content viewed as inappropriate, offensive, or controversial, which may include but is not limited to prejudicial language and ideas, political content, economic theory, social philosophies, religious beliefs, scientific research, sexual content, and representation of diverse sexual orientations, expressions, and gender identities,

Intellectual freedom, the essence of equitable library services, provides for free access to varying expressions of ideas through which a question, cause, or movement may be explored. Library workers have a professional and ethical responsibility to be fair and just in defending the library user's right to read, view, or listen to content protected by the First Amendment, regardless of the creator's viewpoint or personal history. Library workers must not permit their personal biases, opinions, or preferences to unduly influence collection development decisions.²

¹"Services to People with Disabilities: An Interpretation of the Library Bill of Rights (<http://www.ala.org/advocacy/intfreedom/librarybill/interpretations/servicespeoplewithdisabilities>)," adopted January 28, 2009, by the ALA Council under the title "Services to Persons with Disabilities"; amended June 26, 2018.

²*ALA Code of Ethics*, Article VII, adopted at the 1939 Midwinter Meeting by the ALA Council; amended June 30, 1981; June 28, 1995; and January 22, 2008. Adopted July 14, 1982, by the ALA Council; amended January 10, 1990; July 2, 2008; July 1, 2014 under previous name "Diversity in Collection Development"; and June 24, 2019.

A5. Access to Digital Resources and Services: An Interpretation of the Library Bill of Rights

The fundamental mission of libraries is to provide access to information, regardless of content or format, to everyone. Digital resources and services, or resources and services made primarily available online or on digital devices, are integral to libraries' mission in the twenty-first century. Libraries are important points of access to many digital resources and services, including, but not limited to, computers, the Internet, and digital resources and tools. In order to provide access to digital resources and services while upholding the *Library Bill of Rights*, libraries must consider intellectual freedom principles and issues of equity to ensure that access to information is enhanced, not restricted, by digital technology.

Libraries should regularly review issues arising from digital creation, distribution, retrieval, and archiving of information. Any review of these issues should consider users' First Amendment rights, rights to privacy, and the core values of librarianship as expressed in the *Library Bill of Rights* and the *Code of Ethics of the American Library Association*. Many people lack access or the capability to use or create digital resources effectively. There is a need for places where people can access, use, or create information without impediment. It is the responsibility of libraries to provide access to digital resources and services and to mitigate all barriers, whether they are economic, educational, or political. The provision of access does not imply sponsorship or endorsement by the library. Libraries should resist all attempts by individuals, governments, and private entities to censor or limit access to digital resources or services. In making decisions about how to offer access to digital resources, services, tools, physical equipment, and networks, each library should consider intellectual freedom principles and issues of equity in the context of its mission, goals, objectives, cooperative agreements, and the needs of the entire community it serves.

The Rights of Users

All library policies, procedures, or regulations relating to digital resources and services should be scrutinized for potential violations of user rights. User policies should be developed according to the policies and guidelines established by the American Library Association.¹

Users' access to digital resources and services should not be restricted or denied for expressing, receiving, creating, or participating in constitutionally protected speech. If access is restricted or denied for behavioral or other reasons, users should be provided due process, including, but not limited to, formal notice and a means of appeal.

Information retrieved, utilized, or created digitally is constitutionally protected unless determined otherwise by a court of competent jurisdiction. These rights extend to minors as well as adults.² Libraries should use technology to enhance,

not deny, digital access. Users have the right to be free of unreasonable limitations or conditions set by libraries, librarians, system administrators, vendors, network service providers, or others. Contracts, agreements, and licenses entered into by libraries on behalf of their users should not violate this right. Libraries should provide library users the training and assistance necessary to find, evaluate, use, and create information effectively.

All people, regardless of origin, age, background, or views, possess a right to privacy and confidentiality in their library use.³ The library should uphold these rights by policy, procedure, and practice in accordance with Article VII of the *Library Bill of Rights*. The library should regularly maintain its systems and networks in order to protect users' rights to privacy and confidentiality. As libraries increasingly provide access to digital resources through third-party vendors, libraries have a responsibility to hold vendors accountable for protecting patrons' privacy.

Equity of Access

The digital environment provides expanding opportunities for everyone to participate in the information society, but individuals may face serious barriers to access. These barriers, often referred to as the digital divide, may include a lack of infrastructure for Internet connectivity, lack of tools (hardware or software), and lack of skills, knowledge, or means necessary to access digital resources.⁴ Libraries should be cognizant of the digital divide and work to minimize it as they provide access to digital resources for their communities. Digital resources, services, training, and networks provided directly or indirectly by the library should be readily and equitably accessible to all library users. American Library Association policies oppose the charging of user fees for the provision of information services by libraries that receive support from public funds.⁵ Libraries should develop policies concerning access to digital resources. These policies should be consistent with ALA's policies and guidelines. When new digital resources are provided to library users, libraries have an obligation to provide equitable training opportunities to library users and workers in using those new resources. Training should also address privacy and security issues that accompany the use of digital resources and services.

Information Resources and Access

Libraries, acting within their mission and objectives, should support access to information on all subjects that serve the needs or interests of each user, regardless of the user's age or the content of the material. In order to preserve the cultural record and to prevent the loss of information, libraries may need to expand their selection or collection-development policies to ensure preservation, in appropriate formats, of information obtained digitally. Libraries have an obligation to provide access to government information available in digital format.

Providing connections to global information, services, and networks is not the same as selecting and purchasing materials for a library collection. Some information accessed digitally may not meet a library's selection or collection-

development policy. It is, therefore, left to each user to determine what is appropriate. Libraries and library workers should not deny or limit access to digital resources because of their allegedly controversial content or because of a library worker's personal beliefs or fear of confrontation. Furthermore, libraries and library workers should not deny access to digital resources solely on the grounds that they are perceived to lack value. Parents and legal guardians who are concerned about their children's use of digital resources should provide guidance to their own children.

Publicly funded libraries have a legal obligation to provide access to constitutionally protected information. Federal, state, county, municipal, local, or library governing bodies sometimes require the use of Internet filters or other technological measures that block access to constitutionally protected information, contrary to the *Library Bill of Rights*.⁶ If a library uses a technological measure that blocks access to information, it should be set at the least restrictive level in order to minimize the blocking of constitutionally protected speech.

Adults retain the right to access all constitutionally protected information and to ask for the technological measure to be disabled in a timely and confidential manner. Minors also retain the right to access constitutionally protected information and, at a minimum, have the right to ask the library or librarian to provide access to erroneously blocked information in a timely and confidential manner. In order to ensure user privacy and confidentiality, records of these requests should not contain personally identifiable information. Libraries and librarians have an obligation to inform users of these rights and to provide the means to exercise these rights.⁷

Digital resources and services allow libraries to significantly expand the scope of information available to users. Like all resources and services provided by the library, provision of access to digital resources and services should follow the principles outlined in the *Library Bill of Rights* to ensure equitable access regardless of content or platform.

¹"Guidelines for Library Policies

(<http://www.ala.org/advocacy/intfreedom/guidelinesforaccesspolicies>)," approved June 28, 1994 by the ALA Intellectual Freedom Committee; revised January 19, 2005; March 29, 2014 under previous name "Guidelines for the Development and Implementation of Policies, Regulations and Procedures Affecting Access to Library Materials, Services and Facilities"; June 24, 2019.

² *Tinker v. Des Moines Independent Community School District*, 393 U.S. 503 (1969); *Board of Education, Island Trees Union Free School District No. 26 v. Pico*, 457 U.S. 853, (1 982); *American Amusement Machine Association v. Teri Kendrick*, 244 F.3d 954 (7th Cir. 2001); *cert. denied*, 534 U.S. 994 (2001).

³ "Privacy: An Interpretation of the *Library Bill of Rights*

(<http://www.ala.org/advocacy/intfreedom/librarybill/interpretations/privacy>)," adopted June 19, 2002, by the ALA Council; amended on July 1 , 2014; June 24, 2019.

⁴ Martin Hilbert, "The End Justifies the Definition: The Manifold Outlooks on the Digital Divide and Their Practical Usefulness for Policy-Making," *Telecommunications Policy* 35, no. 8 (2011): 715-736. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.telpol.2011.06.012> (<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.telpol.2011.06.012>)

⁵ "Economic Barriers to Information Access: An Interpretation of the Library Bill of Rights (<http://wwwv.ala.org/advocacy/intfreedom/librarybill/interpretations/economicbarriers>)," adopted June 30, 1993, by the ALA Council and amended June 25, 2019.

⁶ "Internet Filtering: An Interpretation of the (<http://www.ala.org/advocacy/intfreedom/librarybill/interpretations/internet-filtering>) *Library Bill of Rights* (<http://www.ala.org/advocacy/intfreedom/librarybill/interpretations/internet-filtering>)," adopted June 30, 2015, by the ALA Council.

⁷ "If some libraries do not have the capacity to unblock specific Web sites or to disable the filter or if it is shown that an adult user's election to view constitutionally protected Internet material is burdened in some other substantial way, that would be the subject for an as-applied challenge, not the facial challenge made in this case." *United States, et al v. American Library Association*, 539 U.S. 194 (2003) (Justice Kennedy, concurring). Adopted January 24, 1996 by the ALA Council; amended January 19, 2005; July 15, 2009 under previous name "Access to Digital Information, Services, and Networks"; and June 25, 2019.

References to cited policies have been updated on November 6, 2018.

See Also

- "Questions and Answers on Access to Digital Information, Services and Networks (<http://www.ala.org/advocacy/intfreedom/digitalaccessfaq>)," adopted June 5, 1997 by the ALA Intellectual Freedom Committee; revised November 17, 2000; January 16, 2010.
- "Guidelines for the Development of Policies and Procedures Regarding User Behavior and Library Usage (<http://www.ala.org/advocacy/intfreedom/guidelinesdevelopment>)," adopted January 24, 1993 by the Intellectual Freedom Committee; revised November 17, 2000; January 19, 2005; March 29, 2014; and March 24, 2019.
- "Guidelines for Library Policies (<http://www.ala.org/advocacy/intfreedom/guidelinesforaccesspolicies>)," approved June 28, 1994 by the ALA Intellectual Freedom Committee; revised January 19, 2005; March 29, 2014 under previous name "Guidelines for the Development and Implementation of Policies,

Regulations and Procedures Affecting Access to Library Materials, Services and Facilities"; June 24, 2019.

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